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Key Concepts of Catholic Social Thinking

*“Love God with all your heart
and mind and strength;
Love your neighbour as yourself.”*

Jesus: Mark 12: 30—31

1. **Dignity of the Human Person** – Human dignity comes from God. Every person is made in the image of God. All individuals and institutions must honour this fundamental distinguishing quality in every human being.
2. **Community** – Human beings are fundamentally social beings. The relationships of equality and love among the three Persons of the Holy Trinity are the model for all human relationships. People are created through and for others. The dignity of the human person is recognised and protected only in community with others.
3. **Interdependence** – The necessary linkage of all of God’s creation. Political and ecological crises alert us in stark ways to our interconnectedness with all life on this earth.
4. **Cooperation** – Working together towards common goals. True cooperation demands that the goals and the means used to attain them be just.
5. **The Common Good** – A community approach to assessing ultimate value. *The common good* is defined as the sum of those social conditions which allow groups or individuals ready access to their own fulfilment.
6. **Valuing the Culture of Others** – Modern life demands an openness and appreciation of other cultures.
7. **Global Solidarity** – The responsibility shared by all to promote the human rights, integration and development of all peoples of the earth. National and international structures have a special role to play in promoting human rights. By working for justice, we come to see the face of Christ in others.
8. **Care for Creation** – Using the earth’s resources responsibly is working with God in the continuing and completing of Creation.
9. **Change** – the continual process of growth is basic to life. As the pace of change has quickened, openness to new ways of thinking, behaving and relating is essential for the common good.
10. **Development** – The process of fulfilling human potential, particularly of those who are hungry or in poverty, or those who suffer from oppression and powerlessness.
11. **Transformation** – Personal and structural change which promote the development of individuals or groups.

12. **Distributive Justice** – A just allocation of the earth’s resources to guarantee that the basic needs of all people are met. A just distribution of resources is a pressing issue today given the scarcity of natural resources in some places and the economic inequality among nations.
13. **Human Rights** – The minimum conditions necessary for the healthy growth of individuals and peoples. These include the right to life for every human being from conception through to death, sufficient life goods, the availability of education and work, cultural acceptance, economic justice and the right to political participation.
14. **Political Participation** – Democratic participation in the decisions impacting on one’s life. This includes freedom of speech and the right to vote.
15. **Subsidiarity** – Having a say in the decision-making process by those affected by the decisions made. Individuals and communities have a right to be involved in policies and programs that bear on their lives.
16. **Empowerment** – The development of leadership skills aimed at breaking dependency and giving people control over their lives.
17. **The Rights of Working People** - Work is a participation in God’s creation. All people have a right to decent work, fair wages and private property. The economy exists for people, not vice versa.
18. **Peace** – The fruit of justice among peoples and nations. The promotion of peace demands respect for human dignity, international cooperation, a more equitable distribution of the earth’s resources and an end to arms trading.
19. **A Simple Lifestyle** – Limiting one’s consumption and possessions to live in greater solidarity with the poor of the world. Sharing one’s own resources so that others might live more fully. “Live simply so that all may simply live.”
20. **Option for the Poor** – A preferential active standing with the poor whose needs and rights are to be given special attention in God’s eyes. “Poor” is understood as including all those who suffer from powerlessness and oppression as well as those who are economically deprived.

Adapted from Access Guide to Justice (1990)
Bright, T., & Roberto, J.,
Rochelle NY: Don Bosco Multimedia.

A World of Justice

“The world designed by God is a world of justice. The relationship between people must be based on justice. This order must be continually implanted in the world, since social systems are constantly changing and new possibilities and necessities of the distribution of goods are developing.

The words of Mary’s canticle are pronounced in a beautiful outburst of gratitude towards God, who – Mary proclaims – has done great things for her. These words say that the world designed by God cannot be a world in which some hoard immoderate wealth in their hands, while others suffer from destitution and poverty, and die of hunger. Love must inspire justice and the struggle for justice.”

Pope John Paul II
Homily in Paris, May 1980

