

Catholic Social Teaching: A Tradition through Quotes

"When I fed the poor, they called me a saint. When I asked why the poor had no food, they called me a Communist."

—**Archbishop Dom Hélder Câmara**

"If you want peace, work for justice."

—**Blessed Paul VI**

"Justice comes before charity."

—**St. John XXIII**

"Peace is not the product of terror or fear. Peace is not the silence of cemeteries. Peace is not the silent result of violent repression. Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all. Peace is dynamism. Peace is generosity. It is right and it is duty."

—**Archbishop Óscar Romero**

"Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice."

—**The Bishops of the Second Vatican Council**

"[Catholics can] in no way convince themselves that so enormous and unjust an inequality in the distribution of this world's goods truly conforms to the designs of the all-wise Creator."

—**Pope Pius XI**

"Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest things right, and doing all for love."

—**St. Thérèse of Lisieux**

"The bread you store up belongs to the hungry; the cloak that lies in your chest belongs to the naked; the gold you have hidden in the ground belongs to the poor."

—**St. Basil the Great**

"Do not grieve or complain that you were born in a time when you can no longer see God in the flesh. He did not in fact take this privilege from you. As He says: 'Whatever you have done to the least of my brothers, you did to me.'"

—**St. Augustine of Hippo**

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

—**Blessed Teresa of Calcutta**

"[Neighbor is] not he whom I find in my path, but rather he in whose path I place myself, he whom I approach and actively seek."

—**Father Gustavo Gutiérrez, OP**

“If you break a computer it is a tragedy, but poverty, the needs, the dramas of so many people end up becoming the norm. ... If in so many parts of the world there are children who have nothing to eat, that’s not news, it seems normal. It cannot be this way!”

—**Pope Francis**

“Kinship—not serving the other, but being one with the other. Jesus was not ‘a man for others;’ he was one with them. There is a world of difference in that.”

—**Father Gregory Boyle, SJ**

“I firmly believe that our salvation depends on the poor.”

—**Dorothy Day**

“The world is not something indifferent, raw material to be utilized simply as we see fit. Rather, it is part of God’s good plan, in which all of us are called to be sons and daughters in the one Son of God, Jesus Christ.”

—**Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI**

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness. ... He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy”

—**The Cantic of Mary, Luke 1:46–56**

“The Church considers the problem of illegal migrants from the standpoint of Christ, who died to gather together the dispersed children of God, to rehabilitate the marginalized and to bring close those who are distant; in order to integrate all within a communion that is not based on ethnic, cultural or social membership, but on the common justice.”

—**St. John Paul II**

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God.’”

—**Matthew 19:23–24**

“Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, ‘Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.’”

—**Mark 12:43–44**

“The poor you will always have with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them, but you will not always have me. She has done what she could. She has anticipated anointing my body for burial.”

—**Mark 14:7–8**

“He said to them in reply, ‘Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.’”

—**John the Baptist, Luke 3:11**

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

—**Luke 4:18–19**

Jesus answered them, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.”

—**Luke 9:58**

“Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?’ He answered, ‘The one who treated him with mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

—**Luke 10:36–37**

“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need.”

—**Acts 2:44–45**

“But the Lord said: I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry ... I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them ... and lead them up from that land into a good and spacious land”

—**Exodus 3:7–8**

“[Solidarity] then 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*.”

—**St. John Paul II**

“Among our tasks as witnesses to the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor, so that they are not abandoned to the laws of an economy that seems at times to treat people as mere consumers.”

—**Pope Francis**

“Secular freedom only creates individualists and private freedom, but not a society. It never gets around to *the common good*, which is a central principle of the Gospel and Catholic social teaching, which instead demands *from* you and demands *for* others—while ironically giving you all that you really need. Then you become who you most deeply and truly are, a member of a family, a neighborhood, a society, and a planet.”

—**Father Richard Rohr, OFM**

“Help us discover our own riches; don’t judge us poor because we lack what you have. Help us discover our chains; don’t judge us slaves by the type of shackles you wear. ... Be with us as a companion who walks with us—neither behind nor in front—in our search for life and ultimately for God!”

—**Father Henri J. M. Nouwen**

“Love for others, and in the first place, love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice.”

—**St. John Paul II**

“Man must work out of regard for others, especially his own family, but also for the society he belongs to, the country of which he is a child, and the whole human family of which he is a member, since he is the heir to the work of generations and at the same time a sharer in building the future of those who will come after him in the succession of history.”

—**St. John Paul II**

“Let us remember Paul VI’s words: ‘For the Catholic Church, no one is a stranger, no one is excluded, no one is far.’ Indeed, we are a single human family that is journeying on toward unity, making the most of solidarity and dialogue among peoples in the multiplicity of differences.”

—**Pope Francis**

“The Book of Genesis tells us that God created man and woman entrusting them with the task of filling the earth and subduing it, which does not mean exploiting it, but nurturing and protecting it, caring for it through their work.”

—**Pope Francis**

“Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are anger and courage. Anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain as they are.”

—**St. Augustine of Hippo**

“The value of creation does not lie in its usefulness for us. It lies in the fact of its existence from God. The Bible is very clear on this point. The world is not ours; it is God’s. ... We are stewards. We are accountable to God.”

—**Sister Dianne Bergant, CSA**

“Lord, give bread to those who hunger, and to those who have bread, give a hunger for justice.”

—**Latin American prayer**