

The Campus Advocate  
Session # 5

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING:  
Viewing the Media with a Justice Lens**

**PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM:** *To heighten our ability to view media critically, and to integrate Catholic Social Teaching into our everyday perceptions.*

**FACILITATOR NOTE:** *You will need either or both....*  
*\*A video recording of a recent nightly world news episode, or*  
*\*A selection of recent reputable newspapers,*

**Gathering Prayer:**

**All:** Loving God, we thank you for bringing us together so we may learn how to better to serve you and your people. Please bless our conversation, and grant us the gift of your wisdom.  
In Christ's name we pray,  
Amen

**Reader 1:** The Catholic Church's understanding of justice is based on the biblical tradition of justice. Over time, the Catholic Church develop a large body of work known as Catholic Social Teaching, which attempts to apply the biblical understanding of justice as right relationships to modern society.

**Reader 2:** Catholic Social Teaching tries to answer questions such as these: "If justice is about one being in a right relationship, what would that look like in a community setting or between groups of people – or between a government and its people?" And although answers are rarely given, one way that Catholic Social Teaching attempts to help us better understand the full scope and meaning of justice by developing three broad categories for the analysis of justice. These categories help us to think about justice and state the minimum levels of mutual care and respect that all persons owe to each other in an imperfect world.

**Reader 3:** The following is a brief summary of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, specifically as they pertain to the work of the US Church overseas. This list is not meant to be a definitive or authoritative text on the subject, nor is it considered a substitute for the original documents. For additional resources on Catholic Social Teaching visit [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) .

**FACILITATOR NOTE:**

- 1. Have the group read through, and gain a basic understanding of the principles.*
- 2. Next, have the group either watch the video of the news or read the papers.*
- 3. While they are viewing the media, they should mark down which areas of Catholic Social Teaching are relate to which news story.*
- 4. Once the group is ready, discuss their findings.*

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING**

**DIGNITY AND EQUALITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON** All of humanity has been created in the image of God and possesses a basic dignity and equality that come directly from our creation and not from any action on our own part.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES** Every person has basic rights and responsibilities that flow from our human dignity and that belong to us as humans, regardless of any social or political structures. The rights are numerous and include those things that make life truly human. Corresponding to our rights are duties and responsibilities to respect the rights of others and to work for the common good of all.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**SOCIAL NATURE OF HUMANITY** All of us are social by nature and are called to live in community with others --- our full human potential isn't realized in solitude, but in community with others. How we organize our families, societies and communities directly affects human dignity and our ability to achieve our full human potential.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COMMON GOOD** In order for all of us to have an opportunity to grow and develop fully, a certain social fabric must exist within society. This is the common good. Numerous social conditions -- economic, political, material and cultural -- impact our ability to realize our human dignity and reach our full potential.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBSIDIARITY** A higher level of government -- or organization -- should not perform any function or duty that can be handled more effectively at a lower level by people who are closer to the problem and have a better understanding of the issue.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**SOLIDARITY** We are all part of one human family -- whatever our national, racial, religious, economic or ideological differences -- and in an increasingly interconnected world, loving our neighbor has global dimensions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**OPTION FOR THE POOR** In every economic, political and social decision, a weighted concern must be given to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. When we do this we strengthen the entire community, because the powerlessness of any member wounds the rest of society.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**STEWARDSHIP** There is an inherent integrity to all of creation and it requires careful stewardship of all our resources, ensuring that we use and distribute them justly and equitably --- as well as planning for future generations.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- Which news stories connected to which principle?
- Do you see any particular bias in the news agency you used?
- Which principle do you most strongly connect with?
- What is the value of viewing the media with a justice lens?
- What would be an obstacle to continue to view media with a Justice Lens?
- What would be a possible solution to that obstacle?

**Reader 1:** It is important to realize that the Justice Lens does not provide Catholics with easy answers though. Instead, it helps frame the analysis of the situation so that the most informed decision possible can be made.

**Reader 2:** By viewing the media through a “justice lens,” or in other words placing current events within the context of Catholic Social Teaching, US Catholics will be able to focus on the underlying justice issues behind the complex situations.

**Reader 3:** Many times people look for easy answers to difficult situations. Unfortunately, Catholic Social Teaching will not provide many answers such as these. Rather than offering an easy answer to diverse and complex issues, Catholic Social Teaching does provide great meaning and purpose to one’s life.

#### **Sending Forth Prayer:**

**All:** Oh Gracious Mystery, we thank you for our time together. May our conversations root within us a desire for justice and peace on behalf of our brothers and sisters in need, and please bless all those who provide information to the public.

In Christ’s name we pray.  
Amen

*This program has been developed by staff members of US Operations at Catholic Relief Services. For comments or questions, please contact Kevin Kostic [campus@catholicrelief.org](mailto:campus@catholicrelief.org).*