

Catholic Social Teaching 1891–1991

1891	<i>Rerum Novarum</i> (Leo XIII) (The Condition of Labour)
1931	<i>Quadragesimo Anno</i> (Pius XI) (The Reconstruction of the Social Order – 40 th year)
1961	<i>Mater et Magistra</i> (John XXIII) (Mother and Teacher – Christianity and Social Progress)
1963	<i>Pacem in Terris</i> (John XXIII) (Peace on Earth)
1965	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> (Vatican II) The Church in the Modern World
1967	<i>Populorum Progressio</i> (Paul VI) (Progress/Development of Peoples)
1971	<i>Octogesima Adveniens</i> (Paul VI) (Apostolic Letter: Call to Action – 80 th year)
1971	<i>Justice in the World</i> (Synod of Bishops)
1975	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> (Paul VI) (Evangelisation in the Modern World)
1981	<i>Laborem Exercens</i> (John Paul II) (On Human Work)
1987	<i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> (John Paul II) (Social Concerns of the Church)
1989	<i>Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation</i> (John Paul II)
1990	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i> (John Paul II) (Missionary Activity of the Church)
1991	<i>Centesimus Annus</i> (John Paul II) (One Hundred Years)

Prepared by Social Action Office – CLRIQ

Key Principles of Catholic Social Teaching Expanded

1. Human Dignity

Human beings are created in the image of God and, therefore, are endowed with dignity. This inherent dignity carries with it certain basic rights and responsibilities which are exercised within a social framework.

2. The Common Good

While the dignity of the human person is affirmed, individuals live in common with others and the rights of individuals must be balanced with the wider common good of all. The rights and needs of others must be always respected.

3. The Principle of Solidarity

Human beings are social by nature and do not exist merely as individuals. When considering the human community it must be remembered that it consists of individuals and social elements.

4. The Principle of Subsidiarity

This principle recognises that society is based on collectives or communities of people ranging from small groups or families right through to national and international institutions. As a rule of social organisation, this principle affirms that a higher level community should not interfere in the life of a community at a lower level of social organisation.

5. The Purpose of the Social Order

The social order must uphold the dignity of the human person.

6. The Purpose of Government

The purpose of government is the promotion of the common good. Governments are required to actively participate in society to promote and ensure social justice and equity.

7. The Principle of Participation

Individuals and groups must be enabled to participate in society.

8. The Universal Purpose of Goods

The world's goods are meant for all. Although the Church upholds the right to private property this is subordinate to the right to common use and the overall common good. There is a social mortgage on private property.

9. The Option for the Poor

This refers to seeing the world through the eyes of the poor and standing with the poor in solidarity. This should lead to action for justice with and on behalf of those who are poor and marginalised.

Catholic Social Teaching



Summary of the Main Encyclicals and Documents

Rerum Novarum: On the Condition of Labour (Leo XIII, 1891)

Lays out the rights and responsibilities of capital and labour;
 Describes the role of Government in a just society;
 Condemns atheistic communism;
 Upholds the right to private property.

Quadragesimo Anno: On Reconstructing the Social Order (Pius XI, 1931)

Condemns the effects of greed and concentrated political and economic power and proposes that social organisation be based on the principle of subsidiarity.

Mater et Magistra: Mother and Teacher (John XXIII, 1961)

Identifies the widening gap between the rich and poor nations as a global concern of justice;
 Raises concerns about the arms race;
 Calls upon Christians to work for a more just world.

Pacem in Terris: Peace on Earth (John XXIII, 1963)

Focus on human rights as the basis for peace;
 Calls for disarmament;
 Stating the need for a world-wide institution to promote and safeguard the universal common good.

Gaudium et Spes: The Church in the Modern World (Vatican Council document, 1965)

Clear recognition that the Church is immersed in the modern world;
 Condemns poverty;
 Warns about the threat of nuclear war;
 Christians must work to build structures that uphold justice and peace.

Populorum Progressio: On the Development of Peoples (Paul VI, 1967)

Focus on human development – ‘development is the new name for peace’;
 Condemns the situation that gives rise to global poverty and inequality;
 Calls for new international organisations and agreements that promote justice and peace.

Octogesima Adveniens: An Apostolic Letter: A Call to Action (Paul VI, 1971)

Calls for political action for economic justice;
 Develops the role of individual local churches in responding to unjust situations and acting for justice.

Justice in the World (Synod of Bishops, 1971)

States that “action for justice” is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.

Evangelii Nuntiandi: Evangelisation in the Modern World (Paul VI, 1975)

Links the work of doing justice with evangelisation;
 The Gospel is about liberation from all oppressive structures;
 Respect for cultures.

Laborum Exercens: On Human Work (John Paul II, 1981)

Affirms the dignity of work and the dignity of the worker;
 Affirms the rights of labour;
 Calls for workplace justice.

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: The Social Concerns of the Church (John Paul II, 1987)

Includes the “option for the poor” as a central tenet of Church teaching;
 Also develops the notions of ‘solidarity’, the ‘structures of sin’ and ‘the social mortgage on property’;
 Suggests that the resources used for the arms race be dedicated to the alleviation of human misery;
 Nature must be considered in development.

Peace with God the Creator, Peace with Creation – Pastoral Letter (John Paul II, 1990)

The ecological crisis is a moral crisis facing humanity;
 Respect for nature and ecological responsibility is a key tenet of faith;
 The integrity of creation must be upheld;
 Ecological education to nurture a new global solidarity that takes account of nature.

Centesimus Annus: One Hundred Years (John Paul II, 1991)

Reaffirms the principles of Catholic Social Teaching over one hundred years;
 Celebrates *Rerum Novarum*;
 Identifies the failures of both socialist and market economies.

(This Summary has been adapted and developed from NETWORK 1998,
Shaping a New World, pp 5-11)



EXCERPTS FROM THE PARLIAMENT OF WORLD RELIGIONS' GLOBAL ETHIC

Some 250 religious leaders from around the world signed their approval of the “The Declaration of a Global Ethic” September 4, near the conclusion of the Parliament of the World’s Religions, an international gathering held in Chicago, August 28 – September 5, 1993.

Principles of a Global Ethic

Our world is experiencing a fundamental crisis: a crisis in global economy, global ecology and global politics. The lack of a grand vision, the tangle of unresolved problems, political paralysis, mediocre political leadership with little insight or foresight, and in general too little sense for the commonweal are seen everywhere: too many old answers to new challenges. Hundred of millions of human beings on our planet increasingly suffer from unemployment, poverty, hunger and the destruction of their families. Hope for a lasting peace among nations slips away from us. There are tensions between the sexes and generations. Children die, kill and are killed. More and more countries are shaken by corruption in politics and business. It is increasingly difficult to live together peacefully in our cities because of social, racial and ethnic conflicts, the abuse of drugs, organized crime and even anarchy. Even neighbours often live in fear of one another. Our planet continues to be ruthlessly plundered. A collapse of the ecosystem threatens us.

Time and again we see leaders and member of religions incite aggression, fanaticism, hate and xenophobia – even inspire and legitimate violent and bloody conflicts. Religion often is misused for purely power-political goals, including war. We are filled with disgust.

We condemn these blights and declare that they need not be. An ethic already exists within the religious teachings of the world that can counter the global distress. Of course this ethic provides no direct solution for all the immense problems of the world, but it does supply the moral foundation for a better individual and global order: a vision that can lead women and men away from despair and society away from chaos.

We are persons who have committed ourselves to the precepts and practices of the world’s religions. We confirm that there is already a consensus among the religions that can be the basis for a global ethic – a minimal, *fundamental consensus* concerning binding *values*, irrevocable *standards* and *fundamental moral attitudes*.

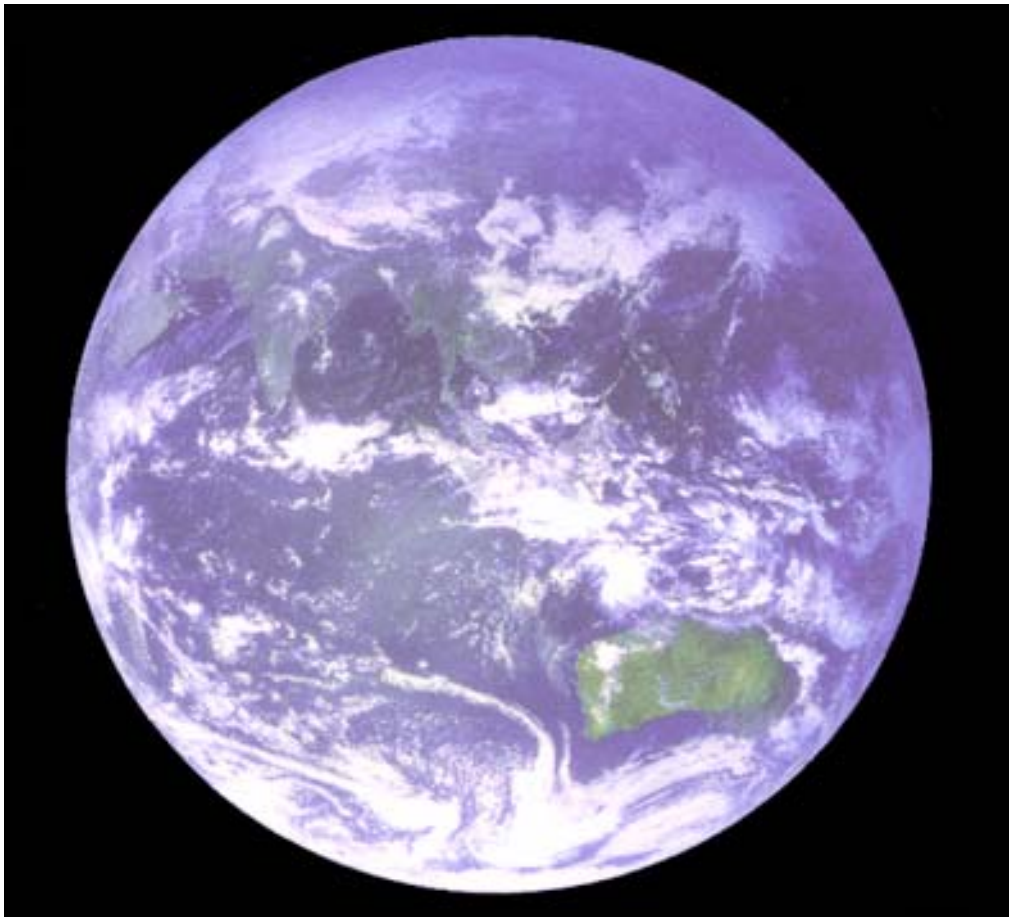
- I. No new global order without a new global ethic!
- II. A fundamental demand: Every human being must be treated humanely.
- III. Irrevocable directives
 1. Commitment to a Culture of Nonviolence and Respect for Life.
 2. Commitment to a Culture of Solidarity and a Just Economic Order.
 3. Commitment to a Culture of Tolerance and a Life of Truthfulness.
 4. Commitment to a Culture of Equal Rights and Partnership Between Men and Women.
- IV. A Transformation of Consciousness!

... In conclusion, we appeal to all the inhabitants of this planet. Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed. We pledge to work for such transformation in individual and collective consciousness, for the awakening of our spiritual powers through reflection, meditation, prayer or positive thinking, for a conversion of the heart. Together we can move mountains! Without a willingness to take risks and a readiness to sacrifice there can be no fundamental change in our situation! Therefore, we commit ourselves to a common global ethic, to better mutual understanding, as well as to socially beneficial, peace-fostering and Earth-friendly ways of life.

We invite all men and women, whether religious or not, to do the same.

The ecological crisis is a moral issue... Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation... we cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations.

-- Pope John Paul II, 1990



Pope John Paul II calls for:

1. a more discriminate application of advances in science and technology;
2. the painful realisation that we cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations;
3. the entire human community – individuals, States and international bodies – (to) take seriously the responsibility that is theirs (in this context the Pope refers to greenhouse gases and the depletion of the ozone layer);
4. attention to be paid to the moral implications underlying the ecological problem – (the) lack of respect for life (that) is evident in many patterns of environmental pollution; viz.
 - a. production over workers
 - b. destruction, by reckless exploitation of natural resources, of delicate ecological balance
 - c. dangers inherent in biological research
 - d. a more internationally coordinated approach to the management of Earth's goods
 - e. implementation of the ideal of a right for all to a safe environment which must be included in an updated Charter of Human Rights
 - f. a direct addressing of the structural forms of poverty existing throughout the world
 - g. the awareness of the danger any war poses for the total Earth community
 - h. An examination of our lifestyles
 - i. education in ecological responsibility
 - j. the appreciation of the aesthetic value of creation
 - k. an acceptance of our common responsibility in relation to the ecological crisis.



How should the church respond to the ecological crisis?

1. Acknowledge the magnitude and urgency of the crisis.
2. Develop an appropriate theology of creation at the local, national and global level. In this context, a vibrant eco-centred ethics is essential.
3. Recognise the transformative power that liturgy and worship have in addressing ecological and justice issues.
4. Ecological concerns ought to be at the heart of pastoral ministry.
5. Promote creation spirituality and simple lifestyles as a way of responding to the destructive impact of our global consumer society.
(D O'Murchu)
6. Work to change systems/structures that are ecologically unsound.
(Social Action Office)



Some questions to use as a stimulus for engaging at a practical level

1. Acknowledge the magnitude and urgency of the crisis:
 - i) What is the magnitude of the crisis
 - from your own knowledge and experience?
 - from other sources?
 - ii) What is the urgency of the crisis?
 - What facts can you think of that would confirm that there is an urgency?
 - iii) How can this magnitude and urgency become known and accepted generally?
 - a) What are some processes in which you could engage to disseminate this conviction?
 - b) What would be some “hurdles” that would have to be overcome in self and others in these processes?
 - iv) At what level, official Church, workplace, local Church, local community, family, etc., can you personally or as a group commit to making known the magnitude and urgency of the crisis?

2. Develop an appropriate theology of creation at the local, national and global level. In this context, a vibrant eco-centred ethics is essential:
 - a) Who does “theology”?
 - What are the “theologians” saying?
 - What are others, who don’t write as theologians, saying?
 - b) What do you mean by eco-centred ethics?
 - c) How does theology and ethics intersect?

3. Recognise the transformative power that liturgy and worship have in addressing ecological and justice issues:
 - i)
 - a) What is liturgy? What is worship?
 - b) What is the purpose of liturgy and worship?
 - ii) What do you mean by the ‘transformative power that liturgy and worship have’?
 - iii) Who/what is being transformed?
 - iv) Where is the transformation leading?
 - v) How then does this translate into ecological and justice issues?
 - vi) What could be included in official Church liturgies and worship that would stimulate ecological and justice transformation?
 - vii) What type of liturgy could you create for your place of work/ministry/family/ community that would capture some of these ecological and justice issues that could lead to transformation?

4. Ecological concerns ought to be at the heart of pastoral ministry:
- a) How do you describe pastoral ministry?
 - b) Who 'does' pastoral ministry?
 - c) What are the ecological concerns?
 - d) How is this put into practical everyday living: Personally? Locally? Globally? As a Church?
5. Promote creation spirituality and simple lifestyles as a way of responding to the destructive impact of our global consumer society (an alternative description for this spirituality would be "ecological spirituality"):
- i) Creation (Ecological) Spirituality
 - a) What do you understand by creation (ecological) spirituality?
 - b) From the handouts what further understanding have you gained?
 - c) How does scripture and Church tradition fit into this?
 - d) How could creation spirituality be used within liturgy and worship?
 - e) Do you need to do some study around this topic? Where can you find appropriate information about this?
 - f) How do you promote creation spirituality?
 - ii) Promote simple lifestyles
 - a) Describe a simple lifestyle that is counter to the destructive impact of our global consumer society.
 - b) Does putting this into practice require an ecological conversion?
 - c) In your own life how can you change some of the environmentally destructive practices that are so much part of the society in which we live?
 - d) What would be some of the difficulties you would encounter if you espouse this ecological conversion?
 - e) How can you encourage this simple lifestyle
 - in the home?
 - in the workplace?
 - in the church?
 - in the local community?
 - others?
6. Work to change systems/structures that are ecologically unsound:
- a) Do you believe that change at this level is critical for the future of the total Earth community?
 - b) What networks are available for you to join which would help in this change at systems/structures level?
 - c) What systems/structures are you involved in that are ecologically unsound? – in your home, local community, school, Church, work, local government, state and federal governments, Asia/Pacific region, others?
 - d) What could you do individually and as part of a group to change these systems/ structures?

Resources

Websites:

1. Vatican – The Holy See: http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm
2. Australian Catholic Bishops Conference: <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/>
3. Catholic Justice and Peace Commission – Archdiocese of Brisbane: <http://www.uq.net.au/cjpc/>
4. Australian Catholic Social Justice Council: <http://www.acsjc.org.au/index.shtml>
5. Catholic Social Teaching, Office for Social Justice, Archdiocese of St Paul and Minneapolis: <http://www.osjspm.org/cst/index.html>
6. Office for Social Justice, Archdiocese of St Paul and Minneapolis: <http://www.osjspm.org/>
7. Forum on Religion and Ecology: <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/>
8. Center of Concern: <http://www.coc.org/>
9. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns:
<http://home.maryknoll.org/index.php?module=MKArticles&office=global>
10. Uniya – Jesuit Social Justice Centre: <http://www.uniya.org/>
11. Woodstock Theological Center: <http://www.georgetown.edu/centers/woodstock/>
12. Voices for Justice – A newsletter of the Missionary Society of St Columban (Ireland):
<http://www.columban.com/vojus.htm>
13. Social Development and World Peace – US Conference of Catholic Bishops:
<http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/ejp/>
14. Sierra Club: <http://www.sierraclub.org/>
15. Climate Action Network Australia: <http://www.cana.net.au/>

Compass Articles:

Vol. 32, Winter 1997:
Quantum Theology – Paul Castley, msc

Vol. 30, Autumn 1996:
Promoting Catholic Ecological Action – Charles Rue ssc

Vol. 30, Summer 1996:
The Ecological Conversion – Should Religious Women and Men Make a Contribution – Susan Smith
rmdm

Vol. 29, Autumn 1995:

Minding the Universe: Aboriginal Leads to Australian Spirituality – Eugene D Stockton

Vol. 27, Spring 1993:

Creation Theology: How Well Are We Coping with Ecological Issues? – Neil Darragh

Vol. 26, Autumn 1992:

Christian Spirituality and the Environment Movement – Len Baglow

Vol. 25, Autumn 1990:

Sacred Story – Sacred Land – Eugene D Stockton

Do We need a New Ecological Ethics? – John Begley sj

The Cosmic Theology of Karl Rahner – Denis Edwards msc

Vol. 24, Summer 1990:

The New Creation and the Australian Aborigines – Frank Fletcher msc

Books:

Catholic Social Teaching Source Material

A Just and Peaceful Land – Rural and Regional Australia in 2001

Social Justice Sunday Statement – Australian Bishops' Conference

Australian Catholics – The Social Justice Tradition

Michael Hogan (Collins Dove 1993)

Catholic Social Teaching – Our Best Kept Secret

Mark O'Connor (ed) (Collins Dove 1992)

John Paul II – The Encyclicals in Everyday Language

Joseph G Donders (ed) (E J Dwyer 1996)

Option for the Poor – A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching

Donal Dorr (Gill & Macmillan 1983)

Our Quest for Ecological Integrity: What is the Catholic Role in the Environment?

Michael Gormly ssc (Catholic Social Justice Series No. 37)

Study Week on a Modern Approach to the Protection of the Environment, November 2-7, 1987

Pontificiae Academiae Scientiarum Documenta (23)

Study Week on Man and His Environment, Tropical Forests and the Conservation of Species, May 14-18,

1990, Pontificiae Academiae Scientiarum Scripta Varia (84)

The Social Justice Agenda – Justice, Ecology, Power and the Church

Donal Dorr (Collins Dove 1991)

General Source Material

This is a short list of THEOLOGICAL, SCRIPTURAL, SPIRITUAL, SOCIOLOGICAL books by Catholic authors. Many more are available by the same and other writers.

McDonagh, Sean

Greening the Earth (Claretian 1990)

Passion for the Earth (Geoffrey Chapman 1994)

To Care for the Earth: A Call to a New Theology (Claretian 1986)

Donovan, Vincent J

The Church in the Midst of Creation (Orbis 1992)

Collins, Paul

God's Earth: Religion as if Matter Really Mattered (Dove 1995)

Edwards, Denis

The God of Evolution – A Trinitarian Theology (Paulist 1999)

Kelly, Tony

An Expanding Theology: Faith in a World of Connections (EJ Dwyer 1993)

O'Murchu, Diarmuid

Reclaiming Spirituality: A New Spiritual Framework for Today's World (Gill & Macmillan 1997)

Quantum Theology: Spiritual Implications of the New Physics (Crossroad 1997)

Berry cp, Thomas & Clarke sj, Thomas

Befriending the Earth: A Theology of Reconciliation between Humans and the Earth (Twenty-third Publications 1991)