



# CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING (CST)



## What is Catholic Social Teaching?

Over the centuries many popes have spoken out about the social issues of their day and have reflected on God's word in the scriptures.

They have often chosen to do this through various encyclicals, and these have become known as Catholic Social Teaching. The first modern instance of this was in 1891, when Pope Leo XIII spoke out in favour of oppressed factory workers.



## Working for Justice

There can't be true peace in the world unless there is justice first. The reason for this is that a lack of peace is usually caused by some form of injustice. Many people in our world today have their human rights abused and they are not treated with dignity and respect. Consequently the Catholic Church calls on believers to challenge these situations in the world and to not rest until all of God's children experience peace and justice and every type of discrimination is eliminated.



## Working for Reconciliation

When people are faced with unjust situations, they can understandably become angry with the way they have been treated and this can lead to an attempt to get revenge, as well as violence and conflict.

Christians argue that sometimes *anger is justified if it is directed towards tackling injustice* – this is often known as righteous indignation or anger. Jesus himself got angry in the temple and overturned the tables when he found that the sellers there were cheating the poor.

## How can Catholics help to bring about peace, justice and reconciliation?

**Catholic Social Teaching asks everyone to treat other people with dignity and to take action when needed by:**

- ✓ Upholding the rights of individuals
- ✓ Standing in solidarity alongside those who are oppressed and treated unjustly
- ✓ Caring for and respecting the planet and the environment
- ✓ Praying for justice and peace for all

## The Second Vatican Council: *Gaudium et Spes*

During the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s the Church published an influential document called 'Gaudium et Spes'. This reflected on the **ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD**. The document drew on the **CREATION ACCOUNTS IN GENESIS** which outline how humans have been created in the image and likeness of God, *imago Dei*. This belief (*imago Dei*) is at the heart of Catholic Social Teaching! Since humans are made in the image of God they are all God's children, sacred and holy, and possess special dignity. The Church, therefore, calls on people to not rest until there is equality for all.



### Gaudium et Spes 29

Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition... **with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated** as contrary to God's intent. For in truth **it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are still not being universally honored**... Therefore, although rightful differences exist between men, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about... **Human institutions, both private and public, must labor to minister to the dignity and purpose of man**. At the same time let them put up a stubborn fight against any kind of slavery, whether social or political, and **safeguard the basic rights of man under every political system**.

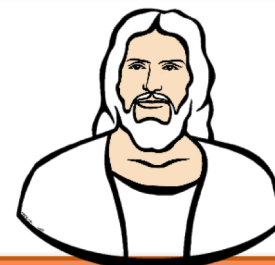


### Gaudium et Spes 78

**Peace is not merely the absence of war**; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called **an enterprise of justice**. Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice. The common good of humanity finds its ultimate meaning in the eternal law ... **peace on earth cannot be obtained unless personal well-being is safeguarded and men freely and trustingly share with one another the riches of their inner spirits and their talents**. A firm determination to **respect other men and peoples and their dignity**, as well as the studied practice of brotherhood are absolutely necessary for the establishment of peace. **Hence peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide**.



*CST is about speaking out against social injustices*



*Imago Dei is at the heart of CST*

**GAUDIUM ET SPES = JOY AND HOPE**

*"...peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can provide."*



## Summary

- Over the centuries the Church has spoken out about issues of social justice
- Since all humans are made in God's image, the Catholic Church calls on people to not rest until equality and justice for all is achieved
- The Catholic Church calls people of all faiths to listen to each other, respect differences and recognise their shared values
- Catholics are active members of inter-faith committees and organisations
- CAFOD and the SVP are showing God's love to the world in their work with the poor and vulnerable. Their work is based on the idea that all humans deserve respect and dignity because they are made *imago Dei*, that Jesus taught the importance of love of your neighbour and that the world is a gift from God that we care for on a temporary basis

## Knowledge Check

1. What is Catholic Social Teaching?
2. What does the Catholic Church say about justice?
3. What does the Catholic Church say about reconciliation?
4. What does the Latin term *Gaudium et Spes* translate to?
5. How can Catholics help to bring about peace, justice and reconciliation?
6. When was the Second Vatican Council held?
7. What is the main message in *Gaudium et Spes 29*?
8. What is the main message in *Gaudium et Spes 78*?

## Choose a Task

1. Create a detailed mind-map (try to make this visual)
2. Create a multiple-choice quiz (aim for at least 10 questions)
3. Create a poster/leaflet

### CHALLENGE!

Turn over the mat and try to complete your task without looking at the information. Then refer back to the task mat to see what you have missed/could have included.

## Exam Question

c) Explain how Catholics can help to bring about peace, justice and reconciliation [8]