

# St. Mark Study Guide

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## Catholic Social Teaching

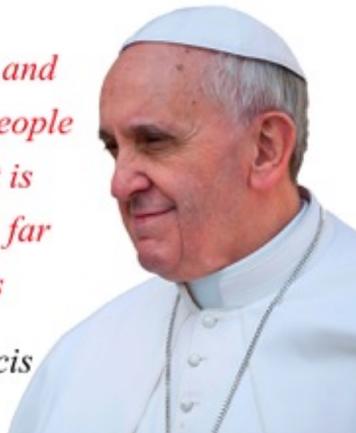
### *Discussion Questions*

1. St. John Chrysostom said that our surplus belongs to the poor. Does that challenge you?
2. What is justice?
3. What role does equality play in social justice? Is it possible to treat people the same?
4. What makes a law just or unjust?
5. What makes an economic system unjust?
6. What is the difference between corrupt and corrupting? Racial discrimination in hiring is a corrupt practice. Can it also be corrupting? How?
7. Is socialism just? Is capitalism just? How can either system contribute to the common good?
8. Which economic system does a better job of honoring the catholic values of subsidiarity and solidarity while providing jobs and security for citizens?

### *Principles of Catholic Social Teaching*

*Things have a price and  
can be for sale, but people  
have a dignity that is  
priceless and worth far  
more than things*

*Pope Francis*



#### **Life and Dignity of the Human Person:**

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. Our belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and assisted suicide. 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.

**Option for the Poor and Vulnerable:** A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our

tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

**The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers:** The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative. Any approach to an integral ecology, which by definition does not exclude human beings, needs to take account of the value of labor.

**The Principle of the Common good:** An integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics. The common good is “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment”. The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others.

## **Resources from the Catechism of the Catholic Church**

1888. "It is necessary, then, to appeal to the spiritual and moral capacities of the human person and to the permanent need for his inner conversion, so as to obtain SOCIAL changes that will really serve him. The acknowledged priority of the conversion of heart in no way eliminates but on the contrary imposes the obligation of bringing the appropriate remedies to institutions and living conditions when they are an inducement to sin, so that they conform to the norms of JUSTICE and advance the good rather than hinder it.[Cf. LG 36.] "

1889. "Without the help of grace, men would not know how 'to discern the often narrow path between the cowardice which gives in to evil, and the violence which under the illusion of fighting evil only makes it worse.'[CA 25.] This is the path of charity, that is, of the love of God and of neighbor. Charity is the greatest SOCIAL commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of JUSTICE, and it alone makes us capable of it. Charity inspires a life of self-giving: 'Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.'[Lk 17:33 .]"

1916. "As with any ethical obligation, the participation of all in realizing the common good calls for a continually renewed conversion of the SOCIAL partners. Fraud and other subterfuges, by which some people evade the constraints of the law and the prescriptions of societal obligation, must be firmly condemned because they are incompatible with the requirements of JUSTICE. Much care should be taken to promote institutions that improve the conditions of human life.[Cf. GS 30 # 1.] "

1928. "Society ensures SOCIAL JUSTICE when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. SOCIAL JUSTICE is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority. "

1929. "SOCIAL JUSTICE can be obtained only in respecting the transcendent dignity of man. The person represents the ultimate end of society, which is ordered to him: What is at stake is the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by the Creator, and to whom the men and women at every moment of history are strictly and responsibly in debt.[John Paul II, SRS 47.] "

1938. "There exist also sinful inequalities that affect millions of men and women. These are in open contradiction of the Gospel: Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and SOCIAL disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against SOCIAL JUSTICE, equity, human dignity, as well as SOCIAL and international peace.[CS 29 # 3.] "

1943. "Society ensures SOCIAL JUSTICE by providing the conditions that allow associations and individuals to obtain their due. "

2419. "Christian revelation . . . promotes deeper understanding of the laws of SOCIAL living.[GS 23 # 1.] 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."

2425. "The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with 'communism' or 'socialism.' She has likewise refused to accept, in the practice of 'capitalism,' individualism and the absolute primacy of the law of the marketplace over human labor.[Cf. CA 10; 13; 44.] Regulating the economy solely by centralized planning perverts the basis of SOCIAL bonds; regulating it solely by the law of the marketplace fails SOCIAL JUSTICE, for 'there are many human needs which cannot be satisfied by the market.'[CA 34.] Reasonable regulation of the marketplace and economic initiatives, in keeping with a just hierarchy of values and a view to the common good, is to be commended."

2426. "The development of economic activity and growth in production are meant to provide for the needs of human beings. Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of persons, of the whole man, and of the entire human community. Economic activity, conducted according to its own proper methods, is to be exercised within the limits of the moral order, in keeping with SOCIAL JUSTICE so as to correspond to God's plan for man.[Cf. GS 64.] "

2442. "It is not the role of the Pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political structuring and organization of SOCIAL life. This task is part of the vocation of the lay faithful, acting on their own initiative with their fellow citizens. SOCIAL action can assume various concrete forms. It should always have the common good in view and be in conformity with the message of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. It is the role of the laity 'to animate temporal realities with Christian commitment, by which they show that they are witnesses and agents of peace and JUSTICE.'[SRS 47 # 6; cf. 42.]"

2459. "Man is himself the author, center, and goal of all economic and SOCIAL life. The decisive point of the SOCIAL question is that goods created by God for everyone should in fact reach everyone in accordance with JUSTICE and with the help of charity. "

2479. "Detraction and calumny destroy the reputation and honor of one's neighbor. Honor is the SOCIAL witness given to human dignity, and everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect. Thus, detraction and calumny offend against the virtues of JUSTICE and charity. "

2495. "It is necessary that all members of society meet the demands of JUSTICE and charity in this domain. They should help, through the means of SOCIAL communication, in the formation and diffusion of sound public opinion.[IM 8.] Solidarity is a consequence of genuine and right communication and the free circulation of ideas that further knowledge and respect for others."

2512. "Society has a right to information based on truth, freedom, and JUSTICE. One should practice moderation and discipline in the use of the SOCIAL communications media. "

2832. "As leaven in the dough, the newness of the kingdom should make the earth 'rise' by the Spirit of Christ.[Cf. AA 5.] This must be shown by the establishment of JUSTICE in personal and SOCIAL, economic and international relations, without ever forgetting that there are no just structures without people who want to be just."