

Being Neighbor

The Catechism and Social Justice



Break the cycle of poverty
BUILD COMMUNITY

Catholic Campaign for Human Development
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Internet Edition

Introduction

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a sure and authentic compendium of the Church's teaching. It provides a means to help Catholics deepen their understanding of the faith. As Catholics, we believe that our faith is meant to make a difference in the communities, societies, and world in which we live. We can start making that difference by following Christ's call to be neighbor. The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides us with some of the steps to begin:

Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], no. 3)

Being Neighbor: The Catechism and Social Justice is intended as a prayer resource to highlight some of the social justice teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in the context of Catholic social teaching. Being Neighbor can be used in individual prayer, in a small-faith sharing group, in a classroom setting, or in a liturgical context with an emphasis on the social mission of the Church.

May we always keep focused on our Lord Jesus Christ's mission: Love God and love your neighbor. By loving our neighbor, we grow deeper in our love for God.

A Note About this Internet Edition: This is an abridged and slightly modified version of the print edition. A way to use this resource is to download and print or affix it to heavier stock for use as prayer cards, gift cards, teaching aids, or on bulletin boards. To order the print version, call 1-800-235-8722, and refer to publication number 5-261 (English) and 5-262 (Spanish).

poverty in america



34 million
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Dignity of the Human Person

“Created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all...have the same nature and the same origin. Redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, all are called to participate in the same divine beatitude: all therefore enjoy an equal dignity” (CCC, no. 1934).

Prayer for Life

Eternal God,
creator and sustainer of life,
bless us with the courage to defend all life
from conception to natural death.
Bless us with the strength to respect
all peoples from east to west, from north to
south,
so that we may truly follow
the call of Jesus
to be neighbor.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

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Community and the Common Good

“...The common good requires the social well-being and development of the group itself. Development is the epitome of all social duties. Certainly, it is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on” (CCC, no. 1908).

Prayer for Community

Saving God,
You grace each of us with equal measure in your love.
Let us learn to love our neighbors more deeply,
so that we can create
peaceful and just communities.
Inspire us to use our creative energies
to build the structures we need
to overcome the obstacles
of intolerance and indifference.
May Jesus provide us the example needed
and send the Spirit to warm our hearts for the journey.
Amen.

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Rights and Responsibilities

“Man is himself the author, center, and goal of all economic and social life. The decisive point of the social question is that goods created by God for everyone should in fact reach everyone in accordance with justice and with the help of charity” (CCC, no. 2459).

Prayer for Basic Rights

Lord of Wisdom,
Awaken us to our duty
to care for the basic needs
of all people.
Strengthen with hope
people denied
their human rights and freedoms.
Provide us all with the voice
to cry out for justice
for the poor and the oppressed.
Amen.

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Option for and with the Poor

“...Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs. ‘The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity.’ When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.” (CCC, no. 2446)

Prayer for the Poor

God of Justice,
open our eyes
to see you in the face of the poor.
Open our ears
to hear you in the cries of the exploited.
Open our mouths
to defend you in the public squares
as well as in private deeds.
Remind us that what we do
to the least ones,
we do to you.
Amen.

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Dignity of Work

“Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family, and of serving the human community” (CCC, no. 2428).

Prayer for Work

Creator God,
thank you for providing us
with the gift to share our talents.
Provide our community, our nation, our world
the fortitude to provide work for all
which is decent and fair.
Make us faithful stewards
of your creation
to enhance the human dignity
of our global family.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit
now and forever.
Amen.

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Solidarity

“Various causes of a religious, political, economic, and financial nature today give ‘the social question a worldwide dimension.’ There must be solidarity among nations which are already politically interdependent. It is even more essential when it is a question of dismantling the ‘perverse mechanisms’ that impede the development of the less advanced countries. In place of abusive if not usurious financial systems, iniquitous commercial relations among nations, and the arms race, there must be substituted a common effort to mobilize resources toward objectives of moral, cultural, and economic development, ‘redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values’” (CCC, no. 2438).

Prayer for Solidarity

Almighty and ever-living God,
empower your one human family to join hands
on our journey of faith.
Send us your Spirit of hope,
so that we may work
to alleviate human suffering
and foster charity and justice
in our world.
Amen.

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Care for God's Creation

“Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection. For each one of the works of the ‘six days’ it is said: ‘And God saw that it was good.’ ‘By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth, and excellence, its own order and laws.” Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God’s infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment.” (CCC, no. 339)

Prayer for Creation

Loving God,
You are the Creator of all good things.
Keep us mindful that you provide abundant
resources for the good of all people. You give us
every good and necessary gift, freely and without
regard for social status or economic condition.
Stir within us a desire to preserve and share the earth’s
resources so as to satisfy the physical and spiritual
needs of all human persons, particularly the poor
and vulnerable.
Amen.

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