

Short course in theology

Catholic Social Teaching

Theological Foundations

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Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

- embodies the Catholic Church's mission in action, helping Catholics to relate to the world and address its problems.
- provides a foundation from which Catholics may understand social, political, and economic issues through historical, political, and social analyses.
- was conceptualized in 1891 with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, or "Of New Things," as a result of the wealth gap between the rich and the poor and the obstacles faced by the working classes.



Key Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

- Human Dignity
- Common Good
- Solidarity
- Subsidiarity
- Social Order
- Purpose of Government
- Participation
- Purpose of Goods
- Option for the Poor
- Care for God's Creation



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CST aims to provide

(i) principles for reflection, (ii) criteria for judgment, (iii) guidelines for action in the face of changing social, economic, and political conditions



An easy guide to Catholic Social Teaching Principles



KEY DOCUMENTS IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

- *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labor)—Pope Leo XIII, 1891
- *Quadragesimo Anno* (On Reconstruction of the Social Order)—Pope Pius XI, 1931
- *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress)—Pope John XXIII, 1961
- *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth)—Pope John XXIII, 1963
- *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)—Second Vatican Council, 1965
- *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom)—Second Vatican Council, 1965
- *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples)—Pope Paul VI, 1967
- *Octogesima Adveniens* (A Call to Action)—Pope Paul VI, 1971
- Justice in the World – Synod of Bishops, 1971
- *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work)—Pope John Paul II, 1981
- *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On Social Concern)—Pope John Paul II, 1987
- The Church and Racism: Towards a more fraternal society—Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 1989
- *Dignitatis Personae* (The Dignity of a Person)—Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1998
- Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life - CDF, 2002
- Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church — Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004
- *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth)—Pope Benedict XVI, 2009.
- *Lumen fidei* (The Light of Faith: Faith, Common good) Pope Francis, 2013
- *Laudato si'* (Praise Be to You: On Care for our Common Home, Environment, Sustainable Development) -- Pope Francis, 2015

Theological Foundations

Genesis 1: Doctrine of Creation

- not scientific cosmology, but theological anthropology.
- Christian idea and image of who God is and how God relates with the world.
- ‘Who is God?’, ‘How God relates to the world?’, and ‘What is the human’s place in creation?’
- ‘God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good’ (Gen 1:31): the whole of creation, including human beings, was not only created by God but is also generously graced with divine goodness.

Creation-centred Faith

- teaches that human beings must be in relationship with the creator God, as well as in relationship with all other creatures, i.e., with one another and all other living beings and the rest of nature.
- Such is the foundation to understanding Christian living, all of human life, and the human's relationship with the entire cosmos.
- Nothing or no one on earth or in the heavens is outside of God's creation.
- They are all integral to the very act of creation and so are regarded as valued creatures of God.
- Thus, all peoples, not only Jews and Christians, are people of God, just as all living beings, not only human beings, belong to God.
- This cosmic perspective on creation is the basis for the doctrine of the universal lordship of God.
- This was how the world and its inhabitants were designed and God saw that it was good.

Creation is Revelation/Salvation

- God's love brought about creation
 - the act of creation is a revelation of God's trust in creation
 - analogous to the act of procreation: both are activities of love and trust.
- culminate in the whole of God's creation being offered to the care of Adam and Eve, as representatives of humankind:
 - 'God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth"' (Gen 1:28).
- These were the very first instructions that God gives to the very first humans.
 - *radah*: 'human beings must be friendly to other living beings'.
- *Radah* refers to the human being's role as guardian, leader, guide, and shepherd of the world and of all other living beings.
 - steward and vicegerent, humans as co-creators with God of creation.

Finitude and Transformation

- Just as Adam and Eve acted irresponsibly, humankind is also liable—indeed, prone—to fall and to failure.
 - As finite creatures, humans are subject to making mistakes, being weak and even to committing sinful and evil acts.
- Finitude is the natural condition of created beings, which means that imperfection is part and parcel of being human.
 - creation is even allowed to be as it pleases, without necessarily any intervention from God.
- It is inappropriate to see God as being in control of everything in the universe.
 - That was not how the world was created and what God wants to be.
 - the world and humanity cannot expect God to save them from finitude.
 - That is not what salvation is about.
 - It is in the nature of the world to be finite and thus at times experience brokenness and deficiency.
- Transformation, however, is possible.
 - It is the responsibility of humans to transform the world, which is actually an integral duty of their stewardship.

The Incarnation as Concentrated Creation

- Jesus is the sacrament of God:
 - encountering Jesus is encountering God
 - ultimate key to understanding who God is and who we are as human beings
 - that's the only way we can ever understand God
- Jesus saves by revealing and actualizing God at work for human salvation in history
 - Christians believe that Jesus is also God's definitive revelation and salvation
- Jesus is God's Concentrated Creation
 - Jesus' life is the parable of God;
 - and the paradigm for humanity
 - His life, teachings, witness, fundamental options, etc.

John the Baptist prepares the way (Luke 3)

As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:
A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.
Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.
The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.
And all people will see God's salvation.

Response Required to John's Warning

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

Eye for Eye

- You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person.
- If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.
- And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.
- If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

Murder

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.

First go and be reconciled to that person; then come and offer your gift.

Love for Enemies

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?

Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others?

Do not even pagans do that?

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Judging Others

Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in someone else's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?

How can you say, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?

You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from the other person's eye.

Parable Of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25 – 37)

And a certain teacher of the law got up and put him to the test, saying, Master, 'what have I to do so that I may have eternal life?' And he said to him, 'What does the law say, in your reading of it?' And he, answering, said, 'Have love for the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and love your neighbour as for yourself'. And he said; 'You have given the right answer: do this and you will live'. But he, desiring to put himself in the right, said to Jesus; 'And who is my neighbour?' And Jesus, answering him, said;

'A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he got into the hands of thieves, who took his clothing and gave him cruel blows, and when they went away, he was half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he went by on the other side. And in the same way, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, went by on the other side. But a certain man of Samaria, journeying that way, came where he was, and when he saw him, he was moved with pity for him, and came to him and put clean linen round his wounds, with oil and wine; and he put him on his beast and took him to an inn and took care of him. And the day after he took two pennies and gave them to the owner of the inn and said; 'Take care of him, and if this money is not enough, when I come again I will give you whatever more is needed'.

'Which of these three men, in your opinion, was neighbour to the man who came into the hands of thieves?' And he said, 'The one who had mercy on him'. And Jesus said, 'Go and do the same'.