

Some Foundation Principles

Scripture

Luke 4: 16 – 24 – Jesus begins His public ministry with these words from Isaiah

Luke 10: 29 – 37 – The Good Samaritan – Who is my neighbor?

Matthew 5 – The Sermon on the Mount – A Vision of Justice Blueprint

Matthew 25: 36 – 46 – The Judgment of the Nations – When did we see you, Lord?

Luke 16: 19 – 30 – The Rich Man and Lazarus – Why are the poor invisible?

John 21: 15 – 19 – Jesus and Peter – I know your flaws. I need your heart.

Luke 7: 11 – 17 – Raising of the Widow's Son – Jesus' response to Systemic and Economic Injustice

Mark 10: 17 – 31 – Rich Young Man - "How did you acquire your possessions or gain your wealth?"

John 6: 1 – 15 – Multiplication of Loaves and Fish – Common Good and the Corporate World

Tradition

1 - "For too many, our social teaching is an unknown tradition. In too many parishes, social ministry is a task for a few, not a challenge for the entire parish community. We believe we are just beginning to realize our potential as a community of faith committed to serve those in need and to work for greater justice. The Parishes that are leaders in this area see social ministry not as a specialized ministry, but as an integral part of the entire Parish." U.S. Catholic Bishops

2 – "We should not be surprised if we find Catholic Social Teaching to be demanding. The Gospel is demanding. We are always in need of conversion, of a change of heart." Economic Justice for All, #23

3 – The 1971 World Synod of Bishops was a Catholic milestone. It was then the bishops declared "justice is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel." So justice was neither an optional extra nor a postscript to the gospel: It was of its very essence.

4 - "love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to the Church as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel. The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word." Pope Benedict XVI – Deus Caritas Est - # 22

5 – "Throughout Israel's history and in early Christianity, the poor are agents of God's transforming power." Economic Justice for All, #16

6 - Pope John Paul II has stated that solidarity is: ". . .above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world in its economic, cultural, political, and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue,' is solidarity. It then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, near and far. On the contrary it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all." *On Social Concern (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)*

7 - In Catholic social teaching, true stewardship is a moral challenge which, according to the U.S. Bishops, “calls us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God’s creation.” *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*.

8 - In his Apostolic Letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine* (2004), Pope John Paul II spoke of the Eucharist as “a project of solidarity”, cautioning us that “The criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged will be our mutual love and in particular our concern for those in need”.

9 - *The Eucharist commits us to the poor*. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1397

Catholic Social Teaching – Documents, Principles, and Vision

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is a large body of thought and work that emerges from the Catholic Church as it seeks to address the social situations that we face in our ever-changing world. It looks at the world environment and reflects on what is seen; it asks the questions “**what would a just world look like?**” and “**how can we work towards this world vision?**”

It was reflection on just these types of questions that produced the first major modern social encyclical -- *The Condition of Labor (Rerum Novarum)*. This letter was written by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 in response to the dehumanizing treatment of workers during the Industrial Revolution. His letter became the first of many social encyclicals put forth by the Catholic Church. The Church and its work on social teaching entered a new phase during Vatican II in the 1960’s. Though justice had always provided the foundation for much of the work of CST, it wasn’t until Vatican II that the Church began to advocate a global vision where justice was to be sought at all levels of society, most importantly between the rich and powerful nations and those nations that were impoverished and oppressed economically and politically. The Church continues to address issues of social concern today through the work of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Their numerous works add significantly to the ever-growing tradition of Catholic Social Teaching and **continue to challenge all members of the human family to work towards real justice and true peace through the elimination of injustice in our world.**

But Catholic Social Teaching is more than just a set of documents --- it is a vision of the world that places the dignity of the human person at the forefront of all human activity and celebrates the interconnectedness of all humanity. Catholic Social Teaching recognizes that throughout the world, including in the United States, people find themselves living in diverse situations where many times injustice and oppression are the operative norms. In the face of such realities, Catholic Social Teaching offers a set of principles and values for action in a world longing for greater freedom, justice, and peace, calling us to examine the situations in which we live and work and, in dialogue with all persons, discern the options and commitments which are necessary to bring about the social, political, and economic changes which are urgently needed. Catholic Social Teaching is a call to conscience for people to understand the day to day realities that poor and marginalized people experience throughout the world. And most importantly, Catholic Social Teaching is a call to action -- calling us to look for creative solutions in the face of terrible oppression and despair, calling us not to lose sight of the world in which we want to live.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

From Conception to Natural Death

The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. The depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents. In these brief reflections, we highlight several of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

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. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

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. 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

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 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. 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 the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

Solidarity

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice."¹ The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

2005, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Washington, D.C. This summary should only be a starting point for those interested in Catholic social teaching. A full understanding can only be achieved by reading the papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents that make up this rich tradition.

Where to Find The Seven Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Life and Dignity of the Human Person: 1700 – 1702, 1929

Call to Family and Community Participation:

- Family: 2204 – 2213
- Community: 1877 – 1912
- Participation: 1913 – 1917

Rights and Responsibilities: 1930

- Rights: 2237
 - Right to life: 2270
 - Right to immigrate: 2241
 - Right to freedom: 1738
 - Right to work: 2429, 2430, 2433
- Responsibilities (of citizens): 2238 – 2240

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: 1397, 2443 – 2449

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers:

2427 – 2428, 2211, 2436, 2429 – 2435

Solidarity: 1939 – 1942

Care for God's Creation: 2415 - 2418, 339 - 373

One of the most encouraging signs of the gospel at work in our midst is the vitality of social justice ministries in our parishes. -Communities of Salt and Light, USCCB, 1993.

What is Parish “Life and Justice” Ministry?

The parish is where the church lives. Parishes are communities of faith, of action, of hope. They are where the gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth. In addition, our parish communities are measured by how they serve “the least of these” in our parish and beyond its boundaries– the hungry, the homeless, the sick, those in prison, the stranger (Matthew 25:31). Our local families of faith are called to “hunger and thirst for justice” and to be “peacemakers” in our own communities (Matthew 5:6, 9). A church cannot really proclaim the gospel if its message is not reflected in its own community life. The biblical call to charity, justice, and peace claims not only each believer, but also each community where believers gather for worship, formation, and pastoral care.

Parish Life and Justice Ministry is how our local parishes are organized to serve those in our midst and around the world in the areas of charity, justice, and peace. We cannot be truly “Catholic” unless we hear and heed the Church’s call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace. We cannot call ourselves followers of Jesus unless we take up his mission of bringing “good news to the poor, liberty to captives, and new sight to the blind” (Luke 4:18).

The framework provided by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops asks us to examine each of the following areas in our local parishes and schools with social ministry in mind:

1. Prayer and Worship
2. Preaching and Education
3. Family, Work, Citizenship
4. Outreach and Charity
5. Legislative Action
6. Organizing for Justice
7. Global Solidarity

(Much of above article content from [Communities of Salt & Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish, United States Council of Catholic Bishops.](#)

PARISH LIFE AND JUSTICE SESSIONS

Each 90 Minute Session has the following:

- 1 – Prayer at beginning and end
- 2 – A Biblical Reading and Reflection
- 3 – Excerpts from Catholic Social Teaching and Respect Life Documents
- 4 – “Communities of Salt and Light”; Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish
- 5 – Focus Questions, Conversation, and Shared Reflections: What did I learn tonight about my life or life beyond my life? How did God challenge or stretch me tonight?

Session 1: Biblical Stories of Discipleship and Service: The cost and the risk:

Annunciation / Visitation, Rich Young Man; Good Samaritan; Beatitudes; Lazarus; Matthew 25; Raising of Widow’s Son

Session 2: Christ-centered Discipleship: from Conception to Natural Death - The courage to repent (re-think) / change / grow

- Willingness to see myself in the story; Inter-personal, Transformational
- “We have the gift, the poor have the need becomes we have the need, the poor have the gift.” What is the gift of the poor, vulnerable, and voiceless that we need?

Session 3: What makes our Parish Catholic? Jesus’ Counter-Cultural Ministry Revealed in Luke: Mealing and Healing

- Sacraments and Social Justice; Mass is ended, the Service begins
- Eucharist: Body of Christ for the Body of Christ – Receiving Holy Communion to Live in Holy Communion with all – from conception to natural death.

Session 4: Two feet of Catholic Social Thought: Charity and Justice – A consistent Ethic of Life

- Charity to Justice – A journey of the heart; Symptom to dis-ease; What to Why
- Visible to Invisible; Effect to Cause; Personal to Structural, Legislative, Systemic

Session 5: The World beyond my World

- Film: “WHEN DID WE SEE YOU HUNGRY”?; Social Justice Monopoly
- Fair Trade / Just Wage choices
- Community Organizing – The Path to Life and Justice

Session 6: Youth and Young Adult Ministry as Faith Formation: Inviting young people to hear and respond to the Gospel message. Challenging the Parish Community to listen to and encourage the Faith journey of our youth.

Session 7: Guest Speaker on a Life and Justice issue. (The exact week depends on the availability of the Speaker).

Session 8: Practical Steps to Begin or Deepen Life and Justice Ministry in your Parish

“For too many parishioners, our social teaching is an unknown tradition. In too many parishes, social ministry is a task for a few, not a challenge for the entire parish community. We believe we are just beginning to realize our potential as a community of faith committed to serve those in need and to work for greater justice. The Parishes that are leaders in this area see social ministry not as a specialized ministry, but as an **integral** part of the entire Parish.” U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1993

Session Facilitator: Larry DiPaul
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Life and Justice Orientation Two Feet Formation Session

Overview:

The three hour formation session would give a brief overview of Catholic Social Teaching, providing insight into the centrality of Justice and Charity to our conscience formation, worship, and call to discipleship. The session would be offered quarterly for Diocesan staff and volunteers and would give a common foundation from which all ministries, programs, and discussions would grow, enabling staff and volunteers to better carry out the mission and vision of Jesus, reflected through the Diocese of Camden. The hope of the Offices of Justice and Catholic Charities is that all staff would be mandated to attend the formation session, and that newly hired staff would be required to attend within 6 months of hire.

Desired Outcomes:

As a result of the session, staff and volunteers would better understand:

- The relationship between Scripture, Tradition, and the Call to live and act justly.
- Catholic Social Teaching as flowing from the Story of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Gospel Mission of Jesus, and the Pentecost awakening. More than documents – a Vision of the world.
- How to incorporate and apply Catholic Social Teaching, Charity and Justice, as “constitutive dimensions of the preaching of the Gospel” into our lives, ministry, and relationships.

Curriculum

Opening Prayer	5 minutes
Welcome and Introductions	10 minutes
Exercise 1	
Who and what informs our Faith? Where does our Faith in God, revealed in the Mission of Jesus, point us and lead us?	10 minutes
Catholic Social Teaching - a reflection of God's hand and Jesus' voice in the world.	50 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Exercise 2	
Justice/ Injustice Reflection and Sharing. What part of the Story of God, or the Story of Jesus, or our Church Writings is reflected in my particular ministry?	20 minutes
Justice – right relationships with all of God's people, from conception to natural death.	15 minutes
Biblical Justice – what does the Bible / Church teach us about Justice?	25 minutes
Charity – what does the Bible / Church teach us about Charity?	15 minutes
Sending Prayer	

The Eucharist and Social Justice

By The Catholic Commission for Social Justice 04.09.2005

“The Christian community’s proclamation of Christ’s death and resurrection through the Eucharistic celebration makes a radical social and political statement. Far from being a mere act of individual piety or internalized spirituality, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper calls the participants into real community, one which becomes the Body of Christ as a model of unity in the world...Today, Christian communities are at risk of forgetting the real social demands of the Lord’s Supper... We cannot privatize Eucharist and separate it from community and concern for justice. St Augustine said: ‘We eat the body of Christ to become the body of Christ’. What does that mean today? How should we relate our celebration of the Eucharist to the quest for justice and peace?” (Michael J. Lafrate)

The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is “the source and summit of Christian life.” The Eucharist has a specifically social dimension. In his Apostolic Letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine* (2004), Pope John Paul II spoke of the Eucharist as “a project of solidarity”.

He said: “Can we not make this Year of the Eucharist an occasion for diocesan and parish communities to commit themselves in a particular way to responding with fraternal solicitude to one of the many forms of poverty present in our world?” He cautioned us that “The criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged will be our mutual love and in particular our concern for those in need”.

The Apostle Paul says that it is “unworthy” of a Christian community to partake of the Lord’s Supper amid division and indifference towards the poor (1 Cor. 11:17-22, 27-34). Our *Catechism* (1397) tells us: “To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren”.

Reflect on the number of times that we say the words “peace” “unity” and “love” during Mass. The Eucharist sustains us as the body of Christ in the world following the mission of Jesus to the poor, to captives and to the oppressed to bring good news and a time of great favour (Luke 4: 16-19).

The Eucharistic meal is shared equally by the faithful. There is no division. Yet we often leave this “meal” and divide/discriminate against our brothers and sisters according to the social categories in which we place them.

Continued racism, sexism, classism, discrimination against the disabled, the elderly, structural injustices etc. reflect either a lack of understanding of the social dimensions of the Eucharist or a lack of willingness to act on the social imperatives of the Eucharist.

The Old Testament prophets repeatedly warned Israel that worship and sacrifices were not acceptable to God unless justice had been attained (Amos 5:21; I 1:13-15; Is 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-8; Ezekiel 36:26). Therefore, in Judeo-Christian tradition, justice is required for authentic worship.

We must remember, though, that although there is a relationship between charity and justice, justice and charity are *not* the same thing.

The UK Bishops rightly state that working for justice involves a much deeper level of change—it means changing the systems, structures, institutions and public policies that are at the root cause of poverty. It means identifying and reversing the practices that cause one group of people to be alienated from another by privilege or status. We must learn to walk with the two feet of justice – works of mercy and works of social action.

Catholic social teaching provides certain principles to assist us in promoting justice e.g. the dignity of the human person, the common good and community, option for the poor, rights and responsibilities, the role of government and subsidiarity, economic justice, stewardship of God's creation, promotion of peace and disarmament, participation, global solidarity and development.

These principles will help us to build a civilization of love. However, we will only be able to act on them if we open our hearts to receive God's love through the Eucharist. In John 13:35 we read that love is "*the distinguishing mark of Christ's disciples*". The Eucharist nourishes us to build social relationships as well as our relationship with God.

Catholics make up about 28% of the population. What impact are we having in the country as a Eucharistic people? The editorial in a newspaper asked recently: "Why is it that in our country which is enjoying a booming economy there is a 21% poverty rate and an average rate of one murder every 25 hours? Why is it that even as the economy grows, the unemployment rate holds steady at 10%? Why is the unemployment rate of young males twice that of the national average? How will the Government use the country's economic wealth to create societal health?"

We should ask such questions and take action to promote justice/work for systemic change where there is poverty; a lack of affordable housing and basic amenities such as water, electricity, sanitation; unemployment; poor health care; inadequate transportation; deplorable roads; inequitable distribution of the nation's resources.

Our celebration of the Eucharist cannot be divorced from the injustices around us. "The Eucharist commits us to the poor" (*Catechism*, 1397). The US Bishops said in 2003, the Eucharist challenges us "to seek a place at the table of life for all God's children".

When writing of the virtue of solidarity in *On Social Concern* (1987), Pope John Paul II called for a religious awareness of the "neighbour" as "a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God." This is symbolized in a dramatic way in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Rev Ronald Ketteler reminds us that in each celebration of the Eucharist, the transformation of worship into "a great school of charity, justice and peace" remains an ongoing challenge to translate "the banquet of the Lord" into "the banquet of life."

The scope of the Eucharist is global and inclusive. The Eucharist challenges us to reach out to the entire human family and to all God's creation; to examine, for example, the negative aspects of globalization and its impact on people's lives.

Questions posed by Sr. Margaret Scott (USA) are pertinent:

"Is there something in the dynamic of the Eucharistic celebration that can inform globalization and make it more humane, inclusive and sustainable? Does the Eucharist offer a paradigm for sharing the earth's goods and building community? Can it provide a language that can be used

by institutions and men and women of good will to address the problem of the alleviation of poverty? Can it enable the poor to make globalization 'work for them' too?"

"...Whatever happened to the 'heart beat' of Christ in the Eucharist, pulsating with his special love for the poor and marginalized? Can our Eucharistic celebrations overflow with a passion for justice ... How do we make our Eucharistic celebrations more alive and relevant? More about real people, not reduced to a private, spiritual experience, lost in rubrics... The Eucharistic words: 'This is my body' personalize the Eucharist and make us one."

We must bridge the gap between the theology of Eucharist as "a project of solidarity for all humanity" and our sacramental practice which is often disconnected from reality. Solidarity requires us to be concerned not only about local issues in T & T but also about global issues such as war, drugs, guns, human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, crime and violence, abortion, euthanasia etc.

Why is it that in a world with such abundant resources a child dies from malnutrition every three seconds and every day 30,000 people die from extreme poverty? Why are more than 1.2 billion people living below the international poverty line – on less than US\$1 per day?

The Eucharist changes bread and wine; it changes us. It has a transformative power and the potential for personal and global transformation. The Eucharist is essentially active, enabling us to "do this", all of it, "in memory of me".

Fr. John A. Coleman SJ said in 2001: "It would be wrong to think of Eucharist and social justice as belonging to two disparate or disjointed domains. For at its very heart, the Eucharist is a proclamation of social justice.

Therefore the Eucharist must engage the genuine transformation of the world. To keep from being false or trivialized, our Eucharistic worship should embody justice at its very core. For Catholics, social justice finds its deepest roots in and is fed by a profoundly Eucharistic imagination.

"As a sacrament, the Eucharist affects what it signifies: covenant; communion with God through Christ and with one another; and Christ's real and transforming presence that transfigures us into the body of Christ, making us God's temple and children of God's Holy Spirit."

US Bishop Nevins explains the significance of the command given at the end of Mass: "Go in peace". He says: "You are sent by Christ back into the world, along with each person present at Mass, to bring peace, serenity and justice to every person and neighbourhood in need...let's consider...the meaning of the Eucharist in our lives as evangelizers, with particular emphasis on the role of social justice in our...society so that the poor and disenfranchised are not forgotten."

Christ, whom we encounter in the Eucharist, meets us daily in our communities, in our social, economic and political relationships. When we take part in the Eucharist, we learn to become promoters of communion, justice and solidarity in every situation and in our areas of responsibility – at home, in our workplaces etc.

You may know the story of a young man who asks God: "Why don't you do something about all this poverty and suffering?" And God answered: "I did something, my son. I sent you."

It brings to mind the prayer of St Teresa of Avila:

“Christ has no body now but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.”

The Eucharist provides spiritual food which empowers us in our Christian lives. Therefore, though the Eucharist calls us to ACTION, it nourishes us and strengthens us in virtue so that we can carry out the Church’s mission in the world. It assists us with the discernment process that is necessary for the work in hand. During this Year of the Eucharist, let us pray “that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ.”

The time has come for us to revitalize the celebration of the Eucharist by discovering ways to better “*put on Christ*” in our everyday life in the world and be more forceful witnesses for justice and peace. Let us use our liturgy to **DO** justice in a world in which injustice is an ever present reality.

CCSJ uses Pope Paul VI’s statement as our rallying call: “If you want peace, work for justice”. The first step in this journey is to develop awareness of the justice issues that confront you in your parishes, nationally and internationally.