

OUR LADY OF LOURDES RCIA
SOCIAL JUSTICE

Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority.

(CCC. 1928)

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

(Matt. 22:39)

I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.

(Matt. 25:40)

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1. Through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are offered, “*an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.*”¹ This inheritance awaits us in heaven but while on earth we are called to “be holy in every aspect of our conduct,” because God is holy.²
2. Through our free will, we can choose to act or not act in accordance with God’s laws. In some cases, society and our laws condone actions that contravene God’s laws, and this can provide a moral dilemma for Christians. An example of this is abortion.
3. We can tell if an action is morally right or wrong by asking ourselves;
 - Is the act good or evil (based on God’s laws);
 - Our intention; what do we hope the result will be;
 - The circumstances and consequences of the action;

Therefore, an act that is morally wrong cannot be made “good” by good intentions.

4. The Catholic Church's social teaching offers moral principles and coherent values that allow us to build a just society and live lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops summarizes Catholic social teaching using seven major themes³:
 - i. Life and Dignity of the Human Person
 - ii. Call to Family, Community, and Participation
 - iii. Rights and Responsibilities
 - iv. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
 - v. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
 - vi. Solidarity
 - vii. Care for God's Creation

Human Dignity

5. Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all men have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity.⁴
6. Social justice can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man. The person represents the ultimate end of society.⁵ Each person is sacred, made in the image of God.⁶

¹ 1 Pet. 1:4

² 1Pet. 1:15-16

³ USCCB, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching, Pages 4-6

⁴ CCC 1934

⁵ CCC 1929

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- The dignity of man goes beyond the boundaries of ordinary experience.
- Man has rights, needs and desires beyond those allowed to him by society because man was endowed with such rights by God.⁷
- Individuals comprise society and the rights of the human person supersede the rights of society.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

7. All people have a right to a minimal level of participation in the economic, political, and cultural life of society.⁸ Some of the inequities are a consequence of individualism; class divisions and stereotyping; gender discrimination; ethnic, racial and religious intolerance; neglect of immigrants; and the treatment of refugees.
8. It is the role of the state to defend and promote the common good of civil society, its citizens, and intermediate bodies.⁹ **Do our state or national political communities strive to achieve this?**
9. Some of the issues that erode or promote man's dignity are; *capital punishment, same sex marriage, legalized abortion, materialism, pornography, unrestrained commercialism, drug trafficking, abuse, and euthanasia*. **Given that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and we have the teachings and examples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is society's approach to these issues and our laws in line with Catholic social teaching?**

Rights and Responsibilities

10. The common good presupposes respect for the person, requires the social well-being and development of the individual and the group, and requires peace.¹⁰
 - Respect for persons – Society and public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person.¹¹ **In what ways do our society and our laws contravene or support this basic right?**
 - Social well-being and development – Societies and public authorities should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: *food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family*, and so on.¹² **In what ways does society and our laws contravene or support this basic right?**

⁶ Gen 1:27

⁷ CCC 1930

⁸ CCC 1913-1917

⁹ CCC 1927

¹⁰ CCC 1907-1909

¹¹ CCC 1907

¹² CCC 1908

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- Peace - Society and public authorities should ensure by morally acceptable means the security of society and its members. It is the basis of the right to legitimate personal and collective defense.¹³ **In what ways does society and our laws contravene or support this basic right?**
11. Scripture tells us; “Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God.”¹⁴ **Do you believe this to be true?**
 12. There exist also *sinful inequalities* that affect millions of men and women. These are in open contradiction of the Gospel:

Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace.¹⁵
 13. Truth, justice and love are the foundations which allow individuals and society to place the needs of the person above all else.¹⁶ **Does society and our laws support this?**

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

14. The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged, in whatever area this may be. “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”¹⁷ It is therefore our responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves - *The unborn, the old, the sick, the poor, the crippled, those with mental illness, etc.* **Does our society achieve this?**
15. We also have to respect those who think or act differently from us. Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of *sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion* must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God’s design.¹⁸

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

16. “Human society can be neither well-ordered nor prosperous unless it has some people invested with legitimate authority to preserve its institutions and to devote themselves as far as is necessary to work and care for the good of all.”¹⁹
17. The basis of the authority that governs human society lies in human nature which, as God

¹³ CCC 1909

¹⁴ Rom. 13:1

¹⁵ CCC 1938

¹⁶ CCC 1912

¹⁷ CCC 1932

¹⁸ CCC 1935

¹⁹ CCC 1897

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intended, should ensure the common good of society.²⁰

18. The economy must serve people, not the other way around. People are more important than things. Labor is more important than capital. Examples of unjust economic practices are *Global systems of economic injustice, nationalism and economic competition, unjust labor practices, widespread unemployment and low wages in impoverished countries,*

Solidarity

19. The common good of the whole human family calls for an organization of society on the international level.²¹ *Sweatshops, child labor, ethnic division, persecution of minority populations, displacement of people from their land, small and large-scale military conflicts, gang violence* are all examples of why the common good is not achieved and as a result many suffer.
20. Authority is exercised legitimately only when it seeks the common good of the group concerned and if it employs morally licit means to attain it. **If rulers were to enact unjust laws or take measures contrary to the moral order, such arrangements would not be binding in conscience.** In such a case, “authority breaks down completely and results in shameful abuse.”²² Examples of how the common good is not exercised by societies and public authorities are:
- *Institutionalized racism, neglect of minority communities, ethnic genocide, imprisonment of political dissidents, abuse of prisoners, denial of political and social freedom.*

Care for God's Creation

21. Man also has a responsibility to care for the environment. God gave man the command to “cultivate and care for” the land.²³ Society does not always do so. Examples - Environmental destruction, loss of habitat for creatures and people, unsustainable consumption of global resources.

²⁰ CCC 1898

²¹ CCC 1927

²² CCC 1903

²³ Gen 2:15