

D. THREE AUXILIARY PRINCIPLES

1. The Principle of Solidarity to Overcome Divisions
2. Preferential Option for the Poor (marginal) in light of the Universal Claim on All Goods
3. The Principle of Subsidiarity to Create Meaningful Participation

E. INTEGRATING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: ELEMENTS FOR A JUSTICE-CENTERED SPIRITUALITY

1. Are our words, strategies and actions truly nonviolent?
2. Do we treat others as an end in itself or merely as a means to an end?
3. Are we living the virtue of preferential solidarity to the marginal and vulnerable?
4. Can we embrace freedom as a joyful obligation toward others?
5. How can we simplify our lives and practice a renewed and appropriate asceticism?

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A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING



A. THE WORLD SCRIPTURE ENVISIONS FOR US

1. Some Examples:

Matthew 25:31-46 ("what you did to the least ones, you did to me") and 26:1 ("when Jesus had finished all these words...")

James 5:1-6 ("Come, now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries...")

1 Peter 2:10 ("Once you were 'no people' but now you are God's people")

Joel 2:13 ("Rend your hearts, not your garments...for your God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love..")

Exodus 22:21-22 ("...If you ever wrong [any widow or orphan] and the cry out to me, I will surely listen to their cry.")

Isaiah 58:6-10 ("Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose:

releasing those bound unjustly...setting free the oppressed...sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and homeless into our house; clothing the naked...")

Micah 6:1-8 ("You have been told ...what the Lord requires of you: only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.")

Luke 4:16-21 ("He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written, 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor...")

2. Summary

Wherever the reign of God is, there needs to be visible, concrete, socially significant manifestations of justice. Catholic Social Teaching does not depend on one text or other of Scripture to prove it has biblical foundations. Rather, it is grounded in the whole of Scripture and the revelation of a God who wants to be in relationship with us, who covenants with us by inviting us into a community of faith and faithfulness in a way that obliges us to create a society of right relationships/justice visible to the world, and if we do, we become part of God's fullness of life/shalom/ the reign of God breaking into the world.

B. ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Phase I: The Church Responds to Modern Industrial World: Social Justice Related to Local/National Economic Realities

Context: Rise of "modern", developing world, industrial capitalism and socialist alternatives as challenge to more stable agrarian, hierarchical, organic model of past

One effective way to weaken historical consciousness, critical thinking, the struggle for justice and the processes of integration is to empty great words of their meaning or to manipulate them. Nowadays, what do certain words like democracy, freedom, justice or unity really mean? They have been bent and shaped to serve as tools for domination, as meaningless tags that can be used to justify any action. (#14)

Certain populist political regimes, as well as certain liberal economic approaches, maintain that an influx of migrants is to be prevented at all costs. Arguments are also made for the propriety of limiting aid to poor countries, so that they can hit rock bottom and find themselves forced to take austerity measures. One fails to realize that behind such statements, abstract and hard to support, great numbers of lives are at stake. Many migrants have fled from war, persecution and natural catastrophes. Others, rightly, "are seeking opportunities for themselves and their families. They dream of a better future and they want to create the conditions for achieving it". (#37)

C. TWO BEDROCK PRINCIPLES

Dignity of Every Human Being

- Human Dignity is **Intrinsic**
- Human Dignity is **Inalienable**
- Human Dignity is **Inviolable**

The Common Good

- The sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby every person can fulfill their basic needs and maintain their fundamental dignity
- Not "the greatest good for the greatest number"
- Not the majority-imposed good

the planet... The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor. (#48)

A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power. This is what consumer movements accomplish by boycotting certain products. They prove successful in changing the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production... This shows us the great need for a sense of social responsibility on the part of consumers. "Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act." Today, in a word, "the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle". (#206)

Quote from Gaudete et Exultate :

The other harmful ideological error is found in those who find suspect the social engagement of others, seeing it as superficial, worldly, secular, materialist, communist or populist. Or they relativize it, as if there are other more important matters, or the only thing that counts is one particular ethical issue or cause that they themselves defend. Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection. We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty. (#101)

Quotes from Fratelli Tutti:

- Focal points:**
- 1) Protection of family stability through an emphasis on the common good (understood in a paternalistic manner)
 - 2) The excesses of capitalism of the time countered by rights of workers to fair wages, acceptable working conditions, and free association
 - 3) Concern about socialist movements countered by a reminder of "natural right" to private property, but with acceptance of limited state intervention

Documents:

1891 *Rerum novarum* (On the Condition of Labor, Leo XIII)

1931 *Quadragesimo anno* (On Reconstructing the Social Order, Pius XI)

1939 and following years, *Christmas Radio Messages* of Pius XII

Quotes from Rerum Novarum:

The following duties . . . concern rich men and employers: Workers are not to be treated as slaves; justice demands that the dignity of human personality be respected in them, ... gainful occupations are not a mark of shame to man, but rather of respect, as they provide him with an honorable means of supporting life.

It is shameful and inhuman, however, to use men as things for gain and to put no more value on them than what they are worth in muscle and energy. (#31)

Equity therefore commands that public authority show proper concern for the worker so that from what he contributes to the common good he may receive what will enable him, housed, clothed, and secure, to live his life without hardship. Whence, it follows that all those measures ought to be favored which seem in any way capable of benefiting the condition of workers. Such solicitude is so far from injuring anyone, that it is destined rather

to benefit all, because it is of absolute interest to the State that those citizens should not be miserable in every respect from whom such necessary goods proceed. (#51)

In protecting the rights of private individuals, however, special consideration must be given to the weak and the poor. For the nation, as it were, of the rich, is guarded by its own defenses and is in less need of governmental protection, whereas the suffering multitude, without the means to protect itself, relies especially on the protection of the State. Wherefore, since wage workers are numbered among the great mass of the needy, the State must include them under its special care and foresight. (#54)

Phase II: The Church Looks at an Interdependent World: Social Justice as Related to International Political and Economic Realities

Context: Experience of horror of two world wars, establishment of east-west political and economic blocs, arms race and Cold War, end of colonialism and need for “development”

- Focal points:**
- 1) Greater emphasis on the common good as key moral criterion, no longer understood paternalistically
 - 2) Emphasis on the need for peace and institutions to guarantee peaceful relations among countries
 - 3) Expanded understanding of human rights beyond basic economic rights for workers to include social rights
 - 4) Greater emphasis on the social debt/responsible use of private property as well as the right to it
 - 6) Inviolable dignity yet social nature of every person gets highlighted
 - 7) Dialogic relationship of Church and world
 - 8) Responsibility for nations to aid “developing” nations and recognition of stronger state intervention to achieve justice

Context: Recognition of devastating human effects due to climate change, huge economic inequalities, ongoing violence; pastoral need to address less than perfect situations/people

- Focal points:**
- 1) Greater emphasis on ecology and care for all creation as essential to social justice of individuals and groups
 - 2) Increased critique of excesses of global capitalism
 - 3) Solidarity with those displaced by social upheaval and climate change
 - 4) Evangelical joy in solidarity with the poor
 - 5) Focus on relationships, especially those who are different from us
 - 6) Greater emphasis on subsidiarity / synodality within the Church’s own structures

Documents:

2005 *Deus Caritas Est* (God Is Love, Benedict XVI)

2009 *Caritas Veritate* (On Christian Love, Benedict XVI)

2013 *Evangelii Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel, Francis)

2015 *Laudato Si’* (Care for Our Common Home, Francis)

2018 *Gaudete et Exsultate* (On the Call to Holiness, Francis)

2020 *Querida Amazonia* (Beloved Amazon, Francis)

2020 *Fratelli Tutti* (On Social Friendship, Francis)

Quotes from *Laudato Si’*:

The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on

economy and society? ... The answer is obviously complex. If by "capitalism" is meant an economic system which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector, then the answer is certainly in the affirmative, ...

But if by "capitalism" is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality and sees it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious, then the reply is certainly negative. (Official text, #42)

Quote from Caritas Veritate:

Another important consideration is the common good. To love someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it. Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of "all of us", made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. It is a good that is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it. To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity. To take a stand for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally, making it the pólis, or "city". The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them. (#7)

Phase Four? The Church in a World of Global Crisis: Justice as Related to the World as a United Whole

9) Social justice as constitutive dimension of the gospel

10) Preferential option for poor, vulnerable and youth

Documents:

1961 *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress, John XXIII)

1963 *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth. John XXIII)

1965 *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World, Vatican Council II)

1967 *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples, Paul VI)

1971 *Octogesima Adveniens* (A Call to Action, Paul VI)

1971 *Justitia in Mundo* (Justice in the World, Synod of Bishops)

1974 *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelization, Paul VI)

Bishop Conference Documents such as the U.S. Bishops' Pastorals 1983 *The Challenge of Peace* and 1986 *Economic Justice for All*, CELAM's 1968 Medellin statements, etc. all fit in this phase as well

Quotes from Mater et Magistra:

It is necessary that public authorities have a correct understanding of the common good. This embraces the sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby people are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection. (#65)

Wherefore, whatever the progress in technology and economic life, there can be neither justice nor peace in the world, so long as men fail to realize how great is their dignity; for they have been created by God and are His children. (#215)

Individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so, for men are by nature social beings. This fact must be recognized, as also the fact that they are raised in the plan of Providence to an order of reality which is above nature. (#219)

Quotes from Gaudium et Spes:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. (#1)

For excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace. (#29)

Economic development must ... not be left to the sole judgement of a few men or groups, possessing excessive economic power, or of the political community alone, or of certain powerful nations. It is proper, on the contrary, that at every level the largest number of people have an active share in directing that development. (#65)

Quote from Justitia in Mundo):

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation. (#6)

Phase III: The Church in the Emerging Post-Modern, Post-Industrial World: Justice as Related to Global Political, Economic, and Cultural Realities

Context: Breakdown of East-West bloc and failure of communist socialism as economic, political model; failure of developmental model for emerging nations and increased disparity between rich/poor nations, emergence of a global perspectives and realities; long pontificate of John Paul II

- Focal points:**
- 1) Solidarity as core principle and virtue in social
 - 2) Recognition of energy and potential of capitalist economic model but condemnation of current western-style capitalism's greed, consumerism; priority of labor and human subject over capital
 - 3) The need to protect humanity's openness to the transcendent: strong critique of secularism
 - 4) Protection of traditional understanding of marriage and family and sharper divide between a "culture of life" / "civilization of love" and current secular emphases on issues of life
 - 5) Greater emphasis on the global nature of economic, social (immigration, e.g.), and ecological realities and solutions

Documents:

- 1979 *Redemptor Hominis* (The Redeemer of Humanity, John Paul II)
1981 *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work, John Paul II)
1987 *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (The Social Concerns of the Church, John Paul II)
1991 *Centesimus Annus* (The 100th Anniversary Year, John Paul II)
1995 *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life, John Paul II)
2005 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace)

Quote from Centesimus Annus :

Can it perhaps be said that, after the failure of Communism, capitalism is the victorious social system, and that capitalism should be the goal of the countries now making efforts to rebuild their