

## We Work for Justice and Peace

“Seek peace and pursue it.”

(Psalm 34:15)

**+ Leader:** On December 12, the Church celebrates Mary as patron of the Americas: Our Lady of Guadalupe. With confidence in her care for us, we now pray:

**Reader 1:** God of power and mercy,  
you blessed the Americas at  
Tepeyac  
with the presence of the  
Virgin Mary of Guadalupe.

**Reader 2:** May her prayers help all men  
and women  
to accept each other as brothers  
and sisters.

**Reader 3:** Through your justice present in  
our hearts  
may your peace reign in the world.  
*(Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers)*

**All:** Grant this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.



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## The BIG Question:

Do I feel respected by others?

**Discover** whether or not you show respect for others. Circle your response to each statement.

- 1** I treat other people the way I want to be treated.  
True    False
- 2** I am considerate of other people.  
True    False
- 3** I accept the personal differences of others.  
True    False
- 4** I never intentionally ridicule, embarrass, or hurt other people.  
True    False
- 5** I listen to what other people have to say.  
True    False
- 6** I consider the feelings of all who will be affected by my actions and decisions.  
True    False
- 7** I believe all people are equal.  
True    False
- 8** I am tolerant of others' views.  
True    False

### Results:

Look over your responses. Circling *false* just once means that you have some work to do. Nobody is perfect, but remember that you are called to respect and care for everyone that God has created. Showing respect to others is often the first step to others respecting you.

Reflect silently on some of the improvements you might make in the way you treat other people.

### In this chapter

we learn that God calls us to practice social justice, to honor the human dignity of each human being, and to live lives of justice and peace. Through this chapter, we hope



to understand that justice is the way to peace



to accept our responsibility to work for the common good



to follow Catholic social teachings in our own lives.



Now her family members could farm their land to feed her entire family.

⌘ Meredith and her friend Amy noticed a flyer announcing their school's participation in Catholic Relief Services. ⌘⌘ They volunteered to help raise money for efforts that would fight world hunger in union with the Catholic Relief Services. ⌘⌘⌘ Meredith and Amy forwarded the money raised to CRS/FRB. It joined community contributions, profits from crops donated by local farmers, and government grants to provide necessities such as seeds, farming tools, and other essentials to help farming communities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

⌘⌘⌘⌘ Some farming tools paid for by the money raised by Meredith and Amy were put on Lila's family truck in Kenya.

**Activity** Meredith and Amy were part of a chain of events whose consequences went beyond their school or neighborhood. What could you do today that might spark another such chain of events?

“Kindness is the golden chain by which society is bound together” is a quote widely attributed to German poet, novelist, and dramatist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832).



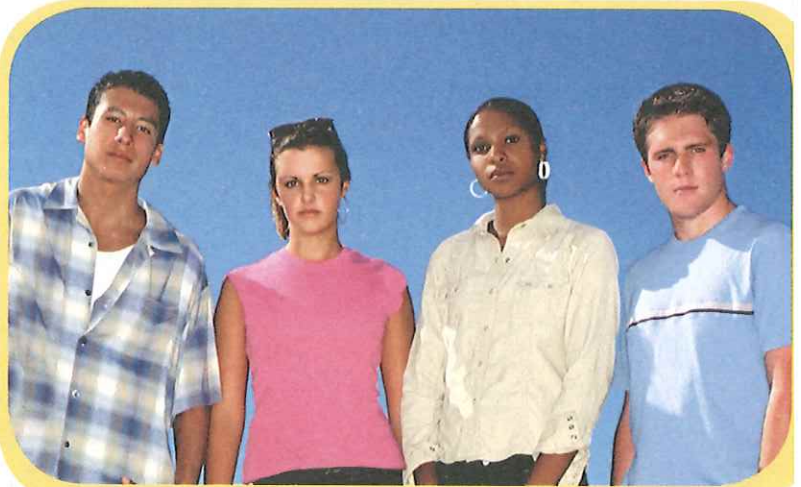
# BELIEVING...

## We are called to justice.

God calls us to practice **social justice**—opposing every form of injustice in society and working to promote justice for all people. Justice is based on the simple fact that all people have **human dignity**, the value and worth that we share because God created us in his image and likeness.

God made it known that anyone who hopes for salvation must act justly—respecting the rights of others, giving people the things that are rightfully theirs, and working to make life better for everyone. Jesus' example of making sure that no one in society was neglected or ignored gives us our best understanding of God the Father's call to justice.

As Jesus' disciples, we follow his example of faith in God the Father and a life of justice. And, as members of the Church, together we take on the serious responsibility of continuing Jesus' work of social justice. We uphold humanity's most basic human right, the right to life. We work to treat all people fairly and equally and to protect the rights of all people in our society—including children, those without a home, those who are new to our country, those who are disadvantaged, those who



are different from us, and those who are in need in any way.

Recognizing that all people possess the same human rights, we work to be sure that they have the right to: practice faith and have a family; receive an education and work; experience equal treatment and safety; receive housing and health care.

Our Catholic understanding of justice reaches far beyond what is usual in our society. God calls us to a justice that exceeds the boundaries of what most people are willing to give—especially to those who are poor, oppressed, neglected, or in need in any way.

When we strive for this justice we are seeking **righteousness**, or conduct in conformity with God's will. Jesus told us:

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6).

So, by striving for justice and seeking righteousness we work to attain the happiness of knowing that God's power and presence are at work in this world, as well as in the next!

### Faith Words

**social justice**  
**human dignity**  
**righteousness**

**Activity** Today in the Church and in our world people's words and actions remind us that justice, peace, and love of neighbor are still part of our way of life. Share with your group stories of people who work for justice in our world.

## Stewards of creation

**G**od created the world to share his love and goodness and to show his glory and power. Creation is a marvelous gift for which we praise God. We also praise God for asking us to be *stewards of creation*—to care for his creation and to make sure that all people share in the goodness of creation.

Justice is sharing the resources that come from God's creation with those who do not have them. Justice is using the resources we have in a responsible way. We cannot use so much food, water, and energy that there is not enough for others. The world is not only God's gift to us, but also his gift to the generations of people to come. We must work together to protect our environment and the good of all God's creation.

How can you be a good steward of God's creation?



## We are called to peace.

God lovingly wills that all people live in peace. In Scripture we find that God's peace, which is more than just the absence of war and violence, is realized when everyone lives in true harmony with one another and with God's creation. We also find that peace and justice are very closely connected. They are like two sides of the same coin, and both are central to the coming of God's Kingdom.

"Justice will bring about peace;  
right will produce calm and security."  
(Isaiah 32:17)

As disciples of Jesus, carrying out the mission of sharing God's love and spreading God's Kingdom, we must commit to justice and become peacemakers in every context of our lives. Yet in our society there are many types of violence—all of which contradict peace and are against God's loving will for us. One tragic form of violence is domestic violence. It takes place in many homes today and is particularly condemnable because it violates people where they should be safest—in their own family. At your age, you may not be able to prevent domestic violence, but you should know that it is an assault against human dignity. And if you have witnessed it, you must consciously work never to repeat or allow this type of violence in your life.

**A**s Catholics, we recognize that some forms of violence are always wrong:

**abortion** The direct termination of the life of an unborn baby is always wrong. The Supreme Court of the United States has legalized abortion, but we must remember that what is legal is not always morally right. We should work to change laws in society that allow abortion.

**euthanasia, or mercy killing** We can never deliberately kill someone, even in cases of great suffering. Our faith requires us to take ordinary measures to preserve life. A dying patient, however, may refuse "'over-zealous' treatment" (CCC, 2278).

**murder** The deliberate taking of someone's life

**suicide** The taking of one's own life is an offense against God, who gave each of us the gift of life.

**terrorism and related violence that intentionally targets innocent civilians** Misusing our political views and personal beliefs to intimidate or attack innocent people is never acceptable.

There are many other forms of violence. Catholic teaching should shape our decisions on these:

**war** We should always try to use nonviolent means to resolve conflicts. War should be a last resort when other means fail to protect the innocent against fundamental injustice. Our American Catholic bishops have declared, "We do not perceive any situation in which the deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare . . . can be morally justified" (*The Challenge of Peace*, 1983, 150).

**the death penalty** The *Catechism* states, "The cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity 'are very rare, if not practically non-existent'" (2267).

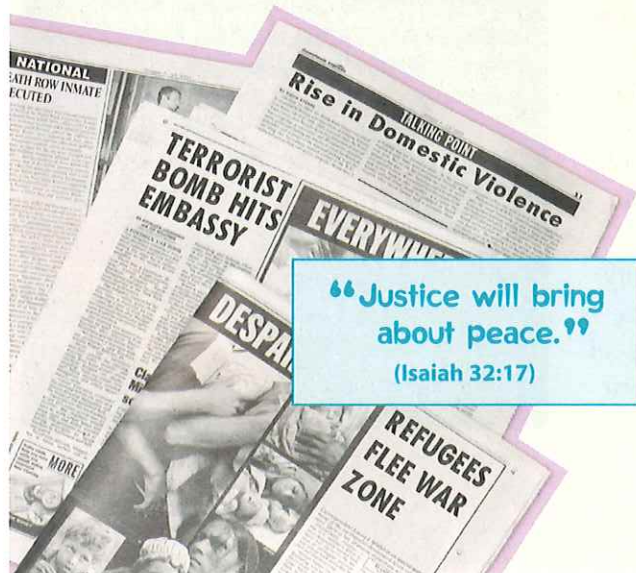
**environmental waste and pollution** This is the destruction of those things in creation that God gave us to support life. To pollute the environment is to poison ourselves and to take away the possibilities of life for the generations that will come after us.

**scandal** "An attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil" (CCC, 2284). It is wrong when individuals or groups use their power and influence to tempt others to disrespect life in any way.

Though we realize that we will only experience the fullness of God's Kingdom in eternity, by doing God's will—living in justice and peace—we show that good can triumph over evil, hope over despair, love over hate. In Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, God's grace is active in us, empowering us to live as disciples, doing God's will "on earth, as it is in heaven" (the Lord's Prayer). It is then that we show the world that God's Kingdom is among us!

**Activity** Discuss five concrete ways that people your age can work for justice in society, and five ways that people your age can be peacemakers.

"Justice will bring  
about peace."  
(Isaiah 32:17)





## We are called to work together for justice and peace.

*How can you show that you believe in justice and peace?*

Jesus worked for justice. He tried to make sure that people had what they needed. He healed the sick and fed the hungry. He listened to people when they told him about their needs. Jesus stood up for people who were neglected or ignored by society. And he spoke out against leaders who did not take care of people.

As disciples of Jesus, we cannot allow unjust conditions to exist without taking a stand against them.

**“It is the duty of citizens to contribute . . . to the good of society.”**  
(CCC, 2239)

The *Catechism* reminds us that “we have a responsibility for the sins committed by others when we *cooperate in them*: by participating directly and voluntarily in them; by ordering, advising, praising, or approving them; by not disclosing or not hindering them when we have an obligation to do so; by protecting evil-doers” (1868).

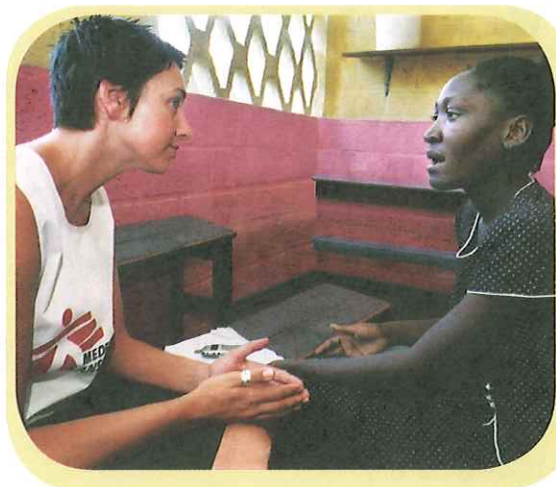
**Catholic social teaching** is the teaching of the Church that calls all members to work for justice and peace as Jesus did. Jesus’ life and teaching are the foundations of Catholic social teaching. And the whole Church is called to live by this social teaching—to put the Good News of Christ into action. Thus, the Church encourages individuals and groups to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ into society and to work for change in policies and laws so that the dignity and freedom of every person may be respected.

The social teachings of the Catholic Church teach us to build a “civilization of love”—for “love is the only force that can lead to personal and social perfection” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, d:580). Catholic social teachings call all members to work for the common good. The **common good** is the well-being of every individual person and of the whole society to which everyone belongs.

### Faith Words

**Catholic social teaching**  
**common good**

When we witness situations that serve the good of some but not the good of all, such as discrimination or poverty, we are called to oppose them. The *Catechism* reminds us that “it is the *duty of citizens* to contribute along with the civil authorities to the good of society” (2239). Thus, following the social teachings of our Church is one way that we, as Jesus’ disciples, accept our responsibility to care for others.



**Activity** Discuss some ways that your parish and your diocese work for the common good of all people.

## Social responsibility

**T**he pope and our bishops remind us to respect the rights of all people.

They teach us about the need to protect human life, to care for those who are poor, and to work for peace and justice. Their teaching can often take the form of an *encyclical*, a pastoral letter written by the pope and sent to the whole Church and even the whole world. These letters from the popes give us words of wisdom for our times. Here are two examples: “Everyone who has joined the ranks of Christ must be a glowing point of light in the world, a nucleus of love.” (Pope John XXIII, *Peace on Earth*, 164)

“The goal of peace . . . will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of the virtues which favor togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity.” (Pope John Paul II, *On the Social Concern of the Church*, 39)

Use the Internet to find other encyclicals that teach us about justice and peace.

**CATHOLIC IDENTITY**



## Through Catholic social teaching we live out our discipleship.

As the Church, the People of God, we know that no one who professes to be a Christian can separate love for God from love for neighbor. Thus, being mindful of and living according to the following themes of Catholic social teaching help us to show our love of God through love for our neighbor—our brothers and sisters around the world.



### THEMES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

#### Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Human life is sacred because it is a gift from God. We are all God's children, and share the same human dignity from the moment of conception to natural death. Our dignity—our worth and value—comes from being made in the image and likeness of God. This dignity makes us equal. As Christians we respect all people, even those we do not know.

#### Call to Family, Community, and Participation

As Christians we are involved in our family life and community. We are called to be active participants in social, economic, and political life, using the values of our faith to shape our decisions and actions.

#### Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person

Every person has a fundamental right to life. This includes the things we need to have a decent life: faith and family, work and education, health care and housing. We also have a responsibility to others and to society. We work to make sure the rights of all people are being protected.

#### Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

We have a special obligation to help those who are poor and in need. This includes those who cannot protect themselves because of their age or their health. At different times in our lives we are all poor in some way and in need of assistance.

#### Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Our work is a sign of our participation in God's work. People have the right to decent work, just wages, safe working conditions, and to participate in decisions about their work. There is value in all work. Our work in school and at home is a way to participate in God's work of creation. It is a way to use our talents and abilities to thank God for his gifts.

#### Solidarity of the Human Family

Solidarity is a feeling of unity. It binds members of a group together. Each of us is a member of the one human family, equal by our common human dignity. The human family includes people of all racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds. We all suffer when one part of the human family suffers, whether they live near us or far away from us.

#### Care for God's Creation

God created us to be stewards, or caretakers, of his creation. We must care for and respect the environment. We have to protect it for future generations. When we care for creation, we show respect for God, the Creator.

### QUESTIONS

What are some ways the dignity of students or teachers is not respected during class? Why do you think this happens? What are some conflicts in your school that have been resolved in a way that recognizes the dignity of those involved?

What are some virtues that individuals practice? that families practice? that neighbors practice? How does the practice of these virtues influence society as a whole?

What is the difference between needing and wanting something?

What are some ways people might be poor? What are some ways people are vulnerable?

How might different kinds of work make people feel? How can we make people feel respected and valued for whatever work they do?

What are some problems or challenges that we face in our country? How are they similar to those of other countries? How are they different?

What are some examples of society not protecting the environment? How can these situations be changed?

### Activity

Read the chart and discuss the questions given for each theme.



# RESPONDING...

## Recognizing Our Faith

Recall the question at the beginning of this chapter: *Do I feel respected by others?* How do the Church's teachings presented in this chapter guide people to respect one another?

## Living Our Faith

Choose one of the themes of Catholic social teaching, and decide on a practical way to live it out this week.

## Jesuit Volunteer Corps

### Partners in FAITH

The Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) has become the largest Catholic lay volunteer program in the United States. JVC offers men and women the opportunity to work full-time for justice and peace. Volunteers serve the homeless, the unemployed, refugees, people with AIDS, the elderly, street youth, abused women and children, the mentally ill, and the developmentally disabled. Jesuit volunteers draw inspiration and direction from the traditions of the Society of Jesus, known as the Jesuits. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, sought to integrate a life of prayer with active work to build up the Kingdom of God. Members of the JVC are called to go where God will best be served and where people will best be helped. Working and serving in the JVC is one way to participate in the Church's mission to teach that all people have equal dignity and deserve to fulfill their potential in life.

How can you more fully practice social justice in your life?



# JVC

JESUIT VOLUNTEER CORPS



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## Putting Faith to Work

Talk about what you have learned in this chapter:



**We understand** that justice is the way to peace.



**We accept** our responsibility to work for the common good.



**We follow** Catholic social teachings in our own lives.

Decide on ways to live out what you have learned.



## ENCOUNTERING GOD'S WORD



“For family and friends I say,  
‘May peace be yours.’  
For the house of the LORD,  
our God, I pray,  
‘May blessings be yours.’”  
(Psalm 122:8–9)



**READ** the quotation from Scripture.



**REFLECT** on these questions:

Do you pray for peace for your family and friends? How can your prayer also extend to those unknown to you, all the people in the world, the poor and those in need, and even your enemies, as Jesus taught?



**SHARE** your reflections with a partner.



**DECIDE** to put your prayer into action, at home, in your parish, and in the world.

### Define.

1. human dignity \_\_\_\_\_
2. social justice \_\_\_\_\_
3. common good \_\_\_\_\_
4. Catholic social teaching \_\_\_\_\_

### Complete the following.

5. Living according to the Church's social teaching helps us to show our love of God through \_\_\_\_\_
6. As members of the Church, together we take on the serious responsibility of continuing Jesus' work of social justice by \_\_\_\_\_
7. As Catholics, we recognize that some forms of violence are always wrong: abortion, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. As disciples of Jesus, we cannot allow \_\_\_\_\_ to exist without taking a stand against them.

9–10. **ESSAY:** Summarize each theme of Catholic social teaching.

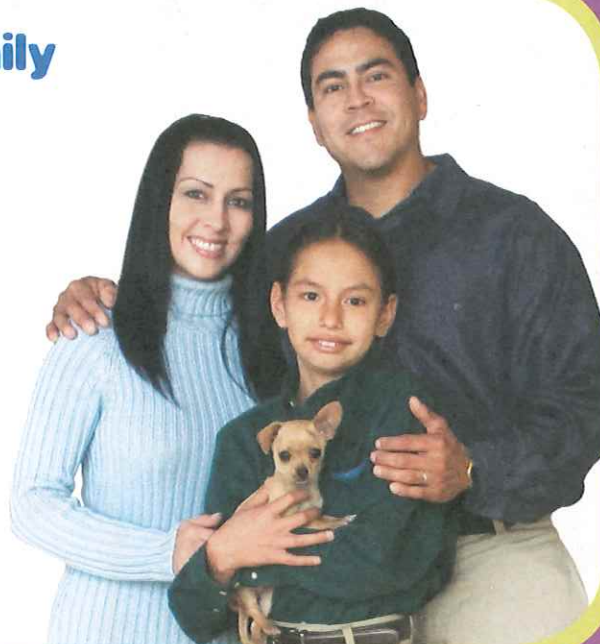


## Sharing Faith with Your Family

Discuss the following with your family:

- We are called to justice.
- We are called to peace.
- We are called to work together for justice and peace.
- Through Catholic social teaching we live out our discipleship.

Encourage your family to be aware of the "brothers and sisters" around the world who need comfort and aid. Urge your family to help others by doing an act of kindness each day this week. At the end of the week, share your experiences and discuss the ways that you have lived out the themes of Catholic social teaching.



## The Worship Connection

At Mass on Sunday there may be a second collection to help those in need. Set aside some of your money this week to give at this collection.

## More to Explore

Use the Internet to research Catholic organizations that promote peace and justice in our world today.

## Catholic Social Teaching Checklist

### Theme of Catholic Social Teaching:

Choose a theme found in this chapter. \_\_\_\_\_

**How it relates to Chapter 22:** List the ways this theme relates to Chapter 22. \_\_\_\_\_

### How can you live out this theme?

☐ At home:

\_\_\_\_\_

☐ At school/work:

\_\_\_\_\_

☐ In the parish:

\_\_\_\_\_

☐ In the community:

\_\_\_\_\_

Check off each action after it has been completed.