

THE DOROTHEA PROJECT ACTION

DISCERNMENT FOR FAITHFUL PARTICIPATION



AN AID FOR DISCERNING FAITHFUL
CITIZENSHIP THROUGH THE LENS OF
CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING



The Dorothea Project Action offers this Preparation for Faithful Participation as an aid to Catholics preparing to exercise our call to vote. This guide can be used for:

- Personal reflection, conscience formation, and discernment to ground our voting in Catholic Social Teaching (CST).
- Discussions in our Catholic communities (parishes, lay groups, clergy associations, OCIA, etc.)
- Discussions with candidates for offices at all levels of government and leadership.

Every Catholic has different lived experiences, so some issues will be more important than others for their communities and families. Users of this guide are encouraged to consider local issues with relevant candidate questions specific to CST principles.

This aid is organized according to the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as defined by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). CST grew from *Rerum Novarum* and the church's long history of advocating for widows, the poor, the hungry, and all identified in [Matthew 25:31-46](#). Each CST principle is based on Jesus' teachings in Scripture and supported by Papal and Conciliar documents including the Catechism. The seven principles of CST direct us to reflect on the fullness of our faith and to make choices for the [common good](#) so all can thrive in our society. This is what our Catholic Faith calls us to do and why CST is the foundation of this aid.

To assist your use of this aid, here is a link to a [Small Group Discussion Guide](#).

These 7 Principles of CST are the Foundation of our Candidate/Policy Assessments:

- 1) Life and Dignity of the Human Person.
- 2) Call to Family, Community, Participation
- 3) Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- 4) The Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers
- 5) Solidarity - Justice and Peace for All
- 6) Rights and Responsibilities
- 7) Care for God's Creation

Throughout this guide, these ICONS represent the sections under each CST Theme:

	Quotes from Saints or Holy People
	Quotes from Scripture
	Doctrinal Tradition (i.e., Magisterium, Vatican II, Papal Encyclicals, Catechism)

Abbreviations Used in this Guide:

CST	Catholic Social Teaching
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
CCC	The Catechism of the Catholic Church

This aid is inspired by Pope Francis's description of the concerns of preeminent priority for the [common good](#) that are equally sacred to consider as we prepare to vote:

"Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.^[84] We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty." (Pope Francis, "[Gaudete et Exultate](#)" No. 101, 2018)

Catholics are called to bring their faith into public life. Some suggestions:

- Using CST principles as your lens, invest time in assessing candidates' integrity, strength of character, and transparency plus, their positions on issues and the policies they support.
- Prioritize the U.S. Bishops' call to always ask, "[Who is my Neighbor?](#)"
- Strive to be "political", that is, engaged in government - not partisan ([USCCB](#)).

As Catholics, we need to assess our own character formation. We can then more easily assess a candidate's whole character, as well as their policies.

- As adults, we will face unknown challenges and crises. How we respond depends on how we have integrated the moral virtues into our lives.
- The same is true **for candidates. We cannot know their positions in future crises, so we must examine their moral character** - their judgment, their prudence and humility to seek wise counsel, their willingness to make decisions with concern for all lives, balancing liberty and justice, choosing peace over violence, and promoting the [common good](#) so all can thrive.

As Catholics called to seek unity and the common good, we seek candidates and leaders who do the same. We need leaders who recognize that across the wide span of our population, we have more in common as people made in the image and likeness of God than anything that might divide us.

This Discernment for Faithful Participation aid is divided into four sections:

1. Introduction
2. Forming Conscience
3. Assessing Moral Character
4. The Seven Principles of CST – two pages per principle - which include:
 - a. Definition of the CST principle from the USCCB Website
 - b. Scripture
 - c. Doctrinal Tradition (i.e., Magisterium, Vatican II, Papal Encyclicals, Catechism)
 - d. Saints and Holy Figures
 - e. Personal Examen Questions
 - f. Criteria for assessing our own moral character, for assessing a candidate's moral character, and the qualities of a virtuous politician

Qualities of a Mature Catholic Based on the Cardinal Virtues ([Catechism 1805-1809](#))

1. **Prudence**- Discerns what is good and chooses what is right
2. **Justice**- Honors the rule of law and respects human rights
3. **Fortitude** - Resists temptations, ensuring moral firmness in difficulties
4. **Temperance**- Moderates personal pleasures and goods to pursue what is honorable

Virtues Expressed as Characteristics of a Mature Catholic and of a Competent Leader:

1. **Competence** - Has the necessary skill, experience, and knowledge to fulfill their role.
2. **Collaboration/Respects Expertise** - Humility to seek expert advice to make prudent decisions for the good of all. Honors the scientific process.
3. **Connections** - Willingness to work across party lines and national lines to address worldwide crises such as a pandemic, violence, poverty, etc.
4. **Integrity** - Accountable for actions and mistakes. Holds fast to virtue across situations (i.e., Governing, Finances, Personal Relationships, etc.)

Assess My Personal Moral Character as a Catholic:

Before I assess a candidate's moral character it is valuable for me to **take a look at the principles that guide my decisions and actions, that is, my own moral character.** Each of these personal questions can be converted into a question to assess the character of a candidate.

1. Do I show concern/empathy for people who cannot help me financially, socially, personally or politically?
2. In community or church settings, who do I speak with and who do I avoid?
3. Who bears the cost of my decisions (at work, at home, etc.)? Am I honest about the trade-offs?
4. Do I demonstrate good character in my personal life as seen in my words and actions? How do I speak about people who disagree with me?
5. Do I give future generations reasons for optimism? Do I work for the **common good** and inspire others **to work for the common good so that individuals and all people can flourish?** (Pope Francis, [Fratelli Tutti](#), summary no. 66-67)
6. Do I work for a vision of our local community that inspires a renewal of the principles of our democratic republic, as outlined in the U.S. Constitution and other founding documents?
7. Do I examine sources to be sure that the opinions I offer are based on verifiable facts?
8. Do I make sound financial decisions for myself, my family, my company or employer, and not-for-profit organizations I work with? Do I maintain financial integrity in my personal life? Or do I prioritize my personal financial gain? Am I transparent, honest, and clear about money?
9. When I am under pressure or face a crisis situation do I pause and act with prudence? Do I have the humility to seek out wise counsel and do I take into account concern for all lives, choosing peace over violence, and promoting the common good?

No candidate will satisfy all of our criteria, and we cannot predict their actions in a crisis. We need to ask, "Does this candidate have the moral temperament, character, and discernment to best serve others, especially the vulnerable, and marginalized? Will they, in good faith, work with others to advance peace, justice, and the common good in our communities and the world?"

Ultimately, we need to form and follow our conscience as we choose which policies and candidates to support.

Essential Steps for Discerning our Conscience (Summary of CCC 1792)

1. **Form a desire to embrace goodness and truth.**
2. **Study Sacred Scripture and Church teaching**, e.g., as found in the Catholic Catechism.
3. **Examine facts** and background information about various choices.
4. **Be aware:** If I fail to form my conscience in the light of the truths of the faith and the moral teachings of the Church I can make erroneous judgments.
5. **Reflect and pray to discern the will of God.**

Sources of Errors: “Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad example given by others, enslavement to one’s passions, assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience, rejection of the Church’s authority and her teaching, lack of conversion and charity.” (CCC 1792).

Well-Formed Conscience from the USCCB’s [“Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizens”](#)

The Church equips its members to address political and social questions by helping them to develop a well-formed conscience. Catholics have a serious and lifelong obligation to form their consciences in accord with human reason and the teaching of the Church.

- Conscience does not allow us to justify doing whatever we want. It is not a “feeling” about what we should or should not do.
- Conscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth to us and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil.
- Conscience requires serious attempts to make sound moral judgments based on the truths of our faith.

“Man [sic] has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. ‘He [sic] must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he [sic] be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.’ (CCC 1782)

An individual’s conscience does not exist in a vacuum – The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. *“Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. (CCC 1783) (Also see [Gaudium et Spes Paragraph 16](#) and [Dignitatis Humanae Paragraph 2](#))*

Moral theologians define three levels on which conscience operates: (Timothy E. O’Connell, *Principles for Catholic Morality*. NY: Seabury (Crossroad), 1978.)

- Conscience desires to do good and avoid evil.
- Conscience searches for what is good – consults authorities outside of the Church in addition to the Church. It seeks to discover concretely what is good or evil about any given issue.
- Conscience chooses to do good according to what one believes to be good. One must obey one’s conscience even if it is in conflict with Church teaching.

I. Life and Dignity of the Human Person Definition/Description:

“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.” USCCB

This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means.

“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.” (USCCB)

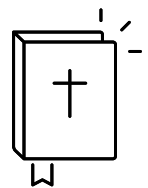
[FULL DESCRIPTION FROM THE USCCB WEBSITE](#)

“Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” ([Genesis 1:26-27](#))

“I come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” ([John 10:10](#))

“And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he ... said to them, “Let the children come to me; ...’ Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.” ([Mark 10:13-16](#))

In John 4:1-42 we see Jesus's encounter with a Samaritan woman who was an outcast not only to his people, but also in her own community. Jesus treated this woman with dignity, engaged her in deep theological discussion, and revealed himself as the Messiah to her. As a result, her life was transformed and she became an evangelist to her community. ([John 4:1-42](#))



SCRIPTURE

“Human persons are willed by God; they are imprinted with God’s image. Their dignity does not come from the work they do, but from the person they are.” (Pope St. John Paul II, [Centesimus annus](#) no. 11)

“The rightly formed conscience cannot fail to ... express its disagreement with any measure that tacitly or explicitly identifies the illegal status of some migrants with criminality.” ([Pope Francis, Letter to US Bishops, February 2025. Par. 4](#)).

“No one is exempted from striving to ensure respect for the dignity of every person, especially the most frail and vulnerable, from the unborn to the elderly, from the sick to the unemployed, citizens and immigrants alike.” (Pope Leo XIV, [Audience to Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See](#), May 2025)



**DOCTRINAL
TRADITION**

I. Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Cont'd

"I really only love God as much as I love the person I love the least." Servant of God Dorothy Day

"Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy." Thomas Merton



SAINTS

Personal Examen - A Sample of Questions, please add your own as needed:

1. Do I recognize and defend the dignity of all people?
2. Who is the person whom I love the least? How might I seek to recognize and uplift their inherent dignity?
3. In what ways do I unconsciously judge others? Do I make sweeping generalizations about certain groups of people? Do I harbor ill-feelings, contempt, or fear of a particular group such as: those who belong to an opposing political party, people with disabilities, people of other faiths, people of other origins, people of color, or people who identify as LGBTQ+?
4. Do I allow myself to see the poor, without judgement, and act on their behalf?
5. Do I avoid the sin of dehumanizing others in my thoughts, words, and actions?
6. Do I allow dehumanizing rhetoric to influence how I view and treat other groups of people? Do I allow dehumanizing rhetoric in my presence?
7. Do I, like the "good Samaritan", find ways to support victims of crime, especially victims of domestic and sexual violence? Do I demand accountability for perpetrators of sexual abuse?
8. Do I defend the unborn and the bodily integrity of women? Do I work to reduce maternal deaths? Do I support women in crisis pregnancies?
9. Do I support the health of infants and children in my community?

II. Call to Family, Community, Participation Definition/Description:

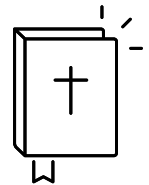
“The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society -- in economics and politics, in law and policy -- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.” USCCB

[FULL DESCRIPTION FROM THE USCCB WEBSITE](#)

“Only if you thoroughly reform your ways and your deeds; if each of you deals justly with your neighbor; if you no longer oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow; if you no longer shed innocent blood ... or follow after other gods to your own harm, only then will I let you continue to dwell in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors long ago and forever.” ([Jeremiah 7:5-7](#))

“You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.” ([Micah 6:8](#))

“We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” ([1 John 4:19-21](#))



SCRIPTURE

“For by his innermost nature, man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.” (Second Vatican Council, [Gaudium et Spes](#), no. 12. 1965)



**DOCTRINAL
TRADITION**

“The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were nonmembers of the human race. To treat people this way is effectively to say they simply do not count as human beings.” ([Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy](#), USCCB, 1986)

“[T]he family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love, and this is a living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity”. ([Pope St. John Paul II, 17, Familiaris Consortio](#))

“[Subsidiarity](#) respects personal dignity by recognizing in the person a subject who is always capable of giving something to others.” (Pope Benedict XVI, [[Caritas in Veritate](#)], no. 57. 2009)

II. Call to Family, Community, Participation, Cont'd

"We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community." – Servant of God Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*

"The nation... doesn't simply need what we have. It needs what we are." – St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

"The problem with the world is that we draw the circle of our family too small." – St. Teresa of Kolkata



SAINTS

Personal Examen - A Sample of Questions, please add your own as needed:

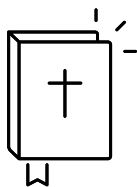
1. What does the phrase "common good" mean to you? "Am I striving for the common good?"
2. How do I overcome obstacles that restrict my active participation in my communities?
3. What is one concrete way I can build community?
4. Do I know people who are unable to fully participate? What is keeping them on the margins? Is there a way I can invite them into my community?
5. How can I live this call to community in my own family, household, and/or community? Even if my sphere of influence is small, how can I help build true community in my local area?
6. Do I have a subconscious judgment towards those in an atypical family situation- such as blended families and single parents?
7. Do I exclude families from participating in the community, perhaps by curating events that are not feasible for those with children to attend?
8. Do I forget to include single mothers/fathers when making friendships in my community?
9. Do I offer support to friends with children, such as setting up playdates, offering to babysit, or checking in with new mothers who might need additional support?
10. Have I harshly or vocally criticized someone for an abortion, miscarriage, or death of a young child?
11. Do I judge mothers who opt to be stay at home mothers? Do I judge mothers who opt to return to the workforce? Do I judge women who opt to not get married or have children?
12. Do I have a subconscious judgment towards adults or children with disabilities? When planning community events do I look for ways to provide accessible spaces?
13. Do I ask for input from people with disabilities to ensure their ideas are included?

III. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable Definition/Description:

"The obligation to provide justice for all means that the poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation." (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Economic Justice for All, no. 86)

"The needs of the poor take priority over the desires of the rich; the rights of workers over the maximization of profits; the preservation of the environment over uncontrolled industrial expansion; the production to meet social needs over production for military purposes." (USCCB, Economic Justice for All, no. 94 citing St. John Paul II's Address September 14, 1984)

FULL DESCRIPTION FROM THE USCCB



SCRIPTURE

"You shall not oppress the poor or vulnerable. God will hear their cry."
(Exodus 22:20-26)

"True worship is to work for justice and care for the poor and oppressed."
(Isaiah 58:5-7)

"If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:17-18)

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:41-46)

"Everyone knows that the Fathers of the Church laid down the duty of the rich toward the poor in no uncertain terms. As St. Ambrose put it: 'You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich.'" (Pope St. Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 23, 1967; Original Source: De Nabuthae, 12. 5)

"We must continue, then, to denounce the "dictatorship of an economy that kills," and to recognize that "while the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control. A new tyranny is being born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules." (Pope Leo XIV, Dilexi te no. 92, 2025)



DOCTRINAL TRADITION

III. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, Cont'd

“...if we walk and talk and work and play and stand together in Jesus’ name – we’ll be who we say we are – truly Catholic and we shall overcome – overcome the poverty – overcome the loneliness – overcome the alienation and build together a Holy city, a new Jerusalem, a city set apart where they’ll know that we are here because we love one another.” (Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman Address to U.S. Bishops Conference, 1989)



SAINTS

“St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: ‘Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs.’ ‘The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity.’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 2446; Original Source: St. John Chrysostom’s Homily on Lazarus 2.5)

Personal Examen - A Sample of Questions, please add your own as needed:

1. Do I understand the role foreign aid/assistance plays in supporting developing nations in the world? Am I willing to research the impact of governmental policy and funding on agencies like [Catholic Relief Services](#), who work directly in the field with the poor and vulnerable?
2. According to the U.S. Bishops in [Economic Justice For All](#), “The poor have the single most urgent economic claim on the conscience of the nation.” Have I prioritized the needs of the poor in the way I live my life and in my support of fair public policy?
3. Am I willing to bring the Catholic values laid out in our rich history of Catholic Social Teaching into the public square, not solely in how I vote, but also through community service to and with the poor and vulnerable?
4. Do I vote for policies and candidates who lift up the dignity of all human beings? Do I simply ignore rhetoric and policies that dehumanize whole groups of people? Or do I actively oppose the dehumanizing rhetoric and policies?
5. Do I know how systemic racism, as outlined by the USCCB’s pastoral letter on racism: “[Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love](#)” impacts my brothers and sisters in Christ? Do I try to learn from other perspectives or experiences of communities unfamiliar to me? Do I understand what has sparked demands for equal treatment under the law by and for people of color in our Country?
6. How much interaction do I have with those who live below the poverty line? Do I truly understand, “the cries of the poor” at a level that moves me to make personal choices based on *their* needs? Do I agree that the poor should have a claim on my heart, and on my resources?
7. Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman advocated for education for the poor and vulnerable as a means to full participation in society and the Church. How can I support education for all members of society? Do I support education that is grounded in historical truth and examines our past through the eyes of the poor and vulnerable? Do I oppose repeating rhetoric and policies that disenfranchise the poor and people of color?
8. Do I work for the common good and inspire others to work for the common good so that every individual and all people regardless of economic level, social status, etc. can flourish? (Pope Francis, [Fratelli Tutti](#), summary no. 66-67)

IV. The Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers Definition/Description:

Work is a form of participation in God's creation and must be respected. **“The economy must serve people, not the other way around.” The Church recognizes that “... the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to form unions and negotiate just contracts, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative” (USCCB) and time for leisure and family.**

Workers are also responsible to fulfill their duties faithfully and to respect their employers' property.

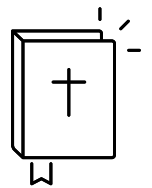
[FULL DESCRIPTION FROM THE USCCB WEBSITE](#)

“You shall not exploit a poor and needy hired servant, whether one of your own kindred or one of the resident aliens who live in your land, within your gates. On each day you shall pay the servant's wages before the sun goes down, since the servant is poor and is counting on them. Otherwise the servant will cry to the LORD against you, and you will be held guilty.”

([Deuteronomy 24:14-15](#))

“Woe to him who builds his house on wrongdoing, his roof-chambers on injustice; Who works his neighbors without pay, and gives them no wages.” ([Jeremiah 12:13](#))

“Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.” ([James 5:4](#))



SCRIPTURE



**DOCTRINAL
TRADITION**

In 1891, as workers struggled in factories where few laws protected them and child labor was rampant, Pope Leo XIII wrote [Rerum Novarum](#). He described a world where trade is concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of the very wealthy are able to exploit workers. (Summary of Rerum Novarum, [CAPP-USA](#))

Workers, in turn, are called to fulfill their duties with diligence and respect their employers' property: “Those who labor...should employ their skill and strengthen faithfully.” (Pope Leo XIII, [Rerum Novarum](#), #20, 1891) (See [CAPP-USA](#) Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor section.)

Pope Benedict XVI warned that “cuts in social spending often made under pressure from international financial institutions can leave citizens powerless in the face of old and new risks; such powerlessness is increased by the lack of effective protection on the part of workers' associations.” (Pope Benedict XVI, [Caritas in Veritate](#), 2009)

IV. Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers, Cont'd

“What we would like to do is change the world—make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended for them to do. And by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of workers, of the poor, of the destitute... we can, to a certain extent, change the world.” (Dorothy Day, Excerpt from *Catholic Worker*, 1936)

A talented lacemaker, and small businesswoman, St. Zelig Martin was known as a good employer, who visited her workers when they were ill, and paid them well. She and her spouse were the parents of nine children, including St. Therese of Lisieux (Saint Zelig Martin)



SAINTS

Personal Examen - A Sample of Questions, please add your own as needed:

1. Do I take the time to learn about the Catholic Church's teaching "... that the poor, for example, should rise above poverty and wretchedness, and better their condition in life; and for this she makes a strong endeavor." (*Rerum Novarum* 28)?
2. Do I seek out lawmakers who advocate for laws that provide opportunities for the poor to engage in labor with dignity and in ways that can better themselves and rise out of poverty?
3. What workers do I encounter in my daily life? Do I treat all laborers with equal dignity - regardless of perceived skill or educational level?
4. How does my life benefit from the work of others - the educators, the farmers, the trash collectors, the factory workers here and overseas? How can I acknowledge the dignity of their work?
5. Do I make assumptions about people with certain types of jobs- such as waitresses, trash collectors, fast-food workers, farm workers, day laborers, maids and those in hospitality services, etc?
6. Have I taken the time to educate myself on the obstacles facing people who wish to enter into higher education and asked, why some people are able to pay for higher education and some are not?
7. Am I aware of income disparity and its causes? Am I aware of how building generational wealth historically enabled many to advance toward economic independence and that following WWII, African American and other service members of color were denied the GI Bill preventing many from seeking higher education?
8. Do I fulfill obligations to my employer and colleagues such as: meeting commitments, doing a thorough job, and supporting colleagues?
9. As an employer, do I fulfill my obligations to my employees to pay a fair wage, provide a safe work environment, and honor labor laws such as the right to form unions?

V. Solidarity - Justice and Peace for All Definition/Description:

A commitment to the common good for all people, recognizing our interconnectedness, seeking peace and justice, acting in solidarity with our brothers and sisters.

"We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be." ... "At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that 'if you want peace, work for justice.' The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all ... demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict." (USCCB) (The Pope Paul VI quote imbedded in this definition is from his talk for the [World Day of Peace 1972.](#))

[FULL DESCRIPTION FROM THE USCCB WEBSITE](#)

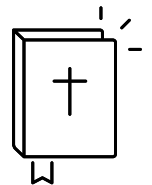
Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" [Answer: Yes.] ([Genesis 4:1-18](#))

"If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy." ([1 Corinthians 12:26](#))

"If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him? Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth." ([1 John 3:17-18](#))

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." ([Matthew 5:9](#))

"Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man ...?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." [Note: Everyone is our neighbor including those who seem different, foreign, even enemies.] ([Luke 10:30-37](#), The Good Samaritan)



SCRIPTURE



**DOCTRINAL
TRADITION**

"The solidarity which binds all men together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist." (Pope St. John XXIII, *On Christianity and Social Progress* [[Mater et Magistra](#)], no. 157)

"[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*." (Pope St. John Paul II, [Sollicitudo rei Socialis](#), no. 38)

"Solidarity finds concrete expression in service ... In offering such service, individuals learn to 'set aside their own wishes and desires, their pursuit of power, before the concrete gaze of those who are most vulnerable... Service always looks to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness and even, in some cases, 'suffers' that closeness and tries to help them. Service is never ideological, for we do not serve ideas, we serve people". (Pope Francis, [Fratelli Tutti](#), 2020. Para. 115)

V. Solidarity – Justice and Peace for All, Cont'd

"Our love of neighbor is the measure of our love of God. For Christians — and not only for them — no one is a 'stranger'. The love of Christ knows no borders." – St. Edith Stein

"There are not two categories of people. There are not some who were born to have everything and leave others with nothing and a majority that has nothing and can't enjoy the happiness that God has created for all. God wants a Christian society, one in which we share the good things that God has given for all of us." –St. Oscar Romero



SAINTS

Personal Examen – A Sample of Questions, please add your own as needed: :

1. Do I reflect on my own privilege as a citizen with the right to vote and use the power I have, even if it is small, to advocate for those with less power?
2. Do I take the time to inform myself about the issues going on in my neighborhood, city, state, nation, and worldwide?
3. When I see communities being discriminated against, do I make efforts to stand with them in solidarity and advocate for peace and justice?
4. Do I see people as human beings, worthy of dignity and love, not as objects of contempt or derision? Do I treat people as brothers and sisters or as a means to an end?
5. Am I a conscientious consumer who supports fair labor and humane working conditions?
6. Am I an over-consumer? Do I consider the environment when I shop?"
7. Do I commit myself to the common good as St. John Paul II urged us? Even if this means making sacrifices in my own life? [Sollicitudo Rei Socialis \(30 December 1987 especially no. 42 and 43\)](#)

VI. Rights and Responsibilities Definition/Description:

Life is the most basic right. The most basic right comes with responsibility toward others. Human rights need to be protected and collective responsibility needs to be met. Every human has a fundamental right to life and to things that support human life including but not limited to food, shelter, education, clothing, fair pay, medical services, disability and social services. We have the responsibility to participate fully in personal, work, and social responsibilities, as we are able, to ensure those rights are secured.

“The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.” (USCCB)

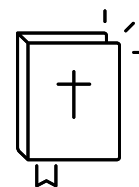
[FULL DESCRIPTION FROM THE USCCB WEBSITE](#)

“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.” ([Isaiah 1:17](#))

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give. Not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: They that have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.” ([2 Corinthians 9:6-9](#))

“Keep on loving others as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels unawares.” ([Hebrews 13:1-2](#))

... if one of you says, “Go in peace, keep warm and eat well, but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? Faith without works is dead.” ([James 2: 16-17](#))



SCRIPTURE

“The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority.” ([Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2273](#))

“We must speak of man's rights. Man has the right to live. He has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, he has the right to be looked after in the event of ill health; disability stemming from his work; widowhood; old age; enforced unemployment; or whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood.” (Pope St. John XXIII, *Peace on Earth* [[Pacem in Terris](#)]).

“A link has often been noted between claims to a ‘right to excess’ ... within affluent societies and the lack of food, drinkable water, basic instruction and elementary health care in areas of the underdeveloped world and on the outskirts of large metropolitan centers. The link consists in this: individual rights, when detached from a framework of duties which grants them their full meaning, can run wild, leading to an escalation of demands which is effectively unlimited and indiscriminate.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*)



DOCTRINAL TRADITION

VI. Rights and Responsibilities, Cont'd

"I think the difference between me and some people is that I'm content to do my little bit. Sometimes people think they have to do big things in order to make change. But if each one would light a candle we'd have a tremendous light." -Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman

"[B]eyond the rights which man acquires by his own work, there exist rights which do not correspond to any work he performs, but which flow from his essential dignity as a person." (Pope St. John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 1991)



SAINTS

Personal Examen - A Sample of Questions, please add your own as needed:

1. Do I acknowledge that all people have inalienable rights as stated in our Declaration of Independence? Do I recognize my responsibility to defend those rights?
2. How do I show that I value people and creating safe and welcoming communities through my vote?
3. Do I take responsibility to contribute to society?
4. Do I recognize the value and rights of everyone, including the poor (who are easy to judge as unworthy in our society)? Do I live up to my responsibilities to help lift up others in my community?
5. Have I taken the time to learn about the injustices within our judicial system, especially as they affect the incarcerated and the death penalty?
6. Do I consider the dignity of all people in my vote, regardless of race, gender, religion, etc?
7. Have I taken the time to educate myself on the history of voting rights for women, Black Americans, and all other minorities previously denied the right to vote?

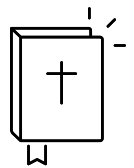
VII. Care for God's Creation Definition/Description:

God has entrusted us with the care for creation, not as owners, but as stewards. Protecting the environment means protecting the people who depend on it, especially the poor and vulnerable, for whom God has a special place in God's providence. Caring for creation is an act of love for God and for our human family.

"We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation... We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored." (USCCB)

[FULL DESCRIPTION FROM THE USCCB WEBSITE](#)

"God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day...The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." ([Genesis 1:31](#); [Genesis 2:15](#))



"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it..." ([Psalm 24:1](#))

SCRIPTURE

"Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection. For each one of the works of the "six days" it is said: "And God saw that it was good." ...Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment." ([Catechism of the Catholic Church, 339](#))

"Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past... [A] new *ecological awareness* is beginning to emerge...The ecological crisis is a moral issue." (Pope St. John Paul II, [The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility, nos. 1, 15](#))



**DOCTRINAL
TRADITION**

"Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of "environmental refugees,"... Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources? All these are issues with a profound impact on the exercise of human rights, such as the right to life, food, health and development." (Pope Benedict, [For the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 2010, no. 4](#))

"The New Testament does not only tell us of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world. It also shows him risen and glorious, present throughout creation by his universal Lordship... Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence." (Pope Francis, [Laudato Si, 2015, no. 100](#))

"God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the world that he created (cf. *Gen 2:15*), for the benefit of all and for future generations, and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters (cf. *Gen 4:9*; *Jn 13:34*). What will be our answer?" (Pope Leo XIV, [Address to the participants in the "Raising Hope" Conference, 2025](#))

VII. Care for God's Creation, Cont'd

Saint Francis was known for his love of the earth and all creatures, and for his ministry to the poor and marginalized. He famously preached, "If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men." St. Francis of Assisi



SAINTS

St. Kateri Tekakwitha's devotion to care for the earth was rooted in her Indigenous heritage, her deep faith, and her belief that loving God fully inspires reverence for all of creation. She remains a guiding light for those who seek to live in harmony with nature and honor the Creator's gifts.

Personal Examen - A Sample of Questions, please add your own as needed:

1. What actions are most practical for me to take such as composting, water conservation, and reducing my use of plastic?
2. Have I joined community groups to protect our local environment? If I do not have the time, could I contribute funds?
3. If I have a garden, could I modify it to conserve water?
4. Do I consider who made my clothes? Am I aware of the effects of the fast- fashion industry on our natural resources such as water and excess waste?
5. Do I often use AI? Do I understand the impact of AI Data Centers' energy requirements on my community such as: electricity rates, clean water supply, and local wildlife?
6. If I live in an arid environment, do I monitor and try to reduce my water usage?
7. Have I taken the time to educate myself on climate change and local policies that affect our water, wildlife, and agriculture? Have I made an effort to visit a local nature preserve or donate to a charity that assists environmental protections?
8. Do I take the time to understand how climate change drives migration?
9. Do I listen carefully to understand why some do not accept that climate change is a danger? Do I make the effort to learn how to communicate in this area?