

TWO FOUNDATIONAL CONVICTIONS

Promote, protect, encounter the dignity of persons.

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Created in God's image, all persons have fundamental dignity. From this dignity flow the moral claims to the freedoms, the fulfillment of basic needs, and the social conditions necessary for their development. Persons experience their dignity and the dignity of others most fully in the giving and receiving that comes within a variety of relationships.

Work for the common good.

The common good is the sum total of social conditions that allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. Working for the common good is a social expression of love, meeting the needs of neighbors within the dimensions of one's life. It "sees" the particular community as it is and as it could be, it "judges" social processes by the requirements of justice, and it "acts" to support or change the processes to enhance the development of persons and their dignity.

FOUR PARTICULAR THEMES

Give priority to the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized.

Throughout Scripture, we see God's love for the poor; indeed, Jesus identifies himself with the poor. Thus, we are called to make a "preferential option for the poor." In charity we care for the immediate needs of the poor, giving them something that is our own. In justice we respond to the social practices that work against the inclusion of the marginalized into full participation in society, enabling them to have what is due them.

Work for peace and the development of peoples.

Conflict will always be a part of life, but violence does not have to be. We are to actively take part in actions and practices to make violence and war less likely. These include understanding and addressing the causes of conflict, building relationships, and working for the development of persons, nations, and groups.

Recognize the dignity of work and the rights of workers.

Work is a key element of the social order. It provides the material means for persons to develop, the opportunity for self-expression, the foundation for the support of the family, and it contributes to the well-being of society. The significance of work primarily resides in the worker and thus the worker has moral claims to appropriate working conditions and compensation.

Care for creation.

Creation is the order of God's love and a place for us to encounter God. The earth is the common home of persons, meant for the use of all people and the rest of God's creatures. Our flourishing, the hope of future generations, and the integrity of the earth are bound to our concern for and responsible stewardship of God's interconnected creation.

THE INTEGRATIVE THEME

Live mercy, solidarity, and love.

Love of neighbor is the primary social responsibility of Christians and is at the heart of Catholic social teaching. With solidarity we see other persons and nations, whether next to us or across the globe, as neighbors loved by God. It impels us to do justice and to transcend justice with compassion and mercy.



Catholic social teaching is part of the Catholic intellectual and moral tradition rooted in the Bible and developed through history.

Some Ways to Live Catholic Social Teaching at the University of St. Thomas