

KEY PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Human Dignity

- In a world warped by materialism and declining respect for human life, the Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all our social teaching.

Community and the Common Good

- In a global culture driven by excessive individualism, our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society – in economics and politics, in law and policy – directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

Rights and Responsibilities

- Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities -- to one another, to our families, and to

the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

- Catholic teaching proclaims that a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt. 25) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Participation

- All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community.
- Conversely, it is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society. In the words of the U.S. bishops, "The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be abandoned passively as if they were non-members of the human race. To treat people this way is effectively to say they simply do not count as human beings."

Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

- In a marketplace where too often profit margins can often take precedence over the rights of workers, we believe that the economy must serve people, not the other way around.
- If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected – the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property and to economic initiative.

Stewardship of Creation

- Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet and have a moral duty to do so.

Solidarity

- Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Solidarity

means that "loving our neighbour" has global dimensions in an interdependent world

Role of Government

The state is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. Its purpose is to assist citizens in fulfilling their responsibility to others in society. Since, in a large and complex society these responsibilities cannot adequately be carried out on a one-to-one basis, citizens need the help of government in fulfilling these responsibilities and promoting the common good.

Promotion of Peace

- Catholic teaching promotes peace as a positive, action-oriented concept. In the words of Pope John Paul II, "Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements." There is a close relationship in Catholic teaching between peace and justice. Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings.