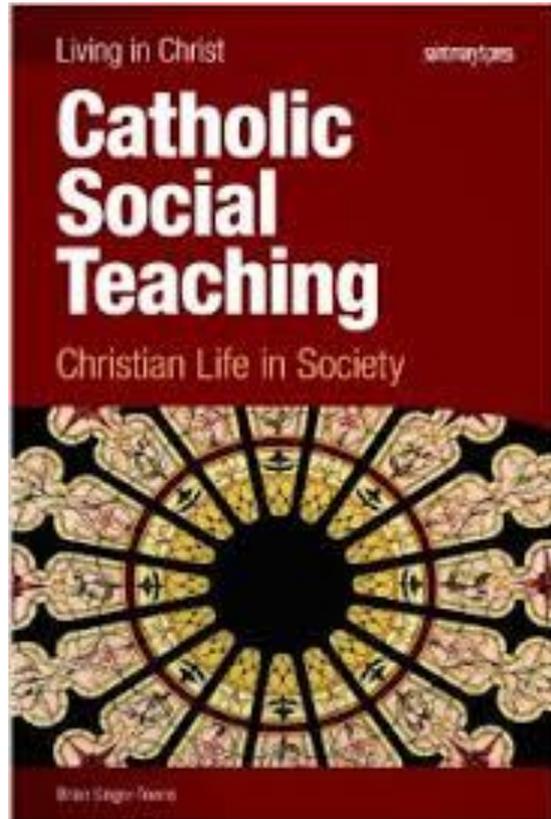


Catholic Social Justice:



Created by Daniel Eberle @ St. Patrick High School, Chicago, Illinois (September, 2015)
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Catholic Social Teaching: Class Syllabus

Course Description: This course leads the students toward a deeper understanding of the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching. The course starts by examining the foundations of Catholic social teachings in Scripture and Tradition. The students then explore the tremendous growth in this teaching over the past century as the Church has responded to our rapid and far-reaching changes in society. Later units explore specific social issues, such as protecting human life at its beginning and at its end, poverty and hunger, war and peacemaking, economic justice and environmental justice. During this course the students are called to reflect on Christ's call to live justly and confront sinful social structures.

The course has eight important questions or concepts about Christian morality. Each one builds on the knowledge, skills and understanding of the previous one. Within each unit the knowledge, skills and understanding also build as it progresses. The eight units are as follows:

1. The Foundations of Social Justice in Scripture and Tradition.
2. Understanding Catholic Social Teaching in the Modern Age
3. Creating a Just Society
4. Respecting Human Life and Dignity
5. Promoting Peace
6. Examining Economic Justice
7. Exploring Environmental Justice
8. Living Justly

Course Objectives:

Upon completing the course the students will have a deeper understanding of the following concepts:

1. God's plan is for human being to be in just and loving relationship with him and with other people; Trinitarian communion is the pattern for social life.
2. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Law and the message of the prophets by teaching that God's justice reflects God's love and mercy.

3. The **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops** summarized the social teachings of the Church in seven key themes that serve as a guide for living as a disciple in a modern society:

a. **LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, every person's life and dignity must be respected and supported from conception through natural death. We believe that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

b. **CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND PARTICIPATION**

The human person is not only sacred, but social. How we organize our society — socially, economically, legally and politically — directly affects human dignity and the ability of every human person to grow in community. Marriage and family, the foundations for social life, should be strengthened and supported. Every person has a right to participate in society and a corresponding duty to work for the advancement of the common good and the well-being of all.

c. **SOLIDARITY**

We are one human family. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Our love for all of our brothers and sisters calls us to seek a peaceful and just society where goods are distributed fairly, opportunity is promoted equally and the dignity of all is respected.

d. **DIGNITY OF WORK**

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. To uphold the dignity of work, the basic rights of workers must be respected — the right to productive work, to fair and livable wages, and to organize and join a union.

e. **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Every person has a fundamental right to life — the right that makes all other rights possible. Each person also has a right to the conditions for living a decent life —

food, health care, housing, education and employment. We have a corresponding duty to secure and respect these rights for others and to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, to each other and to our larger society.

f. **OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE**

Scripture teaches that God has a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. The church calls on all of us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. This preferential option for the poor and vulnerable should be reflected in both our daily lives and public policies. A fundamental measure of our society is how we care for and stand with our poor and vulnerable brothers and sisters.

g. **CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION**

The world that God created has been entrusted to all of us. Our stewardship of the earth is a form of participation in God's act of creating and sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must be guided by a concern for generations to come. We show our respect for the Creator by our care for creation.

4. Every sin has both a personal and social dimension.
5. Societies are cultures of life when they respect and protect human life and they are cultures of death when they deny the sacredness of human life.
6. True peace is the result of working at forgiveness, reconciliation, and justice: it is realized by loving our enemies and trusting God.
7. Poverty and hunger are often the result of social sin and are supported by sinful social structures.
8. Societies must develop social structures that sustain the earth and its goods, working toward bringing them to the perfection God originally intended.
9. God calls us to live a life of charity and justice, balancing prayer and action in living the life of a disciple.

Textbook:

1. *Catholic Social Teachings: Christian Life in Society* (2012) by Anne T. Herrick, EdD. and Mary K. McCullough, PhD.
2. *New American Bible RE – Laudate Application*

3. *Vatican Documents* – Laudate Application
4. *Catholic Catechism* – Laudate Application

Unit 1 – The Foundations of Social Justice in Scripture and Tradition

OVERVIEW: The first unit calls the students to consider the societal implications of God’s plan of salvation. It defines and applies the concept of social justice to our relationship with God and people. This unit contains important information from Sacred Scripture and Church teachings that set the foundation for the remaining units of the course.

Upon completing this unit, the students will have a deeper understanding of the following key concepts:

First Unit Objective: God’s plan is for human beings to be in a just and loving relationship with him and with other people; the Trinitarian *communio* is the pattern for social life.

Second Unit Objective: The foundational principles for a just society are taught in the Old Law and are reinforced by the prophets of the Old Testament.

Third Unit Objective: Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Law and the message of the prophets by teaching that God’s justice reflects God’s love and justice.

Fourth Unit Objective: The Church is a sign and instrument of communion with God and the unity of the whole human race.

Upon completing the unit, the students will have answered the following questions:

- Why did God's original plan for social justice get disrupted, and how has God worked to restore our original state of justice and holiness?
- What foundational principles for social justice are taught in the Old Testament Law and reinforced by the prophets?
- How does Jesus Christ's life and teaching reveal the deeper meaning of Divine Law, especially in issues of social justice?
- How is the Church a sacrament for the communion between God and humanity?

Unit 2 – Understanding Catholic Social Teaching in the Modern Age

OVERVIEW: This unit helps the students to know and understand the social doctrines of the Church. The students examine Catholic social justice encyclicals, pastoral letters of the United States bishops, the seven social justice themes identified by the United States Bishops and several definitions of the term justice from Scripture and Tradition.

Upon completing this unit, the students will have a deeper understanding of the following key concepts:

First Unit Objective: Beginning in the 1800's, important changes in society caused new injustices; the Church responded by applying moral law to these new social injustices.

Second Unit Objective: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops summarized the social teaching of the Church in seven key themes that serve as a guide for living as a disciple in the modern world.

Third Unit Objective: The U.S. bishop's first key theme focuses on the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person; the other six themes build upon this foundational theme.

Fourth Unit Objective: The concept of justice has several nuanced meanings that are all rooted in Scripture and Tradition.

Upon completing the unit, the students will have answered the following questions:

- What prompted the Church to issue a series of modern social encyclicals starting with *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labor)?
- What are the major Church documents on social justice and what are some of the issues they address?
- How does each of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching guide us in living as disciples in society?
- Why does the Church have several definitions for justice and how are they connected?

Unit 3 – Creating a Just Society

OVERVIEW: This unit helps the students to gain a clear understanding of what constitutes sin, the personal and social dimension of sin, the role that the Church, state and individual play in addressing the unjust treatment of others.

Upon completing this unit, the students will have a deeper understanding of the following key concepts:

First Unit Objective: Every sin has both a personal and social dimension.

Second Unit Objective: The Circle of Social Action steps of awareness, analysis and action can be used to address the unjust treatment of others in social structures.

Third Unit Objective: The Church, the state and the individual play important roles in God's plan of salvation.

Fourth Unit Objective: The primary purpose of the media is to be at the service of the common good.

Upon completing the unit, the students will have answered the following questions:

- Why aren't some sins purely private sins?
- Why do we need to work for societal structural changes in order to develop more just societies?
- How is it possible to change sinful social structures?
- Why are works of charity and works of justice both important in building a just society?
- How does the Eighth Commandment guide us in our creation and use of the media?

Unit 4 – Respecting Human Life and Dignity

OVERVIEW: This unit explains that respect for human life and dignity is the central theme of Catholic social teaching. By examining various social issues that threaten human dignity, the students grow in their understanding of how we are called to protect human life and dignity from the moment of conception until natural death.

Upon completing this unit, the students will have a deeper understanding of the following key concepts:

First Unit Objective: Societies are cultures of life when they respect and protect human life and they are cultures of death when they deny the sacredness of human life

Second Unit Objective: Every person's life must be respected and protected from the moment of birth until natural death; this is especially true for the unborn and those at the end of their lives.

Third Unit Objective: Freedom does not mean that we have the right to pursue our secondary rights at the expense of someone else's primary rights.

Fourth Unit Objective: God loves everyone and he calls us to love and respect those who are different from us.

Upon completing the unit, the students will have answered the following questions:

- According to Pope Paul II in his encyclical The
- Gospel of Life, how must the Church, the state and the individual go about building a culture of life?
- How does an erosion of personal conscience contribute to the culture of death?
- How does Catholic social teaching guide our actions regarding social issues affecting human life such as abortion, euthanasia, cloning, genetic manipulation and the death penalty?
- How does Catholic social teaching guide our actions regarding social issues affecting human dignity, such as racism, sexual exploitation and the treatment of immigrants?

Unit 5 – Promoting Peace

OVERVIEW: This unit explores all types of violence as violations of the sanctity of human life. It also invites the students to reflect on Jesus Christ call to live as peacemakers.

Upon completing this unit, the students will have a deeper understanding of the following key concepts:

First Unit Objective: The concept of the spiral of violence teaches us that responding to violence with violence is against Christ's call to live as peacemakers.

Second Unit Objective: Legitimate self-defense and nonviolent resistance are two moral ways of responding to violent aggression.

Third Unit Objective: The arms race and illegal arms trade are sinful social structures that support escalating violence between nations and contribute to other injustices.

Fourth Unit Objective: True peace is the result of working at forgiveness, reconciliation and justice; it is realized by loving our enemies and trusting in God.

Upon completing the unit, the students will have answered the following questions:

- How does Catholic social teaching call us to be peacemakers?
- What is the culture of death?
- How does the spiral of violence apply to current global conflicts?
- Why are some people motivated to practice nonviolent love and resistance?

Unit 6 – Examining Economic Justice

OVERVIEW: This unit looks at Catholic Social teaching on the just distribution of the earth's goods. This teaching addresses the role that social structures play in distributing the earth's resources, especially the role of economic systems. As part of this analysis, the unit considers the issues of poverty and hunger, the contributions of work, and the treatment of workers.

Upon completing this unit, the students will have a deeper understanding of the following key concepts:

First Unit Objective: Poverty and hunger are often the result of social sin and are supported by sinful social structures.

Second Unit Objective: The Seventh and Tenth Commandments call us to combat hunger and poverty by working for just distribution of the goods of the earth.

Third Unit Objective: Economic systems require critical analysis and appropriate oversight to ensure they contribute to the common good.

Fourth Unit Objective: Love of self is a fundamental principle of Christian Morality, calling people to take care of their physical and spiritual health.

Upon completing the unit, the students will have answered the following questions:

- What is the true purpose of wealth?
- How can society address the sinful social structure that supports poverty and hunger?
- How does work contribute to a life of dignity for workers, their families and others in society?
- What responsibilities do businesses have toward society and toward their workers?

- Why does living in solidarity with others result in real happiness and fulfillment of God's plan for us?

Unit 7 – Exploring Environmental Justice

OVERVIEW: This unit addresses the goods of creation and the human responsibility to be stewards of creation.

Upon completing this unit, the students will have a deeper understanding of the following key concepts:

First Unit Objective: God calls us to be stewards of the earth and its goods.

Second Unit Objective: Among all God's creatures, human beings have a special role because of our unique ability to either harm the earth and its goods or to nurture and perfect them.

Third Unit Objective: Societies must develop social structures that sustain the earth and its goods, working toward bringing them to the perfection God originally intended.

Upon completing the unit, the students will have answered the following questions:

- What did God mean when he gave human beings dominion over the earth and its goods?
- How does modern culture encourage and discourage stewardship of the environment?
- What are some practices that societies can adopt to be environmentally responsible?
- How does our role in creating a just and sustainable world bring us closer to God?

Unit 8 – Living Justly

OVERVIEW: This unit studies the Beatitudes as the fulfillment of God’s Covenant, the heart of Christ’s moral teachings, the call to live the actions and attitudes necessary for a true Christian life and the promise of hope that inspire us to meet the challenges of this world.

Upon completing this unit, the students will have a deeper understanding of the following key concepts:

First Unit Objective: Human beings must grow beyond knowledge to action in living the life of a disciple of Christ.

Second Unit Objective: The Beatitudes guide our actions and attitudes for justice.

Third Unit Objective: God calls us to live a life of charity and justice, balancing prayer and action in living the life of a disciple.

Upon completing the unit, the students will have answered the following questions:

- How can I live out in my daily life the ideals expressed in Scripture and Catholic Tradition?
- How can I balance a reflective, prayerful life with a life of action for justice?
- How do I learn to see God in all living things and all people, so that I might live the life of a disciple?
- How does one find the strength to live a life devoted to charity and justice?