



Matthew 25:31-46

The Sheep and the Goats

When the Son of Man comes as King and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, and the people of all the nations will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the righteous people at his right and the others at his left. Then the King will say to the people on his right, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me." The righteous will then answer him, "When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!"

Then he will say to those on his left, "Away from me, you that are under God's curse? Away to the eternal fire which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels!"

Basic Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Our Catholic Social Teaching is more than a set of documents. It is a living tradition of thought and action. The Church's social vision has developed and grown over time, responding to changing circumstances and emerging problems – including developments in human work, new economic questions, war and peace in a nuclear age, and poverty and development in a shrinking world. While the subjects have changed, some basic principles and themes have emerged within this tradition:

The Life and Dignity of the Human Person

In the Catholic social vision, the human person is central, the clearest reflection of God among us. Each person possesses a basic dignity which comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment, not from race or gender, age or economic status. The test of every institution or policy is whether it enhances or threatens human life and human dignity. We believe people are more important than things.

The Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person

Flowing from our God-given dignity, each person has basic rights and responsibilities. These include the right to freedom of conscience and religious liberty, to raise a family, to immigrate, to live free from unfair discrimination, and to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family. People have a fundamental right to life and to those things which make life truly human – food, clothing, housing, health care, education, security, social services, and employment. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families and to the larger society, to respect the rights of others, and to work for the common good.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Work is more than a way to make a living; it is an expression of our dignity and a form of continuing participation in God's creation. People have the right to decent and productive work, to decent and fair wages, to private property and economic initiative. Workers have the strong support of the Church in forming and joining union and worker associations of their choosing in the exercise of their dignity and rights. In Catholic teaching, the economy exists to serve people, not the other way around.