

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE FAITH

### FROM THE CATECHISM

#### 2419

"Christian revelation . . . promotes deeper understanding of the laws of social living."<sup>199</sup> The Church receives from the Gospel the full revelation of the truth about man. When she fulfills her mission of proclaiming the Gospel, she bears witness to man, in the name of Christ, to his dignity and his vocation to the communion of persons. She teaches him the demands of justice and peace in conformity with divine wisdom.

#### 2420

The Church makes a moral judgment about economic and social matters, "when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it."<sup>200</sup> In the moral order she bears a mission distinct from that of political authorities: the Church is concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, our ultimate end. She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships.

#### 2422

The Church's social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of the whole of what has been revealed by Jesus Christ.<sup>202</sup> This teaching can be more easily accepted by men of good will, the more the faithful let themselves be guided by it.

### FROM THE U.S. CATHOLIC BISHOPS

It is clear that in some educational programs Catholic social teaching (CST) is not really shared or not sufficiently integral and explicit . . . Many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social teaching of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith.

Thus, the Bishops "seek a renewed commitment to integrate and to share the riches of the Church's social teaching in Catholic education and formation at every level. This is one of the most urgent challenges for the new millennium."

*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions,*  
U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1998.

## FROM THE VATICAN

From *Centesimus Annus*: Pope John Paul II's reflection on the development of Catholic Social Teaching over one hundred years

The social doctrine of the Church developed in the nineteenth century when the Gospel encountered modern industrial society with its new structures for the production of consumer goods, its new concept of society, the state and authority, and its new forms of labor and ownership. The development of the doctrine of the Church on economic and social matters attests the permanent value of the Church's teaching at the same time as it attests the true meaning of her Tradition, always living and active.

*Centesimus Annus*, no. 3

The true identity of the human person is only fully revealed through faith, and it is precisely from faith that the Church's social teaching begins. While drawing upon all the contributions made by the sciences and philosophy, her social teaching is aimed at helping humanity on the path of salvation.

*Centesimus Annus*, no. 54

Thus the Church's social teaching is itself a valid instrument of evangelization. As such, it proclaims God and God's mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals the person to him or herself. In this light, and only in this light, does it concern itself with everything else: the human rights of the individual, and in particular of the "working class", the family and education, the duties of the State, the ordering of national and international society, economic life, culture, war and peace, and respect for life from the moment of conception until death.

*Centesimus Annus*, no. 54

In addition, the Church's social teaching has an important interdisciplinary dimension. In order better to incarnate the one truth about humanity in different and constantly changing social, economic and political contexts, this teaching enters into dialogue with the various disciplines concerned with the human person. It assimilates what these disciplines have to contribute, and helps them to open themselves to a broader horizon, aimed at serving the individual person who is acknowledged and loved in the fullness of his or her vocation.

*Centesimus Annus*, no. 59