



Faith Formation Session on Catholic Social Teaching: LEADER'S GUIDE

7 on the Archdiocese of Dubuque's Top Ten Reasons to be Catholic!

Faith formation leaders should review all materials and select the material most effective for your presentation. You may copy and distribute any of the materials.

Introduction:

We believe our faith should lead us to evangelize, to share God's love with all people. When we know Christ, we recognize Him in each person we meet. This recognition naturally leads us to acts of justice and service. We appreciate Catholic social teaching, which gives us the foundation for taking Christ's presence into the world. Several people wrote specifically, "Catholic Social Teaching," while many used phrases such as "care for the poor" "respect for life" "outreach and service" and "charitable organizations." Some noted our strong stance for the weak and the vulnerable, based on the dignity of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God.

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, send your Spirit to open our hearts to Jesus.
Guide us to a deeper conversion.
Grant us a greater appreciation of the beauty and truth of our Catholic faith.
Give us the courage and confidence to joyfully share our faith with others.
May your Church be a beacon of light for all who seek your loving presence.
Be with us now as we explore Catholic Social Teaching.
Mary, faithful Mother of God, intercede for us.
We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Opening Scripture:

Matthew 25:31-40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who 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 drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Opening Song:

Least of These by December Radio:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhwiNLRsg0>

OR

Or The Cry of the Poor by Diocese of St. Benedict

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI9h7B8L71U>

Section I: What is Catholic Social Teaching?

Video # 1: Mark Schmidt, Stacia McDermott, Janine Idziak

<http://youtu.be/0FAWlxRkQVo>

Catholic social teaching (CST), often referred to as the best kept secret of the Catholic Church, contains a “rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society” (USCCB). Catholic voices should shout CST from a mountaintop to counter a culture that idolizes wealth, glorifies violence, and devalues the sacredness of the human person. So what is CST? It is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

CST, rooted in both the Old and New Testament, provides clear guidelines for Christian living. The Hebrew prophets, bent and burdened, cried out on behalf of the poor, the disadvantaged, the excluded, and the suffering. Jesus broke into ministry with the fulfillment of the prophet, Isaiah. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Lk 4:18-21). Scripture articulates the responsibility that comes from our own status as baptized and confirmed Christians to care for one another; to ignore this aspect of the Gospel is to be “without excuse” (Rom 1:20). As the Body of Christ, we are charged with the awesome and beautiful task of showing God’s love to each person through acts of justice and service.

Whether a disciple ladles soup in a homeless shelter, works for clean drinking water, or offers loving counsel to a woman with an unplanned pregnancy, the basis of each action is the same—the dignity of the human person. “Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. Every person, from the moment of conception to natural death, has inherent dignity and a right to life consistent with that dignity. Human dignity comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment” (USCCB).

The seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching: Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity; Care for God’s Creation” (USCCB). The evangelization that results from acts of justice and service, done in true charity, manifests to our hurting brothers and sisters their own value, dignity, and worth in Christ. These acts, done in response to Christ’s love, have an eternal value beyond any humanitarian endeavor.

Please break into small groups after watching Video I to discuss the following questions.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Catholic Social Teaching affect your family?
2. As Stacia said, "It's not always easy to serve the poor." Who are the poor you find difficult to serve?
3. Which principle of Catholic Social Teaching is the easiest/most difficult for you?
4. Do you agree we must show a "preferential option for the poor?" How can this be lived out in daily life?

Section II: Catholic Charitable Outreach

Video #2: Witness of Catholic Charities

<http://youtu.be/XNBah1q-3Ys>

As Catholics, we take our commitment to our brothers and sisters seriously—whether in Rwanda, Syria, Bolivia, Thailand, or Iowa. Did you know the Catholic Church is the "largest charitable organization on the planet?"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs6qZd_xP1w Catholic Come Home: Epic.

Catholics (institutional Church, religious sisters, laity) have built and staff hospitals, orphanages, schools, colleges, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, nursing homes, hospitality houses, etc., all over the world. We care for refugees, immigrants, the homeless, the hungry, unwed mothers, the unemployed, the sick, and those with special needs. Catholic charitable outreach, in response to CST, carries the mission of the Church into every nook and cranny of the world—Catholic and non-Catholic.

Catholic Charities serves men, women, children, and families for the Archdiocese of Dubuque through offices in Ames, Cedar Rapids, Decorah, Dubuque, Mason City, and Waterloo. <http://catholiccharitiesdubuque.org/> This often quiet service and advocacy has been working in our archdiocese since 1931. Through them, we "provide help and create hope" with housing assistance, refugee resettlement, prison ministry, post-adoption services, disaster care, and crisis pregnancy counseling, marriage and family counseling. Each person in the Archdiocese of Dubuque makes a difference in the lives of those hurting when we donate our time, talent, or treasure to Catholic Charities: <http://catholiccharitiesdubuque.org/get-involved/>.

FYI: Catholic Relief Services is the largest Catholic outreach organization. Guided by Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic Relief Services reaches out to men, women, and children throughout the world. "Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. We alleviate suffering and provide assistance to people in need in more than 100 countries, without regard to race, religion or nationality." Catholic Relief Services holds an extraordinary record of using 93% of donations to serve the poor through innovative ways of providing food, clean water, medicine, maternal/child care, and employment throughout the world.

Please break into small groups after watching this video presentation to discuss the following questions.

Discussion Questions:

1. What most surprised you about the work of Catholic Charities?
2. Do you know someone who is a resettled refugee? What has been his/her experience?
3. Which of these areas of service seem the most difficult to you? Why?

Section III: Catholic Service and Outreach

Video #3: Witness from the Faithful of the Archdiocese of Dubuque Serving Others.

<http://youtu.be/o8Zey5KsSvo>

“The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle” (Pope Francis, America Magazine Interview, September 30, 2013). <http://www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview>

When meeting with the Italian faith community of St. Egidio, Pope Francis said: “When you meet face to face things change. The other is no longer a stranger.”

It is through service where we heal wounds and warm hearts of, not strangers, but brothers and sisters in Christ. By the thousands, Catholics from the Archdiocese of Dubuque are meeting Jesus face to face in the poor, and the poor, in turn, are meeting Jesus face to face in those who serve. Members of the Body of Christ are doing extraordinary service—taking risks, spending income—pouring themselves out to continue Christ’s Self-Gift in the world. That Self-Gift, received in the Eucharist, strengthens us to obey God’s commandment to “love one another” (Jn 13: 34). They have taken to heart that the Eucharist “commits us to the poor” (CCC, # 1397).

The witnesses reveal a joy and peace in living out Christ’s command to serve the least of their brothers and sisters—whether in Iowa or abroad. They withhold judgment toward those they serve, and count it as a distinct privilege—for there is Christ. Again, Pope Francis in his interview in America Magazine: “Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs or anything else – God is in this person’s life. You can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is in a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.”

These witnesses of the Archdiocese of Dubuque are making a difference, one person at a time/one day at a time. They have developed relationships with those they serve.”They are no longer strangers, “the other” or “the poor;” they are “Joe” “Mary” “Frank” or “Pat.” They are our children, our neighbors, ourselves.

In a moving article, For They Shall Inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, author Becky Guhin writes: “It could not be more simple. We encounter Christ in every person that we meet, most profoundly in the poor. Jesus is very direct: Whatever you did to the least of these, you did for me...and whatever you didn’t do for the least of these, you didn’t do for me (Mt 25). Thomas Merton said that if we could always see each other as we really are, ‘I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other,’ because each of us is so intricately made in the image of God. Even forgetting the poor have the privileged place, this means that people deserve our utmost reverence: rich and poor alike.” Later in the article, she quotes Dorothy Day: “We love God as much as we love the least. All our life is a practice to learn to love God.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Which witness touched your heart most profoundly?
2. How did any certain witness live out the principles of Catholic Social Teaching?
3. Dorothy Day wrote: “We love God as much as we love the least. All our life is a practice to learn to love God.” Who are the least in your home/neighborhood/city?
4. There are so many different ways to make a difference: St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Worker, Birthright, Hospice, etc. etc. How are you making a difference?

To volunteer to make dresses for Haiti, please contact: Megan Ternus, 319-551-9478.

Conclusion: What difference does Catholic social teaching make in our lives?

Please be sure to make time for large group discussion:

Concluding Questions:

- a. What did you learn about Catholic social teaching?
- b. What did you like best about the session?
- c. What is one thing you will share with someone at home or in your sphere of influence?
- d. What difference does it make in one's life to believe the social teaching of the Catholic Church?

Prayer in Thanksgiving for the Gift of Catholic Social Teaching:

Loving God, you have called each of us to be servants.

Help us to witness to your love for the least of our brothers and sisters.

Grant us a deep desire to care for the poor and to work for justice.

Help us to be men and women of prayer, humility, love, and service.

Give us the strength and courage to live according to these rich teachings of our Catholic faith.

Help us to respect life, from conception to natural death.

We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Love Them Like Jesus by Casting Crowns

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0njTvTpOBSA>

OR

What about Now? by Chris Dougherty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roDXSHSEuoo>

Additional Resources:

To find additional resources (including books, DVDs, online resources, and more) on Catholic Social Teaching, please contact the Education Resource Center (ERC) of the Archdiocese of Dubuque at 563-556-2580, ext. 214 or dbqcm1@dbqarch.org.