

Catholic Social Living:
Living wisely, thinking deeply, and loving generously
Lumen Christi Catholic Community
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The following contains edited and abridged excerpts from Catholic social thought. Full texts can be found on the Vatican website: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/it.html> or do an internet search for the title of the document.

The documents below illustrate the three phases in the Catholic social tradition. The first stage is from Pope Leo XIII (1891) to St. John XXIII (1963). Here the tradition highlights rational responses to injustice based on a vision of an ordered society. The second stage is from Pope Pius XII (1940) to St. John Paul II (2005) and supports the “sacredness of persons” and their legitimate moral claims within a globalized moral vision, the imperative being human dignity and human rights. The third stage is from St. John Paul II (2005) to Pope Francis and stresses the interiority of persons and addresses the affective responses of persons as agents of social change, the imperative being solidarity and mercy.

First Phase: Reasoned Arguments for Justice
Some Excerpts from *Rerum novarum* (Pope Leo XIII, 1891)

The Principle of Private Property

As a remedy for these social evils, socialists prey on the envy of the poor toward the rich. They maintain that the solution to these problems is to do away with private possession of goods and make the goods of individuals common to all. They believe that government should then administer the common property. This equal share in wealth will then be the cure for the present evil. This solution is unjust on a number of grounds: it would hurt workers, rob the lawful of their possessions and inject government into an area that is not its own.

Justification from the Purpose of Work: The reason a person engages in remunerative labor is to obtain property. A person who works for pay does so for the purpose of receiving in return what is necessary for the satisfaction of his or her needs. The workers also to have the right to use pay as they see fit. Thus, if workers live within their means, save some money, and invest in land, the land becomes their wages under another form. Thus, workers would be able to use such land as they would use their wages. Ownership necessarily includes the ability to choose use, whether in wages or property.

Justification based on Human Nature: Like all life in God's creation, humans have the fundamental instincts of self-preservation and propagation. Unlike plants and animals, humans have a mind. This is a distinguishing human feature. We have choice; we are the masters of our own acts. We must make decisions for our future welfare. Thus, humans can possess the fruits of the earth as well as the earth itself. The fact that God has given the earth for the use and enjoyment of the whole human race does not prohibit private ownership of property. That God has granted the earth to all humanity does not mean people can use the earth as they please. Human authority must place limits on private property. Moreover, the earth, even though apportioned among private owners, ceases not thereby to minister to the needs of all. Those who do not own land contribute their labor; hence, it may truly be said that all human subsistence is derived either from labor on one's own land, or from some paid work on the land.

Justification from the Transformative Character of Work: There is more proof that private ownership is in accord with the law of nature. When people work, that is to say, when they turn the activity of their mind and the strength of their body toward procuring the fruits of nature, they make a part of that which they work on their own. When people work, they leave an impression of themselves, their personality on the object of labor. Justice demands that people should possess that which they have worked on. That is to say, workers have a right to keep a portion of what they work on as their own.

When a person works on something, he transforms it. Consider working the land, it begins wild and barren. Once it is worked, once it is tilled and cultivated through toil and skill, it is utterly changed. It is now fruitful and productive. It is impossible to separate the parts in this process. How can it be just that the fruit of a person's own sweat and labor can be possessed and enjoyed by another? As effects follow their cause, so is it just and right that the results of labor belong to the laborers.

Justification from the Established Social Practice through the Ages: Human societies throughout time have held that private ownership was in conformity with human nature and most conducive to peace and tranquility in human existence.

Justification based on the Protection of Family: The justification of individual rights is even stronger when considered in the context of a person's social and domestic obligations. Consider the family. No human law can abolish the natural and original right of marriage, nor in any way limit the chief and principal purpose of marriage ordained by God's authority from the beginning: "Increase and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). The family is the "society" of one's house, a society very small, but still a true society. Indeed, the society of the family is prior to any other society, including the nation. The family has rights and duties that are quite independent of these larger communities.

It is a most sacred law of nature that parents must meet the basic needs of their children. There is no other way to do this than through the means of private ownership of property, which parents can pass on to children through inheritance. A family then has rights to the pursuit of its freedom and well-being. As a rule, government should not intrude into family life. However, if a family finds itself in a desperate situation, its needs are to be met through public aid. In like manner, if there is a great disturbance of mutual rights within a family, public authority must intervene. Such intervention does not rob citizens of their rights; in fact, such intervention justly and properly safeguards and strengthens rights.

The first and most fundamental principle, therefore, in the work to alleviate the terrible conditions of the working poor must be the defense of private property. This being established, we proceed to consider the remedy for the contemporary social order...

Mutual Rights and Duties

It is a fundamental error to hold that one social class is by nature hostile to another social class, that is to say, it is wrong to suggest that by nature the wealthy and the workers live in mutual conflict. Just as there are different parts of the human body and the body has a symmetry and balance, so society is ordained by nature with two classes who are meant to dwell in harmony and agreement. Each class needs the other. Capital cannot do without labor; labor cannot do without capital.

The Responsibility of Workers: Workers must fully and faithfully perform the work that has been freely and equitably agreed upon. They must never injure the property, nor outrage the person, of an employer. They must never resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor engage in riot or disorder. They must have nothing to do with persons of evil principles, who work with artful promises of great results, and excite foolish hopes that usually end in useless regrets and grievous loss.

The Responsibility of Employers: The wealthy owners and employers must not look upon their workers as their bondsmen. They must respect the human dignity of every worker as a person and a Christian. They must keep in mind that physical labor is honorable as it enables a person to earn a living in an upright manner. They must know that it is shameful and inhuman to use workers as objects for their own personal gain. They must be aware that justice demands that the good of a worker's soul must be kept in mind. The employer must ensure that workers have time for religious duties. The employer must ensure that the worker not be exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions. The employer must ensure that workers not be led away to neglect their homes and families, or to squander their earnings. Furthermore, the employer must never make people work beyond their strength, or employ them in work unsuited to their sex and age.

The principal duty of every employer is to give every worker what is just. Doubtless, before deciding whether wages are fair, many things have to be considered. Wealthy owners and all employers must be mindful that forcing the poor into unjust conditions for their own selfish gain and profit is condemned by all laws, human and divine. To defraud anyone of wages is a great crime that cries to the

avenging anger of Heaven. “Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts” (James 5:4). Finally, the rich must religiously refrain from cutting down the workers’ earnings, whether by force, by fraud, or by usurious dealing. The vulnerability of workers demands proportionate protection. If these moral rules were obeyed, would there be any social strife today?...

The Moral Requirement of a Just Wage

We now approach a subject of great importance. One in which right thinking is absolutely necessary. Some people hold that wages are regulated only by free consent. Thus, when an employer pays the agreed upon wage, he or she has fulfilled his obligation to the worker. The only way injustice might occur would be if the employer refused to pay the whole of the wages, or if the worker did not complete the work agreed upon. Then, and only then, should public authorities intervene, namely, to see that each obtains his or her due.

No fair-minded person can completely agree with this position. It is incomplete. This position ignores important considerations. To labor is to exert oneself for the sake of procuring what is necessary for the various purposes of life, and chief of all for self-preservation. Hence, a person's labor necessarily has two characteristics. First of all, labor is personal. The exertion of power belongs to the worker. Such ability was given to the worker to pursue personal good. Secondly, one's labor is necessary. One cannot live without the results of work. Self-preservation is a basic law of nature. **If we consider labor merely as personal, it would be within the worker's right to accept any wage whatsoever. Just as one is free to work or not to work, so one is free to accept a small wage or even none at all. But when we consider the fact that work is also necessary for one to live, our conclusion is altogether different.**

The personal and necessary aspects of work are separable in theory but not in practice. We all have the fundamental duty to preserve our lives. To neglect this duty is a moral crime. It necessarily follows that each of us has a natural right to procure what is required in order to live. The poor can procure that in no other way than by what they can earn through their work. Workers and employers should make free agreements on wages and other matters. In doing so, however, they must rest such agreements on a law of justice, namely, that wages must be sufficient to support a worker in reasonable comfort. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil a worker accepts harder conditions because an employer will give no better, he or she is made the victim of force and injustice. While governments can intervene to resolve unjust and unsafe working conditions, it is better that government supported organizations or boards be created to safeguard the interests of workers.

Second Phase: Human Dignity and Human Rights in a Global Context **Excerpt from *Pacem in terris* (St. John XXIII, 1963)**

Introduction

Peace on earth, something people throughout history have longed for and sought after, can only be established and guaranteed if the divinely established order is observed. A marvelous order reigns in the world and in the forces of nature. It is within our nature as persons to comprehend this order and work to harness the forces of nature for universal good. God created us “in His own image and likeness” (Gen. 1:26), endowed us with intelligence and freedom, and made us lord of creation.

In striking contrast to the perfect order of the universe, however, is the disunity between individuals and among nations. The Creator has imprinted on the human heart an order that can be understood through the individual conscience. God has written the moral law and indeed the laws between peoples and governments into human nature.

These laws clearly indicate how we ought to relate to others in society. They also indicate how relationships between members of a society and public officials ought to be conducted. They show too what principles must govern international relations and govern the relation of individuals and nations to the global community. Since humans have common interests it is imperative that a global community of nations be established.

Personal Rights and Responsibilities

Any well-regulated and productive society depends on the acceptance of one fundamental principle: that each individual is truly a person. Humans are endowed with intelligence and free will. Because of this, all people have certain rights and duties. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore inalienable. Since Christians consider human nature in accord with God's revelation, their evaluation of humankind is greatly increased. The blood of Jesus Christ redeems humans, and all people are children and friends of God, heirs to eternal glory.

Rights

The Right to a Life with Dignity: Every person has the right to life. Every person has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, namely, food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, every person has the right to be looked after in the event of ill health; disability stemming from work; widowhood; old age; enforced unemployment; or when deprived of the means of livelihood.

Rights Pertaining to Moral and Cultural Values: Every person has the right to be respected. Every person has a right to a good name. Every person has a right to freedom in investigating the truth, and—within the limits of the moral order and the common good—to freedom of speech and publication, and to freedom to pursue whatever profession he or she may choose. Every person has the right, also, to be accurately informed about public events. Every person has the natural right to share in the benefits of culture, and hence to receive a good general education, and a technical or professional training consistent with the degree of educational development in his or her own country.

The Right to Worship God According to One's Conscience: Every person has the right to worship God according to the dictates of individual conscience, and to profess faith both privately and publicly.

The Right to Choose Freely One's State in Life: Every person has the right to choose the kind of life that appeals to him or her. Every person has the right to found a family, where men and women enjoy equal rights and duties, or to embrace the priesthood or the religious life. The family, founded upon marriage freely contracted, one and indissoluble, must be regarded as the natural, primary cell of human society. The interests of the family, therefore, must be taken seriously into consideration in social and economic affairs, as well as in faith and morals. Each of these spheres has an impact on the strength of family and its ability to fulfill its mission. Parents have the primary right to support and educate their children.

Economic Rights: Every person has the inherent right to be given the opportunity to work, and to be allowed the exercise of personal initiative in work. Working conditions must not harm physical health, the morals of workers, or impair the normal development of young people. Women must be accorded such conditions of work as are consistent with their needs and responsibilities as wives and mothers. Each worker is entitled to a just wage. This must be especially emphasized. The amount a worker receives must be sufficient, in proportion to available funds, to allow the family a standard of living consistent with human dignity. Every person has the right to the private ownership of property, including that of productive goods. With this right comes a social obligation.

The Right of Meeting and Association: Humans are social by nature. Consequently, all persons have the right to meet and to form associations. They have the right to organize associations as they see fit. They have also the right to exercise their own initiative and act on their own responsibility within these associations.

The Right to Emigrate and Immigrate: Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his or her own country. When there are just reasons in favor of it, every person must be permitted to immigrate to other countries and take up residence there. The fact that people are citizens of a particular country does not deprive them of membership in the human family, the global community.

Political Rights: Every person has the right to take an active part in public life, and to make a personal contribution to the common good. Every person is entitled to the legal protection of his or her rights. Such protection must be effective, unbiased, and strictly just.

Responsibilities

These natural rights are inseparably connected to many duties. Rights and duties find their origin, their sustenance, and their indestructibility from the natural law, which in conferring the one imposes the other. Thus, the right to live involves the duty to preserve one's life; the right to a decent standard of living, the duty to live life in an appropriate manner; the right to be free to seek out the truth, the duty to devote oneself to the search for truth.

Reciprocity of Rights and Duties Between Persons: Personal rights correspond to duties in others. All must recognize and respect the rights of others. Every human right is justified on the natural law; this confers its respective duty. People who claim their rights and ignore their duties are people who build with one hand and destroy with the other.

Mutual Collaboration: Since people are by their very nature social, they live together and work for each other's good. A well-ordered society depends on the mutual recognition of rights and duties.

An Attitude of Responsibility: Human society cannot be based on force. Human dignity requires that persons be free and that they be able to act responsibly. Every person must act on his or her own initiative, conviction, and sense of responsibility, not under the threat of external coercion.

Social Life in Truth, Justice, Charity and Freedom: Human society must be based on truth if it is to be considered well ordered, creative, and consonant with human dignity. Justice must guide human society. Justice is based on the respect of rights and the fulfillment of duties. Human society must be animated by love so persons can feel the needs of others. Through love persons are moved to share their goods with others, and to work to create a world expressing intellectual and spiritual values. Human society thrives on freedom, and thus uses means consistent with the dignity of its individual members, who, being endowed with reason, assume responsibility for their own actions and the common good.

Excerpts from *Gaudium et spes* (Second Vatican Council, 1968)

Preface

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Hence this Second Vatican Council now addresses itself to the whole of humanity.

The council brings to all the light kindled from the Gospel, and puts at its disposal those saving resources that the Church herself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, receives from her Founder. For the human person deserves to be preserved and human society deserves to be renewed. Hence the focal point of this document will be the person, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will.

The Person

According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to persons as their center and crown.

But what is the human person? There are many divergent and even contradictory opinions. The Church offers answers to this question, so that the truth about persons, their defects, dignity and destiny, can be portrayed. Sacred Scripture teaches that humans were created "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27), capable of knowing and loving God, and master of all earthly creatures. We are to subdue them and use them to God's glory.

By one's innermost nature a person is a social being, for from the beginning "male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Their companionship produces the primary form of interpersonal communion. Unless they relate to others, persons can neither fully live nor develop their potential.

From the very onset of history humans abused their liberty. They set themselves against God. People today find that they too have inclinations toward evil. When we refuse to acknowledge God, we disrupt our proper relationships to God, ourselves, other people and indeed the whole of creation.

People often feel internally split. As a result, all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness. The call to grandeur and the depths of misery, both of which are a part of human experience, find their ultimate and simultaneous explanation in the light of this revelation.

Though made of body and soul, a person is a unity. Our bodies are good, honorable and created by God. Our interior qualities, however, surpass all material things. God probes our hearts. We plunge into the depths of reality whenever we enter into our own hearts. There we find God waiting for us.

Humans know that through intellect they surpass the material universe, and through this intellect share in the light of the divine mind. The intellectual nature of the human person is perfected by wisdom and a love for what is true and good. The contemporary world is in desperate need of people with wisdom. We note that often people poor in economic goods are quite rich in wisdom and ought to be a source of wisdom for others.

Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. In conscience, one is alone with God. It is where one can hear God. In the depths of conscience, people can perceive a law obliging them to love good and avoid evil. This law is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor. To obey conscience is the very dignity of a person, indeed one will be judged according to how one obeyed one's conscience.

Following an informed conscience pushes us from simple blind choice and toward the objective norms of morality. Conscience, through human limitation, may frequently err but it never loses its primacy.

Only in freedom can one move toward goodness. Hence a person's dignity demands that he or she act with knowledge and freedom, motivated from within. True choice is not made under blind internal impulse nor is it a result of external pressure.

In the face of death, the riddle of human existence grows most acute. Although the mystery of death utterly challenges human imagination, the Church firmly teaches that God has created humans for a blissful purpose beyond the reach of earthly misery. For God has called all people to be joined to Him in an endless sharing of divine life...

The Human Family

God, who has loving concern for everyone, has willed that all people constitute one family. **For this reason, love for God and neighbor is the first and greatest commandment.** For humanity growing daily more dependent on one another, and to a world becoming more unified every day, this truth proves to be of paramount importance.

Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, "that all may be one...as we are one" (John 17:21–22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of people in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that persons, who are the only creatures on earth that God willed for themselves, cannot fully find themselves except through a sincere gift of self.

The subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person. The social element of life is not something added on to a person. It is through relationships with others, through reciprocal duties, and through true dialogue that a person develops his or her gifts and is able to rise to his or her destiny...

Human Dignity

A fundamental equality exists among all people. We all possess a rational soul. All people have been created in God's likeness and thus share the same nature and origin. Since Christ has redeemed us, all people share the same divine calling and destiny. Thus, **every type of discrimination**, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, **is to be overcome and**

eradicated. Discrimination is contrary to God's will. Yet even today, the basic personal rights of many people are not honored.

Although individuals are unique and differences do exist between people, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about. Excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or within particular communities undermine social justice, equity, and the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace.

Excerpts from *Laborem excerens* (St. John Paul II, 1981)

The Person Who Works

In order to continue our analysis of work, we must concentrate on work in the “subjective” sense. Humans are persons, that is to say, subjective beings. Persons are capable of acting in planned and rational ways. They are capable of choice and have a tendency to self-realization. A person therefore is the subject of work. When a person works, he or she performs actions. These actions must serve the realization of the person's humanity. The objective work activity must fulfill the subjective nature of work, that is to say, work must aid the worker in his or her calling to be a person...

The primary basis of the value of work is the person, the subject of work. Ethical reflection on the nature of work then begins with the concept that work is “for persons,” persons are not “for work.” That is to say, the subjective meaning of work has pre-eminence over the objective meaning of work. In the final analysis, it is always a person who is the purpose of the work, no matter what kind of work is being done, even if society thinks such work is the most menial, most monotonous, or the most alienating work.

Third Phase: Mercy, Solidarity, and Love

Excerpts from *Dives in misericordia* (St. John Paul, 1980)

A person lives the merciful love of God to the extent that he or she is interiorly transformed in the spirit of that love towards the neighbor. This is a process and a lifestyle and indeed, a basic characteristic of the Christian life. Merciful love is never a one-way love. Even in helping relationships, where it seems that only one person is giving and the other is receiving for example, in the case of a physician or nurse giving treatment, a teacher teaching, parents supporting and bringing up their children, a benefactor helping the needy), the one who gives can also be a beneficiary. The one who gives can experience the merciful love from the other person.

True mercy is the most profound source of justice. In justice, one experiences the distribution of goods, yet love restores a person.

Mercy that is truly Christian is also the most perfect incarnation of equality between people. It is also the most perfect incarnation of justice as well, insofar as justice aims at equality in its own sphere. However, the equality brought by justice is limited to objective and extrinsic goods. In love and mercy, on the other hand, people meet one another on that fundamental level of shared human dignity.

This is the truth of mercy: the person who gives becomes more generous when one feels at the same time benefitted by the person accepting his gift; and vice versa, the person who accepts the gift with the awareness that, in accepting it, he or she too is doing good, that is, serving the great cause of the human dignity of the person. Through this process, people are united in a deep and profound way.

Mercy is an indispensable element for shaping mutual relationships between people. Objective justice only goes so far. Merciful love directs justice with cordial tenderness and sensitivity. It is indispensable for close personal relationships and it is indispensable in education and in pastoral work.

Merciful love is however not limited to personal relationships. The Second Vatican Council speaks repeatedly of the need to make the world more human and describes this task as the mission of the Church in the modern world. Society can become ever more human only if we practice justice and merciful love, which is so much of the essence of the Gospel, in all relationships. Forgiveness demonstrates a love that is more powerful than sin. Forgiveness is the condition for reconciliation, not only in the relationship of God with persons, but also in relationships between people. A world without

forgiveness would a cold and unfeeling world. Such a world would promote selfishness that could only lead to oppression and strife.

For this reason, the Church considers it one of her principal duties to proclaim mercy, mercy supremely revealed in Jesus Christ. It is obvious that forgiveness does not cancel the objective requirements of justice. Properly understood, justice constitutes the goal of forgiveness. In no passage of the Gospel message does forgiveness, or mercy as its source, mean indulgence towards evil, towards scandals, towards injury or insult. In any case, reparation for evil and scandal, compensation for injury, and satisfaction for insult are conditions for forgiveness.

Thus, the fundamental structure of justice always enters into the sphere of mercy. Mercy, however, has the power to confer on justice a new content, which is expressed most simply and fully in forgiveness. Forgiveness shows that, over and above the process of “compensation” and “truce” which is specific to justice, love is necessary, so that that person may affirm oneself as a person. Fulfillment of the conditions of justice is especially indispensable in order that love may reveal its own nature. The one who forgives and the one who is forgiven encounter one another at an essential point, namely the dignity or essential value of the person. This is a point that can never be forgotten. The affirmation or discovery of forgiveness is a source of the greatest joy.

Excerpt from *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (St. John Paul, 1987)

A Theological Reading of Modern Problems

Because development has an essential moral character, it is clear that the obstacles to development have a moral character. It is necessary then to single out the moral causes that interfere with the course of development.

Sinful Social Structures

In a world sustained by rigid ideologies, imperialism holds sway instead of interdependence and solidarity. This world is subject to structures of sin. The many negative factors working against the universal common good give the impression to many that the obstacles are difficult to overcome.

Given the present situation and the various difficulties facing the common good, it is not out of place to speak of “structures of sin.” The Church recognizes sinful situations or the sinful collective behavior of social groups or nations. Social sin is the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins. It is a case of the personal sins of those people who

- Cause, support, or exploit evil;
- Are in a position to avoid, eliminate or limit social evils but fail to do so out of laziness, fear, indifference, silence, or secret complicity;
- Take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world;
- Produce false religious reasoning so as to avoid the sacrifice required.

Structures of sin are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove. And thus, they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people's behavior. Responsibility lies with individuals. A situation, institution, structure or society is not in itself the subject of moral acts. Hence a situation cannot in itself be good or bad.

Sin and structures of sin are categories that help us name the root of the evils that afflict us. These categories help us gain a profound understanding of reality. There are two typical sets of actions and attitudes opposed to the will of God and the good of neighbor: an all-consuming desire for profit, and the thirst for power so as to impose one's will upon others.

I have wished to introduce this type of analysis above all in order to point out the true nature of the evil that faces us in respect to human development. This is a question of a moral evil, the fruit of many sins that lead to structures of sin.

Solidarity: The Response to Social Sin

The Christian response to sin is change, change of behavior, mentality, or mode of existence. In biblical language, the response to sin is conversion (cf. Mk 13:3, 5, Is 30:15). Conversion specifically entails a relationship to God, to the sin committed, to its consequences and hence to one's neighbor.

On the path toward conversion it is possible to point to the positive and moral value of the growing awareness of economic, cultural, political and religious interdependence among individuals and nations.

When interdependence becomes recognized as a moral category, the response as a moral and social attitude, as a "virtue," is solidarity. Solidarity is not a feeling of vague distress at the misfortunes of people. On the contrary, solidarity is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is to say, to the good of all. We are all responsible for all. Solidarity is based on the conviction that desire for profit and thirst for power hinder full development. The "structures of sin" are only conquered by a diametrically opposed attitude, namely, a commitment to the good of one's neighbor. Solidarity refers to the readiness to "lose oneself" for the sake of the other instead of exploiting the other, and to serve him or her instead of oppressing the other for one's own advantage (cf. Mt 10:40–42; 20:25; Mk 10:42–45; Lk 22:25–27).

Solidarity is exercised when people recognize one another as persons. Those with a greater share of goods should feel responsible for the weaker. They should be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker should not be passive. While claiming their legitimate rights, they should do what they can for the good of all. Solidarity is to be practiced within nations as well as in international relationships.

Solidarity helps us to see the "other," whether we are speaking of a person, people or nation, not just as some kind of instrument with a work capacity. Solidarity helps us to see the "other" as our "neighbor," a "helper" (cf. Gen 2:18–20), to be made a sharer. A neighbor is one who is like us and is equally invited by God to participate in the banquet of life.

Excerpts from *Deus caritas est* (Pope Benedict XVI, 2005)

"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16). These words from the First Letter of John express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of humankind and its destiny. In the same verse, Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us."

We have come to believe in God's love: in these words, the Christian can express the fundamental decision of one's life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Jesus united into a single precept this commandment of love for God and the commandment of love for neighbor found in the Old Testament: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (19:18; cf. Mk 12:29-31). Since God has first loved us (1 Jn 4:10), love is now no longer a mere "command"; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us...

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) offers two particularly important clarifications. First, it opens up the meaning of neighbor. Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbor. The neighbor is universal, yet it always refers to concrete persons. Recall Jesus's teaching on the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46). Here love becomes the criterion for the definitive decision about a human life's worth. Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Love of God and love of neighbor have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God.

There is an unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbor. We lie we say we love God but at the same time we are closed to our neighbor or hate the neighbor altogether. Love of neighbor is a path that leads to the encounter with God. Closing our eyes to our neighbor blinds us to God.

Love is more than a sentiment. Sentiments come and go. A sentiment can be a marvelous first spark, but it is not the fullness of love. Mature love engages the whole person. Contact with God's love

can awaken within us a feeling of joy from being loved. But this encounter also engages our will and our intellect. This process is always open-ended; love is never “finished” and complete for throughout life, it changes and matures.

Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love that they crave. **My readiness to encounter my neighbor and to show him or her love makes me sensitive to God as well.** Only if I serve my neighbor can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me. Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable. They form a single commandment. But both arise from the God who has loved us first. Mature love is not imposed on us; it comes from the experience of love from within us, a love that by its very nature must then be shared with others. Love grows through love. Love is “divine” because it comes from God and unites us to God; through this unifying process it makes us a “we” which transcends our divisions and makes us one...

The Christian's program—the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus—is “a heart which sees.” This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.

Charity, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays called proselytism. **Love is free; it is not a method for achieving other ends. Love is concerned with the whole person.** Often the deepest cause of suffering is the very absence of God. Yet those who practice charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith upon others. They realize that a pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love. A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak. A Christian knows that God is love and that God's presence is felt at the very time when we love. Consequently, the best proclamation of God is though love.

The people who carry out the Church's charitable activity should be guided by faith that works through love. Consequently, more than anything, they must be persons moved by Christ's love, persons whose hearts Christ has conquered with his love, awakening within them a love of neighbor.

Practical activity will always be insufficient, unless it visibly expresses a love for the particular person, a love nourished by an encounter with Christ. **My deep personal sharing in the needs and sufferings of others becomes a sharing of my very self with them. If my gift is not to prove a source of humiliation, I must give to others not only something that is my own, but my very self. I must be personally present in my gift.**

This proper way of serving others leads to **humility.** This means that the person who serves the other ought not to consider himself or herself superior to the one who is served, **however miserable the situation at the moment may be.** Christ took the lowest place in the world—the Cross. Those who are in a position to help others will realize that in doing so they themselves receive help.

Excerpts from *Caritas in veritate* (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009)

Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity. Love — caritas — is an extraordinary force that leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace. It is a force that has its origin in God, Eternal Love and Absolute Truth. All people feel the interior impulse to love authentically: love and truth never abandon them completely, because these are the vocation planted by God in the heart and mind of every human person. In Christ, charity in truth becomes the Face of his Person, a vocation for us to love our brothers and sisters in the truth of his plan. Indeed, he himself is the Truth.

Charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine. It is the synthesis of the entire Law. It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbor; it is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones). For the Church, instructed by the Gospel, charity is everything because: everything has its origin in God's love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it. Love is God's greatest gift to humanity. It is his promise and our hope...

One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation. If we look closely at other kinds of poverty, including material forms, we see that they are born from isolation, from not being loved or from difficulties in being able to love. A person is alienated when he or she is alone, when he or she is detached from reality, when he or she stops thinking and believing in a foundation...

As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically one lives these relations, the more one's own personal identity matures. It is not by isolation that one establishes one's worth, but by placing oneself in relation with others and with God.

The theme of development can be identified with the inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples within the one community of the human family, built in solidarity on the basis of the fundamental values of justice and peace. This perspective is illuminated in a striking way by the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity within the one divine Substance. The Trinity is absolute unity insofar as the three divine Persons are pure relationality.

Excerpts from *Evangelii gaudium* (Pope Francis, 2009)

We hear the **cry of the poor when the suffering of others moves us**. When we listen to what God's word teaches us about mercy and allow that word to resound in the life of the Church. The message is so clear and direct, so simple and eloquent. The Church's reflection on these texts must urge us to accept their exhortations with courage and zeal. This is especially the case with those biblical exhortations that summon us so forcefully to brotherly love, to humble and generous service, to justice and mercy towards the poor. Jesus taught us this way of looking at others by his words and his actions...

God's heart has a **special place for the poor**, so much so that he himself "became poor" (2 Cor 8:9). The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor. Salvation came to us from the "yes" uttered by a lowly maiden from a small town on the fringes of a great empire. The Savior was born in a manger, in the midst of animals, like children of poor families. He was presented at the Temple along with two turtledoves, the offering made by those who could not afford a lamb (cf. Lk 2:24; Lev 5:7). He was raised in a home of ordinary workers and worked with his own hands to earn his bread. When he began to preach the Kingdom, crowds of the dispossessed followed him, illustrating his words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). He assured those burdened by sorrow and crushed by poverty that God has a special place for them in his heart: "Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk 6:20). He made himself one of them: "I was hungry and you gave me food to eat", and he taught them that mercy towards all of these is the key to heaven (cf. Mt 25:5ff.).

For the Church, the option for the poor is a theological category. God shows the poor his first mercy. This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians. **This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor**. They have much to teach us. Not only do they participate, with all Catholics, in the development of the faith, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the center of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom that God wishes to share with us through them.

Jesus identifies especially with the little ones (cf. Mt 25:40). **This reminds us Christians that we are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth**. But the current way of things emphasizes success and self-reliance. It does not favor an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life.

It is essential to become closer to new forms of poverty and vulnerability and there to recognize the suffering Christ. I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, and many others. Migrants present a particular concern for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without frontiers, a Church that considers herself mother to all.

Some Excerpts from *Amoris laetitia* (Pope Francis, 2016)

Love is patient

It refers, then, to the quality of one who does not act on impulse and avoids giving offense.

God's "patience", shown in his mercy towards sinners, is a sign of his real power.

Patience takes root when I recognize that other people also have a right to live in this world, just as they are. It does not matter if they hold me back, if they unsettle my plans, or annoy me by the way they act or think, or if they are not everything I want them to be. Love always has an aspect of deep compassion that leads to accepting the other person as part of this world, even when he or she acts differently than I would like.

Love is at the service of others

Throughout the text, it is clear that Paul wants to stress that love is more than a mere feeling. Rather, it should be understood along the lines of the Hebrew verb "to love"; it is "to do good". As Saint Ignatius of Loyola said, "Love is shown more by deeds than by words".

Love is not jealous

True love values the other person's achievements.

Love inspires a sincere esteem for every human being and the recognition of his or her own right to happiness. I love this person, and I see him or her with the eyes of God, who gives us everything "for our enjoyment" (1 Tim 6:17). As a result, I feel a deep sense of happiness and peace. This same deeply rooted love also leads me to reject the injustice whereby some possess too much and others too little. It moves me to find ways of helping society's outcasts to find a modicum of joy. That is not envy, but the desire for equality.

Love is not boastful

Literally, it means that we do not become "puffed up" before others.

Yet what really makes us important is a love that understands, shows concern, and embraces the weak.

Love, on the other hand, is marked by humility; if we are to understand, forgive and serve others from the heart, our pride has to be healed and our humility must increase.

The inner logic of Christian love is not about importance and power; rather, "whoever would be first among you must be your slave" (Mt 20:27).

Love is not rude

Love abhors making others suffer.

Indeed, the deeper love is, the more it calls for respect for the other's freedom and the ability to wait until the other opens the door to his or her heart

Loving kindness builds bonds, cultivates relationships, creates new networks of integration and knits a firm social fabric.

Love is generous

We have repeatedly said that to love another we must first love ourselves.

Love is not irritable or resentful

To nurture such interior hostility helps no one. It only causes hurt and alienation. Indignation is only healthy when it makes us react to a grave injustice; when it permeates our attitude towards others it is harmful.

Love forgives

The opposite of resentment is forgiveness, which is rooted in a positive attitude that seeks to understand other people's weaknesses and to excuse them.

We need to learn to pray over our past history, to accept ourselves, to learn how to live with our limitations, and even to forgive ourselves, in order to have this same attitude towards others.

If we accept that God's love is unconditional, that the Father's love cannot be bought or sold, then we will become capable of showing boundless love and forgiving others even if they have wronged us.

Love rejoices with others

In other words, we rejoice at the good of others when we see their dignity and value their abilities and good works.

Love bears all things

Far from ingenuously claiming not to see the problems and weaknesses of others, it sees those weaknesses and faults in a wider context. It recognizes that these failings are a part of a bigger picture. We have to realize that all of us are a complex mixture of light and shadows. The other person is much more than the sum of the little things that annoy me. Love does not have to be perfect for us to value it. The other person loves me as best they can, with all their limits, but the fact that love is imperfect does not mean that it is untrue or unreal. It is real, albeit limited and earthly.

Love believes all things

Love trusts, it sets free, it does not try to control, possess and dominate everything. This freedom, which fosters independence, an openness to the world around us and to new experiences, can only enrich and expand relationships.

Love hopes all things

Love does not despair of the future.

Love endures all things

It is a love that never gives up, even in the darkest hour.

Here I think of the words of Martin Luther King, who met every kind of trial and tribulation with fraternal love: "The person who hates you most has some good in him; even the nation that hates you most has some good in it; even the race that hates you most has some good in it. And when you come to the point that you look in the face of every man and see deep down within him what religion calls 'the image of God', you begin to love him in spite of [everything]. No matter what he does, you see God's image there. There is an element of goodness that he can never sluff off... Another way that you love your enemy is this: when the opportunity presents itself for you to defeat your enemy, that is the time which you must not do it... When you rise to the level of love, of its great beauty and power, you seek only to defeat evil systems. Individuals who happen to be caught up in that system, you love, but you seek to defeat the system... Hate for hate only intensifies the existence of hate and evil in the universe. If I hit you and you hit me and I hit you back and you hit me back and so on, you see, that goes on ad infinitum. It just never ends. Somewhere somebody must have a little sense, and that's the strong person. The strong person is the person who can cut off the chain of hate, the chain of evil."