

**>>> Catholic Social Teaching for Adult Groups <<<  
CST: Dignity of the Human Person  
Catechesis for the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh**

Faced with the grave social problems which, with different characteristics, are present throughout America, Catholics know that they can find in the Church's social doctrine an answer which serves as a starting point in the search for practical solutions. Spreading this doctrine in an authentic pastoral priority. In this regard, special care must be taken to train lay persons capable of working, on the basis of the faith in Christ to transform earthly realities. *Ecclesia in America*, Pope John Paul II, 1999

**Scripture**

...God created humans in God's image; in the divine image God created them; male and female God created them. God blessed them, saying: "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth." *Gen 1:26-28*

...For every human, moreover, to eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of all his labor is a gift of God. *Eccles. 3:13*

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you care mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. *Psalms 8*

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made. *Psalms 145*

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. *Jer. 1:5*

Sermon on the Mount *Matt. 5-7*

And Jesus said to them: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." *Mark 16:15*

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior." *Luke 1:46*

...my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to all nations... *Luke 2:31, 32*

Then Peter began to speak: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him..." *Acts 10:34*

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus... *Phil. 2:5*

If we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. *1John 4:12*

**Papal Encyclicals & Bishops' Statements**

All people are sacred, made in the image and likeness of God. People do not lose dignity because of disability, poverty, age, lack of success or race. This emphasizes people over things, being over having.

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*, U. S. Catholic Bishops, 1999

Certainly the Christian vision leads to the expectation of "new heavens" and "a new earth", but this increases, rather than lessens, our sense of responsibility for the world today. I wish to reaffirm this forcefully at the beginning of the new millennium, so that Christians will feel more obliged than ever not to neglect their duties as citizens in this world. Theirs is the task of contributing with the light of the Gospel to the building of a more human world, a world fully in harmony with God's plan.

*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, Pope John Paul II, 2003

If we look upon the dignity of the human person in the light of divinely revealed truth, we cannot help but esteem it far more highly; for each person is redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, they are by grace the children and friends of God and heirs of eternal glory.

Beginning our discussion on the rights of the human person, we see that everyone has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally necessary social services. Therefore a human being also has the right to security in cases of sickness, inability to work, widowhood, old age, unemployment, or in any other case in which one is deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of their own.

*Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII, 1963

...social justice and the common good are daily built up or torn down by the decisions and choices that we all make in every facet of our lives. As family members, workers, owners, managers, investors, consumers and citizens, we are called to use our talents and resources in the service of others. We must build institutions across society that protect human life and dignity and promote justice and peace. As social conditions worsen and poverty deepens in a way unseen by most of us, parishes are called to greater consciousness as well as more determined action at home and abroad.

*In All Things Charity*, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1999

Learn More

Office of Peace & Justice, Catholic Diocese of Raleigh  
[www.dioceseofraleigh.org](http://www.dioceseofraleigh.org) / 919-821-9751 [jurski@raldioc.org](mailto:jurski@raldioc.org)

Catholic Relief Services – [www.catholicrelief.org](http://www.catholicrelief.org)

Life and Dignity of Person >>> Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person >>> Call to Family, Community, Participation >>>

Solidarity >>> Care of Creation >>> Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers >>> Option for the Poor and Vulnerable >>>

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**Objectives:** To learn the themes of Catholic social teaching, its gift, its roots in the life of Christ and the Gospel, papal encyclicals and bishops' statements, its challenge to today's Catholics and its essential role in Catholic faith and identity.  
 To journey more deeply in our life of faith; to respond in our world today in light of Catholic social teaching, as salt and light; and to rejoice in the Good News.  
 To learn more about Catholic Relief Services and its work for the world and for the Church.

**Overview**

Read the Catholic Teaching on the dignity of the human person on the back page:  
 ~Reflect on this teaching :  
     In your own life, your community, country and world.  
     In connection with the other themes of CST listed on the border.  
     In Jesus' life, and how he restored dignity to all through the poor and outcast.  
     As a vision of what work is in the kingdom of God given for us and for the world.  
 ~Expand your familiarity with Church teachings by reading one of the documents in its entirety which can be found on the internet. Using Google, key in the title and author.

**Preparation**

Catholic Relief Services is playing a major role in relief aid for the victims of the tsunami disaster. It is the official international humanitarian agency of the U.S. Catholic community, established in over 94 countries. Thus, Catholic Relief Services is the primary way we as Catholics can get involved in bringing hope and help to so many who need us right now.  
 Visit [www.catholicrelief.org](http://www.catholicrelief.org) and browse through this extensive site, choosing those areas most appropriate for your group. Under "Other CRS Sites" is a section for children. Be sure to check out "Our Work" and "Get Involved" as families, parish and in schools.  
 Make copies of the attached prayer.

**Focus – Catholic Relief**

Ask each person in your group visit one area of the Catholic Relief Website, [www.catholicrelief.org](http://www.catholicrelief.org). Suggestions may be:  
 Our Work                      Emergency Response  
     Peacebuilding  
     Education  
     Community Health  
     Agriculture  
     Microfinance  
     Safety Net Programming  
 Tsunami Relief Effort  
 Advocacy  
 Getting Involved as a Parish or as Families  
 Operation Rice Bowl            (essential for the group)

**Gathering**

Opening Prayer  
 Each person will share their findings with the group.  
  
 On newsprint list ways to get involved as family and/or parish. Operation Rice Bowl has been active in the Diocese of Raleigh over the years, and this year it takes on special meaning and importance.  
  
 From this list make a plan of action for the months ahead.  
  
 Reflection questions: How can we share this with others? How does it feel to be able to walk with others around the world, bringing hope, and light? How does this experience make faith alive?  
  
 Catholic Relief Services states, "Central to our work is the desire to encourage and promote the dignity of the human person through our programming, both in the United States and overseas." How does the work of CRS promote human dignity? How does this work relate to the Gospel message and the work of Jesus? What role does faith play in the service we bring to the world?  
  
 End with *Prayer without Borders, Celebrating Global Wisdom (attached)*  
  

*Go in Peace to love and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God.*

...everyone must consider every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all their life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus (Luke 16:18-31). ...Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, ...whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, ...as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. *Gaudium et Spes*

Prayer Without Borders,  
Celebrating Global Wisdom



To have hope  
Is to believe that history continues open  
to the dream of God and to human creativity

To have hope  
Is to continue affirming that it is possible to dream a different world,  
Without hunger, without injustice without discrimination.

To have hope  
Is to be a courier of God  
And courier of men and women of good will  
Tearing down walls, destroying borders, building bridges.

To have hope  
Is to believe in the revolutionary potential of faith,  
Is to leave the door open so that the Spirit can enter and make all things anew.

To have hope  
Is to believe that life wins over death.

To have hope  
Is to begin again as many times as necessary.

To have hope  
Is to believe that hope is not  
The last thing that dies.

To have hope  
Is to believe that hope cannot die,  
That hope no longer dies

To have hope  
Is to live.



Catholic Social Ministries  
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*Missionary Sisters of St. Charles*