

An Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching & The Sacred Heart Way

From Education to Analysis to Action on Behalf of Justice

Network of Sacred Heart Schools



SACRED HEART EDUCATION

Network of Sacred Heart Schools
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Why Catholic Social Teaching?

For us, Sacred Heart education is never the end; rather, education serves as the means by which students come to know and experience God's love so that they can become agents of transformation.

In our work with students, we draw upon the teachings of Christ as found in Scripture and the teachings of the Church, foundational documents of the Society of the Sacred Heart and the *Goals and Criteria*. Of particular support to our work are the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching. These principles were first articulated in 1891 by Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, reinforced by Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* in 2020 and affirmed by Pope Leo XIV.

The seven principles enable us to see ways to live our belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God. Coupled with the *Goals and Criteria*, Catholic Social Teaching gives us a lens through which to examine our own beliefs and action on behalf of Justice.

Personal & Communal Call to the Sacred Heart Family

Goal III, #3.

"The school, drawing from Catholic Social Teaching, educates students to analyze and work to eradicate social structures, system and values that perpetuate racism and other injustice." *Goals and Criteria*

"Rooted in the Scriptures and the teachings of the Catholic Church, Catholic Social Teaching represents a developing tradition which includes organic and systemic reflection on social realities, ethical principles, and application of those principles to current circumstances.

It involves a three-fold task imposed on us: ANNOUNCING the truth of human dignity and rights; DENOUNCING unjust situations in society and CONTRIBUTING to the positive change in society and real human program."[1]

"Today's world – a world at war in many places- generates a dramatic increase in the poverty of our people, and the many injustices they suffer, especially the lack of access to goods and services, to essential food, to simple human dignity. To the cry of the impoverished people is added the silent scream of our anguished earth undergoing so many ecological disasters."[2]

Society of the Sacred Heart, Apostolic priorities, 2023.

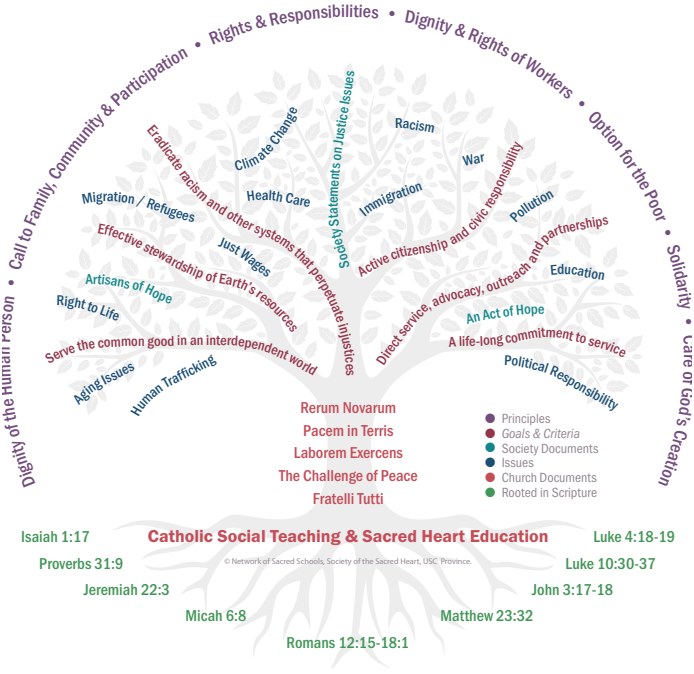
Responding to the calls of the Society of the Sacred Heart, the *Goals and Criteria*, the Catholic Church and the global calls for justice, requires us to examine social justice issues and our involvement in action on behalf of these issues.

These calls invite us to ask critical questions of ourselves and others.

Reflection Questions

1. What does it mean to be a person of faith and commitment in a world marked by social division, inequality, violence, and injustice?
2. What is God asking of me and my community in light of the crises we face today in our country and in our world?
3. Am I aware of Catholic Social Teaching and its deep commitments to principles of dignity, respect, and solidarity?
4. Am I willing to answer this call in a way that enables me to be one with those I encounter, to learn and be liberated with them rather than just help as an outsider?
5. Are we in the Sacred Heart community willing to move beyond "charity and service to others" to learn from them and to be liberated with them?

Mapping the Connections



ROOTS AND TRUNK represent Scripture and Church Teaching as the foundation of the Sacred Heart mission and CST

BRANCHES represent the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart and Sacred Heart education that has grown from their foundations in the Church.

LEAVES represent the specific Sacred Heart Goals and issues that have grown from those foundations and that lead us to action on behalf of Justice.

CANOPY is comprised of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, which provide the lens through which we can analyze reality in an effort to transform the world motivated by our deep values and commitments.

The Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

...provide a tool to analyze issues and guide our decision making on actions related to justice issues. It is important to note that as a "tool" CST gives us objective criteria shared across religious and global boundaries to examine the complexities of issues and to dialogue regarding competing rights and principles. However, CST does not provide definitive answers to complex issues. The seven principles "must interact with the empirical data, with historical, social and political realities, and with competing demands on limited resources."[4]

The principles allow us to move outside of our own preconceived ideas, biases and perceptions to examine an issue from the perspective of shared principles of faith and justice, opening ourselves to being changed and transformed as we

PAUSE, REFLECT, DISCERN and DECIDE how we want to ACT to address justice issues as a Sacred Heart Community.



DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Goal IV: #01

"The School, affirming that all are created in the image and likeness of God, promotes the inherent dignity of the human person and strives for relationships characterized by inclusion and mutual respect." *Goals and Criteria*

Scripture

"God created humankind in the image and likeness of God" Genesis 1:26-27

Dignity of the Human Person

"The sanctity and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. The measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person."[5]

USCCB Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Reflection Questions

1. Where do you personally see the dignity of humans challenged or compromised?
2. How does your school community celebrate and support the life and dignity of all people?
3. How can we collaborate with others to ensure that the life and dignity of all persons is supported and protected?



CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY & PARTICIPATION

Goal III: #01

"Sacred Heart educators prepare students to serve the common good in an interdependent world." Goals and Criteria

Scripture

"There was no one needy among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need." Acts 4:34-35

Call to Family, Community & Participation

"The person is not only sacred, but social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable."[6]

USCCB Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Reflection Questions

1. What are ways in which your own ability to flourish depends on relationships you have with others?
2. In what ways does your school value and celebrate an inclusive community of belonging?
3. How can you collaborate with others to ensure a shared commitment to the common good—that will benefit all?



Goal III: #06

"The School community engages in direct advocacy, outreach and partnerships to work for justice, peace and the integrity of Creation." *Goals and Criteria*

Scripture

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, You did for me."
Matthew 25:40

Option for the Poor

"A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, the Gospels and our tradition recall the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to prioritize the needs of the poor and vulnerable first."[7]

USCCB Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Reflection Questions

1. Who would you count among people who are among the most poor or vulnerable in your own extended community?
2. How does your school community practice or encourage an option for the poor and vulnerable?
3. How might your school collaborate with others to make the needs of the poor and vulnerable a priority?



Goal III: #03

The school...educates students to analyze and work to eradicate social structures, practices, systems and values that perpetuate racism and other injustices. *Goals and Criteria*

Scripture

"To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." *Proverbs 21:3*

Rights & Responsibilities

"Human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society."[8]

USCCB Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Reflection Questions

1. What human rights are most important to you? What responsibilities do you have to preserve these for yourself and others?
2. How does your school community encourage you to know your rights and encourage responsible citizenship?
3. How can you collaborate with your wider social and political communities to ensure that the rights of all people are protected?



Goal III: #05

"School programs promote active citizenship and civic responsibility on the local, national and global levels." Goals and Criteria

Scripture

"My son, rob not the poor man of his
Livelihood; force not the eyes of the needy
To turn away."
Sirach 4:1

Dignity & 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."[9]

USCCB Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Reflection Questions

1. What challenges are you aware of regarding the rights of workers in your area?
2. How does your school community celebrate the dignity and rights of all workers?
3. How might your school community collaborate with other organizations to protect the dignity and rights of all workers—particularly the lowest wage earners?



Goal III: #04

"All members of the school community accept accountability for the care of God's creation, practice effective stewardship of the earth's resources and work to alleviate the climate crisis."

Goals and Criteria

Scripture

"The Lord God then took the man and woman and settled them in the Garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it." *Genesis 2:15*

Care for God's Creation

"We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored."[10]

USCCB Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Reflection Questions

1. In what ways are you aware that the natural environment is being threatened or compromised? What can you do to help?
2. How does your school live out a commitment to taking good care of the natural environment? How might it improve?
3. How might your community collaborate with others to make a wider impact on caring for the natural world?



Goal IV: #05

"Members of the school community practice and teach with a spirit of peace and reconciliation the principle of non-violence and conflict management." *Goals and Criteria*

Scripture

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon God."
Romans 10:12

Solidarity

"We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict."[11]

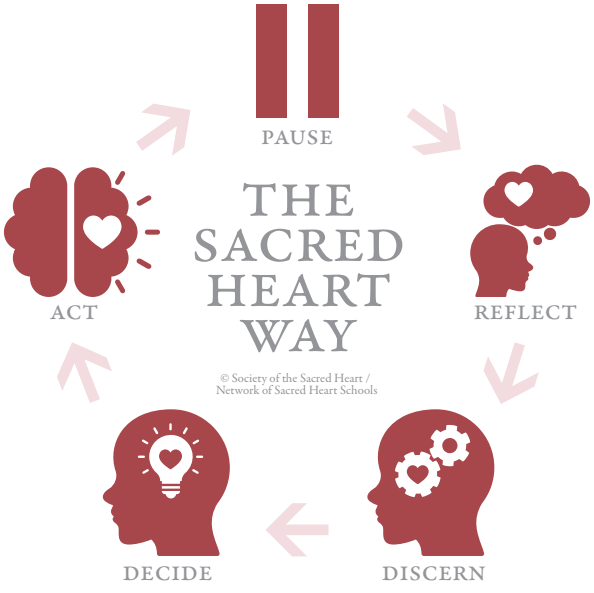
USCCB Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Reflection Questions

1. What have you learned about yourself and others when you have made an effort to get to know people who are different than you?
2. How does your school create opportunities for you to be in relationship with people who are overlooked or misunderstood?
3. How can your school community promote and celebrate a culture of peace and belonging for all people?

The Sacred Heart Way

...is a method for critically reflecting on reality through the lens of faith leading toward action and transformation. This is an ongoing process for making decisions, addressing injustice, upholding the values and principles embedded in Catholic Social Teaching and the *Goals and Criteria* of Sacred Heart Schools.



To PAUSE means to stop and to take time for educating oneself and others on the facts, interrelated issues, and structures that support and perpetuate whatever injustice you are addressing.

To REFLECT is to engage in a deeper form of learning by which we consider reality in the light of our deep commitments. Reflection employs both the mind and the heart in considering how reality conforms to one's deepest values and hopes. Reflection motivates us to action.

To DISCERN means to consider and sort through the variety of one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions with an eye to action. Discernment entails praying for and seeking clarity among the several possibilities for action which ultimately lead to a choice about what is the best fit for an individual and/or community.

To DECIDE means to choose to act from among the many possibilities one has discerned and considered. A decision often follows from the alignment of one's deep values with a course of action that is appropriate to one's passions, hopes, skills, goals, and the time one is able to commit.

To ACT is to engage in transforming the world from a commitment to one's values, hopes, and convictions. In the New Testament, the Greek word praxis is used to describe the ways that early believers put their faith and beliefs into action to transform their society.

Getting directly involved through advocacy, education, direct action with those affected, working with others to change laws and policies that perpetuate injustice, prayer, or a combination of all of these is not an act of going "above and beyond" what we are called to do. Direct involvement is integral to what it means to be students, educators, and alumnae of the Sacred Heart – making known the heart of Christ in our world today.

Reflection Questions

1. How does our school integrate the Sacred Heart Way in all of our decisions, policies, and relationships?
2. How are our community members encouraged to practice the Sacred Heart Way?

Endnotes

1 Fred Kammer, *"What is Catholic Social Teaching?"* Jesuit Social Research Institute.

2 Society of the Sacred Heart, *Apostolic Priorities*, 2023.

3 Graphic, *Catholic Social Teaching and Sacred Heart Education*, Network of Sacred Heart Schools.

4-11 *USCCB Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*, Network of Sacred Heart Schools.

Content not referenced taken from *Using Catholic Social Teaching to Move from Education to Analysis to Action*, *Curriculum Outline and Resources*, Meg Causey RSCJ, Amanda Codina, Susanne Cooke, RSCJ, Mark Potter; Design and graphics by Beth Ponticello, cedc.org.

Credits

Design and graphics for Seven Principles of Catholic Social Teaching, Beth Ponticello, cedc.org.

Design of graphic for Sacred Heart Way, Amanda Codina, Network of Sacred Heart Schools.

Notes

Notes



"As educators, we commit to listening deeply to the cries of humanity and creation and to responding with compassionate action with a preference for the most fragile and vulnerable."

Sophie's Gift...Our Call to the Future, International Education Commission, 2023

SACRED HEART EDUCATION