

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching Challenges and Directions

Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops

The Bishops of the United States list key themes that are “at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.” These concepts are integral to justice education.

The 7 principles are woven throughout our curriculum and celebrations.

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Because we are made in the image and likeness of God, all human life is sacred. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Every person is precious, people are more important than things, and the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

2. Call to Family, Community and Participation

The human person is not only sacred but also social. We are one body “the Body of Christ.” The family is the central institution that must be supported and strengthened. Human beings grow and achieve fulfillment in community. People have a right and a duty to participate in society. Government and other institutions must protect human life and dignity and promote the common good.

3. Rights and Responsibilities

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. We each have a fundamental right to life, food, shelter, health care, education and employment.

4. Option for the poor and vulnerable

Catholic social teaching proclaims that a basic moral test is how the most vulnerable members of society are faring. Our tradition points to the story of the Last Judgment (Mt. 25:31-46) and teaches us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people. Work is more than a way to make a living, it is a continuing participation in God's creation. To protect the dignity of work, the basic rights of workers must be respected...the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

6. **Solidarity**

Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. The virtue of solidarity means loving our neighbor in an interdependent world.

7. **Care for God's Creation**

We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation