



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: MAJOR THEMES

Catholic Social Teaching is a central and essential element of our faith. It is based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity. Catholic Social Teaching is built on a commitment to the poor and vulnerable. It calls us all to reach out and to build relationships of compassion and justice. It calls us all to defend the dignity of life and build the common good.

In these brief reflections, we present the key themes that lie at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.

Life and the Dignity of the Human Person

Our belief in the sanctity of human life is the foundation of Catholic Social Teaching. We believe that every person is precious and that life must be protected and supported from conception to natural death. We assert that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Call to Family, Community, Participation

Our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society - in economics, politics and law - directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. We believe that the family is the central social institution and it should be supported and strengthened. We believe that people have a right and duty to participate in society to build the common good and seek the well being of all.

Rights and Responsibilities

The 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. We believe that every person has a fundamental right to life and to access to the necessities of life. 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 of society is how its most vulnerable members are faring. We are called to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. We believe political institutions should craft just and fair policies, providing access to basic necessities.

The Dignity and Rights of Workers

We believe that the economy must serve people, not the other way around and that work is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. To uphold the dignity of work, the rights of workers must be upheld. The rights to productive work, to fair and livable wages, to organize and join unions and to economic initiative all contribute to full human development.

Solidarity

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic or ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. The principle of solidarity calls us to seek a just social order where goods are distributed fairly, opportunity is promoted equally and the dignity of all is respected.

Care for God's Creation

The Catholic tradition insists that we show respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and our planet, living our faith in harmony with all of God's creation. Our commitment to the common good and our concern for neighbors and for generations yet unborn require responsible stewardship of our natural resources.

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Minnesota Catholic Conference

475 University Ave. W., St. Paul, MN 55103-1959
651-227-8777 * www.mncc.org