





Prayer Resource



















How to use this Prayer Resource

About the Catholic Social Teaching Prayer Resource



Prayer is essential at the commencement of meetings in a Catholic ministry for focus, to reinforce Catholic identity and to call God's blessings on the proceedings. Prayer time is also formative as it allows those present to examine aspects of life, faith and experience.

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is a powerful and challenging voice for justice and compassion in our world. Often overlooked and underappreciated, its key principles transcend time and place pointing to what it means to be human, made in the image and likeness of God. CST shines a light for the radical equality of all human beings; their immeasurable worth and dignity. CST has provided us all with a well-lit path to social and ecological justice and the rationale for action which restores and reinforces human freedom.

Each prayer focuses on one of the Key Principles of Catholic Social Teaching:

- 1. Catholic Social Teaching An Introduction
- 2. Life and dignity of the human person
- 3. The Common Good
- 4. Solidarity love of neighbour
- 5. Dignity of work and the rights of workers

- 6. The Promotion of Peace
- 7. Call to Family, Community and Participation
- 8. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- 9. Care for God's creation
- 10. Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person

For ease of use, the prayer resource is presented in a folder containing 10 copies of each of the ten prayers, and an Acknowledgement of Country.

The prayer cards contain a reading on the theme, a reflection to break open the theme, a discussion question, a scripture quote and a prayer (references are included for all sources).



Catholic Social Teaching An Introduction

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) offers a way of thinking, being and seeing the world. It provides a vision for a just society in which the dignity of all people is recognised, and those who are vulnerable are cared for. It consists of an interrelated body of Catholic social thought and principles which can be used to reflect on and guide how we relate to one another in our local and global communities. CST includes insight from the Scriptures, as well as understanding from the thoughts, reflections and lived experience of people throughout the life of the Church.



Catholic Social Teaching... is not a kind of political manifesto, or an endorsement of any particular ideology or political or economic system. It does, however, judge political and economic systems in terms of the way they treat and affect human beings. Because its ultimate significance is the transcendent nature of humanity, it provides a view of the world that moves beyond secular humanism in seeking justice in this life. (Ferguson, J., Kearins, H., and Brennan, D. *Reading the Signs of the Times*. 2011. p.5).

Catholic Social Teaching... has expanded the understanding of rights and responsibilities beyond national boundaries to include a universality of concern and duty within one human family. No human person or group is outside the one human family... we truly do have obligations toward all, even future generations. (Clark, M. Pope Francis and the Christological Dimensions of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching, Theological Studies Vol. 80 (1). 2019. p.104). How does Catholic Social Teaching inform your values and actions?

> Eternal God of Justice and Love Help us to embrace all people as one human family. Open our eyes to the realities of exclusion and marginalisation. May we live in ways that allow all people to live with dignity. Guide us in your way of love. Amen

You must not infringe the rights of the foreigner or the orphan... (Deuteronomy 24:17)



Life and Dignity of the Human Person

We believe every human person is made in the image and likeness of God. This is a gift that we all share as fellow human beings; we are all infinitely loved by our Creator. The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. The dignity of every human person is the foundation of all Catholic Social Teaching.

Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children as well as disgraceful working conditions... are infamies indeed. (Paul VI. Gaudium et Spes. n.27).

Our worth does not depend on the colour of our skin, our customs, or our religion. We are made in God's image, each deeply loved by God, and that is finally the source of our human dignity. Because each of us is infinitely precious, no one may be treated as a thing or used to achieve some grand goal. When we welcome the stranger, we welcome Christ. (ACBC. Challenging Racism in Australia Today, Social Justice Sunday Statement. 2003).

God requires that we act justly towards the vulnerable in our community, that we love those with whom we disagree or whose behaviour we deplore and that we walk humbly with the outsider, the different, the other. (NCCA. Sr Libby Rogerson, ibvm. *Social Justice Matters*. 2013). Where is the teaching on the dignity of all people evident in your ministry?

May we have open hearts to welcome the stranger to wonder in awe at the beauty of our world to oppose judgement of others to embrace diversity and to unite rather than divide.

Help us God of Love, to make compassion and mercy our touchstones.

Amen

Even in your old age I am God, even when you turn gray I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save. (Isaiah 46:4)



The Common Good

The human person is both sacred and social – we become human in relationship to others. Community has to be built up and organised in such a way that the dignity of all is maintained. The community that is built up has to be fair and just and allow the participation of everyone in the enjoyment of the goods of Creation.

... the common good... is... the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members... access to their own fulfillment. (Paul VI. Gaudium et Spes. n.26).

An understanding of the common good that is consistent with Catholic social teaching would point to the obligation of all citizens, however indirect their stake in the matter. to make significant sacrifices for such improvements that will bring broad benefits to society, including future generations. The importance of such contributions transcends the expected benefits to any given individual; people pay their share of social dues simply because they are responsible members of society. Perhaps the most compelling and urgent common good issue today involves the natural environment. Every creature on earth depends on a healthy ecosystem for its continued existence. Human mishandling of the environment has led to crises such as global warming, resource depletion, endangered species, and pollution in all its forms. Everyone has an obligation to contribute to conditions that will serve life better and provide ecological sustainability to benefit future generations. (Massaro, T. Nine Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, in Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action, 2015. p.89).

How do you answer the question: who is my neighbour?

> May we act always for the Common Good.

Let us open our eyes and extend our hands to reach those who have fallen by the wayside, those who struggle, those who do not receive their fair share.

Help us to live in the way of the heart.

Amen

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need... with glad and generous hearts. (Acts 2:44-46)



Solidarity - Love of Neighbour

We are one human family under God, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences. We are called to practice the virtue of solidarity, understanding that "loving our neighbour" has individual and global dimensions that require a broader social commitment in the interdependent world we all share.

Today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people's troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment. Like the chance traveller in the parable, we need only have a pure and simple desire to be a people, a community, constant and tireless in the effort to include, integrate and lift up... (Francis: Fratelli Tutti. n.77). Don't be afraid to speak up. We all matter. We all deserve to be treated justly and with love.

The opposite of poverty is not wealth, it's justice. Let's help make things more just for all. Let's build communities of resilience and resistance, of empathy and welcome.

It's a wonderful thing to care for our community, be it by standing up for the environment, supporting a call for a treaty, championing freedom for refugees, providing a community of welcome and hope to young Australians, or demanding action to end male violence against women. We all have within us the power to make the world a kinder, fairer and better place. (Karapanagiotidis, K. *The Power of Hope*. 2018).

Pope Francis draws attention to... complicity through indifference... almost without being aware of it, we end up incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor... as though they were someone else's responsibility not our own... those who are indifferent to their neighbour are indifferent to Christ. (Clark, M. Pope Francis and the Christological Dimensions of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching, Theological Studies Vol. 80 (1). 2019. p.117). How do you care for your community and your neighbour?

May we stand in solidarity with those fighting for a fairer, more peaceful world. Give us generous hearts and an openness to helping others, whenever we can. May we be ever vigilant to the Gospel call to justice and solidarity. Amen

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (Matthew 22:39)

MERCY PARTNERS

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

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 organise and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiatives.

... the remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful... Workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations in a worthy manner. (John XXIII. Mater et Magistra. n.71).

In the West people learn to work so that eventually they won't need to work at all. Work has become a burden in this society, a curse, a sign of social diminishment on those who need to work in order to live. Success in this society belongs to those who don't have to work. Instead, their money makes money. What a pity. Not only for their own sense of self but also pitiful for those whose work is not sufficient to sustain human dignity.

As a result, we stand to lose the whole sense of work as our gift to the world...

In generations before us, the work people did went straight into the mouths of children, the hands of friends, and for the up-building of the village in which they lived. Then work was born of talent and meant for communal generosity. People not only worked together but shared the results of their common endeavours together. (Chittister, J. *The Art of Life*. 2012. p.83). May we always honour and protect the right to work.

To recognise the dignity of workers in all professions.

To fight against exploitation and unfair practices in workplaces.

To appreciate the work of mothers, fathers, carers and volunteers.

St. Joseph the Worker, pray for us.

Amen

How can you honour the dignity of those with whom you work?

I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13)



The Promotion of Peace

Peace is a positive, action-oriented concept. It implies 'right relationships' with people, within groups, between people and the environment and between people and God. St. Pope John Paul II said, *Peace involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements.*

Peace is not merely an absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies... Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice. (Paul VI. Gaudium et Spes. n.78).

May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us.

(St. Teresa of Avila)

We sometimes lose sight of our own purpose and how we are meant to play a part in bringing peace to the world. So often it starts here: with internal peace - a peace with our Lord and a deep sense of rest in the creation God has made us. Such a peace radiates out into our families and our communities. Cultivated in each of us, it could bring about great change in our world. (Dillon, M. 14 Of The Most Powerful Peace Quotes From St. Teresa of Auila. Accessed at www.coraevans.com). Light of Peace, 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; where there is sadness, joy. Amen

Excerpt of the Peace Prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi

How can you promote peace through your actions, words and ministries?

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Matthew 5:9)



Call to Family, Community and Participation

All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. It is wrong for a person, or a group, to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate.

We need a model of social, political and economic participation "that can include popular movements and invigorate local, national and international governing structures with that torrent of moral energy that springs from including the excluded in the building of a common destiny. (Francis. Fratelli Tutti. n.169).

How do you include others lovingly?

The well-being of the entire society absolutely depends on healthy families, committed marriages, and responsible parenthood. Family life is where people learn and practice the virtues of love and compassion that allow them to imagine alternatives to the ruthless competition and selfish individualism witnessed all too often in the sphere of business, commerce, and the market. Outside of family life, it is all too rare to witness a spirit of profound selfsacrifice and generous giving to others that refuses to count the cost to oneself. But within our families, no one is surprised by (and, indeed, we almost expect) habitual acts of generosity, forgiveness, and selfemptying love on the part of spouses, parents, and siblings. In a world of bewildering complexity and rapid, unpredictable change, the stable relationships of family and home life are like a safe harbor in a fierce storm. (Sr Mary Terese Donze asc, in Rupp, J. With Grateful Hearts. 2010. p.79).

God of Love, Strengthen us to be builders of communities of acceptance, love and mercy May we reach out to those on the edges and welcome strangers in our midst Remind us always that the smallest act of kindness and hospitality can make a huge difference. Amen

We love because God first loved us. (1 John 4:19)



Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Catholic social teaching instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation.

The struggle against destitution... is not enough. It is a question, rather, of building a world where every person... can live a fully human life... and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man. (Paul VI. Populorum Progressio. n.47).

Gustavo Gutierrez explains that real poverty means privation, or the lack of goods necessary to meet basic human needs. It means inadequate access to education, health care, public services, living wages, and discrimination because of culture, race or gender. He reiterates that such poverty is evil; it is a subhuman condition in which the majority of humanity lives today, and it poses a major challenge to every Christian conscience and therefore to spirituality and theological reflection. (Dear, J. *Gustavo Gutierrez and the preferential option for the poor*. Accessed on National Catholic Reporter. 2011).

To make a preferential option for the poor in a relatively affluent society may not entail an agenda of drastic social change to set aright a history of deep offences against human solidarity, but it does probably mean much greater sensitivity to the impact of one's actions on the vulnerable and marginalized. In a largely middle-class society... making a sincere preferential option for the poor will lead people to revise their lifestyle choices and numerous personal decisions, as well as to advocate for public policies to advance social justice. This commitment might include support for a policy of more progressive taxation, for enhanced safety net programs to assist low-income families, and for better funding for educational services and schools... (Massaro, T. *Nine Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, in Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, 2015. p.121). Where can you practise a preferential option for the poor in your life and work?

Compassionate God Help us to be people of justice who share generously with those in need: by ensuring resources are shared.

by joining our voice to the call for equality

by reviewing our lifestyle choices and personal actions in the light of the poverty around us.

Amen

Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. (Isaiah 1:17)



Care for God's Creation

The goods of the earth are gifts from God, and they are intended by God for the benefit of everyone. We are called to show respect not only for people but for all Creation. How we treat the environment is a measure of our stewardship, a sign of our respect for the Creator.

Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. The entire material universe speaks of God's love... soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.. (Francis. Laudato Si'. n.84).

How does your ministry care for the whole of creation?

One of the greatest contributions of *Laudato Si'* is that it offers what theologians call a 'systematic' approach to an issue. First, he links all of us to creation: *we are part of nature, included in it, and thus in constant interaction with it* (n.139). But our decisions, particularly about production and consumption, have an inevitable effect on the environment. Pope Francis links... *a magical conception of the market...* which privileges profit over the impact on the poor, with the abuse of the environment (n.190).

Needless to say, a heedless pursuit of money that sets aside the interests of the marginalised and leads to the ruination of the planet are connected... in the world of *Laudato Si'* there is no room for selfishness and indifference. One cannot care for the rest of nature... *if our hearts lack tenderness compassion and concern for our fellow human beings* (n.91).

Light of Life,

Show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live.

Amen

Excerpt from Laudato Si' A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation

In God's hand is the soul of every living thing; in God's hand is the breath of all humankind. (Job 12:10)



The Rights and responsibilities of the human person

Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency – starting with food, shelter and clothing, employment, health care, and education. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

A well-ordered human society requires that people recognise and observe their mutual rights and duties. It also demands that each contribute generously to the establishment of a civic order in which rights and duties are more sincerely and effectively acknowledged and fulfilled. (John XXIII - Pacem in Terris. n.31).

Rights should always be placed in the context of solidarity and concern for the well-being of the wider community. To consider only the dignity and intrinsic worth of the individual in isolation risks neglecting the key insight that rights come paired with duties. The rightful claims of people to essential things are necessarily matched with responsibilities for the provision of these same things to others in need. All members of human society are expected to be givers as well as receivers, as we all (at least in our most honest moments) acknowledge our mutual interdependence...

Catholic Social Teaching portrays each person as naturally fitting into the larger society. Except in unusual situations, such as pledging to become a consecrated hermit or finding oneself shipwrecked on a desert island, human flourishing is always communal and social. The full range of features that constitute human nature and dignity come to maturity only in the context of community life, where many relationships develop and ripen. Developing the virtue of solidarity is thus the perfect antidote to any modern temptations toward an egoistic individualism that neglects social obligations or subordinates the needs of others to self-serving and possibly narcissistic agendas. (Massaro, T. *Nine Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, in Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action*, 2015, p.88). How do you build communities of support and care?

God of Justice and Peace

Enable us to build ministries and communities where rights and responsibilities are honoured.

Help us to find the lost, broken and marginalised in our place.

Inspire us to be just in our leadership and fair in our allocation of resources.

May we not rest from the protection of human life and dignity.

Amen

From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded. (Isaiah 1:17)