

## THE SEVEN THEMES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person: As Catholics, we believe that each and every one of us is created in the image and likeness of God. Based on this belief, the Catholic Church asserts that all human life is sacred. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the human person provides the foundation of a moral vision of society. Upon this foundation, rests all Catholic social teaching.
2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation: We are called to live out our faith in our families and in our community. The opportunities for getting involved and making a difference in the lives of those around us are limitless! While our society often promotes individualism, the Catholic Church teaches that we grow and achieve fulfillment in community.
3. Solidarity: Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Solidarity means to "stand with." As Catholics, we believe that solidarity means "loving our neighbor" and we realize it is a global responsibility.
4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: Since the 2nd Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has established that the needs of the poor must come first. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus instructs us on how to care for the poor and vulnerable: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."
5. Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers: Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then basic rights of workers must be respected. Respecting these rights promotes an economy that protects human life, defends human rights, and advances the well-being of all. As Catholic consumers, we are called to inform ourselves about the working conditions of people who make the products we purchase. We must also treat all people in service careers with respect.

6. Rights and Responsibilities: The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met.... Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities - to one another, to our families, and to the larger society. As Catholics, we are called to act in order to ensure that the rights of all people are protected.
7. Care for Creation: The Catholic tradition insists that we show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth...is a requirement of our faith.
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Ethical/Moral Dilemma: A situation in which a moral right or wrong must be chosen. Sometimes right and wrong are clearly distinguished. Sometimes it appears as if it is simply the choice of the lesser of two evils. However, choosing to do wrong (or evil), even with good intentions, is not morally acceptable to Catholics. In other words, the motto "the ends justifies the means" is not a good moral choice!