

## **Catholic Social Teaching – Select Major Documents**

Modern Catholic social teaching is the body of social principles and moral teaching that is articulated in the papal, conciliar, and other official documents issued since the late nineteenth century and dealing with the economic, political, and social order. This teaching is rooted in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures as well as in traditional philosophical and theological teachings of the Church.

### **Rerum Novarum (On the Condition of Labor) -- Pope Leo XIII, 1891**

This first work on modern Catholic social thought addresses the plight of the industrial workers in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. It calls for the protection of the weak and the poor through the pursuit of justice while excluding socialism and class struggle as legitimate principles of change. It affirms the dignity of work, the right to private property, and the right to form and join professional associations.

### **Quadragesimo Anno (After Forty Years) -- Pope Pius XI, 1931**

Writing in response to the alarming concentration of wealth and power in the socio-economic realm, Pius XI calls for the reestablishment of a social order based on the principle of subsidiarity. In commemorating the 40th anniversary of Rerum Novarum, this encyclical reaffirms the need for a social order animated by justice.

### **Mater et Magistra (Mother and Teacher) -- Pope John XXIII, 1961**

Applying the teachings of his predecessors to modern problems, and affirming the role of the Church as a teacher, and as a nurturing guardian of the poor and oppressed, John XXIII calls for a greater awareness of the need for all peoples to live as one community with a common good. Special attention is focused on the plight of the farmers and farm workers in depressed rural, agricultural economies.

### **Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) -- Pope John XXIII, 1963**

Covering the entire spectrum of relations between individuals, between the individual and the community, and between nations, John XXIII affirms the inviolability of human rights. Peace, based on mutual trust, can be well-founded only if undergirded by a unity of right order in human affairs arising from a genuine respect for and adherence to the law of God.

### **Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) Vatican Council II, 1965**

Calling for a new sense of service by the Church in a rapidly changing world, the Council presents the ethical framework of the Church's commitment to pastoral work in the world. This servant Church addresses itself to the real concerns and problems faced by Christians living in the modern age and calls for a development based on an unqualified acceptance of the inherent dignity of the human person.

**Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples) -- Pope Paul VI, 1967**

Calling attention to the worsening marginalization of the poor, Paul VI presents the various dimensions of an integral human development and the necessary conditions for growth in the solidarity of peoples. Only with an accompanying theological reflection on liberation from injustice and genuine human values can there be true development towards a more human condition.

**Octogesima Adveniens (A Call to Action) -- Pope Paul VI, 1971**

Realizing the need for a genuine renewal in domestic and international societal structures, Paul VI calls on Christians to live up to the duty of participation in social and political reform as a way of discovering the truth and living out the Gospel.

**Justitia in Mundo (Justice in the World) -- Synod of Bishops, 1971**

Calling attention to the structural roots of injustice afflicting human relations, the Bishops declare that action in the pursuit of justice, and participation in the transformation of the world are constitutive elements in the Church's mission of preaching the Gospel.

**Laborem Exercens (On Human Work) -- Pope John Paul II, 1981**

Exhorting Christians everywhere to be involved in the transformation of existing socio-economic systems, John Paul II presents work as a fundamental dimension of human existence through which the "social question" must be viewed. The meaning of work can only be properly understood when the dignity of labor is taken as an underlying premise.

**Solicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern) -- Pope John Paul II, 1987**

Expanding on the notion of development in Populorum Progressio, John Paul II reviews the state of world development in the past two decades. The moral nature of development leading humanity to the "fullness of being" is emphasized.

**Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life) -- Pope John Paul II, 1995**

Powerful underscoring of the dignity and value of life; John Paul II condemns the 'culture of death' where individual freedom is placed before the rights of others to life - hence the condemnation of the death penalty, abortion and euthanasia. With very moving words to women who have undergone abortion; 'do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope'. This presents positive images of the promotion of a 'culture of life' where human freedom finds its authentic meaning and a culture of the family is the 'sanctuary of life'.

**Caritas in Veritate (In Charity and Truth) -- Pope Benedict XVI, 2009**

Benedict's message is directed at a variety of concerns including global poverty, injustice and the arms race. This looks at individuals and organisations through the lens of charity and truth. The individual motivation for charity and the concern for authentic human development are frequent concerns. There are also strong environmental concerns and the concept of 'intergenerational justice' is made.

**Evangelii Gaudium (Apostolic Exhortation on The Joy of the Gospel) -- Pope Francis, 2013**

While not a papal encyclical, Evangelii Gaudium gives particular attention to the ‘social dimension of Evangelization’. The first section, setting the context for sharing the Joy of the Gospel talks of a huge amount of social problems, characterized by Pope Francis as the ‘crisis of communal commitment’ and touches on the markets, the economy of exclusion, inner city life, spiritual worldliness and consumerism, among other things.

**Laudato Si' (Apostolic Exhortation on “Praised Be”) -- Pope Francis, 2015**

Laudato Si' is a passionate call to all people of the world to take “swift and unified global action”, particularly in relation to the destruction of the environment. Pope Francis writes that while humanity has made incredible progress in science and technology, this has not been matched with moral, ethical and spiritual growth. This imbalance is causing our relationships with creation and with God to break down and our hearts to become hardened to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. We become arrogant and neglect creation and everyone that is part of it; forgetting what God has entrusted to our care.