

PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING/DOCTRINE

The Church believes that all decisions which affect society have a moral dimension. So, when making decisions which affect social, economic, political, cultural, and family life, the following principles are to be promoted, embraced and protected:

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE: PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN DIGNITY

[Comes into play in every decision. We explored this principle in November of 2007. Materials related to it can be viewed on our www.ssjohnandpaul.org website under "Grace Archives".]

Every human person is made in the image and likeness of God and is endowed with a dignity that is intrinsic, inalienable, and inviolable.

CORE PRINCIPLE: THE PRINCIPLE OF THE COMMON GOOD

[Comes into play in every decision but the foundational principle of human dignity is not to be violated.]

Decisions in any one area must honor the sum total of the social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.

FURTHER PRINCIPLES:

[help us protect the principle of human dignity and give concrete expression to the principle of the common good]

- ◆ **Universal destination of all the goods of the earth** which needs to honor a **preferential option for the poor**: all resources are to be owned/used responsibly, exercising a preferential option for those most in need and on the margin
- ◆ **Subsidiarity** which needs to respect the importance of **Participation**: Decisions are to be made at the lowest level of authority possible so that people are able to participate in decisions that affect their own life. Higher levels of authority may intervene only when such intervention is necessary to protect human dignity and the true common good.
- ◆ **SOLIDARITY: In all decisions we are to work at achieving solidarity with those we most vigorously disagree with, so that such differences do not lead to violence or insurmountable antagonism.**

1) As a principle of social morality, Solidarity keeps together:

- ◆ **The intrinsic social nature of the human person**
- ◆ **The equality of all in dignity and rights**
- ◆ **The common paths all must walk to achieve ever more committed unity**

2) But Solidarity is also a moral virtue. As a moral virtue, Solidarity:

- ◆ **Is a commitment to the good of one's neighbor for their own sake**
- ◆ **Needs to be practiced repeatedly in order to become a virtue**
- ◆ **Is capable of transforming "structures of sin" into "structures of solidarity"**

[NB: Principles are taken from the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, Vatican City, 2005. Sections of the Compendium to read/reflect on: #192-196. [Available online at www.vatican.va/offices/index.htm]

SOME DOCUMENTS OF OUR CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING TRADITION

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| 1891 <i>Rerum novarum</i> (On the Condition of Labor, Leo XIII) | <u>Phase I: The Church Responds to Modern Industrial World: Dominance of Local/National Economic Realities</u> |
| 1931 <i>Quadragesimo anno</i> (On Reconstructing the Social Order, Pius XI) | <u>context:</u> rise of “modern”, developing world, industrial capitalism and socialist alternatives as challenge to more stable agrarian, hierarchical, organic model of the past |
| 1939 and following years, <i>Christmas Radio Messages</i> of Pius XII | <u>focal points:</u> 1) protection of family stability through paternalistic view of the common good 2) rights of workers to fair wages, acceptable working conditions, free association and the excesses of capitalism of the time 3) natural right to private property 4) acceptance of limited state intervention but condemnation of socialism |
| 1961 <i>Mater et magistra</i> (Christianity and Social Progress, John XXIII) | <u>Phase II: The Church Looks at an Interdependent World: Dominance of International Political Realities</u> |
| 1963 <i>Pacem in terris</i> (Peace on Earth. John XXIII) | <u>context:</u> experience of horror of two world wars, establishment of east-west political and economic blocs, arms race and Cold War, end of colonialism and need for “development” |
| 1965 <i>Gaudium et spes</i> (The Church in the Modern World, Vatican Council II) | <u>focal points:</u> 1) greater emphasis on the common good as the work of all people as key moral criterion |
| 1967 <i>Populorum progressio</i> (On the Development of Peoples, Paul VI) | 2) expanded understanding of human rights beyond basic economic rights for workers |
| 1971 <i>Octogesima adveniens</i> (A Call to Action, Paul VI) | 3) greater emphasis on the social debt/responsible use of private property as well as the right to it |
| 1971 <i>Justice in the World</i> , Synod of Bishops | 4) right to participation of all in economy, culture and politics, grounded in appreciation of human freedom as essential to human nature |
| 1974 <i>Evangelii nuntiandi</i> (On Evangelization, Paul VI) | 5) inviolable dignity yet social nature of every person |
| Bishop Conference Documents like U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral letters <i>The Challenge of Peace</i> (1983) and <i>Economic Justice for All</i> (1986); Latin American Bishops’ Medellin conference (1986), Pueblo (1979), all fit in this phase as well | 6) dialogic relationship of church and world 7) responsibility for nations to aid “developing” nations and recognition of stronger state intervention to achieve justice 8) social justice as constitutive dimension of the gospel 9) excesses of both western-style capitalism and Marxist socialism 10) preferential option for the poor, vulnerable, youth embraced by the Church as a whole |
| 1979 <i>Redemptor hominis</i> (The Redeemer of Humanity, John Paul II) | <u>Phase III: Church in the Emerging Post-Modern, Post-Industrial World: Dominance of Global Cultural and Economic Realities</u> |
| 1981 <i>Laborem exercens</i> (On Human Work, John Paul II) | <u>context:</u> breakdown of East-West bloc and failure of communist socialism as economic, political model; failure of developmental model for emerging nations and increased disparity between rich/poor nations, emergence of a world perspective |
| 1987 <i>Sollicitudo rei socialis</i> (The Social Concerns of the Church, John Paul II) | <u>focal points:</u> 1) solidarity as core justice virtue |
| 1991 <i>Centesimus annus</i> (The 100 th Anniversary Year, John Paul II) | 2) battle for a culture of life, a civilization of love 3) priority of labor and human subject over capital 4) recognition of energy and potential of capitalist economic model but condemnation of current western-style capitalism’s greed, consumerism 5) the need to protect humanity’s openness to the transcendent: strong critique of secularism |
| 1995 <i>Evangelium vitae</i> (The Gospel of Life, John Paul II) | <u>Phase IV: Church in the Global Village</u> |
| 2005 <i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church</i> (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2005) | <u>context:</u> emergence of internet and instant global contact; rise of the European union, China, and others to contest U.S. global dominance; re-emergence of disparity within nations as much as between nations; global environmental concerns |
| 2009, <i>Caritas in veritate</i> (Charity in Truth, Benedict XVI)) | <u>focal points:</u> 1) critique of excessive freedom and emphasis on truth as context for true freedom 2) protection of traditional understanding of marriage and family 3) greater emphasis on environmental concerns 4) desire to see teaching as a more systematic “doctrine” than open-ended, evolving teaching 5) re-focus on Church’s evangelical and charitable role as primary, without neglecting justice |