

January 2019

+ Generations of Faith +

FAITH NOTES

+ Enriching, Educating, Engaging All Ages +



“Called and Gifted”

Catholic Social Teaching & The Principle of Rights and Responsibilities

“Rivers of living water will flow from within him...” –John 8:38

Did you know? A person can live for weeks without food, but no more than a handful of days without water. Water is essential for life. It is no accident that water is a central symbol in the Rite of Baptism, wherein we are baptized with water as a sign of both our dying with Christ and our rising to new life in Christ. In Baptism, Christ becomes our source of “living water.” But it doesn’t end there. In response to this gift, we are called to become “living water for a thirsty world.” For baptism is both a gift and a call: In Baptism we are welcomed into the community of Jesus Christ. We are claimed as members of God’s family: sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Christ. And we are called to be Christ for the world.

We are gifted and we are called. This two-fold faith conviction is at the heart of the Catholic Social Teaching principle of “rights and responsibilities.” As the U.S. Bishops explain: “In a world where some speak mostly of ‘rights’ and others mostly of ‘responsibilities,’ 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. While public debate in our nation is often divided between those who focus on personal responsibility and those who focus on social responsibilities, our tradition insists that both are necessary.” (USCCB, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*)

It was Pope John XXIII who provided the first attempt at a list of human rights endorsed by the Catholic Church in 1963, in his encyclical *Pacem et Terris* (“Peace on Earth.”) Over the years, the range of human rights supported by the Church has evolved and expanded. “This is to be expected,” Kenneth Himes points out, “as social conditions develop. New threats to human dignity emerge, new means of protecting human dignity become available, and new conditions make previously unnecessary goods necessary for human dignity. Human rights are not listed in some predetermined manner, but by critical reflection on what is required in order to safeguard a person’s dignity in this place at this time. If, as CST alleges, human dignity is realized in community, then as the conditions of the community develop so, too, must human rights.” As both the Bishops and Himes make clear, the range of human rights - and responsibilities - articulated and championed by the Church are rooted in our God-given human dignity. They flow from the biblical understanding of covenant, as well as Jesus’ consistent, unrelenting outreach to those on the margins of society and Jesus’ invitation – nay, his command – that we respond to God’s gifts and to his call through the witness of our lives.



GOD of love and mercy, you call us to be your people, you gift us with your abundant grace.

Make us a holy people, radiating the fullness of your love.

Form us into a community, a people who care, expressing your compassion.

Remind us day after day of our baptismal call to serve, with joy and courage.

Teach us how to grow in wisdom and grace and joy in your presence.

Through Jesus and in your Spirit, we make this prayer.

-From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium*



A Closer Look at The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is the only prayer formula attributed to Jesus himself in the Gospels. You'll find it in two places: Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes it as a "summary of the whole Gospel." (CCC, 2761) When understood properly and embraced fully, it is our clearest blueprint for building the kingdom Jesus proclaimed.

Let's take a look at these words:

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..."

We are talking about **God's** kingdom. What would be different about our world if it were truly God's kingdom? "Thy will be done," means we do what God wants; we live like God wants us to live. God gave us his son, Jesus, who came to show us how we should live. Jesus said to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself. If we love as Jesus taught us to do, then God's will be done on earth as it always is in heaven. God's kingdom can be here and now because of the way we act. Together, we can work for a time when all people live in heaven on earth.

"The kingdom of God is here and the kingdom of God will come ... This is how the kingdom of God has already come: Jesus has taken flesh, he has become a man like us, he walks with us, and he gives us hope for our tomorrow: 'I am with you always, to the close of the age' ... the kingdom of God needs our participation, but it is above all an initiative and gift of the Lord. Our feeble work many appear small in the face of the complexity of the world's problems, but if embedded within God's work it has no fear of the difficulties. The Lord's victory is assured: his love will cause to sprout and grow every seed of goodness present on the earth. This opens us up to trust and hope, in spite of the tragedy, the injustice, the suffering that we encounter. The seed of justice and peace sprouts and develops because it is ripened by the merciful love of God..."

—Pope Francis

Examination of Conscience

- ✚ **Do I truly believe that, by virtue of my baptism, I am called and gifted to become living water for a thirsty world?**
- ✚ **Do I recognize and respect the economic, social, political, and cultural rights of others?**
- ✚ **Do I live in material comfort and excess while remaining insensitive to the needs of others whose rights are unfulfilled?**
- ✚ **Do I take seriously my responsibility to ensure that the rights of persons in need are realized?**
- ✚ **Do I urge those in power to implement programs and policies that give priority to the human dignity and rights of all, especially the vulnerable?**

*Examination of Conscience adapted in part from the USCCB's "Examination of Conscience in Light of Catholic Social Teaching" and "Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium"