



## REFLECTION ON CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING







**“AN AUTHENTIC FAITH — WHICH IS NEVER COMFORTABLE OR COMPLETELY PERSONAL — ALWAYS INVOLVES A DEEP DESIRE TO CHANGE THE WORLD, TO TRANSMIT VALUES, TO LEAVE THE EARTH SOMEHOW BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT.”**

POPE FRANCIS, *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*, 183

# INTRODUCTION TO CATHOLIC SOCIAL DOCTRINE

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**“An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave the earth somehow better than we found it.”**

POPE FRANCIS, *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*, 183

The call to justice and peace has always been an essential part of the life of the Christian. Our sacred texts offer a constant reminder of the centrality of this call. In the Old Testament the prophet Micah tells us: “this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

The writings of all the prophets provide reminders of the sort of life Yahweh wishes from the people of the Covenant: a life of justice, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness. The prophets denounce the hypocrisy of their society. To be a hypocrite is to wear a “false face”, to pretend to be someone or something that you are not. What the prophets lamented was a society that neglected the most vulnerable within it. For Amos, worship of God is meaningless unless it is also put into daily action. “I hate, I despise your feasts, I take no delight in your solemn assemblies ... but let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Am. 5:21, 24).

These texts show a deep concern for the marginalised – the widow, the orphan, the poor and the stranger in a strange land. The strength of the Covenant relationship with Yahweh is witnessed through commitment to the suffering of others, and not just through visits to the Temple. Thousands of years later we hear those words of the prophets echo through the Council Fathers when they proclaimed that, “it is a mistake to think that, because we have no lasting city, but seek the

city which is to come, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities; this is to forget that by our faith we are bound all the more to fulfil these responsibilities according to the vocation of each one” (*Gaudium et spes*, 43).

For Christians, of course, the New Testament contains the perfect example of God’s justice and mercy, Jesus Christ. The life and ministry of Jesus was one of inclusion, compassion and forgiveness. Christ’s actions were counter-cultural; through his words and deeds he challenged prevailing attitudes and structures that served to exclude and oppress sections of society. The parable about the Good Samaritan illustrates that point well. Jesus is critical of a situation where religious ritual and religious ideology become more important than helping someone who is in pain. And in Matthew 22:34-40 we note the double commandment to love both God and neighbour. In other words, love of God cannot be divorced from the working out of justice and peace in this world.

The earliest Christian community took inspiration from the life and example of Christ, and from its infancy the Christian faith embraced the world. The early Christians went out into the world, conscious of its dangers and its shortcomings, but with a deep conviction that they could change it for the better. Theirs was not a private faith, one that remained sheltered from the world. Rather, the Christian faith was one that was proactive, inclusive and driven by the joy of the Gospel message. As Pope Francis explains, “Reading the Scriptures

also makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God ... The Gospel is about the *Kingdom of God*; it is about loving God who reigns in our world ... Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 180).

For centuries later, this social consciousness acted as a motivation for Christians in times of crisis. The front-line response to famines, to the sufferings of war, and to plagues, invariably came from Christian groups. Monks, priests and nuns commonly became the providers of education and healthcare. In time, organisations such as the Society of St Vincent de Paul emerged, taking on a more formal and organised structure, but always guided by that same Christian calling to social justice. Pádraig Corkery captures this dynamic nature of our faith well: “The Gospel challenges us not to be indifferent or hostile to the world we inhabit but to take it seriously and to take responsibility for it. As women and men of faith, who strive to shape our lives around the Gospel, our presence in the world is meant to be a dynamic, engaging presence that contributes to the transformation of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

What we now call the Social Teaching of the Church is a more recent development. This refers to the body of official teaching on social, political and economic affairs that has been compiled incrementally over more than a century. Pope Leo XIII’s great social encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891) is generally taken as its starting point. That document was the first attempt by the Church’s Magisterium to address in an official way the social concerns of the time. From then onward a set of teaching has emerged that deals with a large number of social justice issues in all parts of the world, and is found primarily in what are called the social encyclicals.

Such is the significance of *Rerum novarum* that many of the subsequent social encyclicals were issued to mark its anniversary. But the Church’s social teaching also includes a Pastoral Constitution (*Gaudium et spes*), Declarations (such as the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* of Vatican II), Apostolic Exhortations (Pope Paul VI’s *Octogesima adveniens* for example, or Pope Francis’

*Evangelii gaudium*), documents issued by Synods (*Justice in the World*, 1971), as well as statements of Bishops’ Conferences from around the world (for example the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference Pastoral Reflection entitled *The Cry of the Earth*, 2014).

A number of key events and developments helped shape the social teaching of the Church. The earliest documents tended to be Euro-centric in focus, dealing with issues of concern primarily to the European Church: the rights of workers in industrialised European cities for example, the crisis surrounding the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the rise of totalitarian regimes, and so forth. However, the 1960s saw a change as the teaching became more global in outlook. International social, political and economic developments such as the Cold War, decolonisation, civil rights movements, and growth in international trade, meant that the social justice agenda now became global in reach. These have been joined more recently by questions of environmental justice and related issues. Thus, our understanding of social relationships and, by implication, of our social responsibilities has taken on a much broader dimension than was earlier the case.

The social teaching of the Church covers a huge variety of issues; one might say that anything that affects our social relationships is of concern to it. Popes have responded to the “signs of their times” by publishing documents that challenge the social consciousness of “all people of good will”, a phrase that with *Mater et magistra* marked the start of the practice of addressing this kind of document to an audience beyond the Church’s boundaries. Poverty, the rights of workers, homelessness, sexual exploitation and trafficking, war, migration, displacement of peoples, sustainable development, trade, ecology, economics, business ethics, banking crises, HIV, access to healthcare, food security, rights of prisoners, rights of ethnic minorities — all of these are now seen to be proper subjects of individual and collective moral concern.

<sup>1</sup> Pádraig Corkery, *Companion to the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2007), p 18.



The underlying insight is that everyone has the right and responsibility to live in our world constructively, not destructively, and to ensure that we leave it in a better state than when we entered it.

At the core of Catholic Social Teaching are a number of key concepts and principles. Chief among these are justice, human dignity, the common good, the principles of participation, solidarity, and subsidiarity, the universal destination of the world's goods, and the option for the poor. We shall look at these in detail in the next section, but meanwhile we must answer two questions that are often asked.

The first can be put as follows: is social concern an optional extra for the Christian, something that we are free to disregard as part of what is demanded of a follower of Jesus? The answer must be an unequivocal no. We have already glanced at the basis for this answer in key biblical texts, to which we can now add the numerous Church documents which remind us that a commitment to justice and peace is at

the heart of the Gospel message, and therefore central to the Christian mission. Evangelisation is achieved not only through proclaiming the joy of the Gospel, but also through action for the betterment of our world.

The second of our questions is related to the first: how much weight does the social teaching of the Church carry? Is it as important as other moral teachings of the Catholic Church? The Magisterium leaves us in no doubt. The *Compendium* states: "Insofar as it is part of the Church's moral teaching, the Church's social doctrine has the same dignity and authority as her moral teaching. It is authentic magisterium, which obligates the faithful to adhere to it."<sup>2</sup> It requires little thought to see a direct moral significance in the themes of Catholic Social Teaching to which we now turn.

<sup>2</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), para. 80.

# JUSTICE

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“Come you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me. In prison and you came to see me.”

MATTHEW 25: 34-6

## “WHY DO YOU CALL ME ‘LORD’ AND NOT DO AS I SAY?” (LUKE 6:46)

The biblical understanding of justice is markedly relational. Both the Old and the New Testament support a vision of justice that places the person and human relationships at its centre. This helps to act as a counter-balance to narrow, or individualistic, notions of justice and its demands.

In the Old Testament we see that the “just person” is one who is in right relationship with his workers, his neighbours, the piece of earth that he inhabits (Job for example). By contrast, the unjust person is one who neglects those around him. The prophets criticised those who failed to take care of the vulnerable in society – the widow, the orphan, the poor, the alien in a strange land. The God of the Old Testament,

we are reminded, is one who stands with those who suffer injustice. Indeed, the prophets realised that faith in Yahweh is meaningless if it is not accompanied by a living out of God’s justice and mercy in the here and now.

In the New Testament, the life and ministry of Christ offers a complete picture of the justice that in the Hebrew Bible is ascribed to Yahweh and expected of Yahweh’s people. The ministry of Jesus is what we would call an inclusive ministry. As we watch it we witness a God whose love goes to the margins of society; a God whose actions are counter-cultural; a God who cares more for people than for what is merely a contingent rule.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How might the biblical understanding of justice, and especially the witness of Christ, shape the way in which we govern and organise ourselves in our parish or in our diocese?

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How might the inclusiveness with which Jesus looked on those to whom he ministered challenge us at local Church level? Are we hospitable to the stranger, to those who are on the margins?

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In contemporary Ireland, whom do we identify as the stranger?

# HUMAN DIGNITY

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“Do not try to combine faith in Jesus Christ, our glorified Lord, with the making of distinction between classes of people.”

JAMES 2:1

Christian anthropology offers an understanding of the person that has certain readily identifiable characteristics. We recognise the person as relational and social. Christians hold the belief that human beings are made in God's image and likeness (*imago Dei*), and therefore the human person has an innate dignity that must be honoured. This way of looking at the person is enhanced by the Christian understanding of God as Trinity.

For the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are obviously interrelated, and their interrelationships – the way each Person is related to the Others – provide an exemplar for right human relationships too. If we are made in the image of this trinitarian God, it follows that we are meant to relate as the Three Persons do. And among the qualities of the interrelationships of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mutuality, respect, equality (none is subordinate to any other Person) and uniqueness. Even within the close relations of the Three, as ancient Christian writers envisaged the life of God, each divine Person

has the space and opportunity to ensure that his uniqueness emerges.

Acknowledging in this way the dignity of every human being, irrespective of race, gender, skin colour, religion, ethnicity, means that our modern talk of human rights fits beautifully into Christian thinking. Correspondingly, the development of human rights theory, language and legislation helps to reinforce Christian faith in the dignity of each human person.

Related concepts such as the principle of participation, the common good, solidarity and justice also complement this; our dignity is connected to our social and inter-personal nature. Thus, one finds in the social teaching of the Church a constant attempt to balance the individual (and his/her rights) with the social (the corresponding duties that accompany these rights). Therefore, while the dignity of the person and his/her rights are constantly acknowledged, it is understood against the broader canvas of social obligation.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the main challenges to the protection of human dignity in Ireland today?

What could we do to increase understanding of the principle of human dignity in our society?



# THE COMMON GOOD

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The common good is described in Catholic teaching as the “sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily.”

*GAUDIUM ET SPES, 26*

The Christian understanding of the common good offers a balance between extreme individualism and totalitarian notions of how society should function. It emphasises the fact that the fundamental rights of all people must be protected and promoted, while at the same time acknowledging that we are part of a social whole. Hence, individual rights bring with them corresponding responsibilities.

The Christian anthropological vision of the person, as mentioned earlier, highlights features that point towards and accentuate human relationality, and this radically relational understanding of the person (in relationship with God and with neighbour) reinforces the notion of social commitment. Christian thought merges with that of ancient Greek philosophers in its belief that human flourishing is best realised through positive human relationships with others.

The common good describes the complex web of social and inter-personal relationships that we need in order to flourish, as well as the context or environment that is necessary for those relationships to foster and to grow. It encompasses much more than just the material commodities, services and utilities that perhaps we tend to think of first. Needless to say, access to education, healthcare, food,

housing and other components of an adequate social infrastructure is essential to our realising the common good. However, the Christian notion of the common good also makes much of those social relationships that are vital to both individual and societal flourishing.

Hence, the common good and what is known in Catholic social doctrine as the principle of participation are intricately linked. Translating this into practical terms, we can say that civic participation, in its many guises, is a critical dimension of the common good. It is through our participation in society that we contribute to the larger social good. We may do this politically through exercising our vote in elections, or through the paying of taxes in order to provide social services for the less well off, or through our involvement in local community groups, through peaceful protest, or through our participation in various voluntary organisations. Civil society, as it is called, provides some of the mechanisms through which we participate in our communities. Political authorities play a major role in the promotion and protection of the common good, but it is impoverishing to think only in terms of what a government must provide for its citizens. There is an onus on each of us to contribute to the common good according to our gifts and our role in society.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What particular contribution can the Church make, either in your own parish or globally, to the promotion and protection of the common good?

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How do the structures of your community help/hinder social participation?

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How might the local Church help to promote greater awareness of the common good? What other organisations might it work with to this end?

# PARTICIPATION

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“Changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual.”

POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, 189

The principle of participation is based on the belief that human agency is itself a good, and an integral part of the common good. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* describes participation as “a series of activities by means of which the citizen contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which he/she belongs” (n. 189). It goes on to explain that participation is a cornerstone of “all democratic orders and one of the major guarantees of the permanence of the democratic system” (n. 190). This is the background to a principle well expressed by Pádraig Corkery: “because participation is a basic right that contributes to the common good of society there is a duty on all to challenge attitudes and structures that work against participation.”<sup>3</sup> The principle

of participation is important not only for the mission of the Church *ad extra*, but also for the life of the Church *ad intra*. A movement towards greater recognition of lay members of the Church and increased lay participation in Church life, several decades in train, was emphatically endorsed at the Second Vatican Council. The bishops participating in the Council acknowledged the very distinctive roles that lay people play in the world: “The laity are called to participate actively in the whole life of the Church; not only are they to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity, but they are to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind” (*Gaudium et spes*, 43).

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<sup>3</sup> Pádraig Corkery, *Companion to the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, p. 77.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the attitudes and structures that deny people the opportunity to participate in society?

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What can we do about them? How might the Church/Church groups help?

# SOLIDARITY

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“[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.”

SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 38

The virtue of solidarity became prominent in Catholic social thinking in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was used to differentiate Catholic social thought from liberal and communist theories of how society should be run. The concept became a central feature of the Polish workers' movements in the 1980s and of the teaching of Saint John Paul II. The notion of solidarity moves us towards encounter with others. This is not a hollow idea, or a vague feeling of compassion for the plight of those around us. Rather, it pushes us out into positive encounter with others. It is a proactive notion, one which concerns not only the quality of our relationships but also issues in action towards rectifying injustices suffered by others.

In the *Compendium* we read that the virtue of solidarity “highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and people towards an ever more committed unity” (n. 192).

We see every day the manifold ways in which the modern world is interconnected. We have become a highly interdependent global community. Increased communication and travel allows us to know almost immediately what is happening thousands of miles away. We are able to respond to crises more speedily and effectively. This helps to foster a greater sense of interdependence and of solidarity among people and peoples. The international responses to tragedies such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, or the efforts to find missing Malaysian Airlines Flight MH370 in 2014, illustrate the ways in which the human community can be mobilised in times of great tragedy.

However, increased communication and wider distribution of information also highlight the enormous inequalities in our world. We have instant access to information concerning poverty, malnutrition, famine, dictatorships, and ethnic cleansing. Solidarity, therefore, requires of us a firm commitment to “the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all (n. 193).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are some of the main challenges to solidarity in our society today?

What do the Church/Church groups do to help promote a spirit of solidarity in our communities?

# THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY

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This principle states that government should not over-extend its reach into local or personal affairs. Rather, the State should help (*subsidiium*) local groups and not try to control or replace their decision-making abilities. This adds to a richness and vibrancy in society whereby local expertise, knowledge and skills contribute to the running of communities. We can see how the principle of solidarity is important here, as are concepts such as human agency, responsibility, freedom, human creativity and initiative.

The State, of course, can intervene in local issues. In situations where the common good is threatened, or in times of crisis when local structures are unable to adequately deal with a problem, the resources of the State may need to be called upon for the good of the community.

This principle is based on the recognition that individuals and local groups have something unique and positive to contribute to society,

and that it is not the business of the State to deny individuals or groups this right. To do so quenches the spirit and freedom of individuals, and thus can be destructive to human flourishing.

We might also think of subsidiarity as both a means and an end. It can be understood as a “means” in so far as it allows for more effective and creative governance. The State has limited resources, and can rarely, if at all, assume total control over the running of a country. Delegating responsibility for local affairs to local communities frees the State to look after national interests. It also serves as a means towards the realisation of human creativity and involvement in social affairs. But it can be understood also as an “end”, since freedom, initiative, creativity and social responsibility are good in themselves, quite apart from any good outcomes which may result from their exercise.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do you see the principle of subsidiarity being realised at parish and diocesan level?

Can you identify the ways in which people at every level of civil community are included in decision-making?

How can the Church contribute to greater local participation in civil life, and how might Christian citizens collaborate with other religious groups towards this end?

# THE UNIVERSAL DESTINATION OF THE WORLD'S GOODS

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In *Centesimus annus* Saint John Paul II stated that “God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone. This is the foundation of the universal destination of the earth’s goods.”

*CENTESIMUS ANNUS*, 31

Christians believe that all human beings are made in God’s image and likeness, and therefore all have the right to participate in God’s creation. The world’s goods are not the preserve of the select few, and Christians, motivated by the joy of the Gospel, are called to rectify processes and structures that exclude and alienate people.

The idea of the universal destination of the earth’s goods can be described as a natural right. By this we mean that it stems from our human nature, made as we are in God’s image. Other rights, such as the right to private property for example, must not hinder this. In the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the*

*Church* we are reminded that “the principle of the universal destination of goods is an invitation to develop an economic vision inspired by moral values that permit people not to lose sight of the origin or purpose of these goods, so as to bring about a world of fairness and solidarity, in which the creation of wealth can take on a positive function” (n. 174).

Thus, the earth’s goods, governed by the norms of a socially just distribution, ought to enhance the lives of all human beings and allow for the flourishing of all peoples. This includes not only the material commodities and resources of the world, but also the invention of new technologies and processes.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How might the principle of the universal destination of the world’s goods impact our decisions as consumers?

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How could we support members of our local Church community in making ethical consumer choices?

# THE OPTION FOR THE POOR

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“I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.”

MATTHEW 25:40

“Doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights.”

*Evangelii gaudium*, 212

As we saw above, in both Old and New Testaments the Christian encounters a God who takes a deliberate stance on behalf of the poor. The God of Jesus Christ is an inclusive God, and One who recognises the suffering of the marginalised in a particular way. The Gospel message is motivational, therefore, moving us outward towards action on behalf of others.

The principle of the universal destination of the earth's goods has a direct connection with the option for the poor. There is a moral imperative to distribute the resources and technologies of the world in a more just and equitable way. In a world of gross inequalities, Christians are called to challenge and reform the structures and attitudes that continue to exclude millions of people from the benefits of our earthly community.

Poverty takes on many guises. We most immediately think of economic deprivation and the ways in which people remain isolated because of it. Food insecurity, lack of access to clean water and basic healthcare, poor housing, homelessness – these are all the consequences of the economic marginalisation of millions of people around the world. But we might also think of social, cultural and spiritual

poverty. Many people find themselves excluded from social, political, religious and cultural participation because of their gender or their ethnicity.

“It is essential to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognise the suffering Christ, even if this appears to bring us no tangible and immediate benefits. I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, and many others” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 210).

Pope Francis draws our attention to the vulnerability of the poor, especially the many women around the world who are “doubly poor” because of their economic, social and cultural subordination. He tells us that “For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor ‘his first mercy’. This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have ‘this mind ... which was in Jesus Christ’” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 198).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What forms of poverty and vulnerability are we aware of in our local community?

How can we, as a Church community, reach out to those who are experiencing spiritual poverty?

# INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**“The moral dimension of the economy shows that economic efficiency and the promotion of human development in solidarity are not two separate or alternative aims but one indivisible goal.”**

*COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH, 332*

In 1967 Pope Paul VI issued his social encyclical on development, *Populorum progressio*. It can be argued that this remains the blueprint for current Catholic thinking on this topic. Its significance was such that later Popes marked its anniversary by publishing social documents. Its relevance for today's world continues to be seen; many of Pope Paul's warnings were realised, and much of this document addresses the economic difficulties that we face in the island of Ireland today.

There are a number of features of Pope Paul's vision of integral human development. Firstly, it is person-centered. The human person must be placed at the centre of our understanding of development, and that in turn requires us to coin an understanding that incorporates all dimensions of human living – the spiritual, cultural, emotional, relational and material dimensions. “Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete; integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every [person] and of the whole [person]” (*Populorum progressio*, 14).

Secondly, Pope Paul is highly critical of a concept of development that prizes economic growth above all other human considerations. He says that it is “unfortunate” that a system exists which regards “profit as the key motive for economic progress, competition as the supreme law of economics, and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right that has no limits and carries no corresponding social obligation” (*Populorum progressio*, 26).

Similarly, Pope Francis criticised a trickle-down view of economic progress, noting the unequal benefits it brings. “Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion ... expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralised workings of the prevailing economic system” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 54).

Pope Paul also recognised the close connection between development and peace. If we are to find lasting peace and stability in our world we must work towards equitable and fair development. This point has been echoed by economists such as James Wolfensohn, who have repeatedly insisted that peace can only be achieved by tackling poverty. Sustainable, equitable development, therefore, is key to

the creation of lasting peace in our world. But it cannot be a type of development that excludes the majority and benefits the few, but rather one that is inclusive and beneficial for all. Authentic development must cater for all aspects of human flourishing, and allow for the possibility of all people to participate in social progress.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is required in our society to enable people to flourish?

What is the impact of inequality in our society? Who is suffering as a consequence of inequality?

# TIMELINE DOCUMENTS<sup>4</sup>

<b>Pope Leo XIII</b>	Rerum novarum	1891
<b>Pope Pius XI</b>	Quadragesimo anno	1931
<b>Pope Pius XII</b>	Christmas Messages	1939–1945
<b>Saint John XXIII</b>	Mater et magistra Pacem in terris	1961 1963
<b>Second Vatican Council</b>	Gaudium et spes Dignitatis humanae	1965 1965
<b>Pope Paul VI</b>	Populorum progressio Octogesima adveniens	1967 1971
<b>Synod of Bishops</b>	Justitia in mundo	1971
<b>Saint John Paul II</b>	Familiaris consortio Laborem exercens Sollicitudo rei socialis Centesimus annus	1981 1981 1987 1991
<b>Pope Benedict XVI</b>	Deus caritas est Caritas in veritate	2005 2009
<b>Pope Francis</b>	Evangelii gaudium	2013
<b>Latin American Catholic Bishops' Conference</b>	Medellin Documents Puebla Documents	1968 1979



<b>Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (and associated Councils and Agencies)</b>	A Call to Action in Times of Crisis	2011
	From Crisis to Hope: Working To Achieve the Common Good	2011
	Challenging Poverty in Northern Ireland	2010
	The Cry of the Earth	2009
	In the Wake of the Celtic Tiger: Poverty in Contemporary Ireland	2009
	Violence in Irish Society: Towards an Ecology of Peace	2008
<b>Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales</b>	Choosing the Common Good	2010
	Meeting God in Friend and Stranger	2010
<b>United States Catholic Bishops' Conference</b>	Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship	2011
	When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women	2002
	Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions	1998
	Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics	1998
	Economic Justice for All	1993
	The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace	1986
<b>Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines</b>	What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?	1988
<b>Indian Bishops' Conference</b>	The Role of the Church for a Better India	2013

<sup>4</sup> Please note, the Bishops' Conference documents listed here are a selection of documents produced, and do not represent a comprehensive list. In addition, this is merely a sample of Bishops' Conferences from around the world that issued documents dealing with social justice issues.

# USEFUL CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING TEXTS AND COMMENTARIES

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All Church social documents are available from the Vatican website: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed.). (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2000)

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life”, in *Readings on Catholics in Political Life* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006)

Council for Justice and Peace, “Catholic Social Teaching Perspectives”, available at: [www.catholicbishops.ie/2012/09/27/catholic-social-teaching-explored](http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2012/09/27/catholic-social-teaching-explored)

Eucharistic Congress, “Inclusive Parishes”, available at: [www.iec2012.ie/media/CommunionandInclusionJan20121.pdf](http://www.iec2012.ie/media/CommunionandInclusionJan20121.pdf)

Mark J. Allman, Tobias L. Winright, *After the Smoke Clears: The Just War Tradition and Post War Justice*, (New York: Orbis, 2010)

Eoin Cassidy (ed.), *The Common Good in a Unequal World: Reflections on the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2007)

Eoin Cassidy (ed.), *Who is my Neighbour? Deus Caritas Est: An Encyclical for Our Times?*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2009)

iCatholic videos available at: [www.iCatholic.ie](http://www.iCatholic.ie)

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