

# Parish Social Ministry Guidebook

PARISH  
SOCIAL  
MINISTRY

CATHOLIC CHARITIES IN ACTION

# About Catholic Charities of Baltimore

*Every day, at our 80 programs at 200 locations throughout Maryland, Catholic Charities of Baltimore serves children and families, immigrants, individuals with intellectual disabilities, people living in poverty and seniors.*

## Our Mission

*Inspired by the Gospel mandates to love, serve and teach, Catholic Charities provides care and services to improve the lives of Marylanders in need.*

## Our Vision

*Cherishing the Divine Within All, we are committed to a Maryland where each person has the opportunity to reach his or her God-given potential.*

## Our Values

*Our values are to love, to serve, to teach and to work for justice.*

## Our Commitments

### **We will honor and respect the Dignity of every person.**

*We believe that all people are created in the image of God and so have an inherent dignity, regardless of the circumstances of their lives. As such, we commit to honoring and respecting this dignity in every interaction.*

### **We will encounter each person with Compassion.**

*We meet others with a sincere desire to know and understand them, without judgment and with a genuine concern that is expressed in the care we provide.*

### **We will act with Humility.**

*Humility is an openness that actively seeks out others' points of view and that both offers and accepts forgiveness when we have not been faithful to our commitments.*

### **We will reach out to others in a spirit of Collaboration.**

*Collaboration is working together, drawing upon each person's unique skills, knowledge and experience, to achieve a common purpose.*

### **We will serve with Excellence.**

*We are inspired to be our best and to do our best work with and for others.*

### **We will act with Integrity in all we do.**

*When we act with integrity, we do what we say we will do.*

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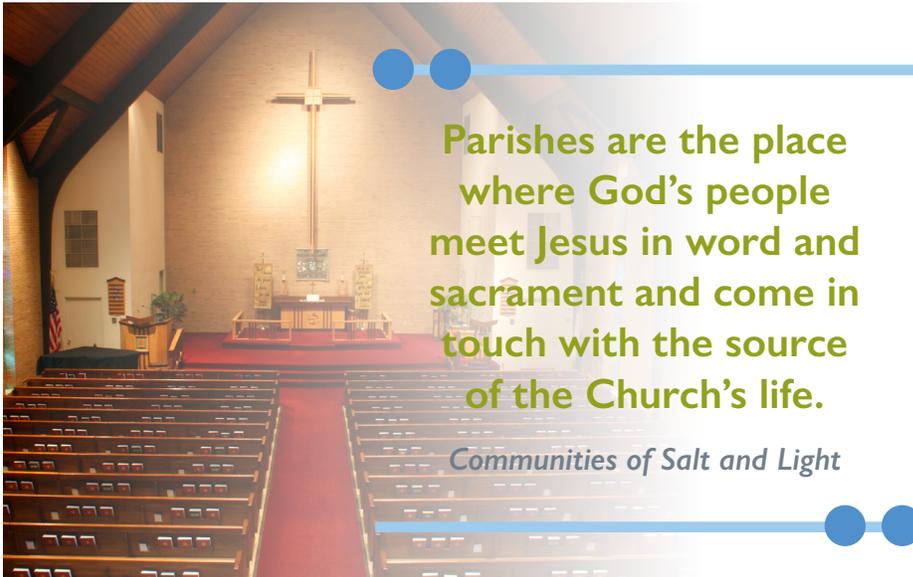
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## FOREWORD

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**IN 1993, THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS (USCCB) PRESENTED COMMUNITIES OF SALT AND LIGHT: REFLECTIONS ON THE SOCIAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH** as both a framework and a vision for integrating God’s call to justice into every aspect of parish life. Justice must infuse liturgy, faith formation, family, work, community life, and legislation. The underpinning of our call to serve lies in the inherent dignity and worth of the human person at every stage of life. Our deep respect for life from conception to natural death is the cornerstone of the social mission of the Church. Furthermore, the devaluing of life and human dignity creates the ever urgent need for effective parish social ministry in today’s world.



As Catholic Christians, we experience Jesus in the Word, the Eucharist, and one another as the Body of Christ – especially amongst people who are poor and vulnerable. The Bible teaches us, the Eucharist nourishes us when we come together to partake in the sacred meal, and we go out into the world strengthened to love and serve others. Social ministry is the responsibility of every baptized Christian and is

one aspect of living out our baptismal call to renew the world.

Parish social ministry includes a broad range of activities, from direct service to community organizing – all rooted in prayer and worship and tailored to the needs of individuals in our communities. We can only witness to the power of the gospel message when we authentically live what we profess to believe. If the broader community does not see the parish consistently involved in acts of charity and justice then the parish’s scope is largely limited to the four walls of its own building.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis says,

*If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat” (Mk 6:37).*

Building, maintaining, and participating in parish social ministry requires faith, diligence, humility, and courage. Everyone is capable of helping to bring forth this vision of answering God’s call to live and act with justice. Therefore, let us be the salt of the earth and light of the world and reach out to the peripheries to ensure that charity and justice reign in society.



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## OVERVIEW

## Components of Effective Social Ministry

Social justice must become a way of life for all parishes. Social justice is not about political party affiliation, picking up on the latest hot-button issue, or turning Mass into a political rally. Rather, social justice is an expression of our love for God and one another. It transforms us interiorly so we can transform communities.

Parish social ministry (PSM) is a mechanism for the entire community to genuinely love and serve God and others, and for us to be in the world but not of the world. The primary goals of PSM are to help people hear and discern their call, find concrete ways to serve those in need, and build better communities. These goals are carried out through prayer, education, direct service, and advocacy, and with a focus on promoting the consistent ethic of life rather than whatever the current hot-button issues are in the news.

## Communities of Salt and Light

*Communities of Salt and Light* identifies seven essential components for social ministry in parishes:

- Prayer and Worship
- Preaching and Education
- Family, Work, and Citizenship
- Outreach and Charity
- Legislative Action
- Organizing for Justice
- Beyond Parish Boundaries

Each component impacts the whole life of the parish and helps us bring the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching into the mission and everyday work of a parish. See Part II of this resource manual for guidance on integrating these seven components into parish life.

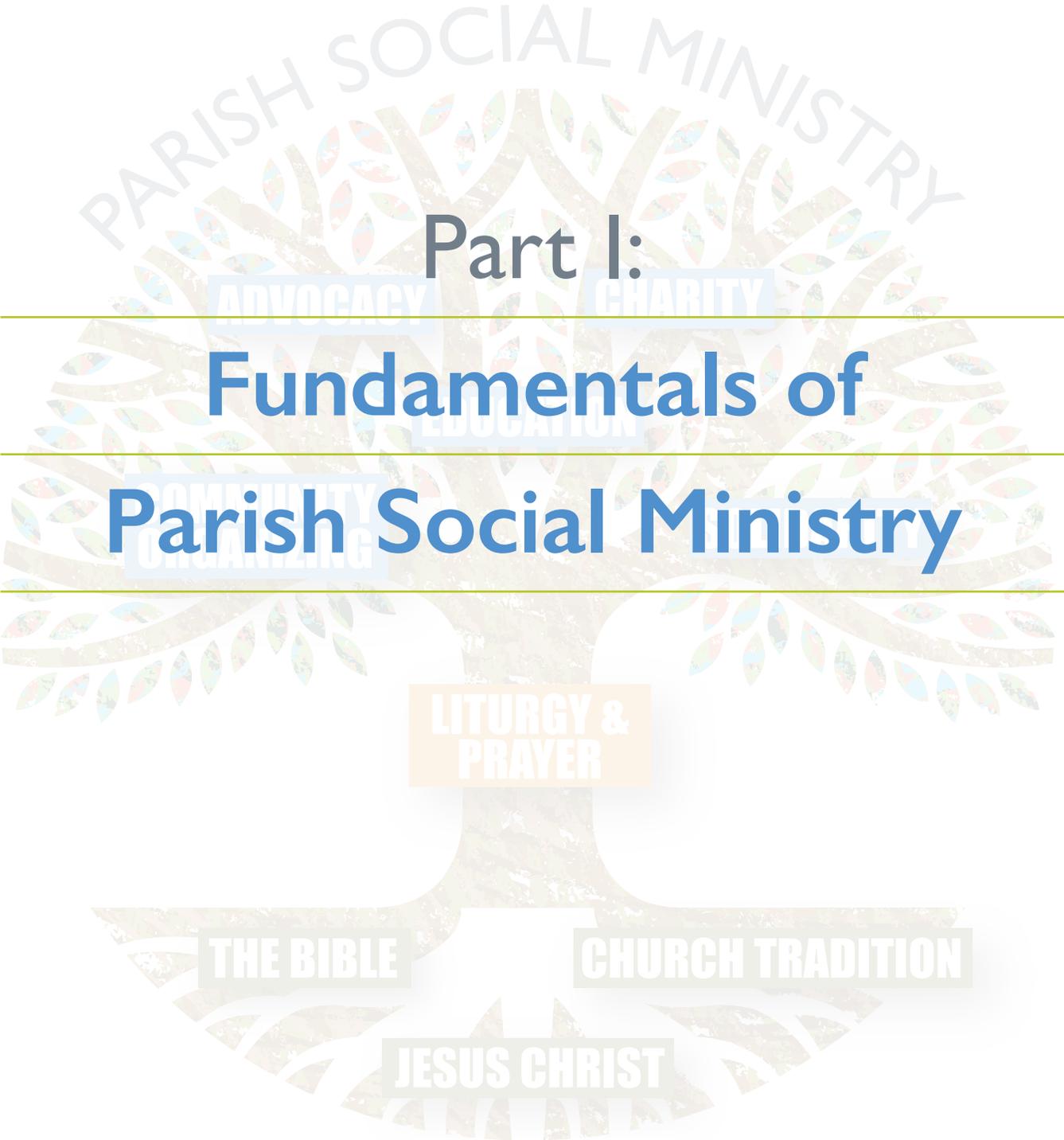
## Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society for all and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. It is rooted in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures as well as a 100+ year history of papal encyclicals, bishops' letters, and other official documents all focused on the economic, political, and social concerns of humanity. Generally, CST is organized into seven main principles:

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Option for People who live in Poverty and are Vulnerable
- Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- Solidarity
- Care for Creation

See Appendix for a description of each principle of CST.





Part I:

**Fundamentals of  
Parish Social Ministry**

## Developing and Maintaining an Effective Parish Social Ministry

### The Roots of Parish Social Ministry

Effective social ministry incorporates all of the components mentioned in the Overview. Social ministry is like the tree in Fig. 1. It is rooted in the Bible, Church tradition, and the model of Jesus’ life – all of which have given us CST. In the Bible, we read of God’s work to bring justice and equity to people who are vulnerable. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we see how God loves us and works through prophets and His own son to bring about changes in the world. Church teaching and traditions help us to further interpret the Word of God and gives guidelines for how to live. The model of Jesus’ life as the Messiah who serves people who are the most vulnerable tells us that we, too, must assume the role of servant in order to imitate His example.

The trunk, from which the life of the tree grows and produces multiple branches, is liturgy and prayer which supports the branches and gets its nourishment from the roots. Social ministry programs emerge from those life-giving activities into the branches of: charity, advocacy, education, community organizing, and solidarity.

The smaller branches of the social ministry tree differ in every parish according to the parish’s needs and gifts. The roots of parish social ministry will take time to develop and take hold, and, like a tree, your social ministry may grow slowly. It is often best to start building a rich foundation and making sure that the “soil” (i.e., parishioners, your parish) is rich and ready to receive a seedling to take root. Then the parish can take the next step to concentrate resources and efforts on fewer areas of interest and do them well, rather than spread the parish too thin by trying to focus on everything at one time.



FIGURE 1

### Social Ministry Core Team

Many parishes need to grow in the area of addressing the root causes of social issues. The main goal of the team is to provide opportunities for all parishioners to live their baptismal call to serve others. Effective social ministry requires leadership, vision, and commitment. Ideally, leadership comes from a social ministry core team. The core team:

- Discerns the needs of the parish and community
- Unites the many components of social ministry into a single vision with the team at its hub
- Educates and empowers parishioners
- Provides opportunities for the spiritual development of the social ministers and the parish as a whole.

In short, the core team along with the pastor, the staff, and the pastoral council coordinates the social ministry efforts of the parish.

A social ministry core team acts as the gardener and provides the careful pruning and planning to help the tree flourish. Therefore, it is critical to seek volunteers who are willing to interact with economic, social, and political systems to promote social change, as well as members who wish to collaborate with agencies and organizations to meet people's immediate needs. Approximately ten to twelve members is manageable, but as few as six may also work well. The larger the group, the harder it is to stay focused and reach consensus.

A core team consists mainly of three types of volunteers: representatives of individual ministries, visionaries, and organizers. Representatives from ministry programs are expected to add value to all of the social ministry efforts by sharing their experiences, not simply to lobby for the interests of individual ministries. Visionaries are those parishioners who can creatively foresee and address the needs of the parish and community. They contribute to the team by understanding and applying CST and focusing the team on the long-term goals of the parish and its social mission. Organizers are detail-oriented, practical, logical people who make a vision come to life. They provide an objective perspective on the benefits and obstacles of a plan in practical terms, and evaluate the plan at multiple stages. Please see page 7 for a sample core team member description and ad for recruitment.

Each parish can develop its own core team member description detailing the types of people they are looking for to be a part of their social ministry core team. We recommend having alternating term limits for each position so team members can avoid burnout and to give opportunities for new volunteers to join the committee. Of course, members could offer to serve multiple terms, but it is important to offer opportunities to step away as life and time commitments change, and to invite new people to join the team.

From the start of the core team, succession planning should be in the forefront of everyone's minds. Document how the team is organized, functions, descriptions of roles, etc. so there is a record of how the team itself operates as new volunteers come in and members with institutional wisdom step away from the core team.

Finally, consider developing mission and vision statements for the social ministry core team. Although the core team has the greater vision of this resource manual and *Communities of Salt and Light* to guide them, developing mission and vision statements give the core team and parish a direction to move towards that is tailored to your individual needs.

## Facilitation

Establish committee norms for the core team to follow:

- Begin every meeting with a prayer and invite the Holy Spirit to guide you.
- Set the agenda ahead of meetings and follow it. Invite input on agenda items and send the finalized agenda to participants ahead of time.
- Assign a volunteer to take notes for each meeting and distribute them afterwards.
- Start and end meetings and events on time.
- Treat everyone with respect.
- When someone is speaking, interrupt only to ask for clarification.
- Focus on the positive.
- Always work toward consensus.
- Create win-win solutions.
- Close with prayer.

## Conflict Management

Conflict is a natural part of working with groups and can actually be healthy and productive. Everyone thinks differently and will have varying ideas and opinions on the matters at hand. In a mutually respectful environment, people ought to be able to disagree amicably. It can be helpful to set guidelines for disagreements ahead of time, such as:

- Maintain a respectful, non-threatening environment.
- Do not allow emotions to escalate.
- Take breaks as needed. Break for prayer and ask for guidance and wisdom from the Holy Spirit.
- Paraphrase positions and ask speakers if their points were understood.
- Identify points where participants agree and ask them to acknowledge agreement.
- Remind the group of its mission and rules as appropriate.
- Focus on the task at hand. Do not allow past grievances to resurface.
- Ensure that conclusions agreed upon by the group are clear and noted in the minutes of the meeting.
- Invoke brainstorming rules as necessary. Suspend evaluation or critique of ideas until the ideas have been fully developed.

## Education and Support for Volunteers

Volunteers need ongoing education, support, and appreciation to remain invested in the vision and work of social ministry. Begin with sharing this resource manual, your parish's social ministry information, and *Communities of Salt and Light* with volunteers. Incorporate the Archdiocese of Baltimore's VIRTUS training as a requirement for volunteers (and core team members) in order to ensure safety compliance for potential social ministry activities and to educate volunteers about child abuse prevention.

It is important for the core team to maintain a system of tracking, keeping updated contact information for, and getting feedback from volunteers. This helps to maintain communication beyond specific volunteer needs and can provide a means for reaching out to volunteers to show appreciation and give support. For example, the social ministry core team can organize periodic retreat days or days of reflection open to all volunteers as a way to support the spiritual needs of volunteers.

## Evaluation

A critical, and sometimes overlooked, component of effective social ministry involves evaluation. Evaluation helps the core team determine how well social justice is being integrated into all aspects of parish life. In a sense, evaluation is the beginning and ending of a cycle of ministry activity because you must evaluate in order to develop and prioritize programs, and then you need to evaluate your progress. Knowing that you will evaluate your results helps you plan an activity and set goals – what do we really want to accomplish? By evaluating your progress, the team asks – how well have we met our goals?

## Sample Parish Social Ministry Core Team Member Description and Ad

### Social Ministry Core Team Member Description

#### Responsibilities

- Recruit other parishioners to be actively involved in direct service activities and in actions that promote social change. The core team acts as a catalyst for justice activities performed by everyone in the parish.
- Actively participate in periodic core team meetings.
- Develop strategies and action plans that involve the entire parish in the work for justice.
- Develop leadership skills among core team members.
- Keep the social ministry effort at the parish focused on systemic change and social service.
- Regularly analyze issues and evaluate progress of parish efforts.

#### Qualifications

- Clearly understand the distinction between charity (social service) and justice (social change).
- Commitment to changing unjust social structures, institutions, laws and systems, addressing the root causes of injustice, and serving all who are in need of immediate help.
- Ability to seek common ground when discussing solutions among groups or individuals that disagree.

#### Skills

- Leadership
- Recruitment
- Conflict Management
- Strategic Planning
- Organization
- Facilitation

### Parish Social Ministry Core Team Ad

The Parish Social Ministry Core Team is looking for parishioners dedicated to the social mission of the Church. We work to promote charity and justice for all during every stage of life through prayer, education, outreach, and advocacy. Core team members serve two-year terms, meet periodically, and work with multiple ministries in the parish to infuse the social mission into all aspects of parish life. If interested, call XXX-XXX-XXXX or e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Sample Bulletin Insert

### Labor Day and the Dignity of Work

Pope Francis has said:

*Work is part of God’s loving plan, we are called to cultivate and care for all the goods of creation and in this way share in the work of creation! Work is fundamental to the dignity of a person. Work, to use a metaphor, “anoints” us with dignity, fills us with dignity, makes us similar to God, who has worked and still works, who always acts (cf. Jn 5:17); it gives one the ability to maintain oneself, one’s family, to contribute to the growth of one’s own nation.*

Indeed, work is part of God’s plan for us. On this Labor Day, let us take many moments to reflect on the various components involved with work and how work is intertwined with justice. First and foremost, let us spend this week praying for all who seek work and all who work. All work has dignity – stay-at-home parents, custodians, CEOs, teachers, pastors, and every position in between. Whether one is searching for work or is a part of our workforce, we need strength and encouragement to live out our faith every day – particularly in environments where our faith is not welcomed with open arms. Take comfort in knowing that whether you work for the Church or not, you are doing God’s work and what you do is important. At each Mass this weekend, we will say a special prayer for workers. All are encouraged to wear their uniforms or other work attire to demonstrate the diversity of professions represented here.

As we pray for workers, let us also reflect upon the social teaching of the Church and how we can uphold it as a parish. There are multiple barriers to obtaining work and thus multiple opportunities to help people find work. Where the rights of workers to organize and to receive the wages they have earned is threatened, let us join in solidarity to come to their aid. When a criminal record excludes people from the workplace, we must work alongside advocates to ensure that people re-entering society after incarceration can earn a living to take care of themselves and their families. Let us find ways to support our brothers and sisters who work tirelessly and are still facing the realities of poverty – food insecurity, low wages, high cost of living, and more. All of these things are not just about the dignity of work but also about the dignity of the worker and the needs of families. What can we do as a parish to support life, family, work, and workers?

We are called to live out our gospel values. Let’s start here with prayer and worship, and be nourished by the Eucharist to go beyond our parish doors to make changes in the world.

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#### Catholic Social Teaching Workshop Series

Join us for **Part 5 of our workshop series on Catholic Social Teaching!** With Labor Day approaching, now is more timely than ever to learn about the **Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**. Meet us in the parish hall on **Tuesday, September 5th at 6 p.m. or after the 9 a.m. Mass on Sunday, September 9th** for an encore presentation. (Childcare provided at both events by volunteers).

## Sample Prayer Service

### Prayer Vigil for Victims of Human Trafficking – February 8th – Feast Day of Saint Josephine Bakhita

*(As each person enters, distribute copies of the prayer to Saint Josephine Bakhita and an unlit candle if closing with a candle-lighting service.)*

LEADER: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER: We gather here today on the feast day of Saint Josephine Bakhita to keep the victims of all forms of slavery on our minds, in our hearts, and in our prayers. Saint Josephine Bakhita was born in Sudan in the 1800s to the family of a tribal chief. Sometime in her late childhood or early teens, she was bought and sold into slavery, which lasted for over ten years. She endured great cruelty until she became the nanny for a family in Italy. When the mistress of the family decided to travel to Sudan without Josephine, she was put into the care of the Canossian sisters where she learned about God. Upon her mistress' return, Josephine refused to leave the sisters and would later become a religious sister. She died in 1947 and was canonized in 2000 by Saint John Paul II. Let us pause to reflect on the life of this dear woman.

(moment of silence)

LEADER: In modern society, far too many people are still enslaved. Although they may not be bought and sold in the exact same manner as Saint Josephine Bakhita, they are still victims of modern day slavery through labor and sex trafficking. We offer these prayers for all victims of human trafficking.

INTERCESSIONS

RESPONSE: Lord, set all captives free.

PETITION: For all those who are victims of labor and sex trafficking.

RESPONSE

PETITION: For all who face extreme cruelty and bodily harm at the hand of those who have held them captive.

RESPONSE

PETITION: For physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and psychological freedom for all who are victims of human trafficking.

## Sample Prayer Service Continued

### RESPONSE

PETITION: For perpetrators of human trafficking who are imprisoned by their own evil acts and for the salvation of their souls.

### RESPONSE

PETITION: For the Church to meet the needs of victims of trafficking and to be a haven of safety for all in need.

### RESPONSE

LEADER: Please join me in praying the Prayer of Saint Josephine Bakhita:

*Saint Josephine Bakhita, you were sold into slavery as a child and endured untold hardship and suffering. Once liberated from your physical enslavement, you found true redemption in your encounter with Christ and his Church. O Saint Bakhita, assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery; Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released from their chains of captivity. Those whom man enslaves, let God set free. Provide comfort to survivors of slavery and let them look to you as an example of hope and faith. Help all survivors find healing from their wounds. We ask for your prayers and intercessions for those enslaved among us. Amen.*

LEADER: As we conclude, let us pray the Prayer of Saint Francis in a spirit of discernment to be led by our Lord in how we can come to the aid of all victims of human trafficking.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*

*(Close with a hymn and/or candle-lighting service to signify being the light of the world and bringing light to all who are trapped in the darkness of slavery.)*

—————  
*Note: This prayer service can open the door to a workshop about trafficking and the Church's response to it locally and internationally.*



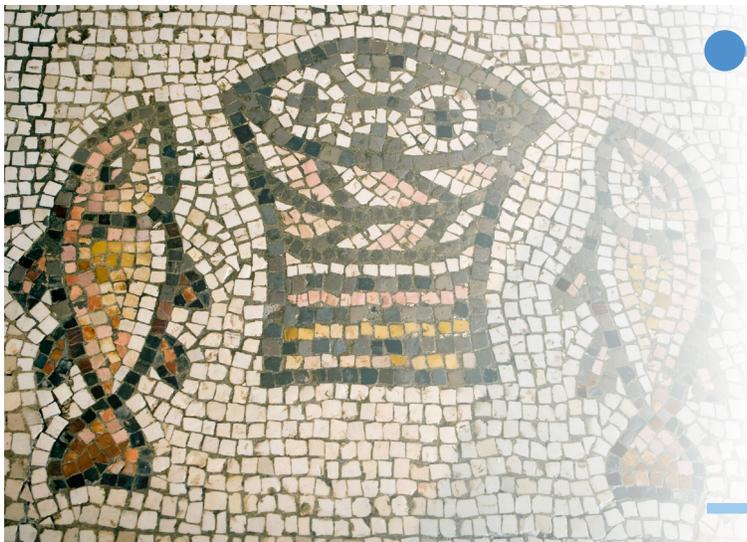
## Prayer and Worship

### COMMUNITIES OF SALT AND LIGHT SO APTLY NOTES THAT:

*It is in the liturgy that we find the fundamental direction, motivation, and strength for social ministry. Social ministry not genuinely rooted in prayer can easily burn itself out. On the other hand, worship that does not reflect the Lord's call to conversion, service, and justice can become pious ritual and empty of the gospel.*

Prayer, worship, and the sacraments are the foundation of a solid parish social ministry. Each play an essential role in recognizing and living out the social mission of the Church. The liturgy gives us the fortitude and encouragement to follow the Bible's call to charity and justice. Both communal and personal prayer deepen our experiences with God and His call to go out to love and serve others. When this link between liturgy and life is clear, justice tends to flow naturally.

It is a challenge to pray and worship in ways that are just, continually renew parishioners' commitments to the gospel's values of peace and justice, and empower worshipers to express their commitments through concrete action. Attempts to instill social consciousness (e.g., prayers for social causes, posters in the worship space about issues, petitions to a legislator available after Mass) without regard for the meaning and purpose of worship can lead to division or bitterness. Yet, prayer and worship that do not attend to service and justice can easily feel empty. Diligent work in these areas will help parishioners both attend to regular worship and understand how the act of worship propels them into committed and faith-filled social action. This holds true not only for the celebrations of Sunday Mass, but also for the preparation and celebration of every sacrament. Overall, we must worship in ways that are just and rekindle the commitment to the gospel and its values.



### A Prayer for Charity and Justice:

*Lord, give bread to those  
who hunger and to those  
who have bread, give a  
hunger for justice.*

## Components of Effective Prayer and Worship

- Ensure that the style and substance of prayers and worship are welcoming and inclusive to people of differing ages, races, ethnicities, disabilities, etc.
- Pray for all who are vulnerable in society, for legislators, and for the success of justice-related events (e.g., Archdiocesan peace walks, annual Social Ministry Convocation, CRS Rice Bowl, March for Life, National Human Trafficking Awareness Day) within the parish and outside of the parish.
- Parishioners understand how prayer, worship, the sacraments, and liturgical symbols connect us to each other, our local communities, and the broader world, and have social significance. The social consciousness about sin and injustice is understood to be both personal and societal.
- Connect homilies, current issues/events, and justice to the readings to make that connection between liturgy and life. Use welcoming language and real-life stories to talk about social justice and moral concerns.
- The parish's social ministry core team works with the pastor, liturgical ministry, whole congregation, and parish community to bring social ministry alive amongst parishioners.
- Link liturgies and prayers to relevant feast days and holidays. For example, focus on the need for racial harmony on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the needs of seniors during Respect Life Month, and the rights of workers on Labor Day.
- The music (e.g., hymnals), styles of worship, and images of our Lord and biblical figures used for worship, around the parish, and in marketing materials reflect the diversity of the parish and of the community.
- Include items such as canned goods, clothing, and letters to legislators as part of the offertory.
- Incorporate a social ministry section in the bulletin to keep parishioners informed about CST, events, special prayer intentions, and more.
- Work to make sure that parish information is accessible to different populations. For example, order large print materials for those who need it, have information online so it can be easily accessed, and have information translated into the primary language(s) spoken in the community.
- Sacramental preparation includes discussions about our social mission and offers opportunities to serve and act for justice.

## Preaching and Education

### COMMUNITIES OF SALT AND LIGHT IS CLEAR WHEN IT SAYS:

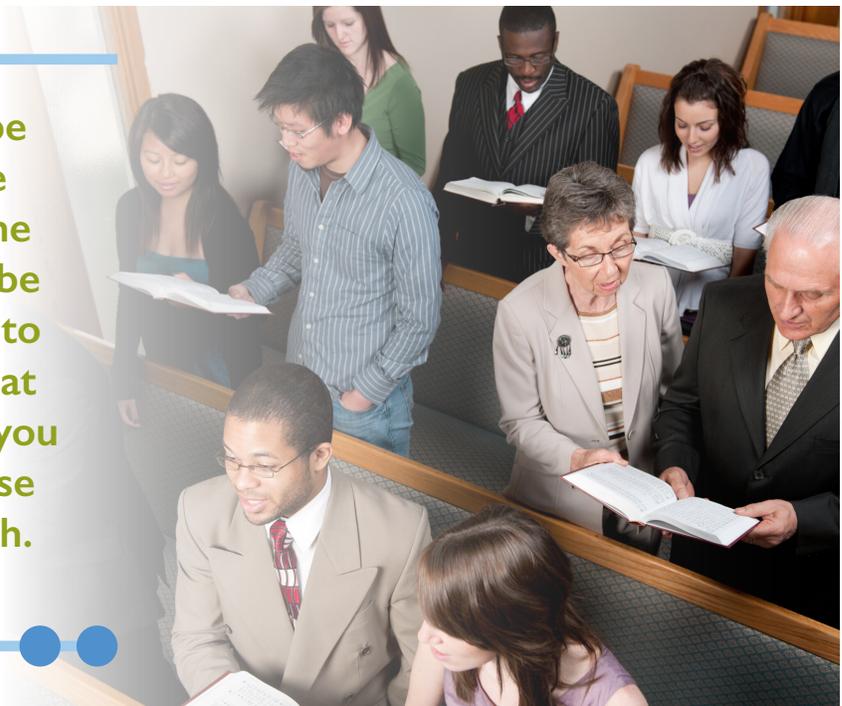
*We urge those who preach not to ignore the regular opportunities provided by the liturgy to connect our faith and our everyday lives, to share biblical values on justice and peace... Our social doctrine must also be an essential part of the curriculum and life of our schools, religious education programs, sacramental preparation, and Christian initiation activities. We need to share and celebrate our common heritage as Catholics, developing materials and training tools that ensure we are sharing our social teaching in every educational ministry of our parishes.*

All Catholic preachers share in the responsibility of opening up the Word of God and applying it to everyday life in order for a congregation to have an appropriate understanding of God's justice, mercy, trustworthiness, and sense of right and wrong. Isaiah 61 exemplifies the Biblical origins of connecting God's Word to the injustices of the time and then reestablishing God's justice in society. Jesus himself referred to this Scripture in Luke 4:16-30 as He began His public ministry. Preaching to the social importance of the Biblical message more effectively involves being attentive to the context of the revealed Word, listening to the needs of parishioners and the community, and applying both Biblical text and Church tradition to what is going on in and around parishioners' lives.

Sadly, CST is still the best kept secret of the Church. While prayer, worship, and preaching all aid in revealing our powerful social teaching to fellow parishioners, we must incorporate these teachings into all levels of religious education and ongoing faith formation as well. Social justice education ought to be fully integrated into the educational offerings of parishes and Catholic schools – both inside and outside of catechetical endeavors because it provides us with the knowledge and tools to go out into the world to bring forth justice. This reinforces the work of pastors to keep faith relevant to individuals' lives and society as a whole, and prepares parishioners to live and work in a socially responsible manner.

**Let what you teach be nourishment for the people of God. Let the holiness of your lives be a delightful fragrance to Christ's faithful, so that by word and example you may build up the house which is God's Church.**

*Pope Francis*



## Components of Effective Preaching

- Make note of when Scripture uses words such as justice, mercy, and truth, and/or focuses on themes of good vs. evil and of healing. Then, utilize issues from the community to bring the Scripture to life.
- Use occasions of archdiocesan and national collections (e.g., Catholic Campaign for Human Development, missions, retired clergy) as teachable moments to raise awareness of the Church's efforts to work for justice.
- Speak in a way that brings closeness with parishioners. Use "we" and "us" instead of "you" or "them." Avoid pushing people out to the peripheries when referring to groups; it is more humanizing to say "people who are poor" than "the poor."
- Incorporate elements of CST into homilies.
- Designate trusted parishioners to evaluate your preaching and provide feedback.
- Gather feedback about the parish from new catechumens. New members of parishes have many gifts to offer and will notice aspects of preaching and the church community differently than long-time members.
- Gather with fellow pastors in your vicariate and/or deanery to be re-energized, learn about issues within the larger community, and be a resource for one another in preaching.

## Components of Effective Education

- Social ministers regularly meet with the coordinator(s) of the parish's religious education programs to incorporate justice themes into all levels of education and sacramental preparation. For example, providing an opportunity for youth and their Confirmation sponsors to participate in service and advocacy activities together heightens the efficacy of bringing faith into other parts of their lives.
- Offer experiential learning opportunities for parishioners to learn about the lives of people who are vulnerable in society (e.g., do an exercise where people have to create a budget based on someone who lives in poverty, host a hunger banquet, provide a workshop on building advocacy skills).
- School and parish libraries include encyclicals and documents on CST and reputable social justice books and resources.
- Review curricula and supplemental materials to determine if they incorporate social justice, and set social justice as part of the criteria for selecting future religious education materials.
- Incorporate social justice themes into Bible studies to help apply Scripture to daily life.

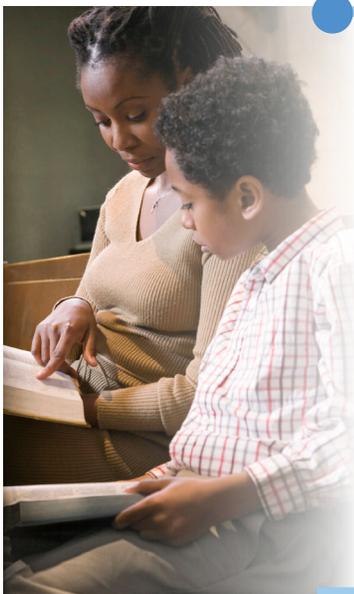
## Family, Work, and Citizenship

**COMMUNITIES OF SALT AND LIGHT HIGHLIGHTS FAMILY, WORK, AND CITIZENSHIP AS THREE AREAS WHERE PARISHES OUGHT TO ASSIST US WITH LIVING OUT FAITH IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES. SPECIFICALLY, IT STATES:**

*Our parishes need to encourage, support, and sustain lay people in living their faith in the family, neighborhood, marketplace, and public arena. It is lay women and men, placing their gifts at the services of others (cf. 1 Peter 4:10), who will be God's primary instruments in renewing the earth by their leadership and faithfulness in the community.*

The family is the foundational structure of our society and needs the support of a church to live out the gospel's values. Work helps to give dignity to people. The work that we do is just as important as how we do that work throughout our lives. Citizenship is crucial to shaping society and, ideally, living in a society that reflects our Christian values. While there is a diversity of approaches on how to live out those values, the values in and of themselves are universal.

Generally speaking, the majority of our time is spent outside of church at work, with friends or family, exercising, volunteering, and more. Without a strong basis in Church teaching and how to live out that teaching daily, our faith will not inform all of the other aspects of our lives in the secular world. A parish must be a place of support, resources, and encouragement for taking on the responsibilities of life, otherwise we run the risk of church being just another obligation of time and resources. Churches are not the place to solve all of the world's problems. Rather, churches are places to be nourished and equipped to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.



**Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever preaches, let it be with the words of God; whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever.**

**Amen.**

*1 Peter 4:8-11*

## Components of Effective Support of Family, Work, and Citizenship

- Assess the needs of families in your parish and determine how the parish can be of support to them (e.g., develop phone buddies for people who are homebound to connect with one another, offer respite care for caregivers, provide marriage and family counseling, sponsor activities for singles, offer volunteers to babysit during Bible studies or other events, provide resources for grandparents raising grandchildren, etc.).
- Have the congregation offer prayers for workers to coincide with various observances (e.g., Labor Day, National Social Work Month, Teacher Appreciation Week).
- Provide space for Christians to network, help one another gain employment, mentor one another, give support through faith challenges in the workplace, and offer tips on how to live out one's faith in the workplace (e.g., praying before meals).
- Publicize and promote archdiocesan and community events that offer programs and support for parishioners in the greater community. For example, utilize the bulletin to advertise a community volunteer effort to make minor home repairs for people who cannot afford them otherwise.
- Encourage parishioners to be leaders in unions, places of work, political organizations, and community groups. Provide opportunities for education and growth in what it means to be a Christian leader.
- Uphold diversity by inviting people of different races, ethnicities, abilities, age, incomes, etc. to participate in planning and celebrating Mass, including but not limited to celebrating feast days and holidays of significance to them. Assess whether or not parish staff, lectors, ministry leaders, etc. are reflective of the diversity of parishioners.
- Evaluate all parish programs (e.g., liturgical, sacramental, religious education, direct service, and social) through the lens of how well they prepare lay people to carry out their vocations beyond the walls of the church.
- Develop a means for parishioners to use their work skills for the benefit of fellow parishioners and the community. For example, health care professionals can offer an informational session on heart disease, or a painter may offer to paint a room for the church or a parishioner.
- Instruct parishioners about the importance of civic responsibility with a Scriptural basis for advocacy work. Teach both advocacy skills and the importance of faith-sharing with legislators.
- Sign the parish up to receive news and alerts from trusted community organizations to stay informed about pressing issues.

## Outreach and Charity

### COMMUNITIES OF SALT AND LIGHT POINTS OUT THAT:

*Catholic teaching calls us to serve those in need and to change the structures that deny people their dignity and rights as children of God. Service and action, charity and justice are complementary components of parish social ministry. Neither alone is sufficient; both are essential signs of the gospel at work...These are not competing priorities, but two dimensions of the same fundamental mission to protect the life and dignity of the human person.*

In both the Old and New Testaments, the call to love one another is clear: our lives will be measured by the extent to which we feed people who are hungry, naked, immigrants, imprisoned, orphaned, sick, or widows. Not only will our individual lives be judged by our response to people in need, so too will our parishes be measured by our help and care for all in need. Therefore, our call is to embody Jesus' spirit of love and compassion for all who are vulnerable in our own communities and beyond.

As we answer this great call, we must all remember that no one person or parish can do everything for everyone. Many of us struggle to find the time to do everything we want to do. When problems arise, they can seem so overwhelming and big that we have a hard time finding a place to start. We may even struggle with our own feelings and questions about interacting with and helping people in need. Yet the gospel call is still there to love and serve our brothers and sisters. Everyone can do something because each person and each parish has a skill set that is suited towards some aspect of charity and outreach. Matching a need to the skills and capacity of a parish goes a long way to continually get more parishioners involved in the charity and outreach work of parishes. Putting faith in action makes the gospel become more alive day by day.

**Let us touch the dying,  
the poor, the lonely and  
the unwanted according to  
the graces we have received  
and let us not be ashamed or  
slow to do the humble work.**

*Saint Teresa of Calcutta*



## Components of Effective Charity and Outreach

- Maintain knowledge of updated information about the demographics of the community surrounding the parish through U.S. Census or other reliable data.
- Meet with other parishes and faith groups to discern how you can expand the scope of your charity and outreach efforts.
- Survey parishioners and target groups within the community to determine:
  - The skills parishioners can offer
  - If the parish's efforts are reaching people in need
  - If parishioners connect the gospel with charity and outreach
  - The parish's capacity for outreach
  - The present needs of the community and gaps in services
  - How well the parish is providing services
- Offer ministry opportunities that serve a variety of people and/or meet different needs (e.g., bereavement, people with disabilities, people living in poverty, prisoners, victims of domestic violence, victims of human trafficking, wellness for seniors, women facing crisis pregnancies)
- Connect with social service organizations to identify the needs of and resources for communities, and to build a network of support for when a need exceeds the capability of the parish to meet it.
- Publicize opportunities for parishioners to be involved in the parish's outreach efforts, as well as efforts organized by other community groups.
- Incorporate charity and outreach into all forms of religious education (e.g., RCIA, pre-Cana, Bible Studies, small groups).
- Organize service activities that build up the parish community by providing the opportunity for parishioners to work together to meet a need.

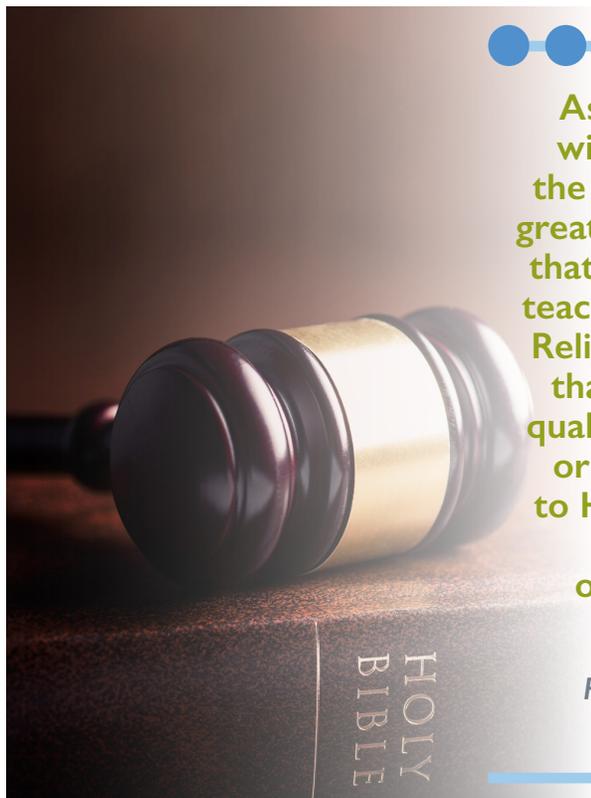
## Legislative Action

### WHEN TALKING ABOUT HOW PARISHES ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE THROUGH LEGISLATIVE ACTION, COMMUNITIES OF SALT AND LIGHT STATES THAT:

*Parishes need to promote a revived sense of political responsibility calling Catholics to be informed and active citizens, participating in the debate over the values and vision that guide our communities and nation. Parishes as local institutions have special opportunities to develop leaders, to promote citizenship, and to provide forums for discussion and action on public issues.*

Legislative action is an essential component of working toward a just society. It is complementary to charity and outreach work since legislative action also seeks to uphold the principles of CST. We are called to bring the gospel message of Jesus' love into public policy arenas in order to better shape society for all –especially for the many vulnerable populations in our midst. In addition to collaborating with legislators to shape society, we cannot forget to think about and pray for them and other public policy officials as they go about their work.

Getting involved in legislative action can seem overwhelming. Many people question if a parish or religious group should be involved in politics at all. Yet, the call to be a witness to Jesus' love and justice in society, participate in public life, and exercise our responsibilities as citizens and believers remains. As Catholics, we can and should use our talents, the resources of our faith (e.g., the Bible, Catechism, papal encyclicals), and opportunities for involvement in our democracy to help lift up the moral and human components of public issues. While we may have disagreements on how an issue ought to be resolved, we can unite around the core values of our Catholic faith to make positive changes in the world.



**As Catholics, we are part of a community with a rich heritage that helps us consider the challenges in public life and contribute to greater justice and peace for all people. Part of that rich heritage on faithful citizenship is the teaching of Vatican Council II's Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae*). It says that “society itself may profit by the moral qualities of justice and peace which have their origin in [people’s] faithfulness to God and to His holy will” (no. 6). The work for justice requires that the mind and the heart of Catholics be educated and formed to know and practice the whole faith.**

*Forming the Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*

## Components of Effective Legislative Action

- Build a relationship with your parish's legislators. Communicate with legislators regularly about social ministry activities, events in your parish (e.g., bull roast, Christmas play, forum on a social issue, school supply drive), and public policy issues. Invite legislators to celebrate Mass at your parish.
- Pray for all legislators and public officials – regardless of their political party affiliation (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Ask for prayer requests from legislators.
- Educate parishioners about important issues on the local, state, and national levels. For example, create or maintain a social justice section in the bulletin that focuses on social issues, information about CST, and how to be an advocate.
- Partner with reputable organizations to keep up to date on legislative issues and determine how your parish can get involved.
- Host workshops on advocacy skills and how to testify at legislative hearings.
- Work in all levels of religious education and in other ministries to ensure that parishioners understand the connection between faith and legislative advocacy.
- Participate in advocacy activities as a parish. Participate in advocacy activities (e.g., lobby day, march, rally) sponsored by trusted local, state, and federal advocacy organizations, such as Catholic Charities USA, Maryland Catholic Conference, Maryland Right to Life, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).
- Encourage parishioners to vote in every election and to participate in public life. [A word of caution: since the pulpit is not the place for endorsing candidates, focus on the communal responsibility to vote in elections and consider hosting nonpartisan voter registration drive through the parish.]
- Develop a parish advocacy network or offer parishioners the opportunity to sign up for an existing advocacy network through organizations such as Catholic Charities USA and the Maryland Catholic Conference.

## Organizing for Justice

### COMMUNITIES OF SALT AND LIGHT RECOGNIZES THAT:

*Parish leaders are taking the time to listen to the concerns of their members and are organizing to act on these concerns. These kind of church-based and community organizations are making a difference on housing, crime, education, and economic issues in local communities. Parish participation in such community efforts develops leaders, provides concrete handles to deal with key issues, and builds the capacity of the parish to act on our values.*

Our faith is fundamentally social. We do not live in isolation. Therefore, we should not attempt to resolve issues by ourselves as individuals or as one parish. It is through our relationships with others that we most fully recognize our own dignity. Likewise, it is through working with other individuals and parishes that we can most fully influence society for good. Our society increasingly fosters a culture of individualism and alienation, and yet our faith invites us to be countercultural by coming together to bring about changes in society.

Community organizing is an empowering process of offering opportunities for community members to partner with one another to identify and develop effective solutions to problems. One benefit of community organizing is that it reflects the principle of subsidiarity by identifying the most pressing issues facing a community from the perspectives of those who live, work, and worship in that community rather than looking at a community from the outside-in. Additionally, community organizing can help communities overcome feelings of apathy, powerlessness, and anger because community members are actively involved and engaged in the process of change every step of the way. It can be challenging to gather people together to work for justice, but the effort is worth the rewards of building a sense of community and being change agents for justice.

**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 them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, the poor, of the destitute—the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words—we can, to a certain extent, change the**



**world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as our friend.**

*Dorothy Day*

## Components of Effective Community Organizing

- Consult with organizations, such as the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, that specialize in community organizing to aid and assess your parish's community organizing efforts and serve as a resource for current community organizing initiatives.
- Offer educational opportunities for parishioners to learn about one another's cultures and the cultures of members of the community surrounding the parish.
- Ensure that the parish maintains active membership in at least one community organizing project and reports updates back to parishioners.
- Invite speakers to come to the parish and give their personal accounts of community needs and/or solutions available to remedy issues.
- If your parish is leading a community organizing effort, make sure that the steering committee/committee of leaders is diverse (e.g., age, income, gender) and includes people who live and/or work in the community.
- Start where the community is. Conduct regular needs assessments to ensure that community organizing efforts are centered on the needs and desires of people who live in the community.
- Work together to reach desired solutions. Do not allow one or two people to dominate the efforts to bring changes to a community. Instead, designate leaders based on the strengths and knowledge they offer for various projects.
- Develop a communication system that keeps all members of a community organizing initiative up-to-date on the progress of the project at hand.
- Offer opportunities for community organizers to reflect, refresh, and relax in order to sustain their ability to work for justice.

## Beyond Parish Boundaries

### COMMUNITIES OF SALT AND LIGHT EMPHASIZES:

*Catholic social teaching more than anything else insists that we are one family; it calls us to overcome barrier of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, economic status, and nationality. We are one in Christ Jesus (cf. Gal 3:28) beyond our differences and boundaries.*

Parishes are prime locations for building solidarity. Solidarity begins with the celebration of Mass where Catholics around the world meditate on the same Scriptures daily or weekly and pray the same prayers together. Most of all, when we all come together to share in the Eucharist, we represent both the highlight of Mass and the hallmark of solidarity for Catholics.

The challenge, then, is to carry that solidarity with us beyond Mass and into every other aspect of our lives. Solidarity is not merely awareness about the world around us; rather, it is respectfully sharing common joys and concerns with each other because our well-being is tied to one another locally and globally. Solidarity does not ignore the differences that make us unique. Instead, it invites us to see how our differences enrich one another and choose to stand together over and over again to make changes in the world. We are all part of the body of Christ and we all serve a function in that Body to bring about solidarity in action.



**Prayer for Solidarity**  
***Almighty and ever-living God,  
 empower your one human  
 family to join hands on our  
 journey of faith. Send us your  
 spirit of hope, so that we  
 may work to alleviate human  
 suffering and foster charity and  
 justice in our world. Amen.***

*U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*

## Components of Strong Solidarity

- During Mass, visitors are recognized and welcomed to return to the parish for events, workshops, and other Mass celebrations.
- A statement of welcome is made to encourage Mass attendees to come forward for the Eucharist (or a blessing) during Communion.
- Consider beginning at least one sister parish/pastorate relationship within the Archdiocese and/or internationally – particularly with a parish/pastorate that differs geographically, culturally, racially, or economically from your own.
- Engage in experiential learning opportunities to gain empathy for and understanding of people in the parish community. For example, Catholic Charities offers AWARE, an experiential learning program that offers the opportunity to gain insight into the lives of the clients we serve.
- Survey parishioners and visitors to determine if they feel a sense of belonging and security within your parish.
- Regularly communicate the needs of parishioners and the community (e.g., crisis pregnancy assistance, disaster relief, prayer requests, utility assistance) to the parish.
- Join in peaceful rallies and marches to stand in solidarity with those who are vulnerable (e.g., Archdiocesan peace walks to end violence, March for Life).
- Support global initiatives through organizations such as Catholic Relief Services' Lenten Rice Bowl to raise awareness about and take action to resolve global issues.





## Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

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### Life and Dignity of the Human Person

This principle is the foundation upon which the other six are laid. The sanctity of human life and its inherent dignity stem from our beliefs that human persons are created in God's image and that Jesus chose to become fully human. The incarnation proclaims loudly how much God values human life because God became like us in every way except sin. Therefore, every human life is precious. People deserve to be treated with respect and dignity throughout the entirety of their lives, from conception until natural death.

We can evaluate the actions, decisions, and policies of persons, institutions, and societies by how well they support the life and dignity of the human person. The Church calls us to speak when those actions, decisions, and policies devalue human life and dignity. In many cases, we must speak for people who are poor and vulnerable in other ways because they often are most injured by such devaluing of life and may not or cannot make their voices heard.

### Call to Family, Community, and Participation

People are social beings. We begin our lives as members of families, communities, and nations. How we interact with others and how we determine society's rules and norms impact people's ability to live with dignity and grow to their fullest potential. As members of the human family, Christians have a responsibility to work for the common good. The Church implores us to express that responsibility by meeting the direct needs of families and actively participating in shaping our society—especially through the political process.

### Rights and Responsibilities

Protecting human rights and dignity is crucial to building a just society. The Church describes all human persons as having rights that include but are not limited to the following:

- Basic needs of life – food, clean water, housing, etc.
- Freedom of conscience
- Health care
- Freedom to emigrate
- Security
- Family

Responsibilities correspond to those rights. We are required to work for the common good to benefit one another, our families, and our communities.

## Option for People Who Live in Poverty and Are Vulnerable

Societies can measure themselves by how well their most vulnerable members are doing. The Church challenges us as Catholic Christians to place the needs of people who live in poverty and are vulnerable before our own and to love our neighbors as ourselves. People who are materially poor struggle more than others to just meet the basic needs of life and have little time and energy to think and act beyond meeting their immediate needs. Poverty is not the only thing that makes people vulnerable in society; people are vulnerable due to age, race, gender, immigration status, being unborn, and more. We must keep in mind that when people who are materially poor or otherwise vulnerable have their needs met, society as a whole is better.

## Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

We participate in God's act of creation when we work. Work contributes to human dignity and to feelings of self-worth. Work allows us to earn money to meet our basic needs and the needs of our families. The Church sees work as a duty – all who are able to work and contribute to society ought to do so.

According to modern Church teaching, the rights of workers include the following:

- Productive work
- Living wages
- Ownership of private property
- Unionization and organizing of workers

## Solidarity

As human persons, our relation to God unites us in one family. Solidarity begins in our hearts and is fostered in the communal celebration of the Mass and the Eucharist. The Church challenges us to support and love our brothers and sisters wherever they are. We live in an increasingly interdependent world where we cannot allow national, racial, economic, or other differences to separate us. Locally and globally, we must stand with one another to seek the common good because we are our sisters' and brothers' keepers.

## Care for God's Creation

The Church recognizes that the earth belongs to the God who created it, and the Creator appointed us to be its stewards. In a sense, we cannot own the earth or its contents; we are long-term tenants. As such, God requires that we manage and care for the resources given to us in ways that honor Him. If we respect creation, then we demonstrate our respect for our Creator. If we disrespect creation, we not only disrespect our Creator, but we disproportionately impact people who are the most vulnerable in our society.