

Catholic Theme: Community and the Common Good



Scriptural Story

Life Among the Believers

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Acts 2: 44-45

Description and Related Topics

Description:

The human person realizes dignity and rights in relationship with others, in community. "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it: if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it." (1 Corinthians 12: 26) We are called to respect each other and work for the good of others, the common good.

Anchor Concepts: Citizenship, Common Good, Community, Family, Interdependence, Lifestyle, Solidarity

Related Concepts:

- DEMOCRACY
- CIVILIZATION
- SOCIETY
- CULTURE
- COMMUNICATION
- COMMON GOOD
- EQUALITY
- IMMIGRATION
- INTERDEPENDENCE
- RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
- STATE / GOVERNMENT
- LOVE
- RESPECT
- INTIMACY
- SERVICE
- TRADITION
- LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR
- JUSTICE
- SOLIDARITY
- HUMAN DIGNITY
- EMPOWERMENT
- CITIZENSHIP
- PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR
- WORLD ORDER / GLOBALIZATION
- CHURCH
- COMMUNION
- ASSOCIATION
- COMMUNICATION
- CULTURE
- UNITY IN DIVERSITY
- EQUITY
- SUBSIDIARITY
- HUMAN FAMILY
- INCLUSIVITY
- FRIENDSHIP / UNDERSTANDING
- SHARING / SOCIAL CHARITY
- HUMAN RIGHTS
- ANTI-SEXISM
- ANTI-RACISM
- COOPERATION/COLLABORATION
- COMPROMISE
- MUTUALITY
- AUTONOMY
- RELATIONSHIP
- COEXISTENCE
- RESPECT FOR LIFE

Scripture References

Laws Concerning the Sabbatical Year Beloved, Let Us Love One Another

Beloved, let us love one another, because love comes from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed to us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:7-10

I Am the Good Shepherd

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away- and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for my sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

John 10: 11-18

Abide in My Love

Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. "You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. "You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

John 15: 9-17

There are Varieties of Gifts, but the Same Spirit

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12: 3b-7, 12

Unity of the Spirit

I call you lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. The gifts he gave were to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4: 1-7, 12

Encourage One Another

Encourage one another and build up each other, as you are doing. Respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the

faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:11-18

Life Among the Believers

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Acts 2: 44-45

Giving to others

Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land."

Deuteronomy 15: 10-11

Miscellaneous Laws

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

Deuteronomy 24: 19-22

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly ...

Isaiah 58: 6-8a

The Beatitudes

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5: 1-12

Last Judgement

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And

the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Matthew 25: 31-40

Parts of the Body

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body", that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you", nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

1 Corinthians 12:12-16

Burdens

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves.

Galatians 6:1-3

Imitating Christ

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:1-4

Forgiveness and Love

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.

Colossians 3:12-15

The Vine and the Branches

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:1-5

Love For Enemies; Judging Others

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

Luke 6: 36-38

Church Teachings

Documents of Vatican II

Promoting the Common Good

26 Every day human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspiration of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family.

Gaudium et Spes, (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1822 Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God.

1823 Jesus makes charity the *new commandment*. By loving his own "to the end," he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." And again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

THE PERSON AND SOCIETY

I. THE COMMUNAL CHARACTER OF THE HUMAN VOCATION

1878 All men are called to the same end: God himself. There is a certain resemblance between the unity of the divine persons and the fraternity that men are to establish among themselves in truth and love. Love of neighbour is inseparable from love for God.

1879 The human person needs to live in society. Society is not for him an extraneous addition but a requirement of his nature. Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue with his brethren, man develops his potential; he thus responds to his vocation.

1880 A *society* is a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them. As an assembly that is at once visible and spiritual, a society endures through time: it gathers up the past and prepares for the future. By means of society, each man is established as an "heir" and receives certain "talents" that enrich his identity and whose fruits he must develop. He rightly owes loyalty to the communities of which he is part and respect to those in authority who have charge of the common good.

1881 Each community is defined by its purpose and consequently obeys specific rules; but "the *human person* . . . is and ought to be the principle, the subject and the end of all social institutions."

1882 Certain societies, such as the family and the state, correspond more directly to the nature of man; they are necessary to him. To promote the participation of the greatest number in the life of a society, the creation of voluntary associations and institutions must be encouraged "on both national and international levels, which relate to economic and social goals, to cultural and recreational activities, to sport, to various professions, and to political affairs." This "*socialization*" also expresses the natural tendency for human beings to associate with one another for the sake of attaining objectives that exceed individual capacities. It develops the qualities of the person, especially the sense of initiative and responsibility, and helps guarantee his rights.

II. THE COMMON GOOD

1905 In keeping with the social nature of man, the good of each individual is necessarily related to the common good, which in turn can be defined only in reference to the human person: Do not live entirely isolated, having retreated into yourselves, as if you were already justified, but gather instead to seek the common good together.

1906 By common good is to be understood "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 the office of authority. It consists of *three essential elements*:

1907 First, the common good presupposes *respect for the person* as such. In the name of the common good, public authorities are bound to respect the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person. Society should permit each of its members to fulfill his vocation. In particular, the common good resides in the conditions for the exercise of the natural freedoms indispensable for the development of the human

vocation, such as "the right to act according to a sound norm of conscience and to safeguard . . . privacy, and rightful freedom also in matters of religion."

1908 Second, the common good requires the *social well-being* and *development* of the group itself. Development is the epitome of all social duties. Certainly, it is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on.

1909 Finally, the common good requires *peace*, that is, the stability and security of a just order. It presupposes that authority should ensure by morally acceptable means the *security* of society and its members. It is the basis of the right to legitimate personal and collective defence.

1910 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 and promote the common good of civil society, its citizens, and intermediate bodies.

1911 Human interdependence is increasing and gradually spreading throughout the world. The unity of the human family, embracing people who enjoy equal natural dignity, implies a *universal common good*. This good calls for an organization of the community of nations able to "provide for the different needs of men; this will involve the sphere of social life to which belong questions of food, hygiene, education, . . . and certain situations arising here and there, as for example . . . alleviating the miseries of refugees dispersed throughout the world, and assisting migrants and their families."

1912 The common good is always oriented towards the progress of persons: "The order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around." This order is founded on truth, built up in justice, and animated by love.

III. HUMAN SOLIDARITY

1939 The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of "friendship" or "social charity," is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood. An error, "today abundantly widespread, is disregard for the law of human solidarity and charity, dictated and imposed both by our common origin and 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."

1940 Solidarity is manifested in the first place by the distribution of goods and remuneration for work. It also presupposes the effort for a more just social order where tensions are better able to be reduced and conflicts more readily settled by negotiation.

1941 Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all the forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, of workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business, solidarity among nations and peoples. International solidarity is a requirement of the moral order; world peace depends in part upon this.

1942 The virtue of solidarity goes beyond material goods. In spreading the spiritual goods of the faith, the Church has promoted, and often opened new paths for, the development of temporal goods as well. And so throughout the centuries has the Lord's saying been verified: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well": For two thousand years this sentiment has lived and endured in the soul of the Church, impelling souls then and now to the heroic charity of monastic farmers, liberators of slaves, healers of the sick, and messengers of faith, civilization, and science to all generations and all peoples for the sake of creating the social conditions capable of offering to everyone possible a life worthy of man and of a Christian.

JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY AMONG NATIONS

2437 On the international level, inequality of resources and economic capability is such that it creates a real "gap" between nations. On the one side there are those nations possessing and developing the means of growth and, on the other, those accumulating debts.

2438 Various causes of a religious, political, economic, and financial nature today give "the social question a worldwide dimension." There must be solidarity among nations which are already politically interdependent. It is even more essential when it is a question of dismantling the "perverse mechanisms" that impede the development of the less advanced countries. In place of abusive if not usurious financial systems, iniquitous commercial relations among nations, and the arms race, there must be substituted a common effort to mobilize resources toward objectives of moral, cultural, and economic development, "redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values."

2439 *Rich nations* have a grave moral responsibility toward those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves or have been prevented from doing so by tragic historical events. It is a duty in solidarity and charity; it is also an obligation in justice if the prosperity of the rich nations has come from resources that have not been paid for fairly.

2440 *Direct aid* is an appropriate response to immediate, extraordinary needs caused by natural catastrophes, epidemics, and the like. But it does not suffice to repair the grave damage resulting from destitution or to provide a lasting solution to a country's needs. It is also necessary to *reform* international economic and financial *institutions* so that they will better promote equitable relationships with less advanced countries. The efforts of poor countries working for growth and liberation must be supported. This doctrine must be applied especially in the area of agricultural labour. Peasants, especially in the Third World, form the overwhelming majority of the poor.

2441 An increased sense of God and increased self-awareness are fundamental to any *full development of human society*. This development multiplies material goods and puts them at the service of the person and his freedom. It reduces dire poverty and economic exploitation. It makes for growth in respect for cultural identities and openness to the transcendent.

2442 It is not the role of the Pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political structuring and organization of social life. This task is part of the vocation of the *lay faithful*, acting on their own initiative with their fellow citizens. Social action can assume various concrete forms. It should always have the common good in view and be in conformity with the message of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. It is the role of the laity "to animate temporal realities with Christian commitment, by which they show that they are witnesses and agents of peace and justice."

Other Church Documents

70 The obligation to "love our neighbor" has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment to the common good. We have many partial ways to measure and debate the health of our economy: Gross National Product, per capita income, stock market prices, and so forth. The Christian vision of economic life looks beyond them all and asks, Does economic life enhance or threaten our life together as a community?

Economic Justice for All, Pastoral Message of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986

38 The members of the Church, as members of society, have the same right and duty to promote the common good as do other citizens. Christians ought to fulfill their temporal obligations with fidelity and competence. They should act as a leaven in the world, in their family, professional, social, cultural and political life.

Justitia in Mundo (Justice in the World), Synod of Bishops, 1971

25 Just freedom of action must ... be left both to individual citizens and to families, yet only on condition that the common good be preserved and wrong to any individual be abolished. The function of the rulers of the State is to watch over the community and its parts; but in protecting private individuals in their rights, chief consideration ought to be given to the weak and the poor.

Quadragesimo Anno (After Forty Years), Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XI, 1931

98 We must remember that, of its very nature, civil authority exists, not to confine its people within the boundaries of their nation, but rather to protect, above all else the common good of that particular civil society, which certainly cannot be divorced from the common good of the entire human family.

Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth), Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII, 1963

35 According to Pope John Paul II, the Catholic tradition calls for a "society of work, enterprise and participation" which "is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the state to assure that the basic needs of the whole society are satisfied."

Centesimus Annus, (The Hundredth Year), Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, 1991

Catholic social teaching more than anything else insists that we are one family; it calls us to overcome barriers of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, economic status, and nationality. We are all one in Christ Jesus - beyond our differences and boundaries.

Communities of Salt and Light , (page 10), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1993

38 Solidarity 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.

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern), Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, 1987

17 We have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries: for this reason we have obligations towards all, and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us to enlarge the human family. The reality of human solidarity, which is a benefit for us, also imposes a duty.

Populorum Progressio, (On the Development of Peoples), Encyclical Letter of Pope Paul VI, 1967

Canadian/Ontario Documents

Community Theme Resources from *Born of the Spirit*

Kindergarten - In God's Image:

Church Times

Community

Grade 1 - We Belong to God:

1. Welcome! You Belong
2. Jesus Welcomes Us
4. God Dwells Among Us
5. I'll Always Be With You
8. We Belong to God's family
9. The Holy Spirit Gathers Us Into God's Circle of Friends
10. We are Born of the Spirit

Grade 2 - We Belong to the Lord Jesus

1. Let's be Friends
2. Let's Come Together
10. Let's Go Forth

Grade 3 - In the Spirit We Belong

1. We Welcome and Gather in the Spirit
2. The Holy Spirit Gathers and Feeds Us at Eucharist
3. The Holy Spirit Calls and Anoints Us in Baptism and Confirmation
4. The Holy Spirit Comes Upon Advent People
5. The Holy Spirit Dwells in Jesus
6. The Holy Spirit Dwells in the Followers of Jesus
7. The Holy Spirit Fills the Whole Earth
8. The Holy Spirit Reconciles People
9. The Holy Spirit Gives New Life
10. The Holy Spirit is Alive!

Grade 4 - Come and See

2. The Good News About Jesus Christ
6. Jesus Reveals the Compassion of God
7. Jesus Says, "I am the Way"
10. Jesus' Spirit is with Us

Grade 5 - May We Be One

1. The Church Proclaims the Good News
2. The Church Believes in the Lord Jesus
3. The Church Celebrates God's Mighty Deeds
5. The Church Welcomes All Nations
6. The Church Acts Justly
7. The Church Reconciles
8. The Church Loves
9. The Church Rejoices
10. The Church Witnesses

Grade 6 - You Shall Be My Witnesses

1. You Are My Friends
2. I Love You With an Everlasting Love
3. I Shall Be Your God; You Shall Be My People

4. God So Loved the World
5. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life
6. Love Your Enemies
7. What You Do to the Least of My Brothers and Sisters
9. Do Not Be Afraid
10. You Shall Be My Witnesses

Community Theme Resources in *Fully Alive*

In all grades:

Theme Two: Living in Relationship
Theme Four: Growing in Commitment
Theme Five: Living in the World

... the social dimensions of our faith come alive in caring service, creative education and principled action throughout the Catholic community.

Celebrating An Education for Justice and Peace, Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996

For complete text go to <http://www.occb.on.ca/english/celebrating.html>

It is precisely this solidarity and interdependence that are at the core of Catholic social teaching and that are so necessary if we are to begin to change those unjust global attitudes and structures that keep the South poor and the North rich.

Celebrating An Education for Justice and Peace, Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996

For complete text go to <http://www.occb.on.ca/english/celebrating.html>

Living and acting in solidarity with others in our society is, of course, something that goes far beyond party politics, since there are many things which politics cannot do. For example, politics by itself cannot give us a sense of justice, a spirit of caring about others, nor a commitment to serving the common good. These are virtues which our faith fosters in us. In one sense, then, the most important thing each of us can do in order to make our political Community Better Is To Live Our Faith To The Full.

Choosing A Government, Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998

For complete text go to <http://www.occb.on.ca/english/choosing.html>

Principles to be Observed by all Governments

What follows are several principles which apply to any government, at any time and under any circumstances. The people of Ontario must expect of any government they elect that its policies and actions respect these principles. ...

2 Respect for human dignity requires a vigorous pursuit of the common good. By the common good is to be understood "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and easily." Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1906). This means that governments have a positive role to play, not only in providing a space for private action, but also in creating those social institutions that are required especially for the fulfillment of socio-economic rights, like the right to satisfying and dignifying employment. Contemporary efforts to "downsize" in order to reduce public deficits must not be pursued to the point where they endanger the common good. Such efforts can also become an ideological pursuit of individualism which threatens to eliminate the role of governments in the pursuit of social goals and purposes. In sharp contrast, the Church has insisted that "the complex conditions of our day make it necessary for public authority to intervene more often in social, economic and cultural matters" in order to achieve this common good (*The Church in the Modern World*, No. 75, emphasis added).

3 Governments must balance the rights, obligations and opportunities of various segments of society. We recognize that we live in a society which is fragmented in many ways. Interest groups are active. Government policy has to balance the needs, not desires, of existing groups as well as protect those who do not belong to organized groups. All must share fairly in the payment of taxes; all must accept their share of the sacrifices which have to be made; all must have the freedom to pursue their legitimate interests, but government must ensure that they do so on an equitable basis. Nor should money be allowed to dominate or distort the exchange of ideas and the flow of information.

Choosing A Government, Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998

For complete text go to <http://www.occb.on.ca/english/choosing.html>

Quotations

If you live alone, whose feet will you wash?

St. Basil

No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do.

Dorothy Day

In separateness lies the world's great misery; in compassion lies the world's true strength.

Buddha

We need at last to form a circle that includes us all, in which all of us are seen as equal... We do not belong to the other, but our lives are linked; we belong in a circle of others.

Emily Dickinson

The love of one's country is a splendid thing. But why should love stop at the border?

Pablo Casals

It is penance to work, to give oneself to others, to endure the pinpricks of community living.

Dorothy Day

If you want to make peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.

Moshe Dayan

The longer we listen to one another - with real attention - the more commonality we will find in all our lives. That is, if we are careful to exchange with one another life stories and not simply opinions.

Barbara Deming

No man is an island entire of itself ... any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

John Donne

Better than a thousand hollow words,
Is one word that brings peace.

Buddha

Web Resources

Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops

<http://www.occb.on.ca/>

The official web site of the OCCB contains extensive resources from the Catholic Bishops of Ontario as well as useful links to other Church and Catholic organizations' web sites. The Conference's jurisdiction over Ontario Catholic schools makes this site particularly relevant.

Christian Community and Catholicism

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Jun1999/feature1.asp>

Six Ways to be Truly Catholic, by Archbishop Weakland is an article that focuses on the faith community aspects of Catholicism. The article is written in clear, invitational language.

Faith Community and Youth

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/YU/ay0803.asp>

Young people put their Catholic faith into action when they pray and worship, when they proclaim God's Word, when they build up the community and when they work for justice.

Educational Leadership and Community

<http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/menuitem.a4dbd0f2c4f9b94cdeb3ffdb62108a0c/>

This is the web site of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that represents 170,000 educators from more than 135 countries and more than 60 affiliates. Members span the entire profession of educators—superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, professors of education, and school board members. The organization seeks to address all aspects of effective teaching and learning—such as professional development, educational leadership, and capacity building. ASCD offers broad, multiple perspectives—across all education professions—in reporting key policies and practices. It notes its desire to focus solely on professional practice within the context of "Is it good for the children?" rather than what is reflective of a specific educator role. In short, ASCD reflects the conscience and content of education. Though written from a public school perspective, the ideas nevertheless have application to Catholic schools.

The Vatican: Catechism of the Catholic Church

http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/ccc_toc.htm

In Part III, Life in Christ, Chapter Two focuses on *The Human Community*. The Church's teaching on Social Justice is detailed, including sections on the respect for the human person, equality and differences among men (people) and solidarity. Section two deals with the Ten Commandments and the Fourth Commandment, "You Shall Love your Neighbour as Yourself" and the Fifth, "Thou Shall Not Kill" concentrate on themes central to social justice. The Seventh, "You Shall Not Steal" also addresses economic activity such as labour, solidarity among nations, and love for the poor. While the Catechism has no links and is difficult to read at times, it provides a useful resource to the underpinnings of Church teachings on social justice.

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

<http://www.cccb.ca/>

The site of Canada's Catholic Bishops under 'Commissions and Organizations' has a deep section under the Episcopal Commission for Social Affairs. Included is a list of letters of both praise and concern written by the Conference to prominent politicians and members of the business and international community. The 'Public Statements' section includes major policy statements on current issues like aboriginal land claims, religious rights and the dignity of life. The CCCB is a valuable resource for those seeking to see where the Canadian Catholic stands on social justice.

Oneworld Online

<http://www.oneworld.net/>

"OneWorld has a vision of equitable and sustainable distribution of wealth amongst the world's population, underpinned by global attainment and protection of human rights and by governance

structures which permit local communities control over their own affairs.” OneWorld site includes news `clippings on global topics, analysis of global issues. Specialized editions for Africa, the US, UK, Latin America and South Asia. Information about their campaigns for debt relief, education, climate change, biosafety and women’s rights. Current special reports from the “world’s front line” countries like the Sudan, Congo, Macedonia and Zimbabwe. One of the most diverse and broad news and analysis sections on the internet: OneWorld draws from sources like the Guardian, the Washington Post, the Nation Magazine, UN agencies, the Arabic Media Internet Network, and Inter Press Service. Extremely useful ‘guides:’ in the Perspectives section on a long list of topics like landmines, land rights, climate change, population, poverty, fair trade, genocide and the World Trade Organization. Each of the ‘guides:’ includes historical information, the current state of the issue in the world today, quotes, and great links to organizations committed to the issue.

The Council of Canadians

<http://www.canadians.org/>

“An independent, non-partisan citizens’ interest group providing a critical and progressive voice on key national and international issues”, the Council of Canadians advocates for social justice on a variety of fronts. The ActionLinks area provides a lengthy how-to on lobbying government and corporations, using the media and organizing events. The Council’s own Campaigns are few but focused, currently centred on water, trade and investment issues and genetically modified food in addition to their ongoing campaigns on social union and the campaign for press and broadcasting freedom. Each of the campaign sections include an introduction, a full achieve of publications and press releases as well as photos and selected links.

The Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace

<http://www.devp.org/>

This Canadian Catholic organization, created by the Canadian Bishops Conference, works to have “helped improve living and working conditions in 70 countries around the globe, providing \$375 million for human rights, community development and humanitarian aid” around the world, provide relief in disaster situations and whose projects seek to improve education and job opportunities, the environment, women’s rights, agrarian reform, housing and co-operative movements. Publications section has issues of the *Global Village Voice* and the organizations annual reports. Specific information about Development and Peace projects around the world is comprehensive. Archive of policy statements, many on current political issues, provides interesting insights into many D & P causes that are outside its traditional work in developing countries. Like many social justice websites, many of the documents are in .PDF format, making Adobe Acrobat reader indispensable for information gathering.

World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/home-page/>

The WHO site features an extremely helpful ‘A to Z’ of world health topics, hot linked to fact sheets or for broader topics like cancer, HIV/AIDS, and asthma, full pages featuring UN publications, news, events, global partners, and links. While not visually attractive, a good base for any global health study.

Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) Canada

<http://www.msf.ca/>

Recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999, MSF’s Canadian site mixes national project information about the work of the world’s largest independent international medical relief organization with poignant On Mission section photo essays, first person travel reports and letters from the field from Canadian MSF volunteers. A small but engaging site, the MSF Canada homepage offers an important human insight into the challenges and rewards of global medical relief.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

<http://www.ifrc.org/>

The website of the world’s largest humanitarian organization, the Red Cross and Red Crescent, opens up in attractive and digestible detail under its sections entitled simply: Who We Are, What We Do, Where We Work. The questions are navigated by a friendly toolbar on the left and answered all on a global, national, ideological and practical level. The Photos section is diverse and powerful, the news section relevant to

all their global work and a publications section that includes everything from appeal to their ten-year plan. The excellent design work in tandem with the content to provide students and teachers alike with a valuable resource of an organization hugely important for people all over the world.

Links to the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

A Discerning Believer Formed in the Catholic Faith Community:

- CGE1d** Develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic social teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good
- CGE1f** Seeks intimacy with God and celebrates communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship
- CGE1h** Respects the faith traditions, world religions and the life-journeys of all people of good will
- CGE1j** Recognizes that “sin, human weakness, conflict and forgiveness are part of the human journey” and that the cross, the ultimate sign of forgiveness is at the heart of redemption (Witnesses to Faith)

An Effective Communicator:

- CGE2a** Listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values
- CGE2b** Reads, understands and uses written materials effectively
- CGE2c** Presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others
- CGE2d** Writes and speaks fluently one or both of Canada’s official languages
- CGE2e** Uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the arts, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life

A Reflective and Creative Thinker:

- CGE3a** Recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges
- CGE3b** Creates, adapts, evaluates new ideas in light of the common good
- CGE3d** Makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience
- CGE3f** Examines, evaluates and applies knowledge of interdependent systems (physical, political, ethical, socio-economic and ecological) for the development of a just and compassionate society

A Self-Directed, Responsible, Life-Long Learner:

- CGE4a** Demonstrates a confident and positive sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others
- CGE4b** Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability
- CGE4c** Takes initiative and demonstrates Christian leadership
- CGE4h** Participates in leisure and fitness activities for a balanced and healthy lifestyle

A Collaborative Contributor:

- CGE5a** Works effectively as an interdependent team member
- CGE5c** Develops one’s God-given potential and makes a meaningful contribution to society
- CGE5d** Finds meaning, dignity, fulfillment and vocation in work which contributes to the common good
- CGE5e** Respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others
- CGE5f** Exercises Christian leadership in the achievement of individual and group goals
- CGE5g** Achieves excellence, originality, and integrity in one’s own work and supports these qualities in the work of others

A Caring Family Member:

- CGE6a** This Christian vision of the human journey is best understood within the context of relationship. It is accomplished in community, in solidarity with brothers and sisters in the Church and beyond
- CGE6b** Relates to family members in a loving, compassionate and respectful manner
- CGE6c** Values and honours the important role of the family in society
- CGE6d** Values and nurtures opportunities for family prayer
- CGE6e** Ministers to the family, school, parish and wider community through service

A Responsible Citizen:

- CGE7a** Acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions
- CGE7b** Accepts accountability for one's own actions
- CGE7c** Seeks and grants forgiveness
- CGE7e** Witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society
- CGE7f** Respects and affirms the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures
- CGE7g** Respects and understands the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today's contemporary society
- CGE7h** Exercises the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship
- CGE7j** Contributes to the common good

Reflection Questions

Personal and Group Reflection:

Personal Reflection:

1. *I describe a time when I felt a sense of community in my school ...*

2. *I describe a time when individual interests were sacrificed in the service of the common good ...*

Small Group Reflection:

1. *In our experience, what are the strengths of our school community?*

2. *What are some obstacles to community?*

3. *What is the common good of our school; my classroom?*

Strategies:

1. *We suggest some creative strategies for building school community.*