

Catholic Social Teaching – Terminology

Common Good – “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.’ The common good concerns the life of all. It calls for prudence from each, and even more from those who exercise authority.”

Distributive Justice – Distributive Justice “relates to the obligation of a government toward its citizens, by which the government regulates the burdens and benefits of societal life (e.g., a government is to tax its citizens fairly and to distribute those tax monies according to need).”

Justice – “is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor.... Justice toward men [and women] disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good.”

Human Dignity – “Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He [she] is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself [herself] and entering into communion with other persons. And he [she] is called by grace to a covenant with his [her] Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his [her] stead.” “Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order.”

Preferential Option for the Poor – “In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society; the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.... The preferential option for the poor continued to be affirmed as constitutive of the gospel, though it was often qualified by a reminder that the preference of both Yahweh and Jesus Christ for the poor, the suffering, the marginalized, and the despised was not an exclusive preference, and the God loves all.”

Social Justice – “Society...provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation.”

Solidarity – “Solidarity, a natural consequence of human relationships, is the primary authentic attitude toward society that signifies a constant readiness to accept each one’s share in the community and to serve the common good. It is an attitude of a community which the common good properly initiates participation, and participation in turn properly serves the common good, fosters it, and furthers its realization.”

Subsidiarity – The principle of subsidiarity wishes to limit the interference of a community of a higher order in the internal life of a community of a lower order and thus depriving the latter of its functions. The higher order rather should support the lower order in case of need, and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.