



Catholic Social Teaching *for Everyone*

SESSION ONE:
Overview

PRAYER TO THE CREATOR

Lord, Father of our human family,
you created all human beings equal
in dignity: pour forth into our hearts
a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a
dream of renewed encounter,
dialogue, justice and peace.

Move us to create healthier societies
and a more dignified world, a world
without hunger, poverty, violence
and war.

May our hearts be open to all the
peoples and nations of the earth.

May we recognize the goodness and
beauty that you have sown in each
of us, and thus, forge bonds of
unity, common projects, and shared
dreams. Amen.

Source: *Fratelli Tutti*, 2020 Encyclical by Pope
Francis

Opening Exercise of Introductions

We invite you to connect with the others at your table:

- Share your name
- Discuss briefly any involvements at SJN
- How familiar are you with Catholic Social Teaching?

What is Catholic Social Teaching?

- “The Church’s social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of the whole of what has been revealed by Jesus Christ.” (CCC 2422)
- It “belongs to the field . . . of theology and particularly of moral theology.” (CSDC 72)
- “The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society.” (USCCB)

What is Catholic Social Teaching?

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- “Catholic social teaching is a central and essential element of our faith. Its roots are in the Hebrew prophets who announced God’s special love for the poor and called God's people to a covenant of love and justice. It is a teaching founded on the life and words of Jesus Christ, who came ‘to bring glad tidings to the poor . . . liberty to captives . . . recovery of sight to the blind’(Lk 4:18-19), and who identified himself with ‘the least of these,’ the hungry and the stranger (cf. Mt 25:45).” (USCCB)

Where does Catholic Social Teaching come from?

SCRIPTURE, *including*:

- Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17)
- Old Testament Prophets
- Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7)
- Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37)
- Judgment of the Nations (Mt 25:31-46)

Where does Catholic Social Teaching come from?

cont'd

TRADITION

- **Long line of papal documents, *including*:**
 - *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labor), Leo XIII, 1891
 - *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), St. John XXIII, 1963
 - *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples), St. Paul VI, 1967
 - *Fidei Depositum* (On the Publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*), St. John Paul II, 1992
 - *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life), St. John Paul II, 1995
 - *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth), Benedict XVI, 2009
 - *Laudato Si'* (On Care for Our Common Home), Francis, 2015
 - *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship), Francis, 2020
 - *Dilexi Te* (On Love for the Poor), Leo XIV, 2025

Where does Catholic Social Teaching come from?

cont'd

TRADITION

- **Documents from the Second Vatican Council:**
 - *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 1965
 - *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Liberty), 1965
- **Vatican documents, including:**
 - *Dignitas Personae* (The Dignity of the Person), Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1998
 - *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004

Where does Catholic Social Teaching come from?

cont'd

TRADITION

- **Documents from the U.S. Bishops, including:**
 - *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, 1983
 - *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, 1986
 - *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call of Love, A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*, 2018
 - *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility*, 2015 (with 2023 Introductory Note).

Visit bit.ly/USCCB-CST-documents or scan the QR code for a full list of relevant Church documents.



Where does Catholic Social Teaching come from?

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- “The Church's social teaching proposes principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgment; it gives guidelines for action.” (CCC 2423)
- CST “allows us to address appropriately the social issues of our day...” (CSDC 9)
- “We may think that we give glory to God only by our worship and prayer, or simply by following certain ethical norms. It is true that the primacy belongs to our relationship with God, but we cannot forget that the ultimate criterion on which our lives will be judged is what we have done for others.” (Pope Francis, 2018 “Rejoice and Be Glad,” 104)

Themes of Catholic Social Teachings

LIFE and DIGNITY of the HUMAN PERSON

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision in society.



Themes of Catholic Social Teachings



OPTION for the POOR & VULNERABLE

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. Our tradition instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Themes of Catholic Social Teachings

CALL to FAMILY, COMMUNITY, and PARTICIPATION

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society — in economics and politics, in law and policy — directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.



Themes of Catholic Social Teachings

Dignity  WORK



The DIGNITY of WORK
and the
RIGHTS of WORKERS

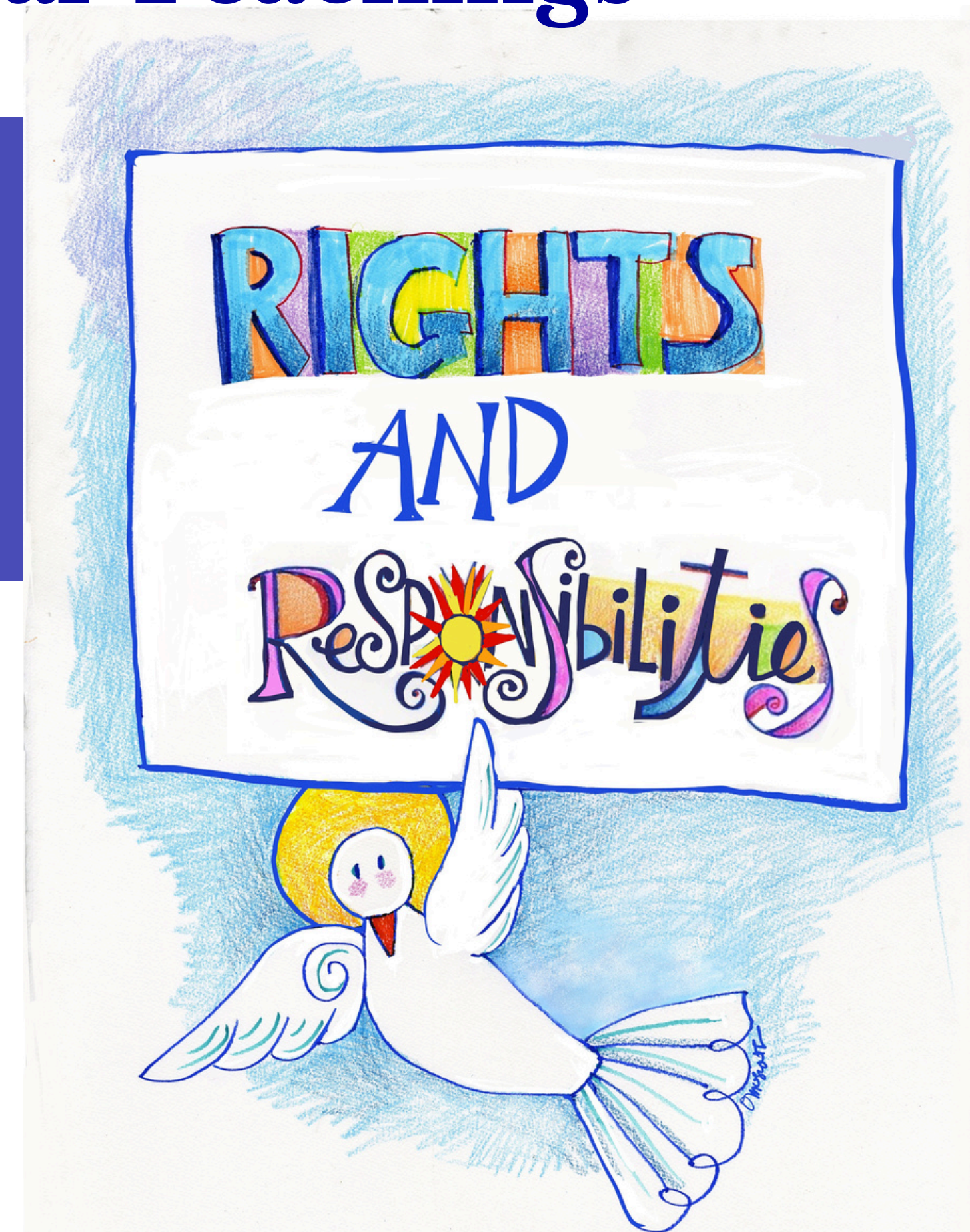
*The economy must serve people,
not the other way around.*

*Work is more than a way to make a living;
it is a form of continuing participation
in God's creation.*

Themes of Catholic Social Teachings

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.



Themes of Catholic Social Teachings



SOLIDARITY

*We are one human family
whatever our national, racial, ethnic,
economic, and ideological differences.
We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers,
wherever they may be.*

Themes of Catholic Social Teachings

CARE for GOD'S CREATION

*We show our respect for the Creator
by our stewardship of creation.*

*Care for the earth...is a
requirement of our faith.*

Licensed art by Br. Mickey McGrath, OSFS



Putting Catholic Social Teaching into Practice

“It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the Church's social doctrine, the light of which is Truth, Justice its objective, and Love its driving force.”
(Mater et Magistra 226)

“There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: see, judge, act.”
(Mater et Magistra 236)



Around Your Table:
Reflect on Relevant Quotes

Quote for Reflection

“The principles and themes of Catholic Social Teaching “provide a moral framework that does not easily fit ideologies of ‘right’ or ‘left,’ ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative,’ or the platform of any political party. They are not partisan or sectarian, but reflect fundamental ethical principles that are common to all people.” (USCCB, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, no. 55.)

Discussion Question

How does this statement fit with your understanding of the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching, as we’ve outlined them here? Can the Church’s social teachings help bridge divides among people today? Why?

Quote for Reflection

“ The principle of the common good, to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people... A society that wishes and intends to remain at the service of the human being at every level is a society that has the common good . . . as its primary goal.”

(CSDC 164, 165)

Discussion Question

Should society focus on the dignity, unity, and equality of all people (i.e. principles of the common good) in their policy discussions or implementation of reforms? How realistic is this? Why?

A blurred, long-exposure photograph of a swimmer in a pool. The swimmer is wearing a red swim cap and goggles, and is captured in a dynamic, forward-leaning posture. The background is a dark, blue-green color, suggesting an indoor pool setting. The text "Taking Action" is overlaid in a large, white, serif font across the center of the image.

Taking Action

Expectation for Future Sessions

- In each of the subsequent sessions, we will delve more deeply into one of the themes of Catholic Social Teaching.
- Prior to our closing prayer in each session, we will identify ministries within the parish aligned with that week's teaching.
- Representatives from the identified ministries or organizations will be present to talk with us about their mission.

Why is There an Expectation of Action?

- The Lord's Prayer: "Central to our identity as Catholics is that we are called to be leaven for transforming the world, agents for bringing about a kingdom of love and justice. When we pray, 'Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' we are praying for God's kingdom of justice and peace and committing ourselves to breaking down the barriers that obstruct God's kingdom of justice and peace and to working to bring about a world more respectful of human life and dignity." (USCCB, "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions," 1988)
- The U.S. bishops invite us to examine our consciences in light of the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching.

Examples of Examining Your Conscience

Life & Dignity of the Human Person

Do I work to protect the dignity of others when it is being threatened?

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Am I aware of problems facing my local community and involved in efforts to find solutions?

Rights & Responsibilities

Do I urge those in power to implement programs and policies that give priority to the human dignity and rights of all, especially the vulnerable?

Options for the Poor & Vulnerable

Do I give special attention to the needs of the poor and vulnerable in my community and in the world?



bit.ly/CST-Examine

Examples of Examining Your Conscience



The Dignity of Work & the Right of Workers

Do I treat all workers with whom I interact with respect, no matter their position or class?

Solidarity

Does the way I spend my time reflect a genuine concern for others?

Care for God's Creation

Do I live out my responsibility to care for God's creation?

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CLOSING PRAYER

Life and Dignity of the human Person Prayer (USCCB)

God of all life,
Help us to appreciate the great gift
that is human life formed in your
image, a reflection of your holiness.
Help us to recognize you in all
whom you have created:

children not yet born, families
affected by poverty and war, people
of different abilities, people from
other lands, and all who are victims
of hatred and racism.

Help us to bear witness to the
dignity of all whom you have
created, regardless of stage of life,
or wealth, or ability, or color, or
creed, for every person is fully
equal in your loving eyes.
Share with us your holy knowledge
that we are all your children,
each bestowed with inherent
dignity.
May your justice reign forever!
Amen.