

# Catholic Social Teaching

*Putting Love of  
Neighbor Into Action*

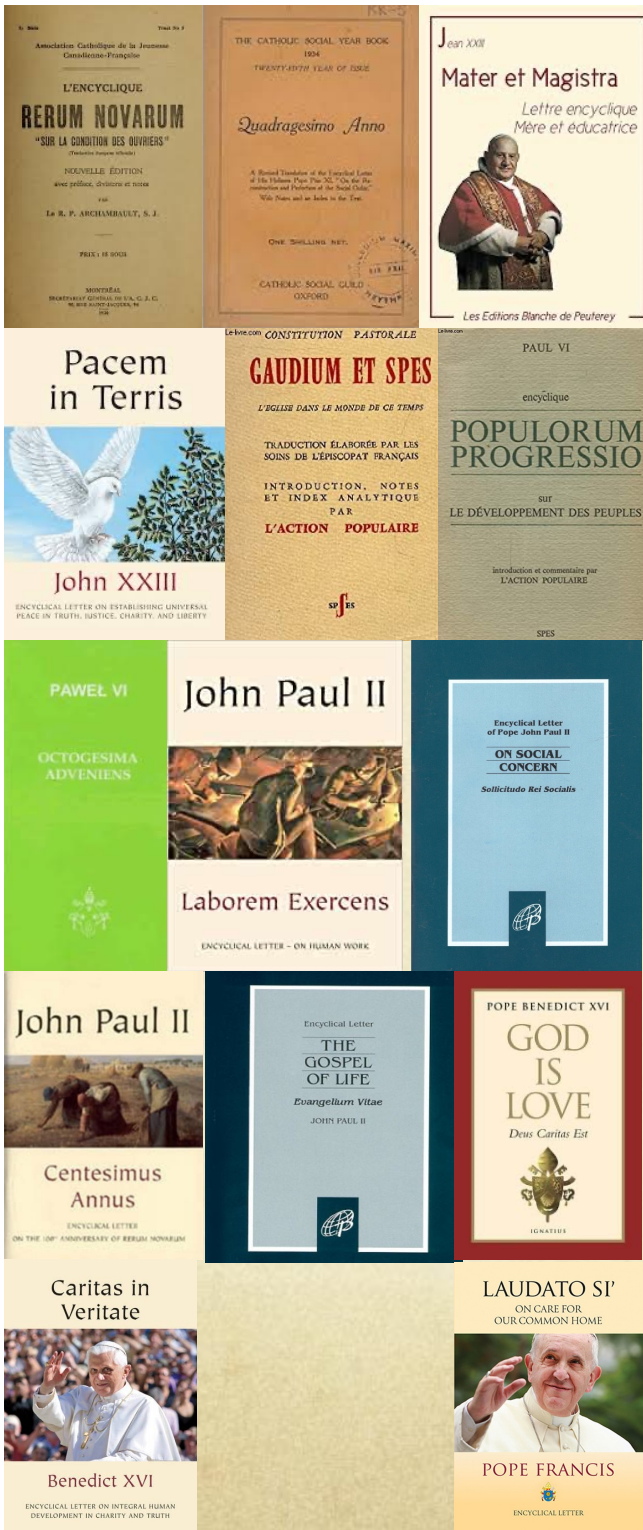
**Father Roger J. Landry**

Thomas Merton Institute for Catholic Life

November 18, 2024

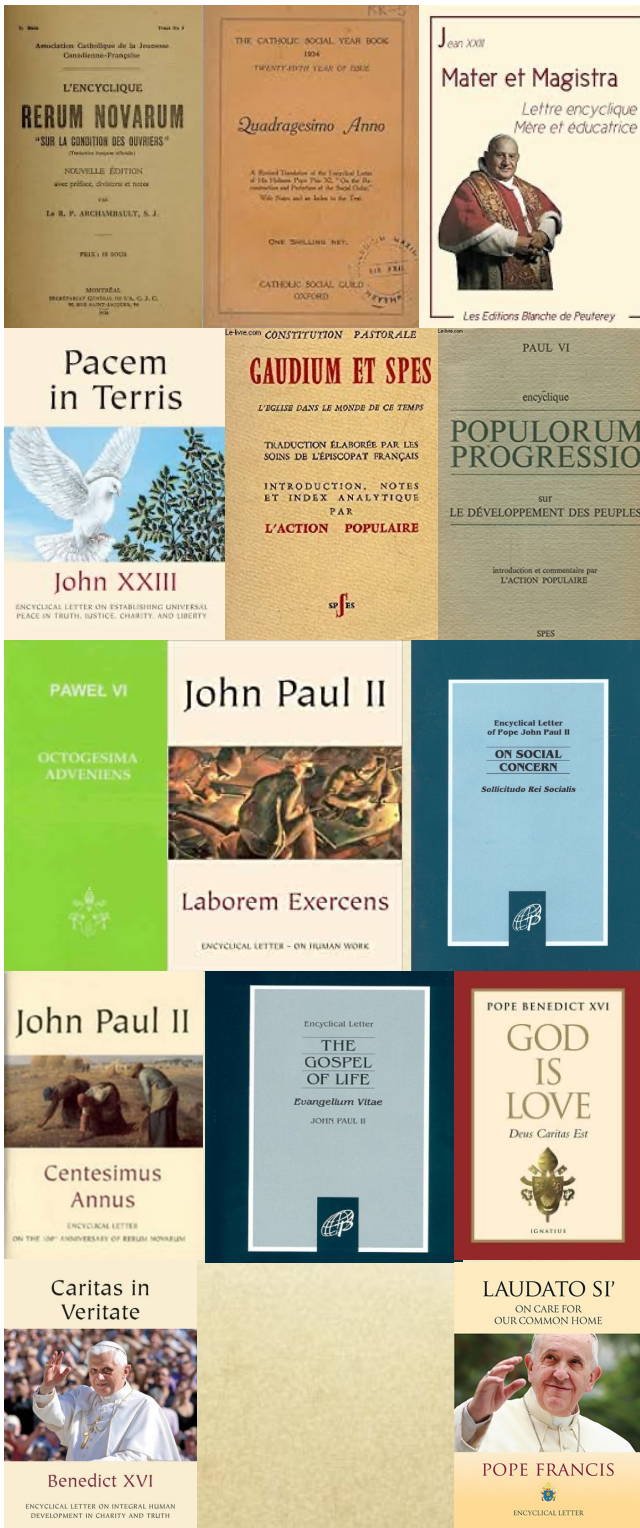
# Catholic Social Teaching

- Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is the set of principles that guide how people are to relate to each other in society and build society up.
- It is based on the love of God and gratitude for his gift of creation, on love of neighbor, and the full social content of the Gospel.
- It is an integral part of her mission of evangelization.
- It is not an ideological or pragmatic system meant to define economic, political and social relationships but a branch of moral theology, aimed to guide people's behavior.



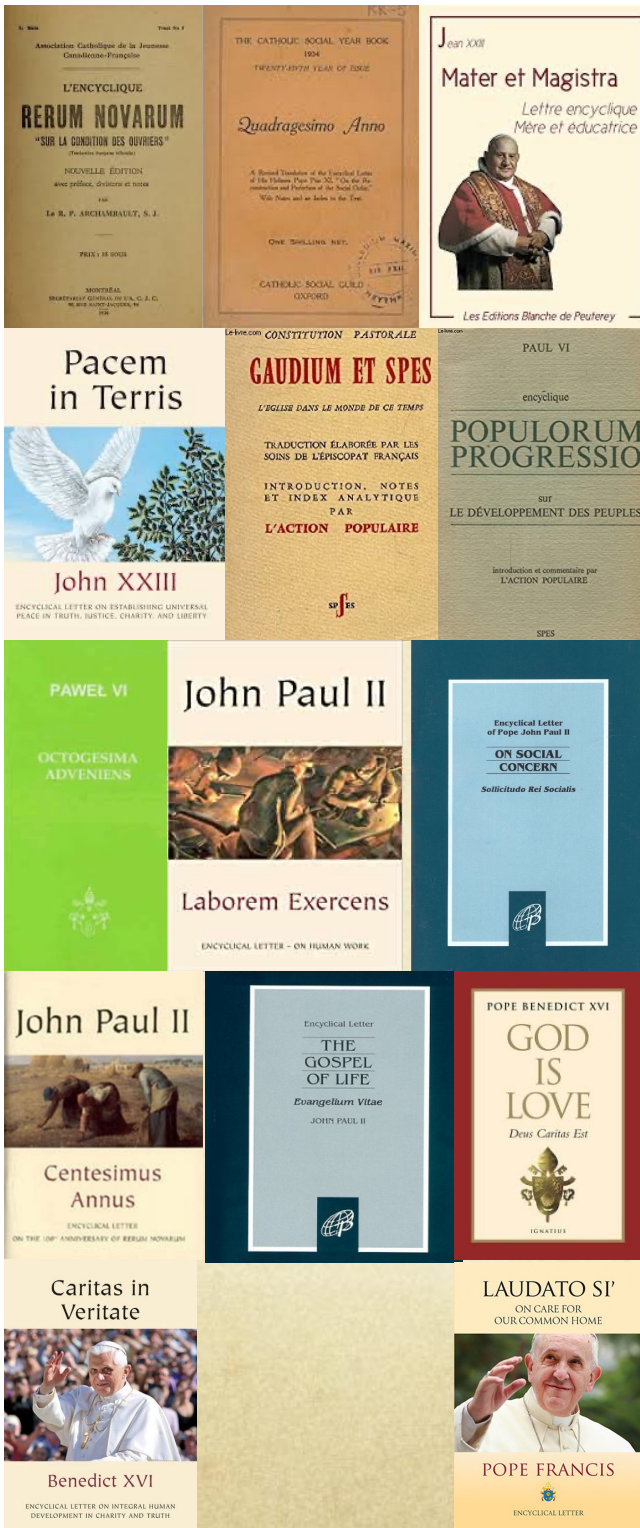
# Catholic Social Teaching

- The term “social teaching” goes back to Pope Pius XI.
- Involves various documents:
  - Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891 – Focused on conditions of salaried workers, excludes socialism, expounds on work, right to property, collaboration instead of class struggle, the right to form professional associations, the rights of the weak, dignity of the poor, obligations of the rich.
  - Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931– Focus on the family wage, principle of subsidiarity, rejects unlimited competition between economic forces, the rise of totalitarian regimes



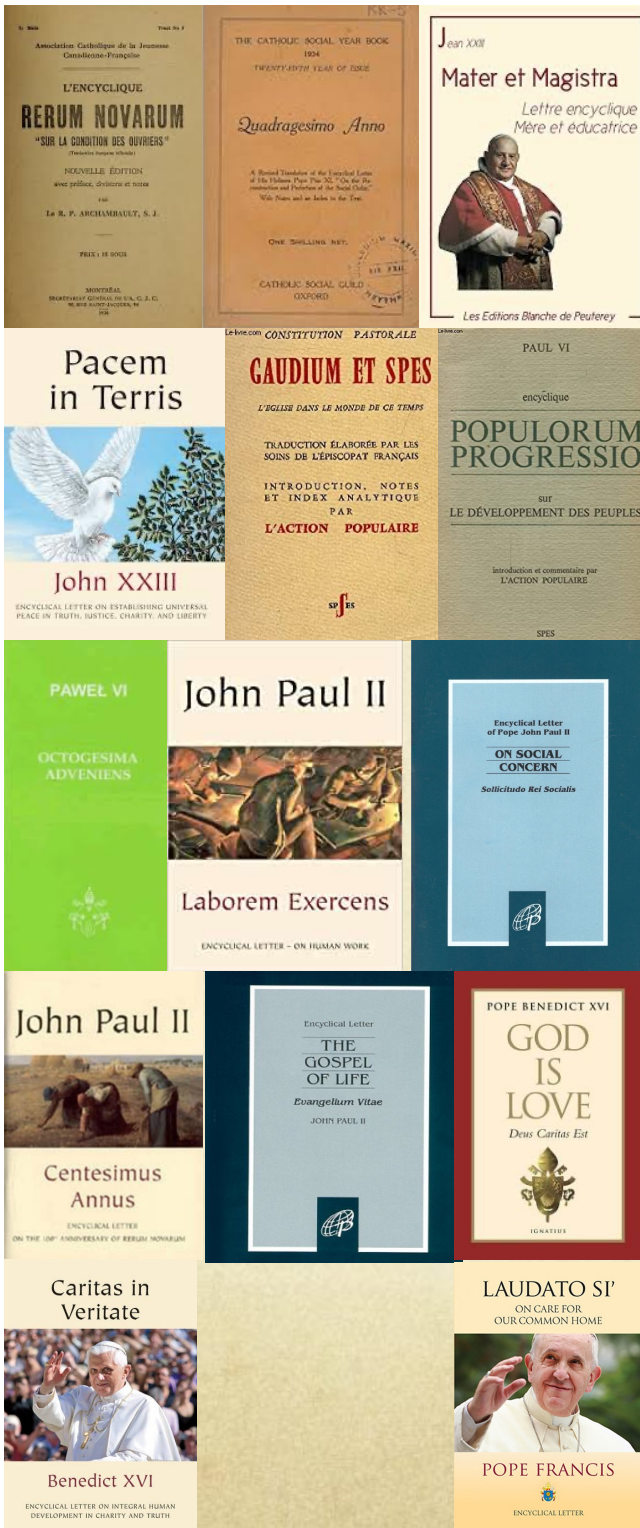
# Catholic Social Teaching

- John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 1961 – Spoke on community and socialization
- John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 1963 – Addressed to all people of good will on the problem of peace in an era marked by nuclear proliferation.
- Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965 – Gave a systematic presentation on culture, economic and social life, marriage and family, the political community, peace and the community of peoples, in light of Christian anthropology



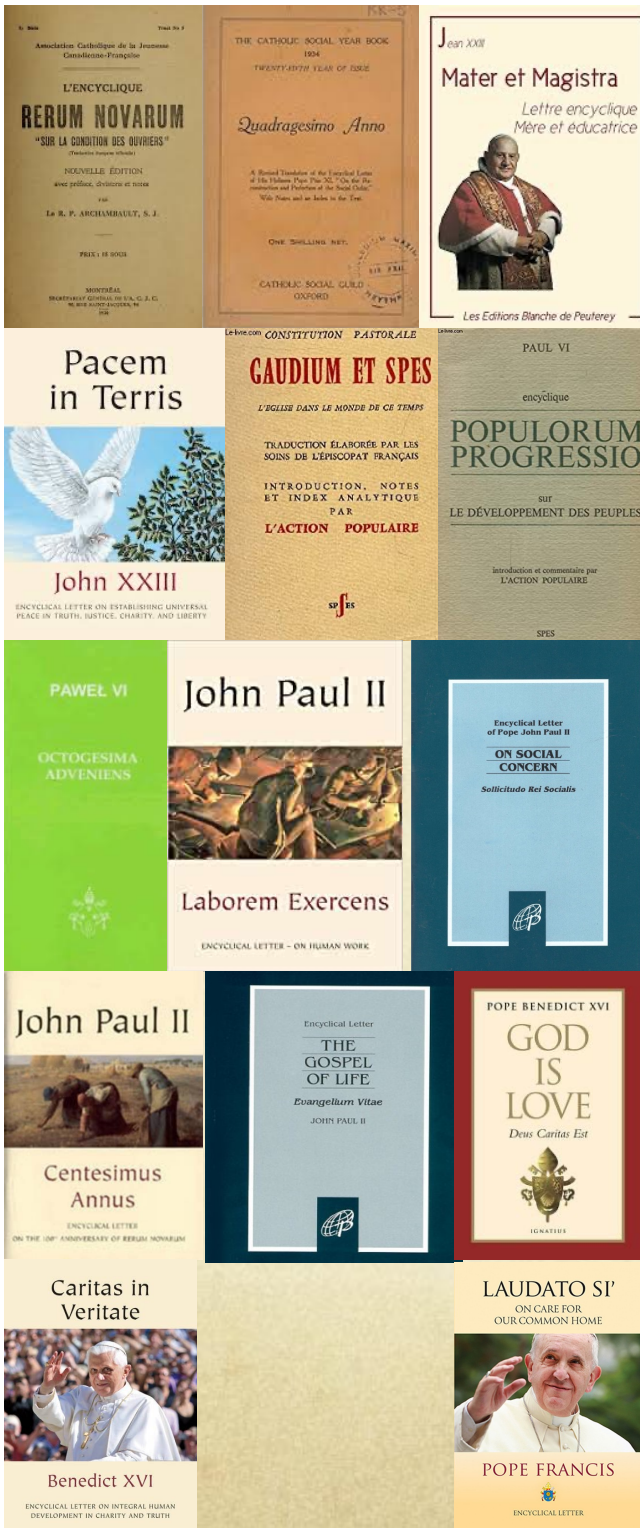
# Catholic Social Teaching

- Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 1967 – Outlined the integral development of man and a development in solidarity with all humanity.
- Paul VI, *Octagesima Adveniens*, 1971 – Reflects on post-industrial society and the inadequacy of ideologies to respond to it. Focuses likewise on urbanization, condition of women, unemployment, discrimination, emigration, population growth, social communications, youth and the ecological problem.
- John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981 – Concentrated on the spirituality and ethic of work at both the objective and subjective dimensions.



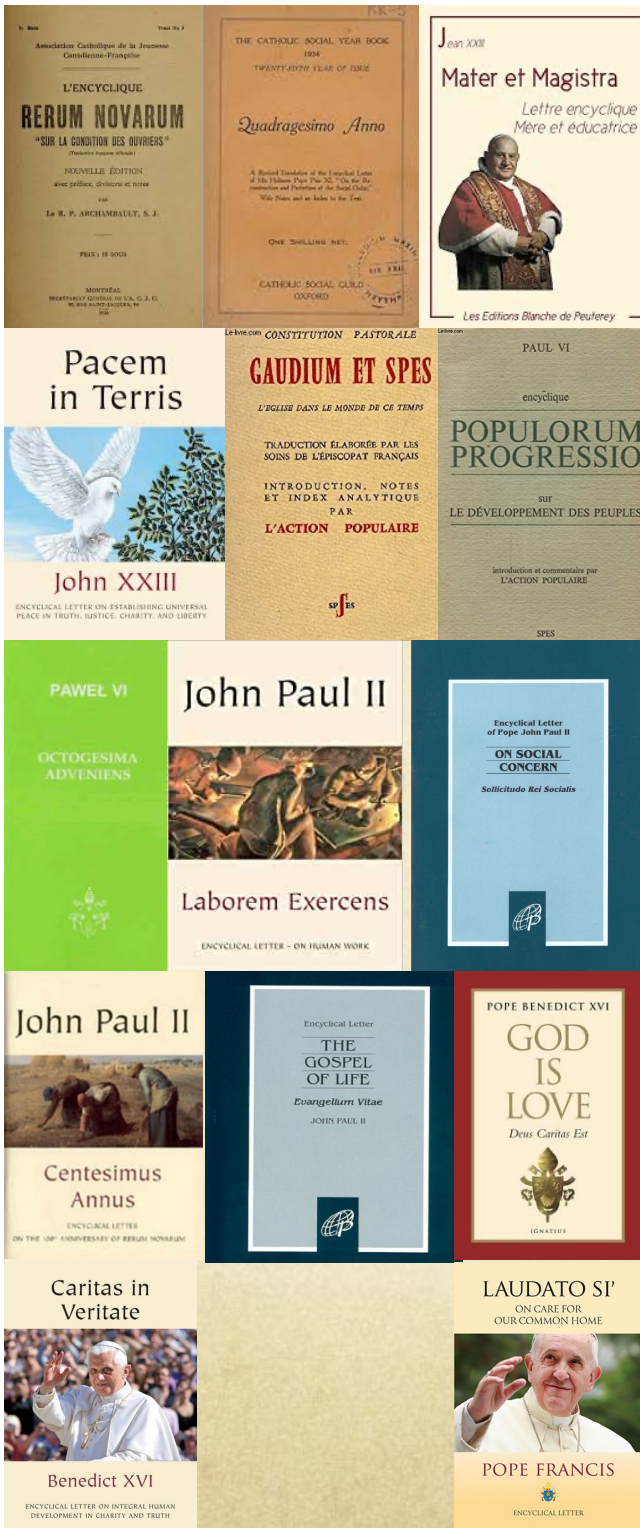
# Catholic Social Teaching

- John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987 – Focuses on development in the “Third World” and the meaning of a development worthy of man. Distinguishes between development and progress, as more than goods and services but personal.
- John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1981 – Presents the fundamental principles of social and political organization, solidarity, a civilization of love, after the fall of Soviet Communism.
- John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995 – On the dignity of every human life, at the beginning, middle and end of life.



# Catholic Social Teaching

- Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 2006 – Pondered the organization of charity in the Church and society
- Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2009 – Discussed global development and the common good, markets, big government, human ecology, population, hunger, migration, civil society.
- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 2015 – Focused on integral ecology, creation, technology, ecological conversion and spirituality.



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# Catholic Social Teaching

- *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 2004*
- Principles of CST
  - Human dignity
  - Solidarity and the common good
  - Subsidiarity
  - Social justice and corresponding rights and responsibilities
  - Charity



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# Human Dignity

- “The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God; it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude.” (CCC 1700)
- *Dignitas Infinita* (2024): A fourfold distinction of the concept of dignity: *ontological dignity*, *moral dignity*, *social dignity*, and *existential dignity*.
- *Ontological dignity* belongs to the person as such simply because he or she exists and is willed, created, and loved by God. It is indelible and remains valid beyond any circumstances in which the person may find themselves.

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# Human Dignity

- *Moral dignity* refers to how people exercise their freedom. While people are endowed with conscience, they can always act against it. However, were they to do so, they would behave in a way that is “not dignified” with respect to their nature as creatures who are loved by God and called to love others. Moral dignity *de facto* can be “lost.”
- *Social dignity* refers to the quality of a person’s living conditions.
- *Existential dignity* is implied in the ever-increasing discussion about a “dignified” life and one that is “not dignified,” particular with regard to health, addictions, hardships, peace, joy, and hope.

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## Common Good

- The common good is the “sum total of social conditions that allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and easily.”
- The common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains ‘common,’ because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future.
- Just as the moral actions of an individual are accomplished in doing what is good, so too the actions of a society attain their full stature when they bring about the common good. The common good, in fact, can be understood as the social and community dimension of the moral good.

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## Solidarity

- Solidarity is the “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.”
- Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity.
- *Solidarity is an authentic moral virtue*, not a “feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far.
- Solidarity rises to the rank of fundamental *social virtue* since it places itself in the sphere of justice. It is a virtue directed *par excellence* to the *common good*, and is found in a commitment to the good of one's neighbor with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to ‘lose oneself’ for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to ‘serve him’ instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage.

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## Subsidiarity

- **Subsidiarity** is the principle that “a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.”
- Socialization presents dangers. Excessive intervention by the state can threaten personal freedom and initiative. The principle of subsidiarity is opposed to all forms of collectivism.
- Solidarity without subsidiarity, in fact, can easily degenerate into a ‘Welfare State,’ while subsidiarity without solidarity runs the risk of encouraging forms of self-centered localism. In order to respect both of these fundamental principles, the State's intervention in the economic environment must be neither invasive nor absent, but commensurate with society's real needs.

COMPENDIUM  
OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE  
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# Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

- Promotion of peace
- The dignity and sanctity of every human life
- Family, community and participation
- The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable
- A free economy, democratic polity and vibrant public moral culture
- The dignity of work and the rights of workers
- Private property and the universal destination of human goods
- Care for God's creation

# The Image of God

- The importance of an adequate Christian anthropology.
- We are made in God's image: we have reason and will and are made to exist in a loving interpersonal communion.
- Christ fully reveals the human person and makes his supreme calling clear (GS 22)
- The human person cannot find fulfillment except in the gift of himself or herself in love (GS 24)



Creation of Man, Michelangelo

# The Image of God

- The human person is a creature; one in soul and body; male or female; is a moral agent with a conscience; has fallen from his original dignity and therefore suffers and dies; but is made for transcendence.
- The “isms” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – Nazism, Communism, Materialism, Hedonism, Individualism, Relativism, Atheism – all start with erroneous, reductive understandings of the person.



Creation of Man, Michelangelo





Saint Thomas Aquinas

# Created to Know

- The human person is created with a desire to know and is able to know by faith and reason, which are complementary, not competitive.
- Faith and reason are the two cognitive paths of the Church's social doctrine, leading to the integral truth of the person as a spiritual and corporeal being.
- In faith, we submit our intellect and will to God and to what he reveals. It is a gift of God but also an authentically human act. Faith seeks understanding and uses every contribution that reason has to offer.
- Since God is the source of truth, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Each has its own scope for action. Philosophy and theology, science and faith, are meant to be in harmonious relationship.
- The problems of agnosticism and relativism.



# The Person in Action

- Virtues are habitual and firm dispositions to do the good, allowing persons not only to perform good acts but to tend toward the good with their whole being and give the best of themselves in concrete actions.
  - The Theological Virtues of faith, hope and love
  - The Cardinal Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Courage, Temperance
- The importance of the commandments, “hanging” on love of God and neighbor. The commandments point to intrinsically evil actions that can never be done.
- The interrelationship between truth, freedom and charity. “*Caritas in veritate* is the principle around which the Church’s social doctrine turns.”
- The complementarity between justice and mercy. Charity goes beyond justice, but never lacks it. Justice is the minimal measure of charity. The *Kairos* of mercy that doesn’t deny justice but surpasses it.



St. Francis of Assisi

# Steward

- Integral ecology
  - Environmental, Economic, Social, Cultural and Human dimensions.
- The gift of creation and nature. The connection to the Creator. Wonder. Cultivation.
- The human person in creation. Human ecology.
- *Laudato Si'*: Care for our Common Home.
  - Ecological conversion
  - Ecological spirituality.



St. Joseph the Worker

## Man as Co-Creator

- God's tri-fold plan for work in the beginning before and after the Fall.
- The Gospel of Work, imitating the Creator in working and resting. Jesus incarnated this Gospel as a *tekton* for most of his life.
- Jesus mentioned constantly refers to human work, to shepherds, farmers, doctors, sowers, householders, servants, stewards, fishermen, merchants, laborers, cooks, bakers, sewers, lawyers, scholars, harvesters, fishermen.
- The two dimensions of work (objective/subjective, transitive/intransitive, *facere/agere*)
- Parable of the Talents.
- Spirituality of work. Sanctifying the work, oneself and others.
- Right to work, rights of workers, unemployment.

# A Spiritual Being

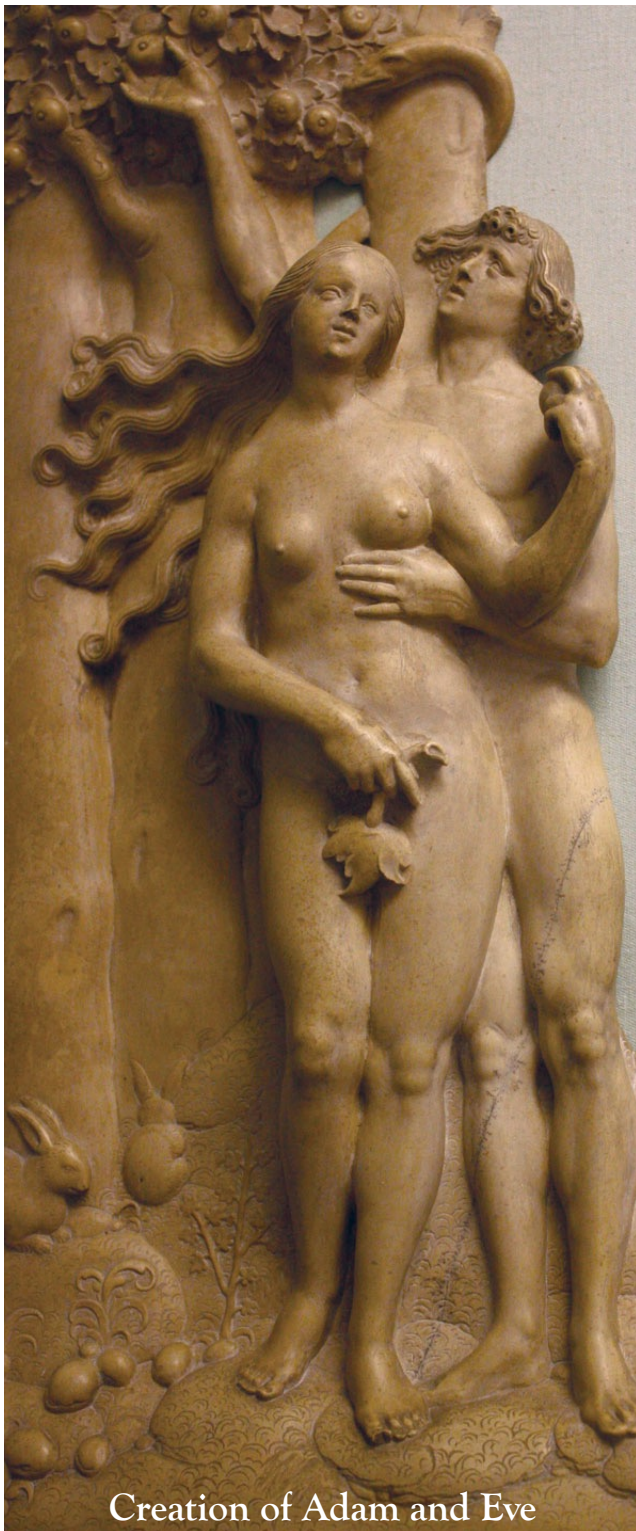
- The importance of freedom of conscience and religious freedom. Exercising that freedom.
- Freedom is tied to truth, goodness, love and responsibility. Justice toward God and toward others.
- The attempted reduction to freedom of worship.
- A proper understanding of the First Amendment and the separation of Church and State.

# A Spiritual Being

- Different types of violations: harassment, intimidation, discrimination, persecution, death or genocide because of religion. Persecution by other religions and by militantly secularist or atheist States.
- Religious freedom doesn't mean religious indifferentism or relativism. Catholics "propose rather than impose."
- The principle of equality before the law based on citizenship.
- The goal for Christians is not just religious tolerance but love for persons, even if one doesn't agree with their ideas.

# Anthropology, Bioethics and Public Policy

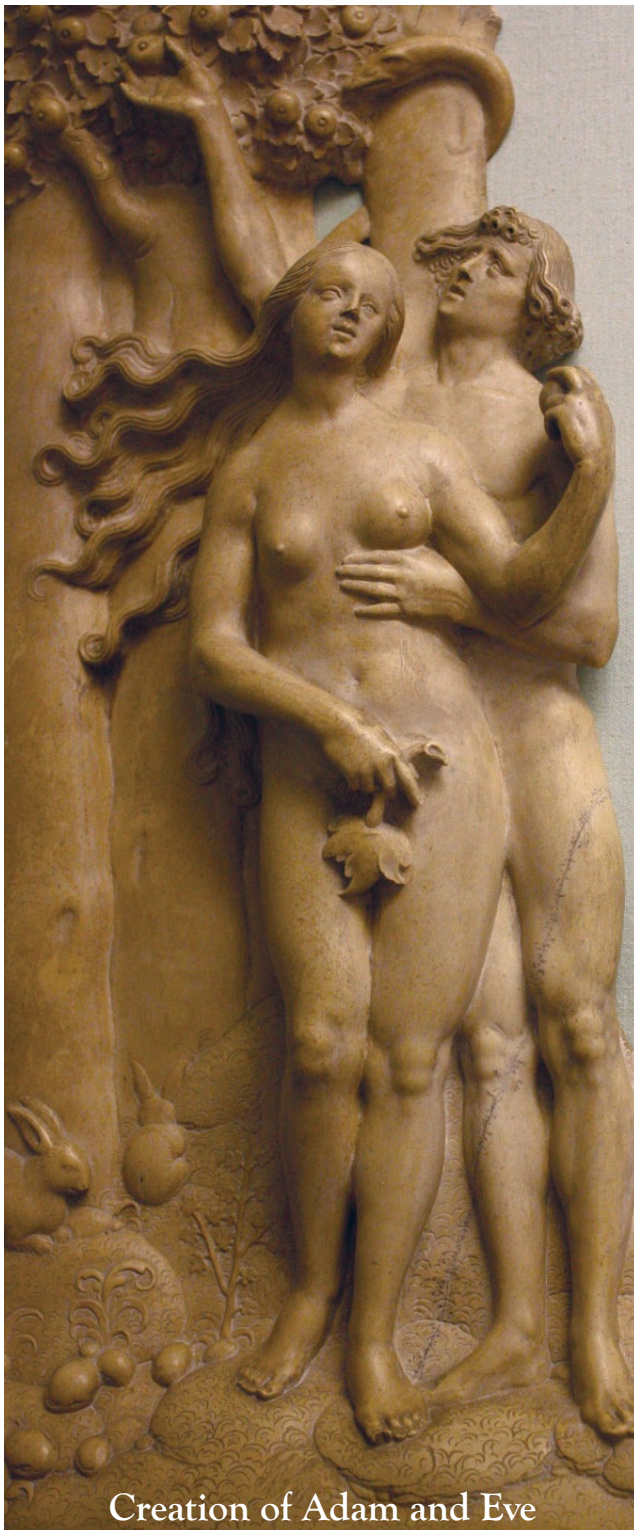
- The natural difference between men and women and human sexuality. Love, Marriage, Sexual relations, procreation.
- Gender identity
- Inseparable connection between love and life and contraception.
- Respect for Life and human dignity:  
Abortion and Euthanasia
- Artificial procreation, cloning and the manipulation, destruction and freezing of embryos
- Pre-implantation diagnosis
- Surrogacy



Creation of Adam and Eve

# Anthropology, Bioethics and Public Policy

- Human ecology: “Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is essential” (LS 155).
- The need for ethics in science to keep science and technology at the service of the person.
- The need for ethics in law.



Creation of Adam and Eve



# Those On the Move: Migrants, Refugees and IDPs

- The Biblical background to migration: Abraham leaving Ur, Jacob and sons moving to Egypt, Moses and the Israelites in the Desert, The Exile of Jews to Babylon, The Flight of the Holy Family.
- Jesus' words: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me. ... I was a stranger and you gave me no welcome. ... What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me."



The Flight into Egypt

# Those On the Move: Migrants, Refugees and IDPs

- The principles and key ideas of Catholic Social Teaching are all relevant: the common good, the universal destination of goods, solidarity, subsidiarity and participation; the importance of the family and care for children, the dignity of work and the rights of workers; the right to remain and the right to migrate.
- Balancing the human rights of those on the move and the rights of individual sovereign countries to secure their borders and establish immigration policy.
- Pope Francis's four verbs: Welcome, Protect, Promote, Integrate.



The Flight into Egypt



When I Was Hungry and Thirsty  
By Timothy Schmalz

# We Are Our Brothers' Keeper

- Jesus: “The poor you will always have with you.” Wealth exists to be shared.
- Jesus himself became poor, came to proclaim the Gospel to the poor, and called us all to poverty of spirit.
- The Lord “hears the cry of the poor” and gives them special attention. The ground of the Church’s “preferential option for the poor” is in this special attention of Jesus.
- St. John: “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods, and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (1 Jn 3:17)

# We Are Our Brothers' Keeper

- The Church fights against poverty, both by helping individual poor people and families as well as by promoting integral human development and helping them become dignified agents of their own destiny. Lifting the poor out of poverty cannot be left to individual charity and market forces.
- Pope Francis: “The kerygma has a clear social content ... centered on charity. Christ redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men” (EG 177). We must address the question of economic exclusion.



When I Was Hungry and Thirsty  
By Timothy Schmalz

# The Person as Citizen

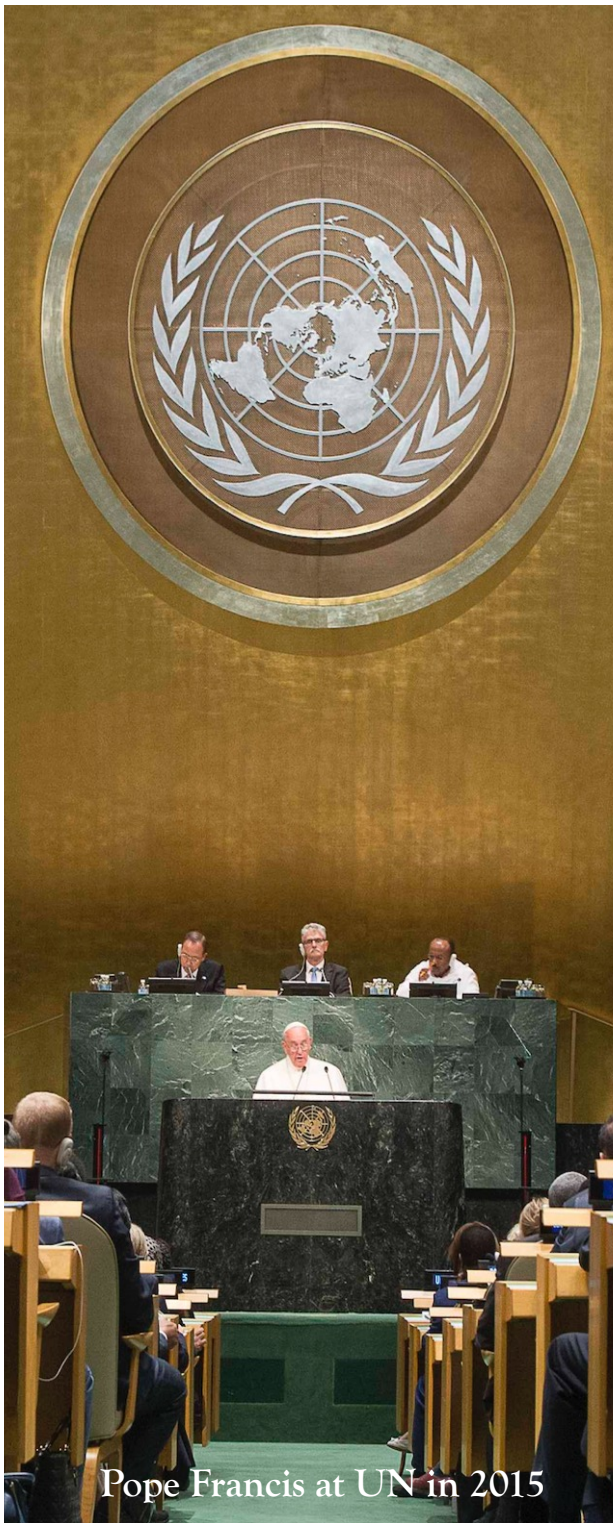
- *Gaudium et Spes* 43: “Christians, as citizens of two cities, [are] to strive to discharge their earthly duties conscientiously and in response to the Gospel spirit. They are mistaken who ... think that they may therefore shirk their earthly responsibilities ... [or] who imagine they can plunge themselves into earthly affairs in such a way as to imply that these are altogether divorced from the religious life. This split between the faith ... and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age. ... Secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to laymen. ... It is generally the function of their well-formed Christian conscience to see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city.”
- *Centesimus Annus* focused on a democratic polity, a free economy and a vibrant moral culture as the three underpinnings of a free and virtuous society.



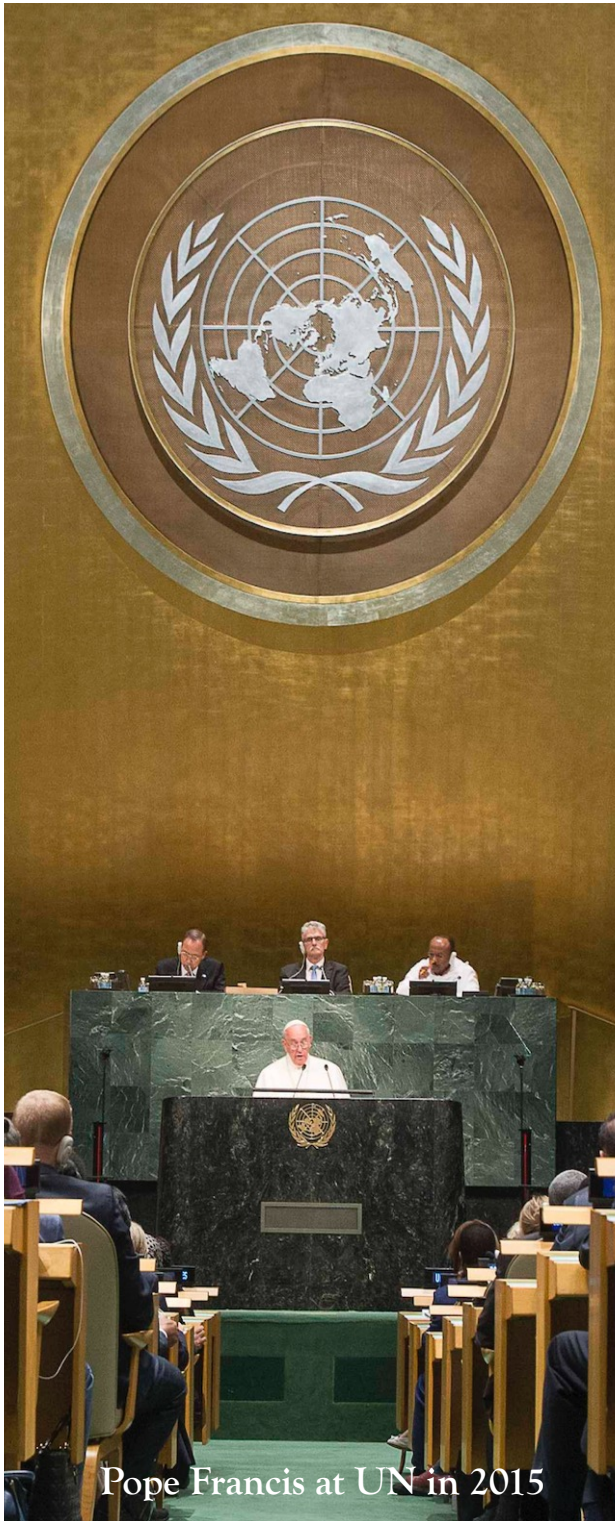
Alexander de Tocqueville

# Catholic Social Teaching in Action

- The Holy See has international juridical personality as a sovereign state and participates formally in bilateral and multilateral diplomatic work.
- The Pope receives States leaders and the diplomats representing them, speaks to them on almost every foreign trip, and has come five times to the United Nations.
- The Holy See's participation is occasionally criticized from the left by those with absolutist notions of secularity or the separation of Church and State, those on the right by those who have concerns over the cooperation of the Church with various governments and international bodies that they preferred to be marginalized or eliminated, as well as Catholics who have questions about the Church's involvement in the secular order, as if the Church were an NGO or social-service agency rather than something that prioritizes proclaiming the Gospel, celebrating the Sacraments and the diakonia.



Pope Francis at UN in 2015



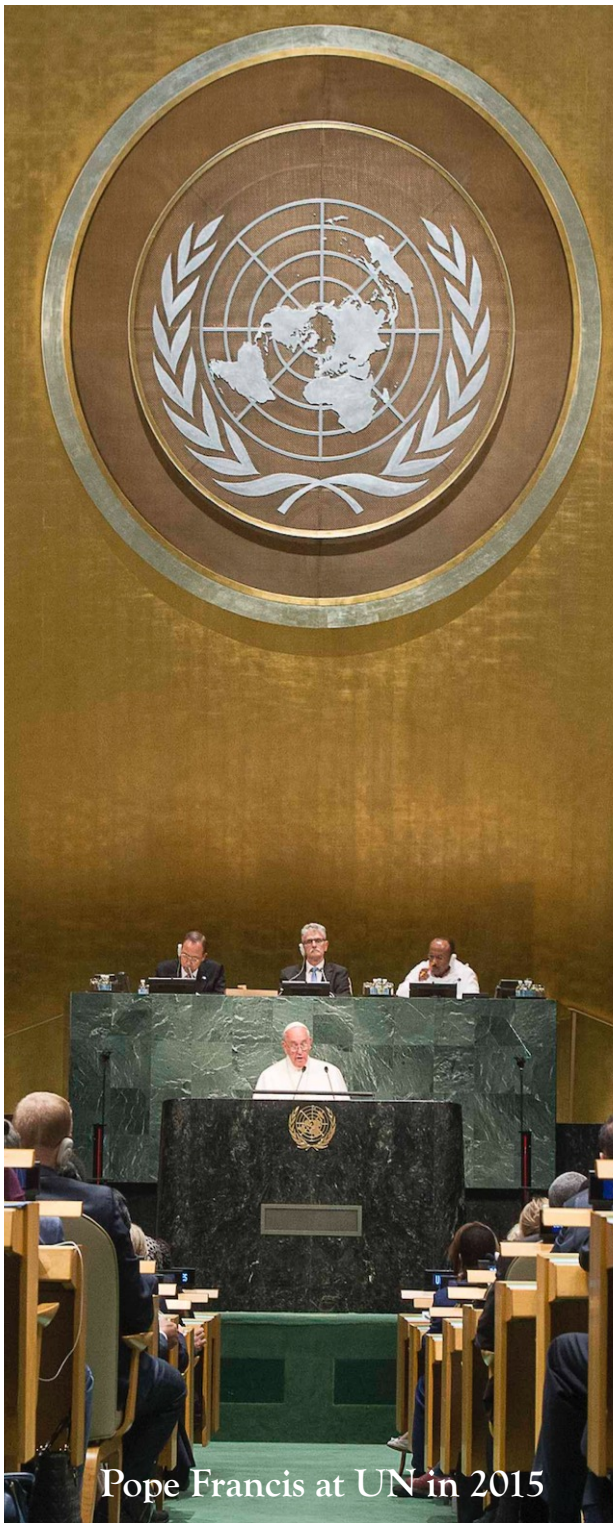
Pope Francis at UN in 2015

# Catholic Social Teaching in Action

- Biblical Ground for the Church's interaction.
  - Salt of the Earth (Mt 5:13)
    - Preservative
    - Gives Flavor
    - Fire Starter
  - Light of the World (Mt 5:14)
    - Enlightens (teaches)
    - Warms (loves)
  - Leaven that makes the whole dough rise (Mt 13:33)
    - One Christian can lift up multitudes
  - Caesar and God (Mt 22:21)
    - While connected, distinct

# Catholic Social Teaching in Action

- The Holy See has bilateral diplomatic relations presently with 184 countries.
- The Holy See also has diplomatic relations with the European Union, The Sovereign Military Order of Malta, and relations of a special nature with Palestine.
- The Holy See participates in various Intergovernmental Organizations and Bodies and International Programs.
- The Vatican City State also participates in various International and Intergovernmental Organizations, including the Universal Postal Union, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Grains Council, the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization, the European Telecommunication Satellite Organization, the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications, and International Institute of Administrative Sciences.

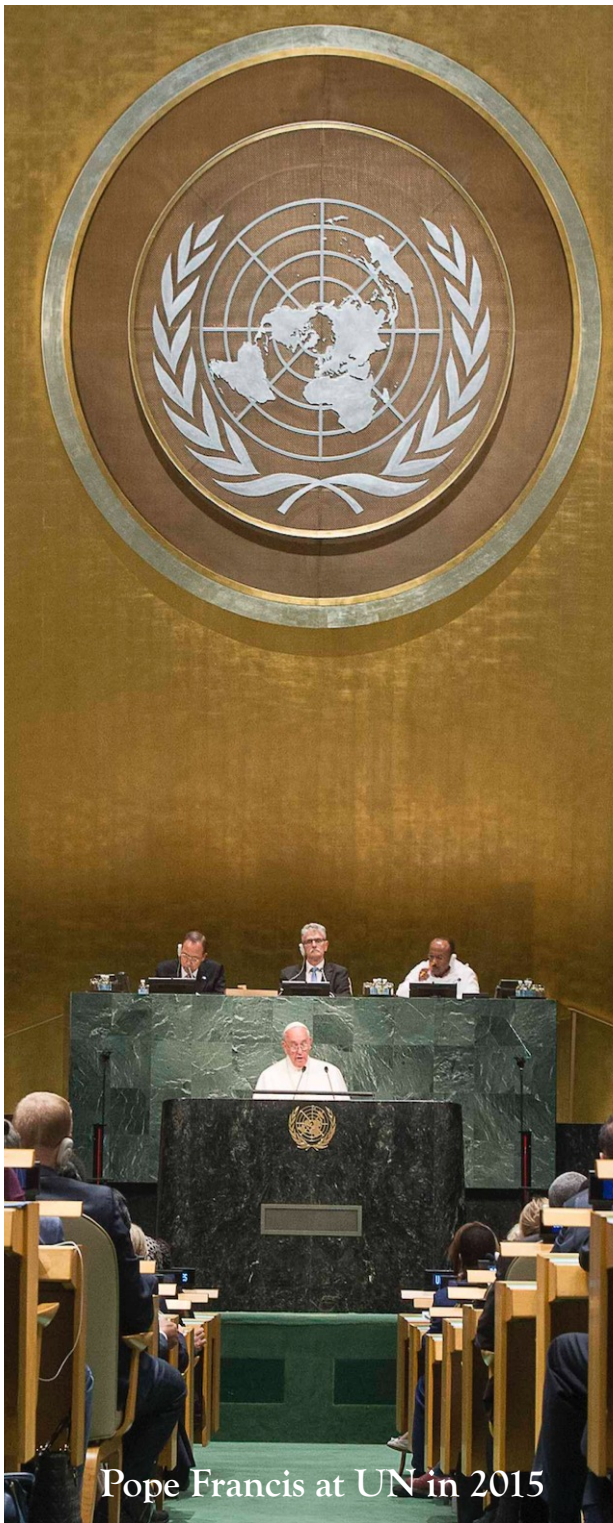


Pope Francis at UN in 2015



# Catholic Social Teaching in Action

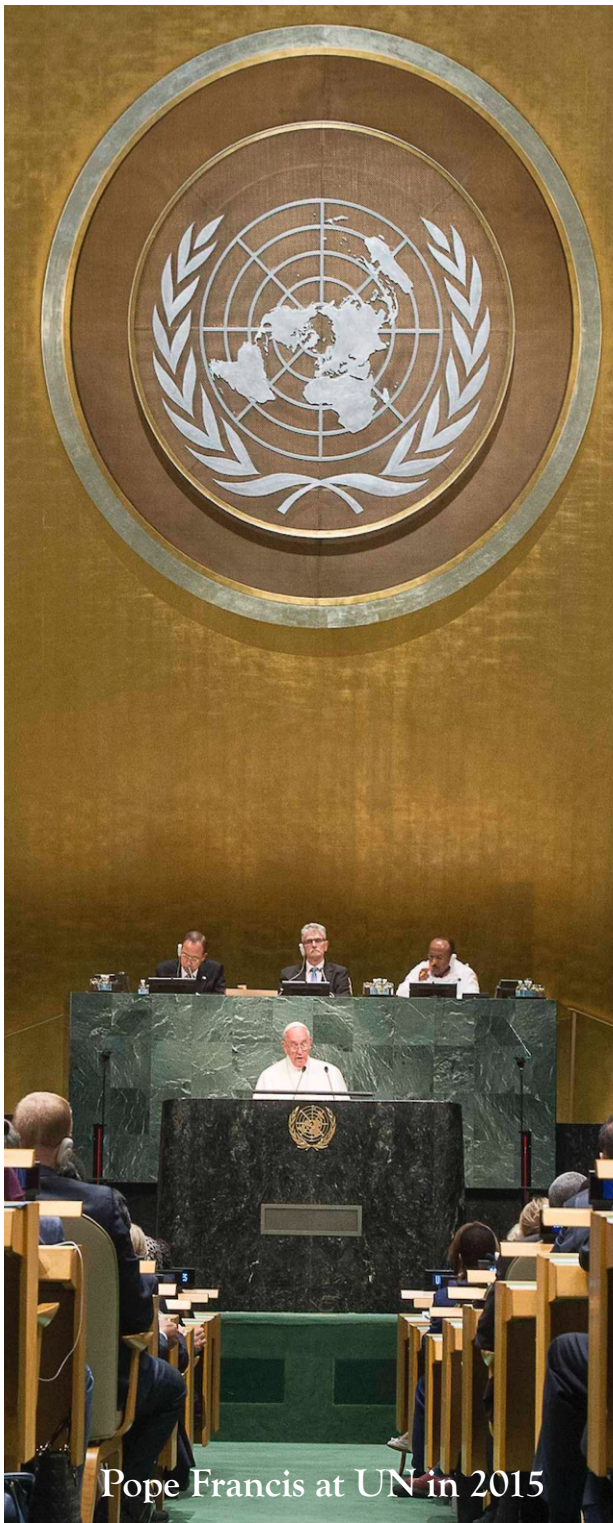
- The Holy See is not concerned principally with what most States are, e.g., borders, economic benefits, military security.
- It is concerned with articulating the ethical principles that ought to underpin the social and political order on the basis of universally applicable principles that are as real as the physical elements of the natural environment.



Pope Francis at UN in 2015

# Catholic Social Teaching in Action

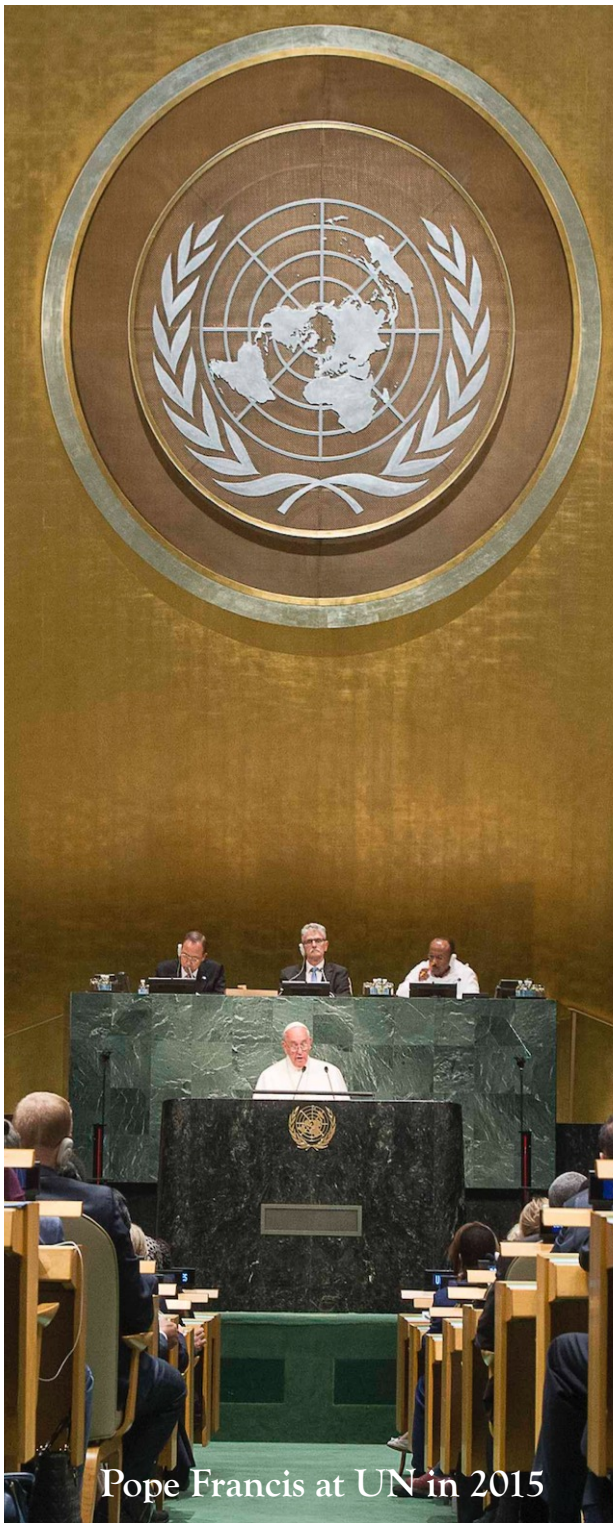
- Initial Concerns of Pope Pius XII
- Overlap of four UN Pillars with Catholic Social Teaching
  - to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
  - to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
  - to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
  - to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.



Pope Francis at UN in 2015

# Perennial and Present Priorities of Holy See Diplomacy

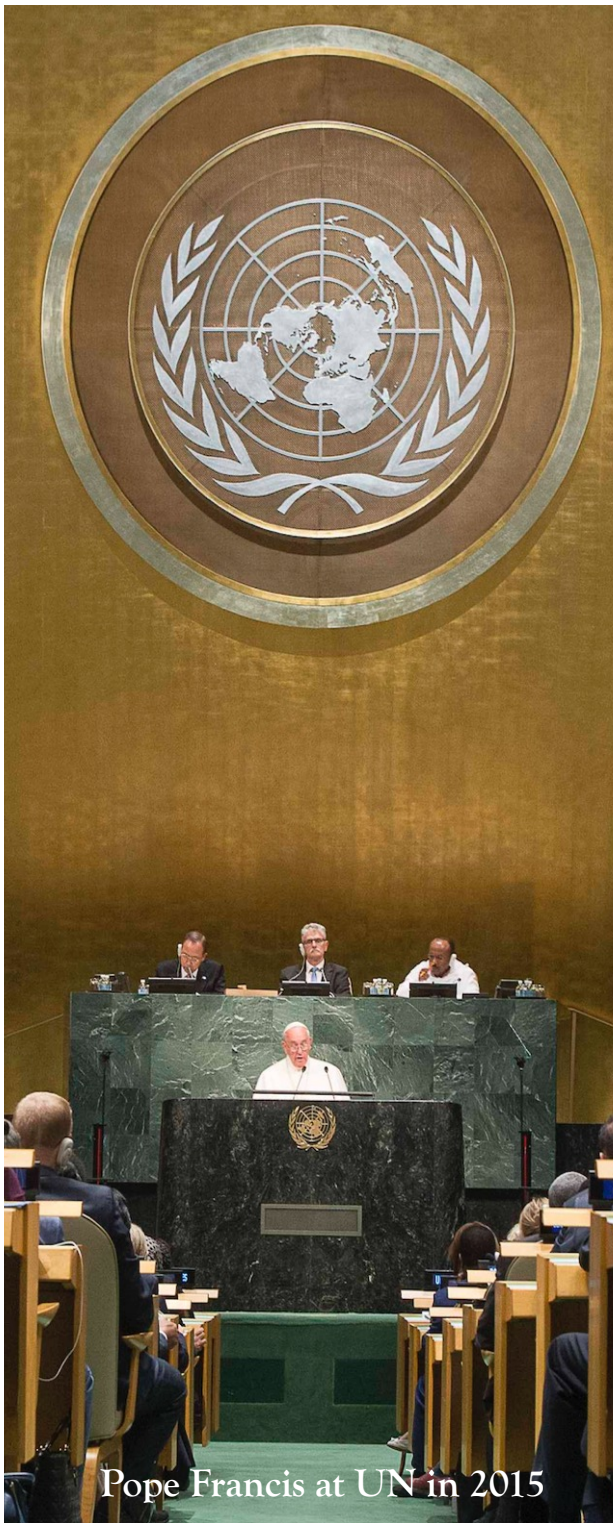
- Peace
- Fundamental human rights
- Development and seeking to lift the poor out of poverty.
- Freedom, especially religious freedom and freedom of conscience
- Intercultural dialogue – fraternity and social friendship (*Fratelli Tutti*)
- Support for democratic institutions
- Care for migrants and refugees
- Care for our common home



Pope Francis at UN in 2015

# The Social Content of the Kerygma

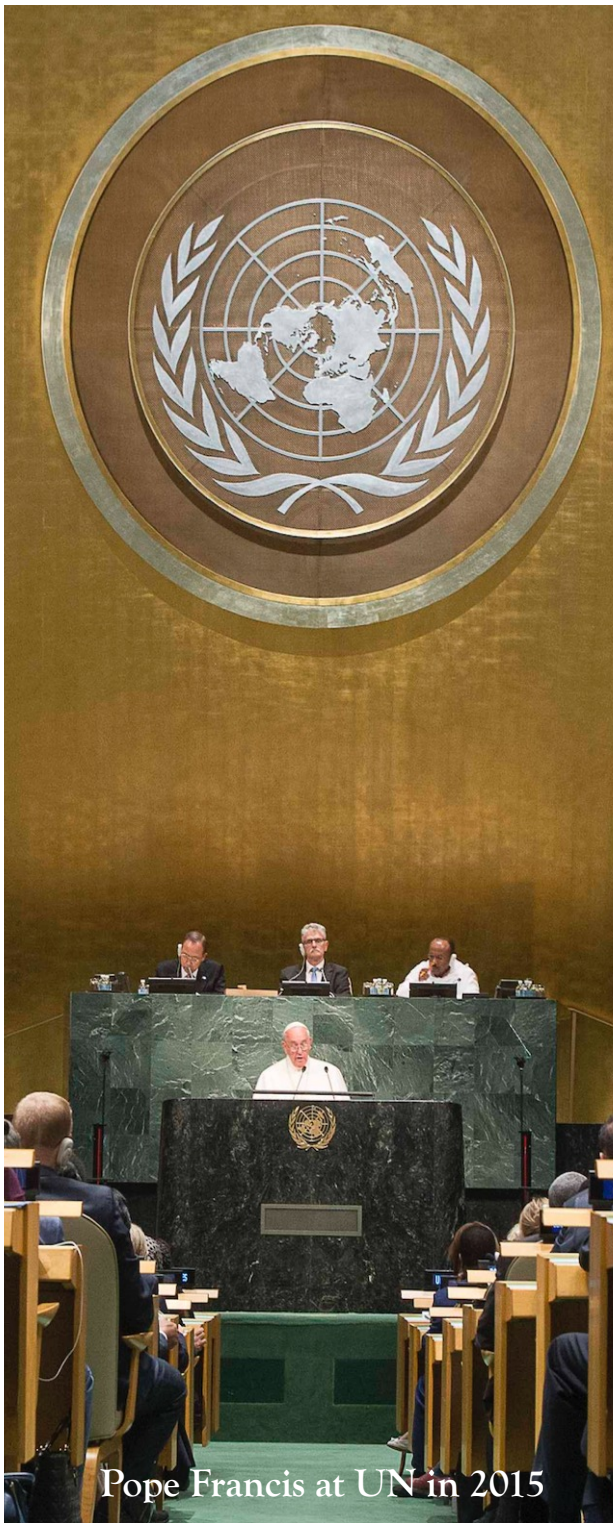
- Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (177-181)
  - Reading the Scriptures also makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of ‘charity à la carte,’ or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience. The Gospel is about *the kingdom of God* (cf. *Lk 4:43*); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society.
  - True Christian hope, which seeks the eschatological kingdom, always generates history.



Pope Francis at UN in 2015

# The Social Content of the Kerygma

- The kerygma has a clear social content
- The Gospel has an immediate moral implication centered on charity
- Our redemption has a social dimension because God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men.
- These are the convictions that undergird the International Diplomatic work of the Holy See, bringing the light of Catholic Social Teaching to the problems facing the world, as part of the Church's seeking to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and the leaven that raises the world.



Pope Francis at UN in 2015

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Fr. Roger J. Landry

Email: [fatherlandry@catholicpreaching.com](mailto:fatherlandry@catholicpreaching.com)



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catholicpreaching.com

Catholic Preaching  
Fr. Roger J. Landry, Diocese of Fall River

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Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.  
Believe what you read.  
Teach what you believe.  
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,  
Fr. Roger J. Landry

Most Recent Homilies

- Bearing Fruit Attached to the Vine, 12th Wednesday (II), June 27, 2018
- Following the Lead of the Precursor, Solemnity of St. John the Baptist, June 24, 2018
- Placing Our Heart and Treasure in God, 11th Friday (II), June 22, 2018
- Longing to See God's Face in Prayer and in Others, 10th Friday (II), June 15, 2018
- The Surpassing Righteousness of Christ-like Merciful Love, 10th Thursday (II), June 14, 2018
- Greatest in the Kingdom, 10th Wednesday (II), June 13, 2018

Most Recent Articles

- The Secular Push to Get Priests to Break the Seal, The Anchor, June 29, 2018
- Approaching the Suicide Surge with Honesty and Resolve, The Anchor, June 15, 2018
- The Abortion Exception to the Practice of Discrimination, The Anchor, June 1, 2018
- The Contemporary Attack on Motherhood, The Anchor, May 18, 2018
- The Euthanasia of Alfie Evans, The Anchor, May 4, 2018
- "Do Not Be Afraid of Holiness," The Anchor, April 20, 2018

Most Recent Talks

- The Church and International Diplomacy, Acton University, June 20, 2018
- The Entrepreneurial Vocation, Acton University, June 20, 2018
- The Social Teaching of Pope St. John Paul II, Acton University, June 20, 2018
- The Necessity and Art of Trinitarian Prayer, Catholic Medical Association Boot Camp, June 18, 2018
- Christ, the Redeemer of Marriage: Living and Proclaiming the Gospel of the Sacramentality of Marriage at a Time When Sex, Love,



# Catholic Social Teaching

*Putting Love of  
Neighbor Into Action*

*Questions*

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