

Catholic Social Teaching, Up Close!

90 minutes

Objectives

Through this activity participants will:

- become familiar with the key principles of Catholic social teaching;
- be challenged to apply these principles to the issues of hunger and poverty; and
- work together to demonstrate this knowledge by creating a poster which includes a description of the principle, a visual illustration, a supporting Scripture, and a prayer.

Materials Needed

- bibles
- 7 pieces of poster board
- magazines
- scissors
- glue
- markers
- yarn
- copy of the *Principles of Catholic Social Teaching* for each participant

Procedure

Session One (1 hour)

Begin with a brief review or overview of the key principles of Catholic social teaching.

Explain to participants that they are going to work in small groups of 2-3 and that each group will be exploring one of the principles of Catholic social teaching (make sure each principle has been assigned to a group).

Each group is to identify ways that their principle is connected to hunger and/or poverty in our world.

- What do the principles call us to do in regard to hunger and poverty?
- How can the principles be used to address the root causes of hunger and poverty in our world?

Groups will demonstrate their ideas on the posters, using words, drawings, magazine cut-outs, or any other creative means they can think of.

Each poster should contain:

- a brief description of the Catholic social teaching principle in their own words
- a visual representation of the connection between the principle and hunger and/or poverty
- a passage from Scripture that supports their ideas
- a prayer

Catholic Social Teaching, Up Close!

Session Two (30 minutes)

Bring the groups together to share their work. This can be done in several ways. One way is to ask each small group to prepare a presentation to the large group.

Another way is to create a focal point by placing the posters in a circle. Have participants sit in a circle surrounding the focal point. Invite the group to become quiet. Tell them that this is an opportunity for them to share each others' insight and faith.

After a moment of quiet, read Matthew 5:3-11 (the Beatitudes). Play some soft music and invite members of the group to take some time to look at the posters and to think about what strikes them about each one.

After everyone has had time to look at each poster, lead the group in a dialogue to share what they noticed.

These posters can be displayed in the parish hall or school, or presented to Confirmation or RCIA candidates for use in their formation.

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

The Scriptures say, “Without a vision the people perish” (Prv 29:18). As Catholics, we have an inspiring vision in our social teaching. In a world that hungers for a sense of meaning and moral direction, this teaching offers ethical criteria for action. In a society of rapid change and often confused moral values, this teaching offers consistent moral guidance for the future. For Catholics, this social teaching is a central part of our identity. In the words of John Paul II, it is “genuine doctrine” (*Centesimus Annus*, no. 5).

—*Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1998

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The human person is the clearest reflection of God among us. Each person possesses a basic dignity that comes directly from our creation in the image of God. Through our actions we must express that each person is precious and the lives and welfare of all people are priorities. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.

Rights and Responsibilities

People have a fundamental right to life and those things that make life truly human: food, clothing, housing, health care, education and security. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others. The first community is the family, where we learn and act on our values. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test of our society is how our most vulnerable members are treated. Those with the greatest needs require the greatest response.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Work is an expression of our human dignity. It is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. The economy must serve people, not the other way around.

Solidarity

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that loving our neighbor has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Care for God’s Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation.