

Bob's Basic Booklet about the

# Social Teachings of the Catholic Church

How to learn what God thinks about economics, politics, social justice, & solidarity.

👉 **Point the First:** The Catholic Church has a distinctive set of teachings on social & economic issues. They are not optional suggestions, but definitive doctrines. It is our duty to form our consciences in accordance with those teachings and apply them to the issues of the day.

👉 **Point the Second:** You won't learn about the social teachings of the Catholic Church from conservative or liberal activists, talk show hosts, nor from political parties. To get the truth, you must listen to what the Catechism and the popes teach about social & economic issues.

## START HERE: THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

✚ Sections 2419 - 2463 on the *Social Doctrine of the Church* – [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_\\_\\_P8C.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P8C.HTM) “The Church makes a moral judgment about economic & social matters, ‘when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it.’ In the moral order she bears a mission distinct from that of political authorities: the Church is concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, our ultimate end. She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods & in socio-economic relationships.” § 2420

✚ Sections 1905 - 1917 on the *Importance of the Common Good*. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_\\_\\_P6K.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P6K.HTM) “Each human community possesses a common good which permits it to be recognized as such; it is in the political community that its most complete realization is found. It is the role of the state to defend & promote the common good of civil society, its citizens, & intermediate bodies.” §1910

✚ Sections 1928 - 1948 on *Social Justice & Solidarity* [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_\\_\\_P6N.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P6N.HTM) & the links thereafter for the rest of this chapter. “Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature & their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good & the exercise of authority.”§1928

...”The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of ‘friendship’ or ‘social charity,’ is a direct demand of human & Christian brotherhood. ‘An error, today abundantly widespread, is disregard for the law of human solidarity & charity, dictated & imposed both by our common origin & by the equality in rational nature of all men, whatever nation they belong to. This law is sealed by the sacrifice of redemption offered by Jesus Christ on the altar of the Cross to his heavenly Father, on behalf of sinful humanity.’ (Pope Pius XII)” §1939

👉 **NEXT. . . you can't go wrong listening to the Popes & the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican council teach about social justice.** You do not need a theological degree to understand what they are saying to us.

✚ **RERUM NOVARUM**, “*On Capital & Labor*,” Leo XIII, 1891 <http://www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/L13RERUM.HTM> “Some remedy must be found. . . for the misery & wretchedness which press so heavily at the moment on the large majority of the very poor... Hence by degrees... workers have been given over, isolated & defenseless, to the callousness of employers & the greed of unrestrained competition. . . when there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor & badly off have a claim to especial consideration. The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, & are less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, & must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. & it is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong in the mass of the needy, should be specially cared for & protected by the government.”

✚ **GAUDIUM ET SPES**, *The Church in the Modern World*, Second Vatican council, 1965 <http://www.ewtn.com/library/councils/v2modwor.htm> “The social order & its development must unceasingly work to the benefit of the human person... this social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice, & animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more humane balance. . . the ferment of the Gospel, too, has aroused & continues to arouse in human hearts the irresistible requirements of their dignity.”

✚ **POPULORUM PROGRESSIO**, *On the Development of Peoples*, Paul VI, 1967 <http://www.ewtn.com/library/encyc/p6develo.htm> “Today the peoples in hunger are making a dramatic appeal to the peoples blessed with abundance. The Church shudders at this cry of anguish & calls each one to give a loving response of charity to these brothers’ & sisters’ cry for help.”

✚ **OCTOGESIMA ADVENIENS**, *On the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, Paul VI, 1971 <http://www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/p6oct.htm>  
“To build up the city. . . to create new modes of neighborliness & relationships, to perceive an original application of social justice & to undertake responsibility for this collective future (which is foreseen as difficult) is a task which Christians must share. To those who are heaped up in an urban promiscuity which becomes intolerable, it is necessary to bring a message of hope. This can be done by brotherhood which is lived & by concrete justice. . . Let Christians not lose heart in view of the vast & faceless society... In the bible, the city is in fact often the place of sin & pride – the pride of humans who feel secure enough to be able to build their lives without god & even to affirm that we are powerful against God. But there is also the example of Jerusalem, the Holy City, the place where god is encountered, the promise of the city which comes from on high.”

✚ **SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS**, *On Solidarity*, John Paul II, 1987  
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/encyc/jp2socia.htm> “Solidarity helps us to see the ‘other’ – whether a person, people, or nation – not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity & physical strength to be exploited at low cost & then discarded when no longer useful, but as our ‘neighbor’, a ‘helper’ to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God. . . The option or love of preference for the poor ... is an option, or a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our social responsibilities & hence to our manner of living, & to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership & use of goods. Today, furthermore, given the worldwide dimension which the social question has assumed, this love of the preference for the poor, & the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care &, above all, those without hope of a better future. It is impossible not to take account of the existence of these realities. To ignore them would mean becoming like the “rich man” who pretended not to know the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate (cf. Lk 16:19-31). Our daily life as well as our decisions in the political & economic fields must be marked by these realities.”

✚ **EVANGELIUM VITAE**, *The Gospel of Life*, John Paul II  
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/encyc/jp2evang.htm> “Today there exists a great multitude of weak & defenseless human beings, unborn children in

particular, whose fundamental right to life is being trampled upon. If...the church could not be silent about the injustices of those times, still less can she be silent today, when the social injustices of the past, unfortunately not yet overcome, are being compounded in many regions of the world by still more grievous forms of injustice & oppression...Should we not question the very economic models often adopted by states which...cause & aggravate situations of injustice & violence in which the life of whole peoples is degraded & trampled upon?”

✚ **CENTESSIMUS ANNUS**, *One Hundred Years*, John Paul II, 1991  
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/encyc/jp2hundr.htm> “Love for others, & in the first place love for the poor...is made concrete in the promotion of justice. Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness...It is not merely a matter of ‘giving from one’s surplus,’ but of helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic & human development...It is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of lifestyles, of models of production & consumption, & of the established structures of power which today govern societies.”

✚ **CARITAS IN VERITATE**, *Human Development in Charity & Truth*, Benedict XVI, 2009  
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/ENCYC/b16caritas.HTM>  
“This dynamic of charity received & given is what gives rise to the Church’s social teaching, which is *caritas in veritate in re sociali*, the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love in society...the social doctrine of the church has unceasingly highlighted the importance of distributive justice & social justice for the market economy, not only because it belongs within a broader social & political context, but also because of the wider network of relations within which it operates. In fact, if the market is governed solely by the principle of the equivalence in value of exchanged goods, it cannot produce the social cohesion that it requires in order to function well. Without internal forms of solidarity & mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfill its proper economic function.

Prepared by Bob Waldrop, Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House, 1524 NW 21, Oklahoma City, 73106, [www.justpeace.org](http://www.justpeace.org).  
Copying & distribution is encouraged.

