



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

## Social Development and World Peace

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### Catholic Teaching and Principles

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#### [The Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching](#)

- **Catholic Teaching on the Life and Dignity of the Human Person:** Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, each person's life and dignity must be respected, whether that person is an innocent unborn child in a mother's womb, whether that person worked in the World Trade Center or a market in Baghdad, or even whether that person is a convicted criminal on death row. We believe that every human life is sacred from conception to natural death, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it protects and respects the life and dignity of the human person. —USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 13
- **Catholic Teaching on the Call to Family, Community, and Participation:** The human person is not only sacred, but social. The God-given institutions of marriage—a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman—and family are central and serve as the foundations for social life. Marriage and family should be supported and strengthened, not undermined. Every person has a right to participate in social, economic, and political life and a corresponding duty to work for the advancement of the common good and the well-being of all, especially the poor and weak. —USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 13
- **Catholic Teaching on Solidarity:** We are one human family. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Pope John Paul II insists, "We are all really responsible for all." Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice." The Gospel calls us to be "peacemakers." Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we be "sentinels of peace" in a world wounded by violence and conflict. —USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 15
- **Catholic Teaching on the Dignity of Work:** 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 act of creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers, owners, and others must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and choose to join a union, to economic initiative, and to ownership and private property. These rights must be exercised in ways that advance the common good. —USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 15
- **Catholic Teaching on Rights and Responsibilities:** Every person has a fundamental right to life—the right that makes all other rights possible. Each person also has a right to the conditions for living a decent life—faith and family life, food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing. We also have a duty to secure and respect these rights not only for ourselves, but for others, and to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, to each other, and to the larger society. —USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 14
- **Catholic Teaching on the Option for the Poor and Vulnerable:** Scripture teaches that God has a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. The Church calls on all of us to embrace this preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, to embody it in our lives, and to work to have it shape public policies and priorities. A fundamental measure of our society is how we care for and stand with the poor and vulnerable. —USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 15
- **Catholic Teaching on Caring for God's Creation:** The world that God created has been entrusted to us. Our use of it must be directed by God's plan for creation, not simply for our own benefit. Our stewardship of the Earth is a form of participation in God's act of creating and sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must be guided by a concern for generations to come. We show our respect for the Creator by our care for

creation. —USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 15

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### [Human Dignity](#)

- There is a growing awareness of the sublime dignity of human persons, who stand above all things and whose rights and duties are universal and inviolable. They ought, therefore, to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing... the right to education, and work. , #26.
- The struggle against destitution, though urgent and necessary, is not enough. It is a question, rather, of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man. *On the Development of Peoples*, #47.
- ...this Council lays stress on reverence for the human person; everyone must consider one's every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus. *The Church and the Modern World*, #27.
- ... Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do no more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. *The Church and the Modern World*, #27.
- Wherefore, whatever the progress in technology and economic life, there can be neither justice nor peace in the world, so long as men fail to realize how great is their dignity; for they have been created by God and are His children. *Mother and Teacher*, #215.
- Life, especially human life, belongs to God; whoever attacks human life attacks God's very self. *The Gospel of Life*, #9.
- The basis for all that the Church believes about the moral dimensions of economic life is its vision of the transcendent worth – the sacredness – of human beings. The dignity of the human person, realized in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured. All human beings, therefore, are ends to be served by the institutions that make up the economy, not means to be exploited for more narrowly defined goals. Human personhood must be respected with a reverence that is religious. When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred. For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God (Gn 1:27). *Economic Justice for All*, #28.
- At the center of all Catholic social teaching are the transcendence of God and the dignity of the human person. The human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world; all of the Church's work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflect God, but is the expression of God's creative work and the meaning of Christ's redemptive ministry. *The Challenge of Peace*, #15.
- The center of the Church's social teaching is the life, dignity, and rights of the human person. We are called in a special way to serve the poor and vulnerable; to build bridges of solidarity among peoples of differing races and nations, language and ability, gender and culture. *Communities of Salt and Light*, 3.

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### [Option for the Poor](#)

- There are certainly situations whose injustice cries to heaven. When whole populations destitute of necessities live in a state of dependence barring them from all initiative and responsibility, and all opportunity to advance culturally and share in social and political life, recourse to violence, as a means to right these wrongs to human dignity, is a grave temptation. *On the Development of Peoples*, #30.
- Let each one examine his conscience, a conscience that conveys a new message for our times. Is he prepared to support out of his own pocket works and understanding organized in favor of the most destitute? Is he ready to pay higher taxes so that the public authorities can intensify their efforts in favor of development? Is he ready to pay a higher price for imported goods so that the producer may be more justly rewarded? *On the Development of Peoples*, #48.
- "If a brother or a sister be naked," says Saint James; "if they lack their daily nourishment, and one of you says to them: 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled', without giving them what is necessary for the body, what good does it do?" (Jas 2: 15-16) Today no one can be ignorant any longer of the fact that in whole continents countless men and women are ravished by hunger, countless numbers of children are undernourished, so that many of them die in infancy, while the physical growth and mental development of many others are retarded and as a result whole regions are condemned to the most depressing despondency. *On the Development of Peoples*, #45.

*Development of Peoples, #45.*

- Perhaps the most pressing question of our day concerns the relationship between economically advanced commonwealths and those that are in process of development. The former enjoy the conveniences of life; the latter experience dire poverty. Yet, today men are so intimately associated in all parts of the world that they feel, as it were, as if they are members of one and the same household. Therefore, the nations that enjoy a sufficiency and abundance of everything may not overlook the plight of other nations whose citizens experience such domestic problems that they are all but overcome by poverty and hunger, and are not able to enjoy basic human rights. *Mother and Teacher, #157.*
- Let each one examine his conscience, a conscience that conveys a new message for our times. Is he prepared to support out of his own pocket works and understanding organized in favor of the most destitute? Is he ready to pay higher taxes so that the public authorities can intensify their efforts in favor of development? Is he ready to pay a higher price for imported goods so that the producer may be more justly rewarded? *On the Development of Peoples, #48.*
- Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the world's citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy. *The Church in the Modern World, #4.*
- In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others. *A Call to Action, #23.*
- ...Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that at the root of war there are usually real and serious grievances: injustices suffered, legitimate aspirations frustrated, poverty, and the exploitation of multitudes of desperate people who see no real possibility of improving their lot by peaceful means. For this reason, another name for peace is development. Just as there is a collective responsibility for avoiding war, so too there is a collective responsibility for promoting development. *The Hundredth Year, #52 (p. 100).*
- Therefore political leaders, and citizens of rich countries considered as individuals, especially if they are Christians, have the moral obligation, according to the degree of each one's responsibility, to take into consideration, in personal decisions and decisions of government, this relationship of universality, this interdependence which exists between their conduct and the poverty and underdevelopment which exists between their conduct and the poverty of so many millions of people. *On Social Concern, #9.*
- "The needs of the poor take priority over the desires of the rich; the rights of workers over the maximization of profits; the preservation of the environment over uncontrolled industrial expansion; the production to meet social needs over production for military purposes." (Address on Christian Unity in a Technological Age [Toronto, Sept. 14, 1984] in *Origins* 14:16 [Oct. 4, 1984]). *Economic Justice for All, #94.*
- The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation. *Economic Justice for All, #86.*
- Christian love draws us to serve the weak and vulnerable among us. We are called to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless. We are also summoned to restore the land; to provide clean, safe water to drink and unpolluted air to breathe; to preserve endangered species; to protect wild places; and to help the poor help themselves. *Renewing the Earth, 11.*
- A consistent theme of Catholic social teaching is the option or love of preference for the poor. Today, this preference has to be expressed in worldwide dimensions, embracing the immense number of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and those without hope. *On Social Concern, #42.*
- Poverty is not only a question of having no material goods. Is the lack of human rights not also a form of poverty? *On Social Concern, #15.*
- Faced with a world today where so many people are suffering from want, the council asks individuals and governments to remember the saying of the Fathers: "Feed the people dying of hunger, because if you do not feed them you are killing them," (1 Cor 7:5) and it urges them according to their ability to share and dispose of their goods to help others, above all by giving them aid which will enable them to help and development themselves. *The Church and the Modern World, #69.*
- Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church see Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice. *The Hundredth Year, #58, p. 108*
- The poor ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity for work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all. The advancement of the poor constitutes a great opportunity for the moral, cultural, and even economic growth of all humanity. *The Hundredth Year, #28, p. 55*
- In spite of the great changes which have taken place in the more advanced societies, the human inadequacies of capitalism and the resulting domination of things over people are far from disappearing. In fact, for the poor, to the lack of material goods has been added a lack of knowledge and training which prevents from escaping their state of humiliating subjection. *The Hundredth Year, #33, p. 65*
- This duty is not limited to one's own family, nation or State, but extends progressively to all mankind, since no one can consider himself extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family. No one can say that he is not responsible for the well-being of his brother or sister (cf. Gen 4:9; Lk 10:29-37; Mt 25:31-46). *The Hundredth Year, #51, p. 99*
- This is the culture which is hoped for, one which fosters trust in the human potential of the poor, and consequently in their ability to improve their condition through work or to make a positive contribution to economic prosperity. But to accomplish this, the poor –be they individuals or nations—need to be provided with realistic opportunities. Creating such conditions calls for a concerted worldwide effort to promote

with realistic opportunities. Creating such conditions calls for a concerted worldwide effort to promote development, an effort which also involves sacrificing positions of income and of power enjoyed by the more developed economies. This may mean making important changes in established life-styles, in order to limit the waste of environmental and human resources, thus enabling every individual and all the peoples of the earth to have a sufficient share of those resources. In addition, the new material and spiritual resources must be utilized which are the result of the work and culture of peoples who today are on the margins of the international community, so as to obtain an overall human enrichment of the family of nations. *The Hundredth Year*, #52 (p. 101).

- More than 33 million Americans - about one in every seven people in our nation - are poor by the government's official definition. The norms of human dignity and the preferential option for the poor compel us to confront this issue with a sense of urgency. Dealing with poverty is not a luxury to which our nation can attend when it finds the time and resources. Rather, it is a moral imperative of the highest priority. *Economic Justice for All*, #170.
- That so many people are poor in a nation as rich as ours is a social and moral scandal that we cannot ignore. *Economic Justice for All*, #16.
- As individuals and as a nation, therefore, we are called to make a fundamental "option for the poor." The obligation to evaluate social and economic activity from the viewpoint of the poor and the powerless arises from the radical command to love one's neighbor as one's self. Those who are marginalized and whose rights are denied have privileged claims if society is to provide justice for all. This obligation is deeply rooted in Christian belief. *Economic Justice for All*, #87.
- The primer purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. The "option for the poor," therefore, is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons. These wounds will be healed only by greater solidarity with the poor and among the poor themselves. *Economic Justice for All*, #88.
- The quality of the national discussion about our economic future will affect the poor most of all, in this country and throughout the world. The life and dignity of millions of men, women and children hang in the balance. Decisions must be judged in light of what they do for the poor, what they do to the poor, and what they enable the poor to do for themselves. The fundamental moral criterion for all economic decisions, policies, and institutions is this: They must be at the service of all people, especially the poor. *Economic Justice for All*, #24.
- As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental "option for the poor" – to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess life styles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. This "option for the poor" does not mean pitting one group against another, but rather, strengthening the whole community by assisting those who are the most vulnerable. As Christians, we are called to respond to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, but those with the greatest needs require the greatest response. *Economic Justice for All (Pastoral Message)*, #16.
- Solidarity does not mean choosing the poor over everyone else, but recognizing that authentic human development cannot be achieved without the inclusion of poor people as full participants in society. This means not only that the poor must have access to enough food, but that the poor must have a real voice in deciding how the food system—and indeed, society itself—should be organized to serve the common good, at home and abroad. *Food Policy in a Hungry World*, 8.
- ...the common good requires solidarity with the poor who are often without the resources to face many problems, including the potential impacts of climate change. Our obligations to the one human family stretch across space and time. They tie us to the poor in our midst and across the globe, as well as to future generations. The commandment to love our neighbor invites us to consider the poor and marginalized of other nations as true brothers and sisters who share with us the one table of life intended by God for the enjoyment of all. *Global Climate Change*, 11.
- Each of us should carefully consider our choices and lifestyles. We live in a culture that prizes the consumption of material goods. While the poor often have too little, many of us can be easily caught up in a frenzy of wanting more and more—a bigger home, a larger car, etc. Even though energy resources literally fuel our economy and provide a good quality of life, we need to ask about ways we can conserve energy, prevent pollution, and live more simply. *Global Climate Change*, 15.
- Even with enhanced international debt relief, strongly urged by our bishops' conference in the 1999 statement A Jubilee Call for Debt Forgiveness, a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa continue to pay debt services that average close to one-quarter of government revenues, thereby shifting already limited resources away from vital health delivery services, education, and other efforts to eliminate poverty. In an age of globalization, Africa is quickly becoming the primary place of poverty in the world. Given the deepening crisis, today's global response remains inadequate and indefensible. *A Call to Solidarity with Africa*, 13, 15.
- A Church that teaches an option for the poor must reflect that option in our serve to those in need. Parish efforts to meet human needs also provide valuable experience, expertise, and credibility in advocating for public policy to address the forces that leave people in need to our charity. *Communities of Salt and Light*, 8.
- The fact that starvation is still a brutal reality in a world with the technical capacity to feed everyone touches all of us. Something is basically wrong when hunger still haunts the richest nation on earth, when thousands of family farmers who produce our food cannot sustain their own families and keep their farms, and when public policy seems designed to promote and reward the biggest and richest farmers at the expense of smaller and more moderately sized farms, for which the original programs were intended. *Food Policy in a Hungry World*, 5.

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### [Dignity of Work](#)

- Work remains a good thing, not only because it is useful and enjoyable, but also because it expresses and increases the worker's dignity. Through work we not only transform the world, we are transformed ourselves, becoming "more a human being." *On Human Work*, #9.
- The obligation to earn one's bread by the sweat of one's brow presumes the right to do so. A society in which this right is systematically denied, in which economic policies do not allow workers to reach satisfactory levels of employment, cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can that society attain social peace. *The Hundredth Year*, #43 p. 88
- Human work is the key to the solution... of the whole "social question." To consider work is of decisive importance when trying to make life "more human." *On Human Work*, #3.
- Yet the workers' rights cannot be doomed to be the mere result of economic systems aimed at maximum profits. The thing that must shape the whole economy is respect for the workers' rights within each country and all through the world's economy. *On Human Work*, #17.
- As the Church solemnly reaffirmed in the recent Council, "the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 25: AAS 58 (1966), p. 1045.) All people have the right to work, to a chance to develop their qualities and their personalities in the exercise of their professions, to equitable remuneration which will enable them and their families "to lead a worthy life on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 67: p. 1089.) and to assistance in case of need arising from sickness or age. *A Call to Action*, #14.
- We must consequently continue to study the situation of the worker. There is a need for solidarity movements among and with the workers. The church is firmly committed to this cause, in fidelity to Christ, and to be truly the "church of the poor." *On Human Work*, #8.
- It is in their daily work... that persons become the subjects and creators of the economic life of the nation. Thus, it is primarily through their daily labor that people make their most important contributions to economic justice. *Economic Justice for All*, #96.
- ...the opportunity to engage in farming should be protected as a valuable form of work. At a time when unemployment in the country is already too high, any unnecessary increase in the number of unemployed people, however small, should be avoided. Farm unemployment leads to further rural unemployment as rural businesses lose their customers and close down. The loss of people from the land also entails the loss of expertise in farm and land management and creates a need for retraining and relocating another group of displaced workers. *Economic Justice for All*, #236.
- It is largely as hired farm laborers rather than farm owners that minorities participate in the farm economy. Along with many white farmworkers, they are, by and large, the poorest paid and least benefited of any laboring group in the country. Moreover, they are not as well protected by law and public policy as other groups of workers; and their efforts to organize and bargain collectively have been systematically and vehemently resisted, usually by farmers themselves. Migratory field workers are particularly susceptible to low wages. This is reflected not only in their characteristically low wages but also in the low standards of housing, health care, and education made available to these workers and their families. *Economic Justice for All*, #230.
- ...Farmworkers have a legitimate right to belong to unions of their choice and to bargain collectively for just wages and working conditions. In pursuing that right, they are protecting the value of labor in agriculture, a protection that also applies to farmers who devote their own labor to their farm operations. *Economic Justice for All*, #249.

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### [Solidarity](#)

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalsolidarity.shtml>

- Solidarity... is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and each individual, because we are all really responsible for all... *On Social Concern*, #38.
- Those who are more influential because they have greater share of goods and common services should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess... the Church feels called to take her stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests and to help satisfy them, without losing sight of the good of groups in the context of the common good. *On Social Concern*, #39.
- A consistent theme of Catholic social teaching is the option or love of preference for the poor. Today, this preference has to be expressed in worldwide dimensions, embracing the immense number of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and those without hope. *On Social Concern*, #42.
- One must denounce the economic, financial, and social mechanisms and structures that are manipulated by the rich and powerful for their own benefit at the expense of the poor. *On Social Concern*, #16.
- I appeal to all to be convinced of the seriousness of the moment, to fulfill your commitment by the way you live, by the use of your resources, by your civic activity, by contributing to economic and political decisions,

and by personal involvement in national and international undertakings. *On Social Concern*, #47

- Solidarity helps us to see the 'other' –whether a person, people or nation- not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our 'neighbor,' a 'helper' (cf. Gn 2:18-20), to be made a sharer on a par with ourselves in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God. *On Social Concern*, #39.
- Interdependence must be transformed into solidarity, grounded on the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all. Avoiding every type of imperialism, the stronger nations must feel responsible for the other nations, based on the equality of all peoples and with respect for the differences. *On Social Concern*, #39.
- Therefore political leaders, and citizens of rich countries considered as individuals, especially if they are Christians, have the moral obligation, according to the degree of each one's responsibility, to take into consideration, in personal decisions and decisions of government, this relationship of universality, this interdependence which exists between their conduct and the poverty and underdevelopment which exists between their conduct and the poverty of so many millions of people. *On Social Concern*, #9.
- All must consider it their sacred duty to count social obligations among their chief duties today and observe them as such. For the more closely the world comes together, the more widely do people's obligations transcend particular groups and extend to the whole world. This will be realized only if individuals and groups practice moral and social virtues and foster them in social living. Then, under the necessary help of divine grace, there will arise a generation of new women and men, the molders of new humanity. *The Church in the Modern World*, #30.
- One of the most striking features of today's world, and one due in no small measure to modern technical progress, is the very great increase in mutual interdependence between people. *The Church in the Modern World*, #23.
- We have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries: for this reason we have obligations towards all, and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us to enlarge the human family. The reality of human solidarity, which is a benefit for us, also imposes a duty. *On the Development of Peoples*, #17.
- Another root of this contradiction between affirmation and practice lies in a notion of freedom that exalts the individual in an absolute way giving no place to solidarity, openness to others, or service of them, asking like Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gn 4:9). Yes, human beings are their brother's and sister's keepers. God entrusts us to one another. Our freedom has a relational dimension; we find our fulfillment through the gift of self to others. *The Gospel of Life*, #19.
- The solidarity which binds all men together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist. *Mother and Teacher*, #157.
- There can be no progress towards the complete development of the human person without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity. *On the Development of Peoples*, #43.
- The same duty of solidarity that rests on individuals exists also for nations: "Advanced nations have a very heavy obligation to help the developing peoples." (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 86, # 3.) It is necessary to put this teaching of the Council into effect. Although it is normal that a nation should be the first to benefit from the gifts that Providence has bestowed on it as the fruit of the labors of its people, still no country can claim on that account to keep its wealth for itself alone. Every nation must produce more and better quality goods to give to all its inhabitants a truly human standard of living, and also to contribute to the common development of the human race. Given the increasing needs of the underdeveloped countries, it should be considered quite normal for an advanced country to devote a part of its production to meet their needs, and to train teachers, engineers, technicians and scholars prepared to put their knowledge and their skill at the disposal of less fortunate peoples. *On the Development of Peoples*, #48.
- Legislation is necessary, but it is not sufficient for setting up true relationships of justice and equality... If, beyond legal rules, there is really no deeper feeling of respect for and service to others, then even equality before the law can serve as an alibi for flagrant discrimination, continued exploitation and actual contempt. Without a renewed education in solidarity, an overemphasis on equality can give rise to an individualism in which each one claims his own rights without wishing to be answerable for the common good. *A Call to Action*, #23.
- Government officials, it is your concern to mobilize your peoples to form a more effective world solidarity, and above all to make them accept the necessary taxes on their luxuries and their wasteful expenditures, in order to bring about development and to save the peace. *On the Development of Peoples*, #84.
- "It is lawful for man to own his own things. It is even necessary for human life." (St. Thomas, "Summa Theologica," II-II, Q.66, Art. 2) But if the question be asked: How ought man to use his possessions? the Church replies without hesitation: "As to this point, man ought not regard external goods as his own, but as common so that, in fact, a person should readily share them when he sees others in need. Wherefore the Apostle says: 'Charge the rich of this world...to give readily, to share with others!'" (St. Thomas, "Summa Theologica," Q.65, Art. 2) No one, certainly, is obliged to assist others out of what is required for his own necessary use or for that of his family, or even to give to others what he himself needs to maintain his station in life becomingly and decently: "No one is obliged to live unbecomingly." (St. Thomas, "Summa Theologica," Q.32, Art. 6) But when the demands of necessity and propriety have been met, it is a duty to give to the poor out of that which remains. "Give that which remains as alms." (St. Luke, 11, 41) These are duties not of justice, except in cases of extreme need, but of Christian charity, which obviously cannot be enforced by legal action. But the laws and judgments of men yield precedence to the law and judgment of Christ the Lord, Who

in many ways urges the practice of alms-giving: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20, 35) *On the Condition of Workers*, #36.

- The commandment "You shall not kill," even in its more positive aspects of respecting, loving and promoting human life, is binding on every individual human being. It resounds in the moral conscience of everyone as an irrepressible echo of the original covenant of God the Creator with mankind. It can be recognized by everyone through the light of reason and it can be observed thanks to the mysterious working of the Spirit who, blowing where he wills (cf. Jn 3:8), comes to and involves every person living in this world. It is therefore a service of love which we are all committed to ensure to our neighbor, that his or her life may be always defended and promoted, especially when it is weak or threatened. It is not only a personal but a social concern which we must all foster: a concern to make unconditional respect for human life the foundation of a renewed society. *The Gospel of Life*, #77.
- By virtue of our sharing in Christ's royal mission, our support and promotion of human life must be accomplished through the service of charity, which finds expression in personal witness, various forms of volunteer work, social activity and political commitment. This is a particularly pressing need at the present time, when the "culture of death" so forcefully opposes the "culture of life" and often seems to have the upper hand. But even before that it is a need which springs from "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). As the Letter of James admonishes us: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled', without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (2:14-17). In our service of charity, we must be inspired and distinguished by a specific attitude: we must care for the other as a person for whom God has made us responsible. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to become neighbors to everyone (cf. Lk 10:29-37), and to show special favor to those who are poorest, most alone and most in need. In helping the hungry, the thirsty, the foreigner, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned—as well as the child in the womb and the old person who is suffering or near death—we have the opportunity to serve Jesus. He himself said: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Hence we cannot but feel called to account and judged by the ever relevant words of Saint John Chrysostom: "Do you wish to honor the body of Christ? Do not neglect it when you find it naked. Do not do it homage here in the church with silk fabrics only to neglect it outside where it suffers cold and nakedness." (In Matthaëum, Hom. L. 3: PG 58, 508). *The Gospel of Life*, #87.
- We have to move from our devotion to independence, through an understanding of interdependence, to a commitment to human solidarity. That challenge must find its realization in the kind of community we build among us. Love implies concern for all – especially the poor – and a continued search for those social and economic structures that permit everyone to share in a community that is a part of a redeemed creation (Rom 8:21-23). *Economic Justice for All*, #365.
- In our parishes, the Eucharist represents a central setting for discovering and expressing our commitment to our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Gathered around the altar, we are reminded of our connection to all of God's people through the mystical body of Christ. U.S. Catholic Bishops *Called to Global Solidarity*
- A parish reaching beyond its own members and beyond national boundaries is a truly "catholic" parish. U.S. Catholic Bishops *Called to Global Solidarity*
- The voices of parishioners need to be heard on behalf of children who are being destroyed by abortion, starvation, landmines, or lack of health care. U.S. Catholic Bishops *Called to Global Solidarity*
- Our international responsibilities enrich parish life and deepen genuine Catholic identity. Integrating themes of solidarity into the routines of parish life will make for a richer, more Catholic experience of Church. In giving a little, we receive much more. U.S. Catholic Bishops *Called to Global Solidarity*
- Parishes are called to help those who suffer in our own communities and in situations of poverty and pain around the world. U.S. Catholic Bishops *Called to Global Solidarity*
- The Church's teaching on international justice and peace is not simply a mandate for a few large agencies, but a challenge for every believer and every Catholic community of faith. U.S. Catholic Bishops *Called to Global Solidarity*
- We respond very generously when the network news tells us of hurricanes and famines, but how will we help those victimized by the often less visible disasters of poverty caused by structural injustice, such as debt, ethnic conflict, and the arms trade? Our Church and parishes must call us anew to sacrifice and concern for a new generation of children who need food, justice, peace, and the Gospel. A central task for the next century is building families of faith that reach out beyond national boundaries. U.S. Catholic Bishops *Called to Global Solidarity*
- More than 80 percent of the world's people live in developing countries. They use just 20 percent of the world's wealth. The remaining 20 percent of the world's people live in industrialized nations and control 80 percent of the world's wealth. USCCB. *Called to Global Solidarity*
- Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gn 4:9), has global implications and is a special challenge for our time, touching not one brother but all our sisters and brothers. Are we responsible for the fate of the world's poor? Do we have duties to suffering people in far-off places? Must we respond to the needs of suffering refugees in distant nations? Are we keepers of the creation for future generations? For the followers of Jesus, the answer is yes. U.S. Bishops *Called to Global Solidarity*.
- Catholic social teaching more than anything else insists that we are one family; it calls us to overcome barriers of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, economic status, and nationality. We are all one in Christ Jesus (cf. Gal 3:28) – beyond our differences and boundaries. *Communities of Salt and Light*, 10.
- Concern for basic human dignity and the global common good must be shaped by the virtue of solidarity. Pope John Paul II described solidarity as "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is, to the good of all and of each individual; it is the moral principle and social responsibility for

*common good*; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (*On Social Concern*, #38). In the case of debt, solidarity is the virtue that motivates people around the world to work toward alleviating the debt burden in order to give new hope to the poorest of the poor. Solidarity also calls for co-responsibility on the part of debtors and creditors in finding fair and workable solutions to this crisis, as part of a broader commitment to protect human life and respect human dignity. *A Jubilee Call for Debt Forgiveness*, 12.

- Our culture often suggests that religion is a private matter, to be tolerated as long as it is detached from our lives as workers and citizens. Catholic men and women look to our parishes to find the support, tools, and concrete help they need to resist this tendency and instead proclaim Christ's love, justice and peace in everything they do. *Everyday Christianity*, 9.
- Our parish communities are measured by how they serve "the least of these" in our parish and beyond its boundaries—the hungry, the homeless, the sick, those in prison, the stranger (cf. Mt 25:31). Our local families of faith are called to "hunger for thirst and justice" and to be "peacemakers" in our own communities (cf. Mt 5:6,9). *Communities of Salt and Light*, 3.
- The central message is simple: our faith is profoundly social. We cannot be called truly "Catholic" unless we hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace. We cannot call ourselves followers of Jesus unless we take up his mission of bringing "good news to the poor, liberty to captives, and new sight to the blind" (cf. Lk 4:18). *Communities of Salt and Light*, 3.
- The center of the Church's social teaching is the life, dignity, and rights of the human person. We are called in a special way to serve the poor and vulnerable; to build bridges of solidarity among peoples of differing races and nations, language and ability, gender and culture. *Communities of Salt and Light*, 3.
- We have much to learn from those parishes that are leading the way in making social ministry and integral part of parish ministry and evangelization. We need to build local communities of faith where our social teaching is central, not fringe; where social ministry is integral, not optional; where it is the work of every believer, not just the mission of a few committed people and committees. *Communities of Salt and Light*, 4.
- Parishes are called to be communities of solidarity. Catholic social teaching more than anything else insists that we are one family; it calls us to overcome barriers of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, economic status, and nationality. We are one in Christ Jesus (cf. Gal 3:28)—beyond our differences and boundaries. *Communities of Salt and Light*, 10.
- A key test of a parish's "Catholicity" is its willingness to go beyond its boundaries to serve those in need and work for global justice and peace. Working with others for common goals across religious, racial, ethnic, and other lines is another sign of solidarity in action. *Communities of Salt and Light*, 10.
- Catholic communities of faith should measure their prayer, education, and action by how they serve the life, dignity, and rights of the human person at home and abroad. A parish's "catholicity" is illustrated in its willingness to go beyond its own boundaries to extend the Gospel, serve those in need, and work for global justice and peace. This is not a work for a few agencies or one parish committee, but for every believer and every local community of faith. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- Catholics in the United States face special responsibilities and opportunities. We are members of a universal Church that transcends national boundaries and calls us to live in solidarity and justice with the peoples of the world. We are also citizens of a powerful democracy with enormous influence beyond our borders. As Catholics and Americans we are uniquely called to global solidarity. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- Through the eyes of faith, the starving child, the believer in jail, and the woman without clean water or health care are not issues, but Jesus in disguise. The human and moral costs of the arms trade, international debt, environmental neglect, and ethnic violence are not abstractions, but tests of our faith. Violence in the Holy Land, tribal combat in Africa, religious persecution, and starvation around the world are not just headlines, but a call to action. As Catholics, we are called to renew the earth, not escape its challenge. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- Solidarity is action on behalf of the one human family, calling us to help overcome the divisions in our world. Solidarity binds the rich to the poor. It makes the free zealous for the cause of the oppressed. It drives the comfortable and secure to take risks for the victims of tyranny and war. It calls those who are strong to care for those who are weak and vulnerable across the spectrum of human life. It opens homes and hearts to those in flight from terror and to migrants whose daily toil supports affluent lifestyles. Peacemaking, as Pope John Paul II has told us, is the work of solidarity. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- There is increasing complacency about the defense of human rights. Our country is tempted to turn its back on long traditions of openness and hospitality to immigrants and refugees who have nowhere to turn. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- Our faith calls us to a different road—a path of global responsibility and solidarity. The call to solidarity is at the heart of Pope John Paul II's leadership. He has insisted that the test of national leadership is how we reach out to defend and enhance the dignity of the poor and vulnerable, at home and around the world. He calls us to defense of all human life and care for God's creation. In his visits to this country, the Holy Father called on our nation to "spare no effort in advancing authentic freedom and in fostering human rights and solidarity." *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- We have heard the Lord's command, "Love your neighbor as yourself." In our linked and limited world, loving our neighbor has global implications. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- Beyond differences of language, race, ethnicity, gender, culture, and nation, we are one human family. Whether at World Youth Day, on World Mission Sunday, or in the daily celebration of the liturgy, the Church

whether at World Youth Day, on World Mission Sunday, or in the daily celebration of the liturgy, the Church gathers people of every nation, uniting them in worship of the one God who is maker and redeemer of all. In so doing, the Church attests to the God-given unity of the human family and the human calling to build community. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*

- Readings from Acts and the Letters of Paul tell us of the concern of distant churches for the needy communities in Jerusalem and Macedonia. In faith, the world's hungry and homeless, the victims of injustice and religious persecution, are not mere issues; they are our sisters and brothers. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- Pope John Paul II has written, "Sacred Scripture continually speaks to us of an active commitment to our neighbor and demands of us a shared responsibility for all of humanity. This duty is not limited to one's own family, nation or state, but extends progressively to all . . . so no one can consider himself extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family" [CA], no. 51
- In pursuit of solidarity, Pope John Paul II calls for a worldwide effort to promote development, an effort that "involves sacrificing the positions of income and of power enjoyed by the more developed economies" in the interest of "an overall human enrichment to the family of nations" (CA, no. 52). *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- Our nation has special responsibilities. Principled and constructive U.S. leadership is essential to build a safer, more just world. As Pope John Paul II insists again and again, our efforts must begin with fundamental reform of the "structures of violence" that bring suffering and death to the poor. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- The Catholic community will continue to speak on behalf of increased development assistance, relief from international debt, curbs on the arms trade, and respect for human life and the rights of families. We will continue to oppose population policies that insist on inclusion of abortion among the methods of family planning. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- Our foreign aid and peacemaking efforts can be reformed and improved, but they cannot be abandoned. Massive cuts in recent years in U.S. assistance for the poor around the world are an evasion of our responsibility as a prosperous nation and world leader. The recent decline in resources for sustainable development must be reversed. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- In the words of the Apostle Paul, we must strive "to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:3-6). *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*
- The Church's teaching on international justice and peace is not simply a mandate for a few large agencies, but a challenge for every believer and every Catholic community of faith. The demands of solidarity require not another program, but greater awareness and integration into the ongoing life of the parish. The Church's universal character can be better reflected in how every parish prays, educates, serves, and acts. A parish reaching beyond its own members and beyond national boundaries is a truly "catholic" parish. An important role for the parish is to challenge and encourage every believer to greater global solidarity. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*, 1.
- Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gn 4:9), has global implications and is a special challenge for our time, touching not one brother but all our sisters and brothers. Are we responsible for the fate of the world's poor? Do we have duties to suffering people in far-off places? Must we respond to the needs of suffering refugees in distant nations? Are we keepers of the creations for future generations? For the followers of Jesus, the answer is yes. Indeed, we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. As members of God's one human family, we acknowledge our duties to people in far-off places. We accept God's charge to care for all human life and for all creation. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*, 3.
- Our faith challenges us to reach out to those in need, to take on the global status quo, and to resist the immorality of isolationism. Pope John Paul II reminds us that a turn to "selfish isolation" would not only be a "betrayal of humanity's legitimate expectations...but also a real desertion of a moral obligation." *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*, 6.
- The Church's commitment to global solidarity belongs especially to lay people. It is reflected at least as much in the choices of lay Catholics in commerce and politics as in the statements and advocacy of our bishops' conference. How U.S. businesses act abroad sets standards that advance or diminish justice. Catholics should bring their awareness of global solidarity to their diverse roles in business and commerce, in education and communications, and in the labor movement and public life. *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*, 8.

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#### [Catholic Teaching on Poverty: A Place at the Table](#)

- As Catholics, we must come together with a common conviction that we can no longer tolerate the moral scandal of poverty in our land and so much hunger and deprivation in our world. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 1
- "What did you do for the least of these?" Jesus identified himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the imprisoned, and the stranger, insisting that when we serve them we serve him (Mt 25:40). *A Place at the Table*, pg. 3
- This is about the virtues we practice in our own lives and the values we promote in public life. And this is about whether there is *A Place at the Table* for all in our communities, nation, and world. *A Place at the Table*.

pg. 5

- In the United States, thirty-four million people live below the official poverty line... If all these people lived in one state, its population would be larger than the combined current populations of Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Idaho, Iowa and Arizona. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 6
- The principle of solidarity reminds us that as members of one human family, we see every "other" as our neighbor, who must share in the "banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God." *A Place at the Table*, pg. 13
- Solidarity calls us to care for our neighbors in need who are nearby and for those who are far away and to see all those who suffer as sisters and brothers. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 13
- Work should not leave people poor but should provide wages sufficient to achieve a standard of living that is in keeping with human dignity. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 14
- In the Catholic tradition, concern for the poor is advanced by individual and common action, works of charity, efforts to achieve a more just social order, the practice of virtue, and the pursuit of justice in our own lives. It requires action to confront structures of injustice that leave people poor. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 14
- Our Church's commitment to find *A Place at the Table* for all God's children is expressed in every part of our country and in the poorest places on earth...Our faith gives us the strength, identity, and principles we need to sustain this work. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 14
- The table we seek for all rests on these four institutions, or legs: (1) what families and individuals can do, (2) what community and religious institutions can do, (3) what the private sector can do, and (4) what the government can do to work together to overcome poverty. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 14
- Here and abroad, our parishes and schools must continue to be clear about their identity and mission and must continue to be beacons of hope and centers of help for poor families and new communities. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 17
- Work must be an escape from poverty, not another version of it. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 17
- The Catholic way is to recognize the essential role and the complementary responsibilities of families, communities, the market, and government to work together to overcome poverty and advance human dignity. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 18
- Those who have more can make choices to use less, to share more, and to advocate for greater justice so that all people have the resources to provide for themselves and their families. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 19
- For all to have *A Place at the Table*, some of us may have to take a smaller place at the table. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 19
- National unity, global solidarity, security at home, and a more peaceful world are all advanced by the pursuit of a decent and dignified life for all God's children. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 20
- We may sometimes differ about the specifics of how best to serve those in need, overcome poverty, and advance human dignity, but it is impossible for a Christian to say, "This is not my task." This mission is an essential part of what makes us disciples of Christ. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 20
- The poor and vulnerable should never be forgotten in our public worship or our private prayer. Just as we worship together worldwide on the Sabbath, we must work together in solidarity the rest of the week to live out the Gospel. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 20
- As faithful citizens, we should take seriously our responsibilities to vote and to voice our convictions in support of public policies that defend human life and promote the dignity of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 22
- When people join with others to demand respect for their dignity and rights, not only do they help themselves, but they also build up the entire community and advance the common good. Our faith calls us to engagement, not retreat—to renew the earth, not flee the world. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 23
- ...whatever our national, ethnic, religious, or economic differences, we are all God's children, members of one human family. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 23
- "Loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in a shrinking world. In our prayer, formation, service, and citizenship, and in our programs of twinning and outreach, we must break through the boundaries of neighborhood and nation to recognize the web of life that connects all of us in this age of globalization. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 23
- This is a time not for "just words or mere talk" but for "active and genuine" commitment by Catholics in the United States to work with others to make *A Place at the Table* for all God's children. *A Place at the Table*, pg. 24

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[Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility](#)

<http://www.usccb.org/pdf/faithful-citizenship/0001ServiceCitizenship.pdf>

<http://www.usccb.org/pdi/stewardship2004ServiceCitizenship.pdi>

- In times of war, of global insecurity and economic uncertainty, of disrespect for human life and human dignity, we need to return to basic moral principles. Politics . . . should be about fundamental moral choices. How do we protect human life and dignity? How do we fairly share the blessings and burdens of the challenges we face? What kind of nation do we want to be? What kind of world do we want to shape? - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, pp 1-2
- Politics . . . should be about an old idea with new power – the common good. The central question should not be, “Are you better off than you were four years ago?” It should be, “How can ‘we’ – all of us, especially the weak and vulnerable – be better off in the years ahead? How can we protect and promote human life and dignity? How can we pursue greater justice and peace?” - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 2
- As we approach the elections of 2004 we renew our call for a new kind of politics – focused on moral principles and not the latest polls, on the needs of the poor and vulnerable not the contributions of the rich and powerful, and on the pursuit of the common good not the demands of special interests. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 3
- At this time, some Catholics may feel politically homeless, sensing that no political party and too few candidates share consistent concern for human life and dignity. However, this is not a time for retreat or discouragement. We need more, not less engagement in political life. We urge Catholics to become more involved. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 3
- A Catholic moral framework does not easily fit the ideologies of “right” or “left,” nor the platforms of any party. Our values are often not “politically correct.” Believers are called to be a community of conscience within the larger society and to test the public life by the values of Scripture and the principles of Catholic social teaching. Our responsibility is to measure all candidates, policies, parties, and platforms by how they protect or undermine the life, dignity, and the rights of the human person, whether they protect the poor and the vulnerable and advance the common good. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 7
- Jesus called us to “love one another.” Our Lord’s example and words demand care for the “least of these” from each of us. Yet they also require action on a broader scale. Faithful citizenship is about more than elections. It requires ongoing participation in the continuing political and legislative process. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 7
- In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation. All believers are called to faithful citizenship, to become informed, active, and responsible participants in the political process. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*
- As bishops, we seek to form the consciences of our people. We do not wish to instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates. We hope that our votes will examine the position of candidates on the full range of issues, as well as on their personal integrity, philosophy, and performance. We are convinced that a consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework from which to address issues in the political arena. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 11
- For Catholics, the defense of human life and dignity is not a narrow cause, but a way of life and a framework for action. . . . Decisions about candidates and choices about public policies require clear commitment to moral principles, careful discernment and prudential judgments based on the values of our faith. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 12
- The coming elections provide important opportunities to bring together our principles, experience, and community in effective public witness. . . . As Catholics we need to share our values, raise our voices, and use our votes to shape a society that protects human life, promotes family life, pursues social justice, and practices solidarity. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 12
- Building peace, combating poverty and despair, and protecting freedom and human rights are not only moral imperatives; they are wise national priorities. Given its enormous power and influences in world affairs, the United States has a special responsibility to ensure that it is a force for justice and peace beyond its borders. “Liberty and justice for all” is not only a profound national pledge; it is a worthy goal for our nation in its role as a world leader – USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 28
- What does it mean to be Catholic and living in the United States in the year 2004 and beyond? As Catholics, the election and the policy choices that follow it call us to recommit ourselves to carry the values of the Gospel and the church teaching into the public square. As citizens and residents of the United States, we have the duty to participate now and in the future in the debates and choices over the values, vision, and leaders that will guide our nation. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 29-30
- This dual calling of faith and citizenship is at the heart of what it means to be Catholic in the United States. Faithful citizenship calls us to seek “A Place at the Table” of life for all God’s children in the elections of 2004 and beyond. - USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p 30

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## Social Justice

- Furthermore society and the State must ensure wage levels adequate for the maintenance of the worker and his family, including a certain amount for savings. This requires a continuous effort to improve workers' training and capability so that their work will be more skilled and productive, as well as careful controls and adequate legislative measures to block shameful forms of exploitation, especially to the disadvantage of most vulnerable workers, of immigrants and of those in the margins of society. *The Hundredth Year*, #15, (pp. 31-32).
- It is a strict duty of justice and truth not to allow fundamental human needs to remain unsatisfied, and not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish. It is also necessary to help these needy people to acquire expertise, to enter the circle of exchange, and to develop their skills in order to make the best use of their capacities and resources. Even prior to the logic of a fair exchange of good and the forms of justice appropriate to it, there exists *something which is due to man because he is man*, by reason of his lofty dignity. Inseparable from that required "something" is the possibility to survive and, at the same time, to make an active contribution to the common good of humanity. *The Hundredth Year*, #34 (p. 67).
- ...But it will be necessary above all to abandon a mentality in which the poor – as individuals and as peoples – are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced... The poor ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity for work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all. The advancement of the poor constitutes a great opportunity for the moral, cultural and even economic growth of all humanity. *The Hundredth Year*, #28 (p. 55).
- Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment. Only such an awareness can give the courage needed to face the risk and the change involved in every authentic attempt to come to the aid of another. It is not merely a matter of "giving from one's surplus," but of helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. *The Hundredth Year*, #58 p. 108
- Today we are facing the so-called "globalization" of the economy, a phenomenon which is not to be dismissed, since it can create unusual opportunities for greater prosperity. There is a growing feeling, however, that this increasing internationalization of the economy ought to be accompanied by effective international agencies which will oversee and direct the economy to the common good, something that an individual State, even if it were the most powerful on earth, would not be in a position to do. In order to achieve this result, it is necessary that there be increased coordination among the more powerful countries, and that in international agencies the interests of the whole human family be equally represented. It is also necessary that in evaluating the consequences of their decisions, these agencies always give sufficient consideration to peoples and countries which have little weight in the international market, but which are burdened by the most acute and desperate needs, and are thus more dependent on support for their development. *The Hundredth Year*, #58 (p. 109).
- It is generally accepted today that the common good is best safeguarded when personal rights and duties are guaranteed. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are recognized, respected, coordinated, defended and promoted, and that each individual is enabled to perform his duties more easily. For "to safeguard the inviolable rights of the human person, and to facilitate the performance of his duties, is the principal duty of every public authority." (Cf. Radio Message of Pius XII, Pentecost, June 1, 1941, A.A.S. XXXIII, 1941, p. 200.) Thus any government which refused to recognize human rights or acted in violation of them, would not only fail in its duty; its decrees would be wholly lacking in binding force. *Peace on Earth*, #60.
- When life is challenged by conditions of hardship, maladjustment, sickness or rejection, other programs—such as communities for treating drug addiction, residential communities for minors or the mentally ill, care and relief centers for AIDS patients, associations for solidarity especially towards the disabled—are eloquent expressions of what charity is able to devise in order to give everyone new reasons for hope and practical possibilities for life. And when earthly existence draws to a close, it is again charity which finds the most appropriate means for enabling the elderly, especially those who can no longer look after themselves, and the terminally ill to enjoy genuinely humane assistance and to receive an adequate response to their needs, in particular their anxiety and their loneliness. In these cases the role of families is indispensable; yet families can receive much help from social welfare agencies and, if necessary, from recourse to palliative care, taking advantage of suitable medical and social services available in public institutions or in the home. *The Gospel of Life*, #88.
- If charity is to be realistic and effective, it demands that *The Gospel of Life* be implemented also by means of certain forms of social activity and commitment in the political field, as a way of defending and promoting the value of life in our ever more complex and pluralistic societies. Individuals, families, groups and associations, albeit for different reasons and in different ways, all have a responsibility for shaping society and developing cultural, economic, political and legislative projects which, with respect for all and in keeping with democratic principles, will contribute to the building of a society in which the dignity of each person is recognized and protected and the lives of all are defended and enhanced. *The Gospel of Life*, #88.
- In the face of *fundamental and inalienable ethical demands*, Christians must recognize that what is at stake is the essence of the moral law, which concerns the integral good of the human person... In addition, there is the right to *religious freedom* and the development of an *economy* that is at the service of the human person and of the common good, with respect for social justice, the principles of human solidarity and subsidiarity, according to which "the rights of all individuals, families, and organizations and their practical implementation must be acknowledged." (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 75). *The Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, #4.
- One of the greatest injustices in the contemporary world consists precisely in this: that the ones who possess

- One of the greatest injustices in the contemporary world consists precisely in this, that the ones who possess much are relatively few and those who possess almost nothing are many. It is the injustice of the poor distribution of the goods and services originally intended for all. *On Social Concern*, #28.
- Commutative justice calls for fundamental fairness in all agreements and exchanges between individuals or private social groups. It demands respect for the equal human dignity of all persons in economic transactions, contracts, or promises. For example, workers owe their employers diligent work in exchange for their wages. Employers are obligated to treat their employees as persons, paying them fair wages in exchange for the work done and establishing conditions and patterns of work that are truly human. *Economic Justice for All*, #69
- Distributive justice requires that the allocation of income, wealth, and power in society be evaluated in light of its effects on persons whose basic material needs are unmet. The Second Vatican Council stated: "The right to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The fathers and doctors of the Church held this view, teaching that we are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of our superfluous goods." (*Pastoral Constitution*, 69.) Minimum material resources are an absolute necessity for human life. If persons are to be recognized as members of the human community, then the community has an obligation to help fulfill these basic needs unless an absolute scarcity of resources makes this strictly impossible. No such scarcity exists in the United States today. *Economic Justice for All*, #70
- Justice also has implications for the way the larger social, economic, and political institutions of society are organized. Social justice implies that persons have an obligation to be active and productive participants in the life of society and that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way. *Economic Justice for All*, #71
- The way society responds to the needs of the poor through its public policies is the litmus test of its justice or injustice. *Economic Justice for All*, #123.
- The works of mercy call Christians to engage themselves in direct efforts to alleviate the misery of the afflicted. The works of justice require that Christians involve themselves in sustained struggle to correct any unjust social, political, and economic structures and institutions that are the causes of suffering. *Health and Health Care*, 3.
- The whole human race suffers as a result of environmental blight, and generations yet unborn will bear the cost of our failure to act today. But in most countries today, including our own, it is the poor and the powerless who most directly bear the burden of current environmental carelessness. Their lands and neighborhoods are more likely to be polluted, to host toxic waste dumps, their water to be undrinkable, their children to be harmed... Caught in a spiral of poverty and environmental degradation, poor people suffer acutely from the loss of soil fertility, pollution of rivers and urban streets, and the destruction of forest resources. *Renewing the Earth*, 2.
- Opposition to abortion and euthanasia does not excuse indifference to those who suffer from poverty, violence and injustice. Any politics of human life must work to resist the violence of war and the scandal of capital punishment. Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issue of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing and health care. Therefore, Catholics should eagerly involve themselves as advocates for the weak and marginalized in all these areas. *Living The Gospel of Life*, 15.
- Every believer is called to serve "the least of these," to "hunger and thirst for justice," to be a "peacemaker." Catholics are called by God to protect human life, to promote human dignity, to defend those who are poor, and to seek the common good. This social mission of the Church belongs to all of us. It is an essential part of what is to be a believer. *Everyday Christianity*, 1.
- Social justice and the common good are built up or torn down day by day in the countless decisions and choices we make. This vocation to pursue justice is not simply an individual task; it is a call to work with others to humanize and shape the institutions that touch so many people. The lay vocation for justice in the world cannot be carried forward alone but only as members of a community called to be the "leaven" of the Gospel. *Everyday Christianity*, 4.

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### [Human and Economic Development](#)

- Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man. As an eminent specialist has very rightly and emphatically declared: "We do not believe in separating the economic from the human, nor development from the civilizations in which it exists. What we hold important is man, each man and each group of men, and we even include the whole of humanity". *On the Development of Peoples*, #14.
- Individual initiative alone and the mere free play of competition could never assure successful development. One must avoid the risk of increasing still more the wealth of the rich and the dominion of the strong, while leaving the poor in their misery and adding to the servitude of the oppressed. *On the Development of Peoples*, #33.
- Economic development must...not be left to the sole judgment of a few individuals or groups, possessing excessive economic power, or of the political community alone, or of certain powerful nations. It is proper, on the contrary, that at every level the largest number of people have an active share in directing that development. *The Church in the Modern World*, #65.
- To speak of development is in effect to show as much concern for social progress as for economic growth. It is not sufficient to increase overall wealth for it be distributed equitably. It is not sufficient to promote

technology to render the world a more human place in which to live. ... Economics and technology have no meaning except from the human person whom they should serve. And people are only truly human in as far as, masters of their own acts and judges of their worth, they are authors of their own advancement, in keeping with the nature given to them by their Creator. *On the Development of Peoples*, #34.

- We want to be clearly understood: the present situation must be faced with courage and the injustices linked with it must be fought against and overcome. Development demands bold transformations, innovations that go deep. Urgent reforms should be undertaken without delay. It is for each one to take a share in them with generosity, particularly those whose education, position and opportunities afford them wide scope for action. *On the Development of Peoples*, #32.
- True development cannot consist in the simple accumulation of wealth and in the greater availability of goods and services, if this is gained at the expense of the development of the masses, and without due consideration for the social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of the human being. *On Social Concern*, #9.
- ...how can one justify the fact that huge sums of money, which could and should be used for increasing the development of peoples, are instead utilized for the enrichment of individuals or groups, or assigned to the increase in stockpiles of weapons, both in developed countries and in the developing ones, thereby upsetting the real priorities? This is even more serious given the difficulties which often hinder the direct transfer of capital set aside for helping needy countries. If "development is the new name for peace," war and military preparations are the major enemy of the integral development of peoples. *On Social Concern*, #9.
- Next to the underdevelopment of the many, there is a super-development for the few. Super-development leads to a throwaway society and to enormous waste. Excessive access to all kinds of things, -- sometimes called consumerism -- enslaves people and does not make them happy. The more one possesses, the more one wants, while the deeper human hopes remain unsatisfied and even stifled. "Having" more things does not necessarily mean "being" more or being better. "Having" only helps us when it contributes to a more complete "being." *On Social Concern*, #28.
- Collaboration in the development of the whole person and of every human being is in fact a duty of all towards all, and must be shared by the four parts of the world: East and West, North and South; or, as we say today, by the different "worlds." If, on the contrary, people try to achieve it in only one part, or in only one world, they do so at the expense of the others; and, precisely because the others are ignored, their own development becomes exaggerated and misdirected. *On Social Concern*, #32.
- ...true development must be based on the love of God and neighbor, and must help to promote the relationships between individuals and society. *On Social Concern*, #33.
- Given these conditions, it is obvious that individual countries cannot rightly seek their own interests and develop themselves in isolation from the rest, for the prosperity and development of one country follows partly in the train of the prosperity and progress of all the rest and partly produces that prosperity and progress. *Peace on Earth*, #131.
- Every perspective on economic life that is human, moral, and Christian must be shaped by three questions: What does the economy do for people? What does it do to people? And how do people participate in it? *Economic Justice for All*, #1.
- As individuals, all citizens have a duty to assist the poor through acts of charity and personal commitment. But private charity and voluntary action are not sufficient. We also carry out our moral responsibility to assist and empower the poor by working collectively through government to establish just and effective public policies. National Conference of Catholic Bishops *Economic Justice for All*
- The quality of the national discussion about our economic future will affect the poor most of all, in this country and throughout the world. The life and dignity of millions of men, women and children hang in the balance. Decisions must be judged in light of what they do for the poor, what they do to the poor, and what they enable the poor to do for themselves. The fundamental moral criterion for all economic decisions, policies, and institutions is this: They must be at the service of all people, especially the poor. *Economic Justice for All*, #24.
- As in our own nation, poverty around the world falls most heavily and directly on women and children. They are the most likely to suffer from the chronic hunger which results from poverty and powerlessness. Their future is mortgaged to flawed "development" which increases a nation's gross national product, but worsens its distribution, helping the rich at the expense of the poor. It is women and children who suffer most when the elites of poor nations invest abroad rather than at home, and when foreign aid from more affluent nations is reduced. And they are the first victims of the cuts in social services made by developing countries to "adjust" their economies in order to pay their burdensome debts. *Putting Children and Families First*, 3.
- In an interdependent world, we need to see clearly how children pay the price for global poverty and indifference, for official corruption, for far too much debt and not enough development, for a global economy dominated by the industrial countries which further impoverishes the poor... As believers and citizens, we need—each of us—to use our values, voices, and votes to hold our public officials accountable and to shape a society that puts our children first. *Putting Children and Families First*, 7.
- Today in Africa lives are being lost at an alarming rate. The continent faces serious challenges that often times weaken the resolve of peoples committed to the pursuit of justice, peace, and integral development. Our voices can join with others to encourage a sustained, just, and comprehensive engagement of the world's vast resources to generate lasting solutions that respect the full, human dignity of our brothers and sisters in the poorest countries. *A Call to Solidarity with Africa*, 4.
- The culture of death extends beyond our shores: famine and starvation, denial of health care and development around the world, the deadly violence of armed conflict and the scandalous arms trade that spawns such conflict. Our nation is witness to domestic violence, the spread of drugs, sexual activity which

poses a threat to lives and a reckless tampering with the world's ecological balance. Respect for human life calls us to defend life from these and other threats. It calls us as well to enhance the conditions for human living by helping to provide food, shelter and meaningful employment, beginning with those who are most in need. We live *The Gospel of Life* when we live in solidarity with the poor of the world, standing up for their lives and dignity. *Living The Gospel of Life*, 4.

- The United States must not write off Africa as having little relevance to our strategic priorities but rather must embrace a broader vision of our nation's interest in, and obligation to, the world's poorest continent. Our nation should provide more development aid for the neediest countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including aid for Africa's debilitated health care. The United States should also seek and develop trade relationships that are an engine for the elimination of poverty, and should play a more central role in promoting peace throughout Africa. *A Call to Solidarity with Africa*, 19.

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#### [On "social sin"](#)

- Also social is every sin against the rights of the human person, beginning with the right to life and including the life of the unborn or against a person's physical integrity...The term social can be applied to sins of commission or omission-on the part of political, economic or trade union leaders, who though in a position to do so, do not work diligently and wisely for the improvement and transformation of society according to the requirements and potential of the given historic moment...Whenever the church speaks of situations of sin or when she condemns as social sins certain situations or the collective behavior of certain social groups, big or small, or even of whole nations and blocs of nations, she knows and she proclaims that such cases of social sin are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins. It is a case of the very personal sins of those who cause or support evil or who exploit it; of those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world and also of those who sidestep the effort and sacrifice required, producing specious reasons of a higher order. The real responsibility, then, lies with individuals. -Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliation and Penance* (1984), no. 16

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