

Major Catholic Documents on Social Justice

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.

The following list includes not only the encyclical and conciliar documents that are typically considered to be the core texts, but also some key teaching documents issued by national bishops conferences and Vatican congregations, documents which contribute to the ongoing development of Catholic social teaching.

For a more extensive list of official Church documents, see <http://web2.shc.edu/theolibrary/docs.htm>

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

This seminal 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.

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.

Iustitia 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.

Sollicitudo 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.

Centesimus Annus (The Hundredth Year) -- Pope John Paul II, 1991

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

Fides et Ratio (Faith and Reason) -- ***Pope John Paul II, 1998***

Deus Caritas Est (God Is Love) -- Pope Benedict XVI, 2005

Sacramentum Caritatis (Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist) -- Pope Benedict XVI, 2007

Other Papal and Vatican Statements of Note

The Participation of Catholics in Political Life -- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 200

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Vatican, 1992

Catholic Social Teaching: The Catechism's Best Kept Secret

Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1986

Responding to the contemporary curtailment of freedoms and widespread oppression, the Congregation reaffirms the Church's determination to advocate for the rights of the poor and the workers, with a view towards establishing changes called for by justice in the social and political order.

U. S. Bishops' Statements

Program of Social Reconstruction 1919

Pastoral Letter of 1919

Brothers and Sisters to Us 1979

Capital Punishment, 1980

Economic Justice All, 1986

The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace, 1993

A Reflection of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on the Tenth Anniversary of The Challenge of Peace

Communities of Salt and Light, 1993

A Decade after Economic Justice for All 1996

Called to Global Solidarity, 1997

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, 1998

Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics

Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice, 2001

Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice, 2001

Online Documents at US Catholic Conference of Bishops

Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility, 2003

Other Statements of Note

The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 1996

This Land is Home to Me, Appalachian Catholic Bishops, 1975

Office for Social Justice, 328 West Kellogg Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55102
http://www.osjspm.org/social_teaching_documents.aspx