

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

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PART I: JUSTICE

What Is Justice?

*Justice is right and life-giving relationship
with God, with others, with the earth and its creatures.*

To live justly means to live in right and life-giving relationship with God, with others and with the world around you.

God's justice is those principles that, when lived, establish right and life-giving relationship with God, with others and with the elements of creation.

When you read in the Bible, *Do me justice, O God, because you are just (Psalm 35:24)*, it means, "God bring me into right and life-giving relationship with You, with others and with the world around me." When the Bible says, *Make justice your aim (Isaiah 1:17)*, it means "strive to live in right and life-giving relationship with God, with others and with the elements of creation around you." When Saint Paul writes, *Jesus was handed over to death for our sins and raised up for our justification" (Romans 4:25)*, it means that Jesus died for our sins and was raised up to live for us and bring us into right and life-giving relationship with God, with each other and with the world around us.

Where Does Justice Come From?

God, the Creator of All, opens His mind and heart to humanity to let us in on the design of human life and the world in which we live. We call this "**revelation**" – God revealing the big picture and the connections behind what is and what is going on.

Receiving what God wants to share with us, incorporating it into our attitudes toward, and choices about life, and acting in accord with that information and wisdom is the foundation of our religion as Catholics.

The Bible is a record of God's revelation of the design and plan of many things – a just world included.

The Commandments: a Blueprint for a Just World

The Commandments are a gift from a loving God who takes seriously both human freedom and humanity's longing for justice – for a world where people live in right and life-giving relationship with God, with one another and with the elements of nature.

The Commandments are the revealed path to that world:

A WORLD in which...

- people strive to understand and honor the integrity
 - of each person and element in creation,
- people stop and think about what they say and do and then
 - ask themselves what they would do differently,
- people are more grateful than they are demanding,
- people pay heart-felt attention to their families of origin
 - and are motivated to forgive, to heal, and to grow,
- violence is abhorred not glamorized or fantasized as entertainment,
- people look at your spouse, find them attractive, value your relationship

and think about how they might honor it,
people take more delight in what they have than dwell on what they don't,
greed does not go unbridled.

A WORLD where there is...

no multi-generation poverty, no disenfranchised class,
no alienated segment of society, no permanent "losers",
no root of bitterness across generations.

A WORLD in which the goal of the social order is redemptive:

the re-enfranchisement, inclusion, and integration of all in a life-giving whole.

If someone has no desire for this kind of world for anyone except him- or herself, then the Commandments make no sense and become only constrictive rules of "do" and "don't".

A. The Ten Commandments

Justice requires personal integrity. The kind of world described above will never come to be without personal integrity, a specific kind of personal integrity. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) are the principles of this integrity.

I, the LORD, am your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides Me.

A whole and free human being: 1) acknowledges the existence of a Power and a Wisdom greater than their own, 2) walks in this world not as a "god unto himself," but as a creature made in the "image and likeness" of God, 3) seeks to know and live the principles of constructive relationship with God and all things.

You shall not take the NAME of the LORD, your God, in vain.

God is not a power to be manipulated or a force to be controlled but a Person with Whom to interact. The name of GOD is a gift given in friendship. Using the Name of God makes us aware of God's Presence, and that we are connected to life in a personal, not an impersonal way.

The Name of God must not be used as a weapon for abuse.

Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, your God. No work may be done...

Stopping our activity, being silent, reflecting upon our actions, listening and being grateful are absolutely essential to remaining human and to preserving a humane world.

Honor your father and mother.

You must pay attention to the personal origin of your life, not deny it or live in resentment of it. You owe your parents understanding of their wounds and weaknesses, resolve to heal and rectify them in yourself, gratitude for the blessings they were able to bring to you, and a resolve to build upon all that was good and noble in them.

You shall not kill.

Once conceived, human life is inviolable. Taking the life of another human being, under any circumstances, inflicts a deep trauma upon the human person and tears the fabric of humanity. Even if done in self defense, it requires personal remorse

and spiritual healing.

You shall not commit adultery.

The sexual bond of husband and wife is sacred. It is the dynamic in which life is conceived, a school for intimate relationship, a supportive context for personal growth, the foundation of the family, and the most elemental cell of human community. To violate it is to violate all of these.

You shall not steal.

Trust is the foundation upon which human community is built. Your personal honesty is connected to the peace and security of others.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Honesty is the foundation of Justice and Freedom. The truth of your word is connected to your freedom, the freedom of others, and justice for all.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Even in your thoughts, the bond of each person with their husband or wife must be held sacred and inviolable.

You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Envy will distort your gifts, erode your talents, destroy your creativity, consume your mind and burn down the world.

The Ten Commandments establish personal integrity in the man or woman who embrace them with a whole heart. Such men and women are essential to a just social order.

B. The Social Commandments

Justice also requires social integrity. Building on a foundation of personal integrity (the Ten Commandments), God also reveals principles of social integrity. In setting forth social commandments, God reveals moral principles of critical concern for a healthy human community. The social commandments call for a specific character to the social order.

If one of your kinsmen in any community is in need in the land...you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand to him in his need. Instead, you shall open your hand to him and freely lend him enough to meet his need...

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

You shall not go about spreading slander among your kinsmen; nor shall you stand by idly when your neighbor's life is at stake.

Leviticus 19:16

A proactive concern for others must be fostered in society's ethics and in the social order. Indifference to the plight of others is a moral evil. The life of the unborn and the vulnerable must be protected from violation.

You shall not defraud a poor and needy hired servant, whether he be one of your own countrymen or one of the aliens who live in your communities. You shall pay him each day's wages before sundown on the day itself, since he is poor and looks forward to them.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

No one shall take a hand mill or even its upper stone as a pledge for debt, for he would be taking the debtor's sustenance as a pledge.

Deuteronomy 24:6

If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset; for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body.

Exodus 22:25-26

Provision must be made in the social order to protect the vulnerability of those who have fallen on hard times. You may never remove a person's means of supporting themselves. Opportunity to recover must be extended.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not be so thorough that you reap the field to its very edge, nor shall you glean the stray ears of grain. Likewise, you shall not pick your vineyard bare, nor gather up the grapes that have fallen. These things you shall leave for the poor and the alien.

Leviticus 19:9-10

Provision must be made in the social order to lift out of destitution those who have fallen into it, for whatever reason.

You shall not act dishonestly in rendering judgment. Show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty, but judge your fellow men justly.

Leviticus 19:15

Rigorous honesty and uncompromised fairness is essential in the social order.

When your countryman becomes so impoverished beside you that he sells you his services, do not make him work as a slave. Rather, let him be like a hired servant or like your tenant, working with you... Do not lord it over them harshly, but stand in fear of your God.

Leviticus 25:39-43

You shall not curse the deaf, or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but you shall fear your God.

Leviticus 19:13-14

Stand up in the presence of the aged, and show respect for the old; thus shall you fear your God.

Leviticus 19:32

Social structures and procedure must respect the basic human dignity of all, especially the weak and impaired.

When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you...

Leviticus 19:33

There is to be no outcast or second class group, no distinction between the treatment of the native and the foreigner.

At the end of every seven-year period you shall have a relaxation of debts, which shall be observed as follows. Every creditor shall relax his claim on what he has loaned his neighbor; he must not press his neighbor, his kinsman...

Deuteronomy 15:1-2

Provision must be made for individuals to reorganize and manage debt with a view to regaining their financial stability and being able to meet their responsibilities.

Seven weeks of years shall you count – seven times seven years – so that the seven cycles amount to forty-nine years... This fiftieth year you shall make sacred by proclaiming liberty in the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you... The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine, and you are but aliens who have become my tenants. When one of your countrymen is reduced to poverty and has to sell some of his property...what he has sold shall remain in the possession of the purchaser until the Jubilee, when it must be released and returned to its original owner.

Leviticus 25:23-28

The opportunities of the next generation must not be foreclosed upon by the negligence or poor choices of the generation before them.

Neither shall you allege the example of the many as an excuse for doing wrong, nor shall you, when testifying in a lawsuit, side with the many in perverting justice.

Exodus 23:2

“Everyone does it” is morally unacceptable as an excuse.

The Social Commandments institute Social Integrity. Where these Commandments are put into practice, there is: no disenfranchised class, no alienated segment of society, no permanent "losers", no root of bitterness across generations. The character of human society becomes redemptive: the re-enfranchisement, inclusion, and integration of all in a life-giving whole. The human world of *God's design* is free of multigenerational poverty and abject destitution. The social world to which the Commandments lead is a world where all have opportunity and all are responsible for the ways in which they use opportunity.

Jesus: "The Lord our Justice"

Jeremiah 23:6

*In the beginning was the Word,
the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God...
Through Him all things came into being, and apart from Him nothing came to be...
The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. John 1:1,3,14*

Jesus is the Word of God become flesh. As the divine Word, Jesus is the author of the principles of Personal Integrity (the Ten Commandments) and the principles of Social Integrity (the Social Commandments) we find in the Old Testament.

Jesus "fills full" the Commandments that call for Personal and Social Integrity:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come, not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. You heard the commandment... 'You shall not commit murder.' What I say to you is: everyone who grows angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment. You heard the commandment... 'You shall not commit adultery.' What I say to you is: anyone who looks lustfully at a person has already committed adultery with them in their thoughts. Matthew 5:17ff

Through Jesus, with him and in him we find the ability to live the Commandments and bring into reality the just world to which they lead:

The law is holy and the commandment is holy and just and good... (But) I am weak flesh sold into the slavery of sin... Even though I want to do what is right, a law that leads to wrong doing is always ready at hand. My inner self agrees with the Law of God, but I see in my body's members another law at war with the Law of God in my mind... What a wretched man I am! Who can free me from this body under the power of death? Romans 7:12,14,21-24

God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering thereby condemning sin in the flesh, so that the just demands of the Law might be fulfilled in us who live...according to the spirit. Romans 8:3-4

We are brought into right-relationship with God by Christ. Living in a personal relationship with Christ, we are able to live the Commandments in their fullness and enter into a life-giving relationship with our fellow human beings and the world around us.

To those who are called... Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1:24

The Principle of Redemptive Re-Integration

There is a parable that Jesus told that sums up everything in the Ten Commandments and the Social Commandments. The parable identifies the core principle that makes a society truly *human*. The parable also expresses perfectly everything Jesus' life, as God and man, is about:

What is your thought on this: A man owns a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away; will he not leave the ninety-nine out on the hills and go in search of the stray. If he succeeds in finding it, believe me he is happier about this one than about the ninety-nine that did not wander away. Just so, it is no part of your heavenly Father's plan that A single one of these little ones should come to grief. Matthew 18:12-14

From this parable comes the great integrating principle that is at the heart of God's Justice:

**Those who have fallen or been pushed to the margins
of spiritual, religious, political, social or economic life must be reached out to.
They must be extended an invitation to come back
into the vital center of human community.
Provision must be made to heal them and equip them,
and a way must be made to facilitate their re-integration
into the spiritual, religious, political, social or economic life of the community.**

Those who seek justice ask: In the way our society is organized, is this possible? Do our laws work effectively to this end? Do our religious institutions foster this? Does our system of education facilitate this? Do our social mores encourage and champion this? Is this the principle operating in our families? It is the work of Christian believers to see that it is, because it is Jesus who asks us:

*Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not put into practice what I teach you?
Luke 6:46*

How Justice Is Born

Justice requires a conversion of the heart. For there to be Justice in the world something fundamental has to change inside of us.

First, we must renounce the pursuit of doing whatever we want, whenever we want, however we want. We must renounce doing whatever we please just because we have the power to do it. We must acknowledge that being a law unto ourselves has led to chaos, violence and bloodshed:

*We are brought low...because we sinned against the Lord,
our God, not heeding His voice. Baruch 2:5*

Second, we must acknowledge that what God has shown us to be right is, in fact, true and life-giving:

*You are just, O Lord, and your ordinance is right.
You have pronounced your decrees...in perfect faithfulness. Psalm 119:137-138*

Third, we must circumcise our freedom with a clear decision of the will. We must decide that we will not do what we please but what God has told is right and life-giving. At times we may have to choose to do this against strong feelings to do as we please. We must decide to let our will, not our feelings be the rudder that guides the use of our freedom, our choices and the direction of our life. Moses said to the Hebrews who were seeking a promised land of freedom and justice for all:

Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and be no longer stiff-necked.

Deuteronomy 10:16; see also 30:6

Moses...wrote down all the words of the Lord... He read it aloud to the people who answered: "All that the Lord has said, we will heed and do!" Exodus 24:4-8

Justice is born in the heart of a man or woman when they can say with true sincerity:

All that the Lord has said, I will heed, and strive with all my strength to do!

PART II CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

What Is It?

Over time the Church has sought to address the social and economic realities of the world with the principles God set forth in the Commandments and the teaching of Jesus. As the Church does this, Catholic social teaching finds expression and takes shape.

Its Foundation and Authority

As set out in Part I, the Biblical foundation of Catholic social teaching is the Ten Commandments and the Social Commandments found in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). In his teaching and example, Jesus expresses these commandments in their fullness. The Catholic Faith holds that these commandments are divinely revealed principles of personal and social integrity which form the blueprint for a just world. The Church's mission is to teach these principles and how they apply to the realities of life:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations...

Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. Matthew 28:19-20

The Catholic Faith also holds that these principles cannot be lived, and the wounded, often violent, self absorption of our human nature cannot be overcome without divine assistance. Jesus lives for all men and women as Savior and Redeemer. A living, personal relationship with Jesus is crucial if a man or woman is to live justly.

We preach...Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1:24

The History of Catholic Social Teaching in its Modern Expression

In modern times Catholic social teaching found fresh and systematic expression beginning with ***Rerum Novarum***, the encyclical (teaching) letter of Pope Leo XIII – 1891. This encyclical

focuses on the dignity of the worker and the purpose and dignity of work. Pope Leo affirmed these fundamental rights:

- the right to private property,
- the right to establish professional associations of employers and workers,
or of workers alone,
- the right to the limitation of working hours,
- the right to legitimate rest and the right of children and women to be treated differently
with regard to the type and duration of work,
- the right to a “just wage.” This is something that cannot simply be left to
the “free consent of the parties, so that the employer, having paid what was agreed
upon, has done his part and seemingly is not called upon to do anything beyond,”
- the right to discharge freely one’s religious duties.

Pope Leo set forth the principle that “when there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the defenseless and the poor have a claim to special consideration.” He asserted that the State has the duty of watching over the common good and of ensuring that every sector of social life, not excluding the economic one, contributes to achieving that good, while respecting the rightful autonomy of each sector.

Catholic social teaching continued to develop and mature in its expression, but has always remained based on the unchanging principles God set forth in the Commandments. Following *Rerum Novarum*, other landmark expressions of the Church’s social teaching are:

***Quadragesimo Anno*, (On the Reconstruction of the Social Order)**

by Pope Pius XI – 1931

***Mater et Magistra*, (On Social Progress)**

by Pope John XXIII - 1961

***Pacem in Terris*, (Peace on Earth)**

by Pope John XXIII - 1963

***Gaudium et Spes*, (The Church in the Modern World)**

Vatican Council II – 1965

***Lumen Gentium*, (The Church)**

Vatican Council II - 1965

***Populorum Progressio*, (On the Development of Peoples)**

by Pope Paul VI - 1967

***Humanae Vitae*, (On Human Life)**

by Pope Paul VI - 1968

***Justice in the World*,**

World Synod of Bishops - 1971

***Laborem Exercens*, (On Human Work)**

by Pope John Paul II – 1981

***Familiaris Consortio*, (The Role of the Family in the Modern World),**

by Pope John Paul II – 1981

***Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, (On Social Concern)**

by Pope John Paul II - 1987

***Centesimus Annus*, (On the Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*)**

by Pope John Paul II – 1991

***Veritatis Splendor*, (On Fundamental Moral Questions)**

by Pope John Paul II – 1993

Tertio Millennio Adveniente, (At the Advent of the Third Millennium)
by Pope John Paul II – 1994

**Some Basic Principles of Catholic
 Social Teaching**

CCC - *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CA - *Centesimus Annus*, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II

EJA - *Economic Justice for All* by The Bishops of the United States

**The Transcendent Dignity of the Human Person,
 the Right to Life, and the Right to a Life of Full Potential:**

There exists something which is due to the person because he is a person, by reason of his lofty dignity. Inseparable from that required “something” is the possibility to survive and, at the same time, to make an active contribution to the common good of humanity. CA 34

The human person, as the visible image of the invisible God, is by his very nature the subject of rights which no one may violate -- no individual, group, class, nation or State. Not even the majority of a social body may violate these rights, by going against the minority, by isolating, oppressing, or exploiting it, or by attempting to annihilate it. CA 44 These rights include:

the right to life, an integral part of which is the right of the child to develop in the mother’s womb from the first moment of conception;

the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child’s personality;

the right to develop one’s intelligence and freedom in seeking and knowing the truth;

the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth’s material resources, and to derive from that work the means to support oneself and one’s dependents;

the right freely to establish a family, to have and to rear children through the responsible exercise of one’s sexuality...

the right to live in the truth of one’s faith and in conformity with one’s transcendent dignity as a person. CA 47

It is a strict duty of justice and truth not to allow fundamental human needs to remain unsatisfied, and not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish... CA 34

The Family:

The first and fundamental structure for “human ecology” is the family, in which someone receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person. Here we mean the family founded on marriage, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny. CA 39

It is urgent therefore to promote not only family policies, but also those social policies which have the family as their principal object, policies which assist the family by providing adequate resources and efficient means of support, both for bringing up children and for looking after the elderly... CA 49

Human Work...

...proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another... CCC 2427 Work is a duty... CCC 2427 In work, the person exercises and fulfills in part the potential inscribed in his nature. CCC 2428

Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family, and of serving the human community. CCC 2428

The fact is that many people...do not have the means which would enable them to take their place in an effective and humanly dignified way within a productive system in which work is truly central. They have no possibility of acquiring the basic knowledge which would enable them to express their creativity and potential. They have no way of entering the network of knowledge and intercommunication which would enable them to see their qualities appreciated and utilized. CA 33

Access to employment and to professions must be open to all without unjust discrimination: men and women, healthy and disabled, natives and immigrants. Society should help citizens find work and employment. CCC 2433

A Just Wage is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice. In determining fair pay, both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken into account... Agreement between parties is not sufficient to justify morally the amount to be received in wages. CCC 2434

The Preferential Option for the Poor:

Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church... CCC 2448

The duty of charity...is the duty to give from one's "abundance" and sometimes even out of one's needs, in order to provide what is essential for the life of a poor person... CA 36

It (is) necessary above all to abandon a mentality in which the poor – as individuals and as peoples – are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced. The poor ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity for work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all. CA 28

Some Principles of Economic Justice in Catholic Social Teaching

Some Definitions:

Justice is Right and Life-giving Relationship with God, with others, with the earth and its creatures.

Social (or Contributive) Justice implies that persons have an obligation to be active and productive participants in the life of society and that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way. EJA 71

Commutative Justice regulates exchanges between persons in accordance with a strict Respect for their rights. *Commutative Justice* obliges strictly; it requires safeguarding property rights, paying debts, and fulfilling obligations freely contracted. *Commutative Justice* calls for fundamental fairness in all agreements and exchanges between individuals or private social groups. CCC 2411

Distributive Justice regulates what the community owes its citizens in proportion to their contributions and needs. CCC 2411

Legal Justice concerns what the citizen owes in fairness to the community. CCC 2411

The Universal Destination of Goods: Goods:

The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race. CCC 2402

The Right to Private Property:

The appropriation of property is legitimate for guaranteeing the freedom and dignity of persons and for helping each of them meet his basic needs and the needs of those in his charge.... CCC 2403

The right to private property does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind. The *Universal Destination of Goods* remains primordial... CCC 2403

In his use of things man should regard the external goods he legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to himself but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as himself. CCC 2404

Man's "dominion" over all creation...over inanimate and other living beings...is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. CCC 2414

Economic Initiative and Business Enterprise:

Everyone has the right of economic initiative; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all and to harvest the just fruits of his labor. CCC 2429

The purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a community of persons who in various ways are endeavoring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society. CA 35

Profits are necessary, however. They make possible the investments that ensure the future of a business and they guarantee employment. CCC 2432

Those responsible for business enterprises are responsible for the economic and ecological effects of their operation. They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of profits... CCC 2432

Social and Economic Systems:

Any system in which social relationships are determined entirely by economic factors is contrary to the nature of the human person and his acts. CCC 2423

A theory that makes profit the exclusive norm and ultimate end of economic activity is morally unacceptable. CCC 2424

A system that "subordinates the basic rights of individuals and of groups to the collective organization of production" is contrary to human dignity. Every practice that reduces persons to nothing more than a means of profit enslaves man. CCC 2424

The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with "communism" or "socialism." She has likewise refused to accept, in the practice of "capitalism," individualism and the absolute primacy of the law of the marketplace over human labor. CCC 2425

The Role of the State:

Reasonable regulation of the marketplace and economic initiatives, in keeping with a just hierarchy of values and a view to the common good, is to be commended. CCC 2425

The State has the duty of watching over the common good and of ensuring that every sector of social life, not excluding the economic one, contributes to achieving that good, while respecting the rightful autonomy of each sector. CA 11

The Principle of Subsidiarity governs the extent of State involvement in economic activity as well as other social activity.

The Principle of Subsidiarity:

A community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need, and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good. CA 48, CCC 1883

International Economic and Financial Institutions:

It is necessary to reform international economic and financial institutions...so that they will better promote equitable relationships with less fortunate countries. The efforts of poor countries working for growth and liberation must be supported. CCC 2440

Development:

Rich nations have a grave responsibility toward those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves or have been prevented from doing so by tragic...events. CCC 2439

Development must not be understood solely in economic terms, but in a way that is fully human. It is not only a question of raising all peoples to the level currently enjoyed by the richest countries, but rather of building up a more decent life through united labor, of concretely enhancing every individual's dignity and creativity, as well as his capacity to respond to his personal vocation, and thus to God's call. CA 29

Investment:

The decision to invest, that is, to offer people an opportunity to make good use of their own labor, (should be) determined by an attitude of human sympathy and trust in Providence, which reveal(s) the human quality of the person making such decisions... The decision to invest in one place rather than another, in one productive sector rather than another, is always a moral choice... CA 3

A "Better Life":

It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards "having" rather than "being," and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in the enjoyment as an end in itself. It is therefore necessary to create lifestyles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investment. CA 36

Economic Freedom is Only One Element of Human Freedom:

All of this can be summed up by repeating once more that economic freedom is only one element of human freedom. When it becomes autonomous, when man is seen more as a producer or consumer of goods than as a subject who produces and consumes in order to live, then economic freedom loses its necessary relationship to the human person and ends up by alienating and oppressing him. CA 39

PART III: UNDERSTANDING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The Dignity of the Human Person:

At the core of Catholic social teaching is a unique and remarkable understanding of what a human person is. Catholic Faith sees the human person as more than either the sum of the circumstances and experiences he encounters in his lifetime, or the sum of his physical and emotional needs. Catholic Faith holds that something beyond physical existence, human experience or human accomplishment gives ultimate meaning and dignity to the life of a human being.

The meaning and dignity of a human life *begins* with what God reveals He has made each human person to be: an image of God.

Let us make man in our own image, after our own likeness... God created man in His image; in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them.
Genesis 1:26-27

The meaning and dignity of a human life *is made complete* with what God reveals human destiny to be: life in God, unending.

Everyone who looks upon the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life..
John 6:40

Well done, you are an industrious and reliable servant. Since you were reliable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Matthew 25:14-30

Who a human person is created to be for God and what his destiny is with God gives meaning and purpose to a person's earthly existence.

The Unique Dignity of Each Human Person:

Each human being is of unique value. Every human life is of ultimate importance. Catholic Faith believes that God desires to touch and give life to a part of the world through each human being, for in each human being God is able to touch and love a part of the world in a way that He can in no other. Each human being is created unique not only by God, but for God to be God-in-them. Jesus expresses this in his prayer to his heavenly Father:

I gave them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are one – I living in them, you living in me – that their unity may be complete. John 17:22-23

Saint Paul writes of the mission of the Church:

I became a minister of this church through the commission God gave me to preach among you His word in its fullness, that mystery hidden from ages and generations past but now revealed to His holy ones...the mystery of Christ in you, your hope of glory. This is the Christ we proclaim while we admonish all men and teach them in the full measure of wisdom, hoping to make every man complete in Christ. Colossians 1:25-28

The Purpose of a Human Life in the World:

The quality of a person's earthly existence is a vital concern in Catholic social teaching.

A person's earthly existence is directly connected to their created dignity and their ultimate destiny. In the view of Catholic Faith, a human person is created mortal (given an earthly existence) in order to mature his soul (which is made in the *image* of God) into the *likeness*

of God. A person does this by interacting and working with the substances and creatures of the earth (human labor), and by interacting and cooperating with his fellow human beings to common ends for the common good (human enterprise). Through both human labor and human enterprise a person becomes skilled in providing sustenance for himself, nurturing and healing others, and improving the human condition for all. And so the human soul unfolds and moves toward maturity.

The Role of Freedom:

Catholic social teaching sees freedom as essential to the dignity and destiny of each human being. The soul of a human person is given shape and character by the use of her freedom. A person is created by God in the *image of God*. A person conforms herself to this *image* by the choices she makes. These choices shape the character of her soul into a *likeness to God*. This happens when a person uses freedom not to do anything she pleases but to choose to do what God has shown her is good and to resist what God has shown her is evil.

The Necessity of Human Work:

Handling and shaping the things of the earth (work) is essential to the maturity of the human soul. “A human being expresses and fulfills himself by working” (CA 6) – he stamps something of himself onto the material he crafts or the service he renders. In turn, these things stamp something of their own on him. In the process a person comes to see and understand more about himself, more about the elements of the earth, and more about the vital connection between himself and the world. In the context of work the human soul learns to honor the integrity of the things of creation and handle them with consideration.

The Value of Human Enterprise:

The opportunity to join cooperatively with other persons to the end of achieving a common good (enterprise) is also essential for the maturity of the human soul. Important virtues are schooled in the human soul through this process, “such as diligence, industriousness, prudence in undertaking reasonable risks, reliability and fidelity in personal relationships, as well as courage in carrying out decisions which are difficult and painful but necessary.” (CA 32). In the context of human enterprise the human soul learns to honor the integrity of other persons, and to curb its freedom in order to engage others and work constructively with them.

The Goal of Earthly Existence: Transcendence of Self

Catholic Faith sees the process of a person maturing through life in this world as having an ultimate goal: transcendence of self. This happens when a person freely chooses to renounce self-interest and personal acquisition in order to give herself and what is her own as a gift for the life of others. This is what God does as Creator. It is what we see God doing in Christ. This is what Catholic Faith understands “love” to be:

Your attitude must be that of Christ. Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross! Because of this, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name. So that at Jesus' name every knee must bend in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father: Jesus Christ is Lord!

Philippians 2:5-6

This attitude of self-emptying, and the actions that flow from it *transcend* self. We do not lose our self, we become infinitely more than our self. We do not end up being nothing, we end up being infinitely more than we could imagine ourselves becoming. Jesus speaks of this when he says:

He who seeks only himself brings himself to ruin, whereas he who brings himself to naught for me discovers who he is. *Matthew 10:39*

This freely chosen emptying of self and gift of self for the life of others is called *Kenosis*. In achieving it we enter fully into the *likeness of God* for which we were created. Catholic social teaching sees the goal of human society as providing each person the means and the invitation to reach the point of being able to freely transcend self – becoming a soul for others.

What Catholic Social Teaching Seeks for Each Person:

Catholic social teaching seeks for each human being the ability to fulfill their transcendent purpose for being in this world. Catholic social teaching calls for each human being to be given:

- The right to **LIVE** once they have been conceived.
- The ability to **ACQUIRE** what is necessary to survive and develop physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.
- The **FREEDOM** to choose his direction, vocation, cooperation, and charity, and to be able to choose between good and evil.
- The opportunity to **LAY HOLD** of the things of the earth, developing them and enhancing their ability to benefit herself and those for whom she is responsible.
- The opportunity to **COLLABORATE** freely with others on a multitude of levels – from the family, through other associations of many different kinds, to the national enterprise.
- The ability to **REALIZE THE PRODUCE** of his labors, to see and enjoy its goodness, and to possess it as his own.
- The dignity of freely choosing to **SURRENDER POSSESSION** of what she has and what she is and to give it as a gift for the enrichment of others and humanity.

The Organization of Human Society Must Have a Redemptive Character:

Those who have fallen or been pushed to the margins of spiritual, religious, political, social or economic life must be reached out to. They must be extended an invitation to come back into the vital center of human community. Provision must be made to heal them and equip them, and a way must be made to facilitate their re-integration into the spiritual, religious, political, social or economic life of the community. In Catholic social teaching, this principle must guide all social policy and permeate all social structures.

An Undivided Conscience and a Clear Witness about Human Life:

The right to live is an inalienable human right. It belongs to a human being because they are a *human* being. If you deny this right to them, you not only deny their humanity, you extinguish your own. If a society denies it to them, the human character of that society dissolves. Abortion is an act of brutal violence. Its memory lodges itself in the core of human awareness – both individual and collective – creating an accommodation to violence that will continue to manifest itself.

The right to live is the first human right – the fundamental human right. It cannot be alienated from the other human rights. It is connected in an organic way to all of them. If you deny this right to some, you can deny it, or any other human right, to anyone. If you rationalize the denial

of this right to some, you can rationalize the denial of it, or any other human right, to anyone. Then they are no longer “rights” but “privileges” granted by those who hold power.

The question has been asked: Is it acceptable for a Catholic believer to divide their moral conscience concerning life by accepting abortion in order to achieve other elements of social good? Catholic faith answers clearly: No! It is never acceptable. The right of a human being to live cannot be alienated from the other human rights without doing irreparable damage to the human person and a human social order. The question has also been asked: In order to secure the right of all to live can you agree to be silent about and indifferent to the pursuit of the right to a fully human life for all? Catholic faith answers equally clearly: No, you can't! Jesus said: *“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”* (John 10:10) *“Life to the full,”* flows from the right to live and is the fulfillment of the right to live. Not to pursue *“life to the full”* for all is to betray the right to live.

If there is to Be Justice, the Jesus Part is Essential:

In pursuing the Justice God calls for, Catholic Faith keeps one fundamental truth clearly in view. The seeds of injustice lie in the human heart before they find expression in the structures of human society. Jesus said:

What emerges from within a man or woman, that and nothing else is what makes him impure. Wicked designs come from the deep recesses of the heart acts of fornication, theft, murder, adulterous conduct, greed, maliciousness, deceit, sensuality, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, an obtuse spirit. All these evils come from within and render a man or woman impure.
Mark 7:20-23

Advocacy for just structures in society and works of mercy, as good and just and helpful as they are, cannot change the human heart. They cannot rid the hearts of those who suffer injustice of their bitterness at their lot, their anger toward those who victimize them, and the urge to victimize others in turn. Nor can they displace from the hearts of those who do injustice and victimize others, the greed, arrogance, and obtuse spirit of moral indifference that prompts them to act unjustly. Even in those who do the works of mercy and work for justice, the works themselves, as good and just and helpful as they are, cannot shield them from the resentment and anger that easily grows in their hearts toward those who aren't doing the good, just and helpful things they are. It is often this resentment and anger that collects in the hearts of the “advocates of justice” and the “doers of the good,” that ends up seeding new hostilities that grow into new evils of violence and injustice. Of themselves, the works of justice and mercy cannot even sustain the consistency with which they are done. People begin doing them when they feel good and just and helpful, and have the time; and they stop doing them when they don't. Or they do them for those toward whom they feel disposed to be good and just and helpful, but not for those toward whom they don't feel so disposed. The fruit of mercy shown and justice done must spring from the root of a heart healed and made sound if it is not, with the passage of time, to sour into bitterness and resentment, and give way to envy, greed, and violence. At the heart of Catholic wisdom there is a constant awareness of this reality.

If right order (righteousness) is not restored in the human heart, a person will find a way to corrupt even the most just of social structures and manipulate acts of mercy to unjust ends. Catholic faith seeks to strip away our blindness to this truth and affords us the power to address it in our own hearts and in the hearts of others. This is why, for Catholics, Justice is not fundamentally a social issue, but a religious issue. For a Catholic, the first act for Justice is to address the human heart – our own, and to recognize there the seeds of injustice that lie at work in the human heart of every man and woman. The first work of mercy is to enter into a living

relationship with Jesus, a relationship in which the human heart finds healing and is restored to an integral wholeness (i.e., “holiness”).

Why We Work for Justice:

Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully. 1 Peter 3:15-16

We work for justice and do the works of mercy to give glory to God! The doing of these sets the people and the elements of the world in right and life-giving relationship with one another. This gives glory to God. It proclaims that God is right about us and about our world.

We work for justice and do the works of mercy so that in doing them we may explicitly announce the presence and power of God in Christ! It is Jesus who heals the minds and hearts, as well as the broken bodies and lives of the advocates of justice, the perpetrators of injustice and the victims of injustice. We want our advocacy of justice and our works of mercy to announce His presence and His power to heal. We want our involvement in this advocacy and these works to prompt people to ask us why we do them.

At the heart of Catholic Social Justice is a readiness to give an answer that explicitly mentions Jesus -- an answer that witnesses to the healing, right order and peace that Jesus has brought to our personal lives, as well as the clarity and balance that He has brought to our way of viewing and engaging the world; an answer that makes it clear that Jesus is present and stands ready to bring healing and restore purpose and hope to them as well. Otherwise doing the works of mercy becomes a way to make ourselves feel good, righteous and helpful, and not a way to help our fellow human beings – the victims and perpetrators alike – attain healing, become whole, and engage life fully.

The advocacy of Justice and the doing the works of mercy are a seamless part of a religious message – a message of salvation that addresses what is wrong in the human heart which creates such injustice in the human world. The religious character of this message is something for which we never make apologies.

The Catholic Way of Advocating for Justice:

First, we address the reality in our own hearts, acknowledge the sins that are lodged there, and turn to Jesus in a living relationship to find healing. Then we “do” the advocacy for justice and the works of mercy, and the “doing of them” gives witnesses to the reality of the presence of a Divine power at work, through flawed and weak men and women like ourselves, for healing and good. Finally, *when God prompts a person to ask why we “do what we do,”* we are ready with more than a humanitarian answer – we are ready with an answer that explicitly witnesses to Jesus. A Catholic ministry of Social Justice consists of:

- 1) awakening our consciences as members of the Body of Christ to what is just.
- 2) searching the deep recesses of our own hearts for the roots of injustice that lie within us.
- 3) calling on the name and power of Jesus to heal and the restore right order within us.
- 4) setting ourselves into action doing what is just and advocating for what works for justice,
- 5) training one another in how to give witness to the presence and power of God in Jesus

to those who ask or who otherwise are crying out to know our source of healing and reason for hope.

As Catholics we have begun and continue to grow significantly in awakening our consciences by teaching and preaching the Justice called for by the Word of God and taught by the Church. The Church and Christians throughout history have long been active, in an amazing multitude of ways, in doing the works of mercy. But we remain tentative and often incapable of articulating a spoken witness to Jesus, and this significantly weakens the effectiveness of our Social Justice efforts. Without the readiness of our testimony, an essential element to the healing of humankind remains hidden and effectively absent: Jesus, the One who cures the disease at its source as well as treats the symptoms. A person advocating for Justice and doing the works of mercy who can effectively articulate her or his witness to Christ will long be doing them, will be doing them with an absence of bitterness or rancor toward anyone or anything, and will be doing them with ever increasing fruitfulness. In this way, the peace of the Kingdom will unfold in a fallen world to the praise of God and for the hope of all.

An Invitation

Are you willing to take a step beyond these reflections? Place yourself before Christ in your heart. Examine your conscience. How much have you been willing to open your mind to what God has to say about justice? In your personal and professional life, how faithful have you been to God's wisdom about right-relationship with your fellow human beings and with your world? Tell Jesus that you want to form your life in God's truth about these things, and that you want to help others do the same. Ask him to give you the gift of the Holy Spirit to help you.

*You have been told, O man, what is good.
And what the Lord requires of you:
Only to do the right and to love goodness,
and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8*

**WHAT DOES FAITH
HAVE TO DO WITH JUSTICE?
(A Reflection)**

Without faith you see yourself standing alone
before the hard realities of the human world.

With FAITH you see yourself standing next to Jesus
and the power of God is all around you.

Without faith you have to solve the problem yourself.

With FAITH you simply have to do something
that moves in the right direction.

Without faith you see your words and action move
as far as your wisdom and energy will take them.

With FAITH you see God multiplying your efforts
for the Good -- thirty-, sixty- and a hundred fold.

Without faith you see only your own efforts
and grow resentful of those who fail to do what you do.

With FAITH you see your actions moved by the Hand
of God and woven with the actions of others into the
fabric of Justice.

Without faith you grow to hate injustice, but it does not
stop there! You grow to hate a multitude of things more.

With FAITH you grow to love the life of all things.

Without faith Justice cannot be attained.

With FAITH it is a reality ready to break forth in any moment.

*To those who are called, Jews and Gentiles alike,
Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.
1 Corinthians 1:24*

