

The Ministry of Peace and Justice

by Michael Jordan Laskey

Session 2 Handout

Catholic Social Teaching Quotes

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

O LORD, you have searched me and known me. . . .
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.

—Psalm 139:1, 13-16

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

At the center of all Catholic social teaching are the transcendence of God and the dignity of the human person. The human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world; all of the

Church's work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God's creative work and the meaning of Christ's redemptive ministry.
—The Challenge of Peace, US Catholic bishops, 1983

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. . . . Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.

—1 John 4:11, 20

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The obligation to "love our neighbor" has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment to the common good. We have many partial ways to measure and debate the health of our economy: Gross National Product, per capita income, stock market prices, and so forth. The Christian vision of economic life looks beyond them all and asks, Does economic life enhance or threaten our life together as a community?

—Economic Justice for All, US Catholic bishops, 1986

Rights and Responsibilities

Learn to do good;
seek justice,
 rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
 plead for the widow.

—Isaiah 1:17

Rights and Responsibilities

Beginning our discussion of the rights of the human person, we see that everyone has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services. . . . [These rights] are inseparably connected . . . with just as many respective duties. . . . It is not enough, for example, to acknowledge and respect every [person's] right to the means of subsistence if we do not strive to the best of our ability for a sufficient supply of what is necessary for his [or her] sustenance.

—*Pacem in Terris*, St. Pope John XXIII, 1962

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

[Jesus] unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

—Luke 4:17-19

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental “option for the poor”—to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess life styles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. This “option for the poor” does not mean pitting one group against another, but rather, strengthening the whole community by assisting those who are most vulnerable. As Christians, we are called to respond to the

needs of *all* our brothers and sisters, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response.

—Economic Justice for All, US Catholic bishops, 1986

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

—Deuteronomy 24:14-15

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Created in God's image, we were given the mandate to transform the earth. By their work people share in God's creating activity. . . . Awareness that our work is a sharing in God's work ought to permeate even the most ordinary daily activities. By our labor we are unfolding the Creator's work and contributing to the realization of God's plan on earth. The Christian message does not stop us from building the world or make us neglect our fellow human beings. On the contrary it binds us more firmly to do just that.

—*Laborem Excercens* (On Human Work), St. Pope John Paul II, 1981
(Donders translation)

Solidarity

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. . . . If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

—1 Corinthians 12:27, 26

Solidarity

The solidarity which binds all [people] together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to

look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist.

—*Mater et Magistra*, St. Pope John XXIII, 1961

Care for God’s Creation

God said [to Adam and Eve], “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

—Genesis 1:29-31

Care for God’s Creation

The environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. . . . Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other.

—*Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI, 2009

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