

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. 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.

Scripture

Genesis 1:26-31

God created man and woman in his image.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19

God loves the orphan, the widow, and the stranger.

Psalms 139:13-16

God formed each of us and knows us intimately.

Proverbs 22:2

The Lord is the maker of both rich and poor.

Luke 10:25-37

The good Samaritan recognized the dignity in the other and cared for his life.

John 4:1-42

Jesus broke with societal and religious customs to honor the dignity of the Samaritan woman.

Romans 12: 9-18

Love one another, contribute to the needs of others, live peaceably with all.

1 Corinthians 3:16

You are holy, for you are God's temple and God dwells in you.

Galatians 3:27-28

All Christians are one in Christ Jesus.

James 2:1-8

Honor the poor.

1 John 3: 1-2

See what love the Father has for us, that we should be called Children of God.

1 John 4:7-12

Let us love one another because love is from God.

Tradition

When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected. (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [Laudato Si'...], no. 117)

Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape. Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a "throw away" culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the "exploited" but the outcast, the "leftovers". (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* [Evangelii Gaudium. . .], no. 153)

The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth [Caritas in Veritate...]*, no. 32)

Human persons are willed by God; they are imprinted with God's image. Their dignity does not come from the work they do, but from the persons they are. (St. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Year [... Centesimus annus] ...*, no. 11)

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). (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 28)

Every individual, precisely by reason of the mystery of the Word of God who was made flesh (cf. Jn 1:14), is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church. Therefore, every threat to human dignity and life must necessarily be felt in the Church's very heart; it cannot but affect her at the core of her faith in the Redemptive Incarnation of the Son of God, and engage her in her mission of proclaiming the Gospel of life in all the world and to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15). (St. John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life [... Evangelium vitae...]*, no. 3)

As explicitly formulated, the precept "You shall not kill" is strongly negative: it indicates the extreme limit which can never be exceeded. Implicitly, however, it encourages a positive attitude of absolute respect for life; it leads to the promotion of life and to progress along the way of a love which gives, receives and serves. (St. John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life [Evangelium vitae...]*, no. 54)

This teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so, for men are by nature social beings. (St. John XXIII, *Mother and Teacher [... Mater et Magistra ...]*, no. 219)

There exist also sinful inequalities that affect millions of men and women. These are in open contradiction of the Gospel: Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice,

equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace. (Catechism of the Catholic Church ..., no. 1938)

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 more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. (Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World* [. . . *Gaudium et Spes*...], no. 27)

2. Call to Family Community and Participation

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

Scripture

Genesis 2:18

It is not good for man to be alone

Genesis 4:8-15

I am my brother's and sister's keeper.

Leviticus 25:23-43

What you own belongs to the Lord and is given for the good of all.

Jeremiah 7:5-7

If you act justly with one another, God will dwell in the land.

Micah 6:6-8

Act justly, love kindness, walk humbly with God.

John 15:12-17

This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

Acts 2:43-47

Life among the believers.

Romans 12:4-8

We are one body, individually members one of another.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Rouse one another to love and good works.

James 2:14-17

Our faith is dead if we ignore others in need.

1 Peter 4:8-11

Serve one another with the gifts you have received.

1 John 3:16-18

We ought to lay down our lives for one another.

1 John 4:19-21

Those who love God must love their brothers and sisters.

Tradition

Family

"The family is thus an agent of pastoral activity through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness, namely solidarity with the poor, openness to a diversity of people, the protection of creation, moral and material solidarity with other families, including those most in need, commitment to the promotion of the common good and the transformation of unjust social structures, beginning in the territory in which the family lives, through the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy." (Pope Francis, *On Love in the Family [Amoris Laetitia...]*, no. 290, quoting the Final Report of the Synod of Bishops, 10/24/15)

Economic and social policies as well as organization of the work world should be continually evaluated in light of their impact on the strength and stability of family life. The long-range future of this nation is intimately linked with the well-being of families, for the family is the most basic form of human community. Efficiency and competition in the marketplace must be moderated by greater concern for the way work schedules and compensation support or threaten the bonds between spouses and between parents and children. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 93)

The first and fundamental structure for a "human ecology" is the family... founded on marriage, in which the mutual gift of self as husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny. (St. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Year [Centessimus Annus ...]*, no. 39)

Insofar as it is a "small-scale Church," the Christian family is called upon, like the "large-scale Church," to be a sign of unity for the world and in this way to exercise its prophetic role by

bearing witness to the Kingdom and peace of Christ, towards which the whole world is journeying. Christian families can do this through their educational activity-that is to say by presenting to their children a model of life based on the values of truth, freedom, justice and love-both through active and responsible involvement in the authentically human growth of society and its institutions, and by supporting in various ways the associations specifically devoted to international issues. (St. John Paul II, *The Family in the Modern World* [*Familiaris Consortio ...*], no. 48)

Community/Participation

Local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land... Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds. (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [*Laudato Si ...*], nos. 179, 219)

People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens, not as a mob swayed by the powers that be. Let us not forget that "responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation." (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* [*Evangelii Gaudium...*], no. 220, quoting United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Nov. 2007, no. 13)

Subsidiarity respects personal dignity by recognizing in the person a subject who is always capable of giving something to others. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [*Caritas in Veritate...*], no. 57)

The primary norm for determining the scope and limits of governmental intervention is the "principle of subsidiarity" cited above. This principle states that, in order to protect basic justice, government should undertake only those initiatives which exceed the capacities of individuals or private groups acting independently. Government should not replace or destroy smaller communities and individual initiative. Rather it should help them contribute more effectively to social well-being and supplement their activity when the demands of justice exceed their capacities. These does not mean, however, that the government that governs least, governs best. Rather it defines good government intervention as that which truly "helps" other social groups contribute to the common good by directing, urging, restraining, and regulating economic activity as "the occasion requires and necessity demands". (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 124)

Catholic Social Teaching: "Living Compassion and Mercy for the Salvation of Souls"
Lay Dominicans Retreat 2017

In order that the right to development may be fulfilled by action: (a) people should not be hindered from attaining development in accordance with their own culture; (b) through mutual cooperation, all peoples should be able to become the principal architects of their own economic and social development. (World Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World [Justicia in Mundo...]*, no. 71)

But God did not create man as a solitary, for from the beginning "male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Their companionship produces the primary form of interpersonal communion. For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential. (Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World [Gaudium et Spes...]*, no. 12)

3. Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Scripture

Leviticus 25:35

When someone is reduced to poverty, we have an obligation to help.

Ruth 2:2-23

Boaz cares for Ruth, a widow and a foreigner, giving her far more than the law requires.

Tobit 4:5-11

Give from what you have received and do not turn away from the poor.

Proverbs 31:8-9

Open your mouth to speak on behalf of those in need.

Isaiah 1:16-17

Seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Jeremiah 22: 13-16

A legitimate government upholds the rights of the poor and vulnerable.

Jeremiah 29:4-7

Seek the welfare of the city, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Matthew 25: 31-46

Just as you did it to the least of these, you did it to me.

Luke 16:19-31

The rich man has a responsibility to care for Lazarus.

Acts 4:32-35

There was not a needy person among them.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

God's gifts are given to be shared.

James 2:14-18

Faith without works is dead.

Tradition

Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development. It has also to do with the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups, applying the principle of subsidiarity. Outstanding among those groups is the family, as the basic cell of society. Finally, the common good calls for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice; whenever this is violated, violence always ensues. Society as a whole, and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good. (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home [Laudato Si'...]*, no. 157)

Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and eco-systemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. For example, changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children. There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation... Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters' points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded. (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home [Laudato Si. . .]*, no. 25)

A link has often been noted between claims to a "right to excess", and even to transgression and vice, within affluent societies, and the lack of food, drinkable water, basic instruction and elementary health care in areas of the underdeveloped world and on the outskirts of large metropolitan centers. The link consists in this: individual rights, when detached from a framework of duties which grants them their full meaning, can run wild, leading to an

escalation of demands which is effectively unlimited and indiscriminate. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth*, [Caritas in Veritate...], no. 43)

The inviolability of the person which is a reflection of the absolute inviolability of God, finds its primary and fundamental expression in the inviolability of human life. Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights-for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture- is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination. (St. John Paul II, *On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful* [Christifideles Laici...], no. 38)

We must speak of man's rights. Man has the right to live. He has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, he has the right to be looked after in the event of ill health; disability stemming from his work; widowhood; old age; enforced unemployment; or whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood. (St. John XXIII, *Peace on Earth* [Pacem in Terris...], no. 11)

In human society one man's natural right gives rise to a corresponding duty in other men; the duty, that is, of recognizing and respecting that right. Every basic human right draws its authoritative force from the natural law, which confers it and attaches to it its respective duty. Hence, to claim one's rights and ignore one's duties, or only half fulfill them, is like building a house with one hand and tearing it down with the other. (St. John XXIII, *Peace on Earth* [Pacem in Terris...], no. 30)

As for the State . . . It has also the duty to protect the rights of all its people, and particularly of its weaker members, the workers, women and children. It can never be right for the State to shirk its obligation of working actively for the betterment of the condition of the workingman. (St. John XXIII, *Christianity and Social Progress* (Mater et Magistra...), no. 20)

4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (**Mt 25:31-46**) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

Scripture

Exodus 22:20-26

You shall not oppress the poor or vulnerable. God will hear their cry.

Leviticus 19:9-10

A portion of the harvest is set aside for the poor and the stranger.

Job 34:20-28

The Lord hears the cry of the poor.

Proverbs 31:8-9

Speak out in defense of the poor.

Sirach 4:1-10

Don't delay giving to those in need.

Isaiah 25:4-5

God is a refuge for the poor.

Isaiah 58:5-7

True worship is to work for justice and care for the poor and oppressed.

Matthew 25:34-40

What you do for the least among you, you do for Jesus.

Luke 4:16-21

Jesus proclaims his mission: to bring good news to the poor and oppressed.

Luke 6:20-23

Blessed are the poor, theirs is the kingdom of God.

1 John 3:17-18

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's good and sees one in need and refuses to help?

Tradition

God's word teaches that our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us: "As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). The way we treat others has a transcendent dimension: "The measure you give will be the measure you get" (Mt 7:2). It corresponds to the mercy which God has shown us: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you . . . For the measure, you give will be the measure you get back" (Lk 6:36-38). What these passages make clear is the absolute priority of "going forth from ourselves toward our brothers and sisters" as one of the two great commandments which ground every moral norm and as the clearest sign for discerning spiritual growth in response to God's completely free gift. (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* [**Evangelii Gaudium**. . .], no. 179)

"The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. . . . "Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation." (**Catechism of the Catholic Church**. . . , nos. 2444, 2448, quoting *Centisimus annus*, no. 57, and *Libertatis conscientia*, no. 68)

Love for others, and in the first-place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice. (St. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Year* [**Centesimus Annus**. . .], no. 58)

The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, **Economic Justice for All**, no. 86)

The primary 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. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, **Economic Justice for All**, no. 88)

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. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, **Economic Justice for All**, no. 94)

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. (Blessed Paul VI, *A Call to Action* [**Octogesima Adveniens**. . .], no. 23)

"He who has the goods of this world and sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?" Everyone knows that the Fathers of the Church laid down the duty of the rich toward the poor in no uncertain terms. As St. Ambrose put it: "You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich." (Blessed Paul VI, *On the Development of Peoples* [**Populorum Progressio**. . .], no. 23)

Therefore everyone has the right to possess a sufficient amount of the earth's goods for themselves and their family. This has been the opinion of the Fathers and Doctors of the church, who taught that people are bound to come to the aid of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. Persons in extreme necessity are entitled to take what they need from the riches of others.

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," 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 develop themselves. (Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World* [**Gaudium et Spes**. . .], no. 69)

Still, when there is a question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and badly off have a claim to especial consideration. The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. (Pope Leo XIII, *On the Condition of Labor* [**Rerum Novarum**. . .], no. 37)

5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. 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.

Scripture

Genesis 2:1-3

God rests on the seventh day.

Genesis 2:15

God settles man in the garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it.

Deuteronomy 5:13-15

The Sabbath is for everyone—all are allowed to rest from their work.

Deuteronomy 4:28-29

The Lord blesses our work so that we may share its fruits with others.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

Do not withhold wages from your workers, for their livelihood depends on them.

Sirach 34:20-22

To deprive an employee of wages is to commit murder.

Isaiah 58:3-7

To observe religious practices, but oppress your workers is false worship.

Jeremiah 22:13

Woe to him who treats his workers unjustly.

Matthew 20:1-16

All workers should be paid a just and living wage.

Mark 2:27

The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath.

Luke 3:10-14

Practice integrity in your work.

Luke 12:13-21

One's worth is not determined by an abundance of possessions.

James 5:1-6

Those who become rich by abusing their workers have sinned against God.

Tradition

Work should be the setting for this rich personal growth, where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God. It follows that, in the reality of today's global society, it is essential that "we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone," no matter the limited interests of business and dubious economic reasoning. We were created with a vocation to work. The goal should not be that technological progress increasingly replace human work, for this would be detrimental to humanity. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfillment. Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work. (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [**Laudato Si.** . .'], nos. 127-28)

Growth in justice requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth: it requires decisions, programs, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality. I am far from proposing an irresponsible populism, but the economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new poison, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded." (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* [**Evangelii Gaudium.** . .], no. 204)

I would like to remind everyone, especially governments engaged in boosting the world's

economic and social assets, that the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man, the human person in his or her integrity: "Man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life." (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [**Caritas in Veritate**. . .], no. 25, quoting Second Vatican Council, *The Church in the Modern World* [**Gaudium et Spes**. . .], no. 63)

The economic sphere is neither ethically neutral, or inherently inhuman or opposed to society. It is part and parcel of human activity and precisely because it is human, it must be structured and governed in an ethical manner. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [**Caritas in Veritate**. . .], no. 36)

In many cases, poverty results from a violation of the dignity of human work, either because work opportunities are limited (through unemployment or underemployment), or "because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family." (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [**Caritas in Veritate**. . .], no. 63)

The obligation to earn one's bread by the sweat of one's brow also 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. (St. John Paul II, *The Hundredth Year* [**Centesimus Annus**. . .], no. 43)

All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, **A Catholic Framework for Economic Life**, no. 5)

Work is, as has been said, *an obligation*, that is to say, a *duty, on the part of man*. . . Man must work, both because the Creator has commanded it and because of his own humanity, which requires work in order to be maintained and developed. Man must work out of regard for others, especially his own family, but also for the society he belongs to, the country of which he is a child, and the whole human family of which he is a member, since he is the heir to the work of generations and at the same time a sharer in building the future of those who will come after him in the succession of history. (St. John Paul II, *On Human Work* [**Laborem Exercens**]. . . , no. 16)

Work is a good thing for man-a good thing for his humanity-because through work

man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes "more a human being." (St. John Paul II, *On Human Work* [**Laborem Exercens**. . .], no. 9)

All these rights, together with the need for the workers themselves to secure them, give rise to yet another right: *the right of association*, that is to form associations for the purpose of defending the vital interests of those employed in the various professions.

These associations are called labor or trade unions. (St. John Paul II, *On Human Work* [**Laborem Exercens**. . .], no. 20)

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." 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" and to assistance in case of need arising from sickness or age. (Blessed Paul VI, *A Call to Action* [**Octogesima Adveniens**. . .], no. 14)

6. Solidarity

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. 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."¹ The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

Scripture

Genesis 12:1-3

God blessed Israel so that all nations would be blessed through it.

Psalms 72

Living in right relationship with others brings peace.

Psalms 122

Peace be with you! For the sake of the Lord, I will seek your good.

Zechariah 8:16

These are the things you should do: Speak truth, judge well, make peace.

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, they will be called children of God.

Matthew 5:21-24

Be reconciled to one another before coming to the altar.

Romans 13:8-10

Living rightly means to love one another.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

If one member of Christ's body suffers, all suffer. If one member is honored, all rejoice.

1 John 3:16-18

The love of God in us is witnessed to by our willingness to lay down our lives for others as Christ did for us.

Tradition

Developing countries, where the most important reserves of the biosphere are found, continue to fuel the development of richer countries at the cost of their own present and future. The land of the southern poor is rich and mostly unpolluted, yet access to ownership of goods and resources for meeting vital needs is inhibited by a system of commercial relations and ownership which is structurally perverse... As the United States bishops have said, greater attention must be given to "the needs of the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests". We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference. (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [**Laudato Si'**. . .],no. 52, quoting United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, **Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good**)

In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world's goods, but, as I mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, it demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, this option is in fact an ethical imperative essential for effectively attaining the common good. (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [**Laudato Si'**. . . '],no. 158)

To love someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it. Besides the good of the individual, there is the good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of "all of us", made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [**Caritas in Veritate**. . .], no. 7)

It is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral — and not simply economic — act. Hence the consumer has a specific social responsibility, which goes hand-in-hand with the social responsibility of the enterprise. Consumers should be continually

educated regarding their daily role, which can be exercised with respect for moral principles without diminishing the intrinsic economic rationality of the act of purchasing... It can be helpful to promote new ways of marketing products from deprived areas of the world, so as to guarantee their producers a decent return. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [**Caritas in Veritate**. . .], no. 66)

At another level, the roots of the contradiction between the solemn affirmation of human rights and their tragic denial in practice lies in a notion of freedom which exalts the isolated individual in an absolute way, and gives no place to solidarity, to openness to others and service of them. . . It is precisely in this sense that Cain's answer to the Lord's question: "Where is Abel your brother?" can be interpreted: "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). Yes, every man is his "brother's keeper", because God entrusts us to one another. (St. John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life* [**Evangelium Vitae**. . .], no. 19)

[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 of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all. (St. John Paul II, *On Social Concern* [**Sollicitudo rei Socialis**. . .], no. 38)

Interdependence must be transformed into *solidarity*, based upon the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all. That which human industry produces through the processing of raw materials, with the contribution of work, must serve equally for the good of all. (St. John Paul II, *On Social Concern* [**Sollicitudo rei Socialis**. . .], no. 39)

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). (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, **Economic Justice for All**, no. 365)

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

Catholic Social Teaching: "Living Compassion and Mercy for the Salvation of Souls"
Lay Dominicans Retreat 2017

imbalances persist. (St. John XXIII, *On Christianity and Social Progress* [**Mater et Magistra** .
.], no. 157)

7. Care of God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

Scripture

Genesis 1:1-31

God made the heavens and the earth and it was good.

Genesis 2:15

Humans are commanded to care for God's creation.

Leviticus 25:1-7

The land itself must be given a rest and not abused.

Deuteronomy 10:14

All of heaven and earth belong to the Lord.

Psalms 24:1-2

All the earth is the Lord's.

Daniel 3:56-82

Creation proclaims the glory of God.

Matthew 6:25-34

God loves and cares for all of creation.

Romans 1:20

Creation reveals the nature of God.

1 Corinthians 10:26

Creation and all created things are inherently good because they are of the Lord.

Tradition

A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor... Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society. (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [**Laudato Si'**. . .], nos. 49, 91)

The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us. (Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [**Laudato Si'**. . .], no. 159)

We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures. Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement. Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations. (Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* [**Evangelii Gaudium**. . .], no. 215)

The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole... Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth* [**Caritas in Veritate**]. . . , nos. 48, 51)

Changes in lifestyle based on traditional moral virtues can ease the way to a sustainable and equitable world economy in which sacrifice will no longer be an unpopular concept. For many of us, a life less focused on material gain may remind us that we are more than what we have. Rejecting the false promises of excessive or

conspicuous consumption can even allow more time for family, friends, and civic responsibilities. A renewed sense of sacrifice and restraint could make an essential contribution to addressing global climate change. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, **Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good**)

Equally worrying is *the ecological question* which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way... Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him. (St. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Year* [**Centesimus Annus**. . .], no. 37)

The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to "use and misuse," or to dispose of things as one pleases. The limitation imposed from the beginning by the Creator himself and expressed symbolically by the prohibition not to "eat of the fruit of the tree" (cf. Gen 2:16-17) shows clearly enough that, when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity. A true concept of development cannot ignore the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources and the consequences of haphazard industrialization - three considerations which alert our consciences to the moral dimension of development.(St. John Paul II, *On Social Concerns*[**Sollicitudo rei Socialis**. . .], no. 34)