



The Church's social teaching helps every Catholic to live a fully just life. The teaching involves a set of principles which are based on the Gospels, and which have been developed mainly over the last hundred years. This set of fact sheets will outline the basic principles and will give examples of how they can guide our lives and our action in the world.

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

Faith Doing Justice
www.faithdoingjustice.com.au

Office for Social Justice, Archdiocese of
St Paul and Minneapolis
www.osjspm.org

*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church
www.hobart.catholic.org.au

See link on left hand side under "Universal Church"

CONTACT THE COMMISSION

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New Town
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phone (03) 6208 6271
fax (03) 6208 6299
email tcjpc@aohtas.org
visit www.tasjustice.org.au

We have a **small library of resource** material on Catholic Social Teaching and social justice issues. You are welcome to borrow from us.

We have a collection of brochures and flyers on various social justice issues for you to take away.

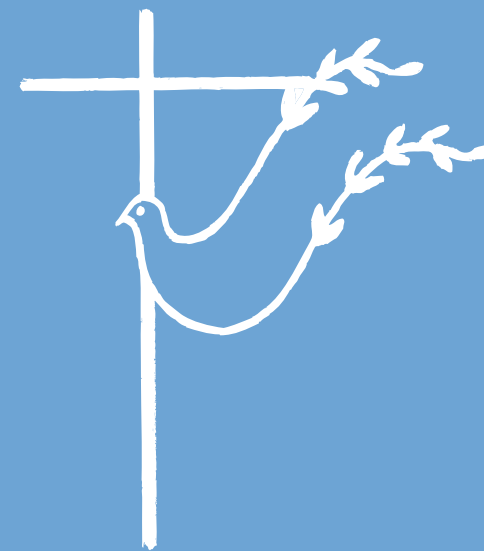
Ask us for information about web resources or personal contacts on particular issues.



TASMANIAN CATHOLIC
JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION

4 principles that can
change the world

The Common Good



THE TASMANIAN CATHOLIC
JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION

FACT SHEET 2

The Common Good



The common good is a principle which is derived from the concept of the dignity, unity and equality of all people. Hence, “A society that wishes to remain at the service of the human being at every level is a society that has the common good – the good of all people and of the whole person – as its primary goal.” (Catechism 1912)

The three essential elements of the common good involve respect for the person, the social well being and development of the group, and the stability and security brought by the presence of peace.

St Thomas Aquinas explained that the common good corresponds to the highest of human instincts.

This principle tells us that we are responsible for each other and that we need to work together so that each and every person can realise their full potential.

Pope John Paul II explained that what is required 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.” (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis).

THE TEACHING OF JESUS

The idea of the common good is enshrined in Jesus’ teachings; numerous stories and parables illustrate this. The story of the good Samaritan, the feeding of the five thousand, the labourers in the vineyard, the rich young man, the parable of the great dinner, the judgment of the nations are just some examples. In Luke ch 4 we read how Jesus defined his mission:

**“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To let the oppressed go free,
To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”**

Jesus reserves his greatest anger for the hypocrites – those who uphold God’s law in words but oppress others in God’s name and want to be seen as more important than others.

Crucially, the commandment to “love your neighbour as yourself” means not only caring for individuals but all people.

POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

The common good also has an important political dimension: According to the Compendium*, the common good is “the reason that the political authority exists”, hence, it is a government as well as an individual



responsibility. (168) As a result, “the government of each country has the specific duty to harmonise the different sectoral interests with the requirements of justice.” (Catechism 1908)

The common good is a measuring stick by which actions of government and individuals can be assessed.

In our individualistic society, it is important to ensure that the idea of the common good is a prominent part of the political discourse.

The Vatican II document “Gaudium et Spes” outlines the importance of promoting the common good because “every day human interdependence grows more tightly drawn

and spreads by degrees over the whole world.” So that “every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family” (26)

Pope John XXIII outlined the means by which the common good can be achieved: by a **commitment to peace**, the organisation of the State’s powers, a sound juridical system, the protection of the environment. The provision of essential services to all is crucial: food, housing, work, education and access to culture, transportation, basic health care, the freedom of communication and expression, and the protection of religious freedom. (cf Mater et Magistra, 421)

According to Gaudium et Spes, society “must be founded on truth, built on justice, and animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more **humane balance**.”



QUESTIONS ?

What does this mean for us in our daily lives?

- Can you read the Gospel stories with your eyes and ears open to Jesus’ call for us to care for the common good of all? Can you think of examples he uses?
- Do we see our neighbour as all people – what are the implications of responding to this?
- Respect for the person includes respect for their culture, beliefs and views, whether we share those or not. How do we live this out?
- Can you think of ways that our society works against the common good?
- Are you aware of things you do to contribute to the common good each day? Is this a conscious choice?
- What are some of the practical things you could do?

