



**MINNESOTA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE**  
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## **THE SEVEN THEMES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING**

Catholic social teaching is central to our faith, and is based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and dignity. These teachings are derived from: the Gospels and the words of Christ; Papal Statements and Encyclicals; and Catholic Bishops' Statements and Pastoral Letters. Catholic social teaching calls us all to work for the common good, help build a just society, uphold the dignity of human life and lift up our poor and vulnerable brothers and sisters.

The following paragraphs describe the seven themes of Catholic social teaching.

### **THE LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, every person's life and dignity must be respected and supported from conception through natural death. We believe that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

### **THE CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND PARTICIPATION**

The human person is not only sacred, but social. How we organize our society—socially, economically, legally and politically—directly affects human dignity and the ability of every human person to grow in community. Marriage and family, the foundations for social life, should be strengthened and supported. Every person has a right to participate in society and a corresponding duty to work for the advancement of the common good and the well-being of all.

### **SOLIDARITY**

We are one human family. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Our love for all of our brothers and sisters calls us to seek a peaceful and just society where goods are distributed fairly, opportunity is promoted equally and the dignity of all is respected.

## **THE DIGNITY OF WORK**

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. To uphold the dignity of work, the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to fair and livable wages, and to organize and join a union.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Every person has a fundamental right to life—the right that makes all other rights possible. Each person also has a right to the conditions for living a decent life—food, health care, housing, education and employment. We have a corresponding duty to secure and respect these rights for others and to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, to each other and to our larger society.

## **OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE**

Scripture teaches that God has a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. The Church calls on all of us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. This preferential option for the poor and vulnerable should be reflected in both our daily lives and public policies. A fundamental measure of our society is how we care for and stand with our poor and vulnerable brothers and sisters.

## **CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION**

The world that God created has been entrusted to all of us. Our stewardship of the earth is a form of participation in God's act of creating and sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must be guided by a concern for generations to come. We show our respect for the Creator by our care for creation.

This information has been adapted from: *Catholic Teaching and Principles*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, available online at: [www.usccb.org/sdwp/catholicteachingprinciples.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/catholicteachingprinciples.shtml).



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