

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching
{in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*}

Human Dignity The dignity of the human person is rooted in one's creation in the image and likeness of God; it is fulfilled in one's vocation to divine beatitude (participation in the divine nature, eternal life). It is in Christ, the image of the invisible God, that humanity has been created. It is in Christ, Redeemer and Savior, that the divine image, disfigured in humanity by the first sin, has been restored to its original beauty and ennobled by the grace of God. The divine image is present in every human person. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the unity of the divine persons among themselves. #1700-02, 1726

Human Community The vocation of humanity is to show forth the image of God and to be transformed into the image of the Father's only Son. This vocation takes a personal form since each of us is called to enter into the divine beatitude; it also concerns the human community as a whole. There is a certain resemblance between the unity of the divine persons and the unity that people are to establish among themselves in truth and love. Love of neighbor is inseparable from the love of God. #1877-78

Human Society & Socialization The human person needs to live in society. Society is not for persons an extraneous addition but a requirement of human nature. Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue, persons develop their potential and respond to their vocation. As an assembly that is at once visible and spiritual, a society endures through time: it gathers up the past and prepares for the future. By means of society, each person is established as an "heir" and receives certain "talents" that enrich one's identity and whose fruits one must develop. The human person is and ought to be the principle, the subject and the end of all social institutions. Certain

societies, such as the family and the state, correspond more directly to human nature; they are necessary to humanity. To promote the participation of the greatest number in the life of a society, the creation of voluntary associations and institutions must be encouraged on both national and international levels, which relate to economic and social goals, to cultural and recreational activities, to sport, to various professions, and to political affairs. This "socialization" also expresses the natural tendency for human beings to associate with one another for the sake of attaining objectives that exceed individual capacities. It develops the qualities of the person, especially the sense of initiative and responsibility, and helps guarantee one's rights. #1879-82

Rights & Duties Respect for the human person entails respect for the rights that flow from one's dignity as a creature. These rights are prior to society and must be recognized by it. Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that everyone should look upon one's neighbor (without any exception) as "another self," above all bearing in mind one's life and the means necessary for living it with dignity (what is needed to lead a truly human life includes: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on). The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged. This same duty extends to those who think or act differently from us. Christ extends the commandment of love to all enemies. #1930-33, 1908

Subsidiarity Excessive intervention by the state can threaten personal freedom and initiative. The teaching of the Church has elaborated the principle of subsidiarity according to which a community of higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should

support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good. #1883

The Common Good In keeping with the social nature of humanity, the good of each individual is necessarily related to the common good, which in turn can be defined only in reference to the human person. By common good is to be understood the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. The common good consists of three essential elements: respect for the person as such, the social well-being and development of the group itself, and peace (the stability and security of a just order). #1905-09

Participation is the voluntary and generous engagement of a person in social interchange. It is necessary that all participate, each according to one's position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. Participation is achieved first of all by taking charge of the areas for which one assumes personal responsibility: by the care taken for the education of one's family, by conscientious work, and so forth. As far as possible, citizens should take an active part in public life. As with any ethical obligation, the participation of all in realizing the common good calls for a continually renewed conversion of social partners. #1913-16

Universal Destination of Goods In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of humanity to take care of them, to direct them by labor, and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race. The right to private property, acquired or received in a just way, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of humanity. In the use of things one should regard the external goods one legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to

oneself but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as oneself. The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all one's family. #2402-04

Work Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another. Hence work is a duty. Work honors the Creator's gifts and the talents received from God. It can also be redemptive, a means of sanctification, and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ. In work, the person exercises and fulfills in part the potential inscribed in one's nature. Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for one's life and that of one's family, and of serving the human community. #2427-28

Preferential Love for the Poor God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them. It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. In its various forms—material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illness and death—human misery is the obvious sign of the inherited condition of frailty and need for salvation in which humanity finds itself as a consequence of original sin. This misery elicited the compassion of Christ the Savior who willingly took it upon himself and identified himself with the least of his brethren. Hence, those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of her many members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation. #2443, 2448