

## 7 Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

### **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

All people are created in the image of God and thus, all human life, from conception to natural death, is sacred. Through the mystery of Christ, we become children of the Father and temples of the Holy Spirit. God's love for all is the foundation of human dignity. The basic dignity that each person possesses comes from God; therefore, all forms of discrimination are always wrong. People take precedence over things and structures. Systems are meant to serve people. And people are meant to serve and care for one another. Scripture tells us repeatedly of God's love for us. We are called to see every person through the eyes of God and to love them because God loved them (and us) first.

### **Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

Our faith is rooted in the mystery of the Trinity: the divine relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's own essence is a communion of persons. Created in God's image, we too are social creatures. We are called to live this Trinitarian reality of self-giving love. It is in the community that we are shaped and formed. It is through the community that the dignity of every individual is realized. And it is out of the community that we are sent to love and serve the world. We find in Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, "The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them. Every Christian is called to practice this charity...This is the institutional path – we might also call it the political path – of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbor directly."

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

We are created in God's image. As such, every person has the right to life. They also have a right to those things which preserve their dignity, or quality of life; food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful employment. Corresponding to these rights are responsibilities. Because we are created in the image of the Triune God, we must respect the rights of others and care for others according to God's commandments and example.

### **Option for and with the Poor**

The morality of society is judged by how well our most vulnerable members are faring. Just as a parent gives more care and resources to a sick child in order that the child might become healthy, so we as Christians are called to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. Those with the greatest need require the greatest response. In a society marked by the deepening divide between rich and poor, the gospel calls us to radical and self-giving love—to meet the needs of the poor and vulnerable and to oppose the structures that perpetuate poverty and abuse the vulnerable.

### **Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

Work is about more than making a living; it is a form of participation in the creative work of God. People have a right to decent, meaningful work and fair wages. Workers have the right to organize and join unions, own private property, and to economic initiative. Work should promote the dignity of the worker. Our economy exists to serve people, not vice versa. Our faith calls us to demand justice for all workers and a just economy that serves the life and dignity of all. Likewise, our work contributes to the good life of our brothers and sisters.

### **Solidarity**

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial ethnic, economic and ideological differences. We are our brother's and sister's keeper. As Christians, we are as St. Paul reminds us, one body. Love of neighbor has global dimensions in our rapidly shrinking world. At the core of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Peace is more than a lack of conflict. Peace, or in Hebrew Shalom, means literally "right relationship." The gospel calls us to be peacemakers: that we live in right relationship with others, ourselves, and God. Pope Paul VI taught, "If you want peace, work for justice." Our love for our entire human family demands that we work for justice and for peace, that we promote God's shalom in our world.

### **Care for God's Creation**

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth and set humans as his stewards to care for his creation. Care for God's creation was God's fruitful commandment to humanity and a fundamental requirement of our faith. Moreover, creation witnesses to God's existence. God reveals himself in creation and we see in nature the fingerprints of God. Creation is always an object of praise in Israel's prayer and the prayers of the early Christians. We are called to honor and protect our planet and its people—to live in relationship with all of God's creation. At the dawn of creation, God commanded us not only to be fruitful and multiply, but also to use for his good creation.

\*for more info – <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>

*"Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord." Romans 12:11*