

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

and Religious Freedom

Catholics need to be free to take action on these key themes, without government impediments:

1. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

The “foundation of a moral vision for society” is based on the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person, the bishops’ conference said. “We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.”

2. **Call to Family, Community and Participation**

By their nature, humans are social beings, starting with the “central social institutions” of marriage and the family, that “must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.”

3. **Rights and Responsibilities**

Corresponding to rights are responsibilities; every person has a fundamental right to life and “a right to those things required for human decency,” but that brings responsibilities “to one another, to our families and to the larger society.”

4. **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

Echoing Pope John Paul II, and the accumulated wisdom of centuries, the bishops’ conference notes that societies are judged by how their most vulnerable members fare. For Catholics, there’s the added instruction of Jesus in the story of the Last Judgment (see Mt 25:31-46), which “instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.”

5. **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

The economy serves humans, not the other way around. Work, no matter how dreary, earns dignity as a participation in God’s continuing work of creation. “If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected — the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property and to economic initiative.”

6. **Solidarity**

“Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world.” At the root of this sense of shared responsibility for all is the awareness that we are all children of God.

7. **Care for God’s Creation**

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

Source: Our Sunday Visitor