

“AS

I HAVE  
“SO  
YOU

DONE  
ALSO

FOR  
SHOULD  
DO.”

YOU.”

A PASTORAL LETTER

+JOHN F. KINNEY  
BISHOP OF SAINT CLOUD



*Office of the Bishop  
Diocese of St. Cloud*

214 3RD AVENUE SOUTH - BOX 1248  
ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA 56302  
TELEPHONE (320) 251-2340  
FAX (320) 258-7618

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In 1998, I wrote a Pastoral letter on Catholic Social Teaching, "As I Have Done for You..." Since that time, many changes have occurred; however, Catholic Social Teaching never changes. In light of the many societal and diocesan developments over the past 12 years, I think it is important to revisit this pastoral message.

In that spirit, I write this second letter: "As I Have Done for You...So You Also Should Do."

I ask you to reflect on the words of Jesus and His ongoing teaching for us. Please join me in asking, "Lord, where do we see you hungry, thirsty, or naked? Help us to see you and to act."

May this pastoral letter help you to understand and accept the many challenges we all experience as we respond to God's call to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+John F. Kinney  
Bishop of Saint Cloud

“AS I HAVE DONE FOR YOU  
...SO YOU ALSO SHOULD DO.”

*A Pastoral Letter*

+ John F. Kinney  
Bishop of Saint Cloud



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Diocese of Saint Cloud

P.O. Box 1248

St. Cloud, MN 56302-1248

Phone: 320-251-2340

Fax: 320-251-1470

[www.stclouddiocese.org](http://www.stclouddiocese.org)

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## INTRODUCTION

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me' (Mt. 25:37-40).

**I**n Jesus' parable of the last judgment (Mt. 25), the righteous were surprised at the king's reply. Being judged by their acts of love, mercy, and justice was not the surprise. Rather, they were taken aback by how these acts of mercy and justice were to be done: among those who were hungry, thirsty, and in need of clothing; among strangers, prisoners, and the sick; among those who lacked the basic necessities of life; among those who were least able to return the kindness. In John's Gospel, we read of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples (13:1-11). Jesus then tells them that they should do to one another as he has done to them (vs 15). A little later (vs 34) Jesus tells his disciples:

*I give you a new commandment that you love one another.  
Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*

The Gospels could not be clearer. To be followers of Jesus Christ – to be Christians – means above all that we love one another, precisely because God has loved us. To love as Jesus loves calls us to serve anyone in need – without judging and without expecting a reward.

*Do to one another as I have done to you.*

Our Catholic Church always has taught that we have a special obligation to those who are poor, to those in our community and around the world who are most in need. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us: “To love someone is to desire that person’s good and to take effective steps to secure it.”<sup>1</sup> This calls for both charity and justice. It means that while we respond to peoples’ immediate needs, we also ask why they are poor. To love as Jesus loves means that we strive to change whatever it is that causes or allows poverty in our own country and throughout the world.

Our Church offers a body of teachings to guide us in our response to poverty and the many other challenges we face in our daily lives here in the Diocese of Saint Cloud. These Catholic social teachings can help us to know what it means to love as Jesus loves at this time and in this place. Unfortunately, most Catholics are not familiar enough with these teachings.

A recent survey in our Diocese indicates that fewer than 40 percent of parishioners who responded are familiar with Catholic social teachings. This means that many of us do not refer to these moral teachings for guidance in responding to the sometimes complex social and economic issues of our day. Catholics in the Diocese of Saint Cloud are not alone in this.

In 1998, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) called for Catholic education at all levels to increase efforts at presenting these teachings. In their document, *Sharing Catholic Social Teachings*, the bishops wrote: “If Catholic education and formation fail to communicate our social tradition, they are not fully Catholic.”<sup>2</sup>

As your bishop, I offer this pastoral letter as an invitation for all of us to become more acquainted with our Church’s social teachings. I encourage all of us to apply this moral wisdom to the people, the needs, and the challenges in our Diocese and beyond. I ask each of you to join me in reflecting upon our Holy Father’s call, that echoes the voice of Jesus, to love our neighbor in need – to take effective steps to secure that person’s good.

During the past fifteen years, I have come to appreciate the fact that we in the Diocese of Saint Cloud are a generous people. Central Minnesotans do care about their neighbors and are willing to help one another. I also believe we could do more – as individuals and as parishes.

For that reason, I invite every parishioner to reflect with me upon Jesus’ ministry to those who are poor and what it means for the Diocese of Saint Cloud. I ask you to join me in seeking a better understanding of the needs

of persons within our Diocese. And, while there are many proposals in our society around these issues, I encourage everyone to examine our Church's social teachings for guidance on how best to respond to these needs. A starting point for that examination might be the seven basic themes of Catholic social teaching that begin on page 14.

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Jesus asks us to love our neighbor as he has loved us. How difficult is it to love and serve one another "without judging and without expecting a reward"?
2. Can you think of a time or an example when your love for someone led you to practical actions to help that person do well?
3. How familiar are you with our Church's social teachings and what does it mean to you to take guidance from these teachings?



## OUR DIOCESE: ITS CHANGING FACE

The needs of individuals and families in Central Minnesota are many and varied. Some are recurring with every generation; others seem to accompany the growing diversity of this geographical area. In either case, it is helpful to identify specific areas of concern and need, to which both parishes and parishioners can respond.

### OUR HERITAGE

Ours is a Diocese with a rich history that continues to enhance the Church today. People of deep faith built both communities and churches. It was this same faith that directed our predecessors to care for one another. Extended families and the limited mobility of earlier generations contributed to an experience of community, belonging, and the love that each person needs. A predominantly European population may have made it easier, at times, to feel a sense of commonality. Some parishes were established as ethnic or national churches to better care for an immigrant population. From the earliest days of our Diocese, we note how parish life, programs, and organizations were set up to meet the total needs of the parishioners.

Our Diocese often is characterized as stable and with a relatively homogeneous population. But, earlier years found settlers arriving from many different European nations with different languages, foods, and customs. A history of the Diocese shows that for many years, the various ethnic groups – especially German, Polish, Irish, and French Canadians – struggled to get along together.<sup>3</sup> Today, we experience again the richness of new forms of diversity and with it the challenge of truly being the “People of God.”



### GROWING DIVERSITY

The 16 counties of the Diocese of Saint Cloud represent communities undergoing changes in demographics and in economics. These changes lead to an increasing diversity among the people, the parishes, and the towns – a diversity that creates both opportunities and challenges. Some of our counties, such as Sherburne, are among the fastest-growing counties

in Minnesota. Other counties, notably on the western side of the Diocese, experience net population losses. Rural areas more distant from the city of Saint Cloud struggle to maintain a stable population, while resort and recreational areas see significant population growth. Some communities have a high percentage of elderly citizens as they observe the steady departure of young adults. Immigrants and refugees also add to our population in several areas of our Diocese.

Regarding economics, we note that when our Diocese was founded in 1889, the vast majority of the people in Central Minnesota made their living through farming. Today, only about 12 percent of the working people in this Diocese are involved in agriculture. Manufacturing, retail, health service, education – each of these sectors counts more employees than agriculture.<sup>4</sup> Even within agriculture, we see a continuing movement toward fewer but larger farming operations, as Bishop George Speltz observed so insightfully.

Demographic and economic changes account for much, but not all, of the growing diversity within our Diocese. Central Minnesota reflects the national trend in recent decades of sharp political polarity. Whether from the right or the left, conservative or liberal, this trend makes it difficult for communities to reach agreement on how best to promote the common good. This polarity also finds its way into our church communities and challenges all of us to listen to one another with an open heart and give voice to the message of the Gospel above our own perceptions, ideologies, and preferences.

This growing diversity within Central Minnesota – demographic, economic, political – offers exciting opportunities for each of us to respond to Jesus' command:

*Do to one another as I have done to you.*

These changes, creating their own new needs, provide each of our parishes with rich opportunities to experience more fully the truly “Catholic” aspect of the Church. Individual Christians and local faith communities are well-positioned to recognize and respond to these needs. Indeed, the growing diversity within our Diocese can be viewed as a challenge to each individual and to each parish. It is a challenge that asks how well we carry out the social implications of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do we welcome new residents into our parish or community? Do we hear the cries of our young people in

a confusing and frightening world? Do we help persons of racial and ethnic minority groups feel welcome in our communities? Do we appreciate the gifts that elderly persons can offer to both communities and parishes? Do we try to understand and respond to the needs of people living in economic poverty? Do we recognize how economic changes affect people and communities?

We may view these as opportunities or challenges. Either way, as followers of Jesus and as communities professing faith in Jesus Christ, we are called to reach out to those in need.

*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*  
(John 13:34)

## AREAS OF CONCERN

**I**n every geographical area, there are individuals with particular needs. Sometimes patterns develop and we speak of certain population groups with more pressing needs than others. Individual Christians involved in the day-to-day happenings of their communities know where these needs are. I believe there are certain groups within the Diocese of Saint Cloud deserving particular attention: families, the elderly, the youth, women, and racial and ethnic minority groups. I also think we must look at what is happening to small towns and rural communities and what these developments imply for parish restructuring. Finally, if we are to love as Jesus loves, then we have to recognize the poverty that exists in our communities.

## POPULATION GROUPS

While no one family is typical of all other families in our Diocese, Bill and Rachel's family may come close. With three active teenagers, this family spends a lot of time at school-related events and activities. Everyone enjoys being at one another's events and the parents also try to find time for broader community and parish involvement. An obvious challenge is that of finding enough time for everything, especially time for the family just to be together at home. Another challenge is that of teaching and living our faith values in a culture that enshrines contradictory values in so many areas of life and that boasts of so many social media venues for reaching our children.

Families in Central Minnesota experience the blessings and joys of families anywhere. They also must accept the challenges and struggles that families face today. For some, a problem is having the income needed to support growing children; for others, it might be a matter of limiting spending to what is truly necessary. Some families never seem to have enough time to do everything expected of parents, children, spouses, and friends. For parents today, the cultural environment in which they are raising their children is far different from that in which they were raised. Social communication and networking available today provide wonderful opportunities for learning and staying connected. They also carry their own potential problems. These communication resources break down many of the differences between urban and rural living, requiring today's families in the Diocese of Saint Cloud to recognize a new generation of challenges to family living. For this reason, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops designated family life as a priority area of ministry over the next several years.

*Mary Ann lives in a small house less than a block from her parish church. Her health is not good, and at 78, she feels fortunate to be within walking distance of daily Mass. But she is less able to meet other needs since the grocery store, pharmacy, post office, café, and other services in her town have all closed. Her children long ago moved out of the area. She rides a Tri-Cap bus each week to the "city" about fifteen miles away. It is her opportunity for shopping, visiting to the medical clinic, and perhaps having pie and coffee outside of her home.*

In all parishes, towns, and open countrysides, there are persons of older age who have special needs. Some have recurring medical problems; others face financial challenges. Most have lived their entire lives in these communities. Many have retired from farming, settling into nearby towns where they have worshiped, shopped, and socialized throughout their lifetime. Loneliness accompanies many, as does the confusing experience of seeing their gifts and wisdom unrecognized and unappreciated.

*John is beginning his final year of high school and is uncertain about his next move. He is considering college, as well as vocational school. He would like to stay in the town where he grew up, near his family, among his friends. He knows, however, that the jobs here are not very attractive. As with youth in many other rural communities, he*

*sees jobs with low pay, minimal benefits, little advancement, and not much security. Whether he goes on to further his education or seeks employment after high school graduation, John is beginning to realize that he will have to move away.*

Our young people are a special concern in the Diocese of Saint Cloud. Sometimes we fail to recognize and include their gifts in the life of our community and our parish church. Too often we take them for granted, overlooking the unique challenges confronting every generation of teenagers and young adults. At every moment, our culture surrounds them with messages and values that often conflict with their faith values. As they approach important transitions in their lives, the social and economic options for the future may necessarily lead them away from family and hometown. Continuing high rates of addiction and suicide remain dramatic signals that the youth in Central Minnesota need our love and attention.

*Louise goes to work each day at a local optics manufacturing company. She and her husband also care for their three young children, sending them off to school in the morning, preparing their meals, and overseeing their homework in the evenings. Though Louise and her husband share much of the work around the house, it still is a long day for her as she balances her roles as wife, mother, housekeeper, and employee. Like many other women, she often feels the strain of multiple expectations placed upon her, as well as her own doubts about how well she is doing in these many roles.*

Today, more than in the past, the role of women in the family, the Church, and the community merits careful recognition and examination. Women – as wives, as mothers, and as single adults – are taking on an ever-larger role in securing income for the household. More than half of working-age women are employed outside the home.<sup>5</sup> This is a reality we must recognize; we need to let go of past stereotypes that serve neither the family nor the changing needs of women. Women also are taking on greater responsibilities in civic leadership as members of city councils, as well as school, township, and county boards. In spite of these encouraging developments, some women face age-old problems. One example is the tragic reality of domestic abuse. Problems of this nature are especially difficult in small communities where some family issues are not easily confronted.

*Enrique and his family moved to Central Minnesota almost six years ago. As with many other immigrants to this area, he works at a local poultry plant to earn what he and his wife need to support their family.*

*Their two children speak English well and Enrique himself is studying English through a parish program. Living in a different culture and communicating in a second language is difficult. Even more difficult is the occasional anti-immigrant discrimination Enrique and his wife experience. They endure it because they need his income and they want a better future for their children than would be possible in the village from which they came in Central Mexico.*



It hardly needs saying that among the more serious areas of concern in our Diocese is that of racial and ethnic minority population groups. The total racial minority population here is relatively small. But, the numbers are changing. As they change, we are challenged to examine carefully our own feelings and attitudes about persons from different racial and ethnic groups. Today, there is much public debate around immigration issues, focusing on undocumented workers of Hispanic background. The issues involved are always complex and the tone of the public debate surrounding them often reveals a not-too-subtle racism. In recent years, the city of Saint Cloud has experienced overt acts of racism directed toward members of the Muslim immigrant community in the area. We must be clear on this point: Christianity does not condone racism nor does it accept discrimination against persons because of their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. To be a Christian means that we speak out against such behavior within our own communities. It also means that we take the initiative and reach out in hospitality to members of new immigrant communities – Hispanic, Somali, Asian, and any other. Let us remember that among the needs of minority groups in Central Minnesota, none is greater than the simple need to be accepted, respected, and treated as people of dignity. As we do the difficult work of coming to know one another as individuals, and not just members of a certain group, we recognize our common human dignity without ignoring what makes us different.

## RURAL COMMUNITIES

Any number of small towns could stand as examples of what is happening to many rural communities in our Diocese. Historically dependent upon farming, they now try to adjust to the dramatic changes occurring in American agriculture. Contract farming arrangements involving poultry or large-scale hog confinements give rise to problems and controversies not previously experienced in these communities. In some areas, the number of farms surrounding the town is decreasing, while the size of these farms swell. Economic development in new sectors often adds pressure to acquire land that once was dedicated to family farms. As families leave the land, local businesses and services face a shrinking market population. All of this impacts the local parishes as well.

It sometimes is difficult to distinguish between social change and social loss. Economic changes and progress in one area can lead to losses in other areas. Throughout Minnesota, as throughout much of the United States, moderate-sized family farms continue to disappear as larger, more corporate-style-farming enterprises take their place. This represents progress for some in parts of our Diocese; however, rural communities are experiencing what can only be described as loss – population loss and a spiraling cycle of further losses in the farms, locally owned businesses, community services, and the churches our small towns have treasured for generations. Elderly persons retiring to these towns now find themselves in communities without the services they had expected would always be there. Young people find little reason to set down roots in their home communities. The decline of populations in some rural communities leads to an increase in small, aging parishes. These developments, coupled with fewer priests, require difficult discernment about parish restructuring in our Diocese. The opportunity embedded in this challenge is for us to rediscover what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ at this time in the Diocese of Saint Cloud.

## POVERTY

Two persons living in the city of St. Cloud represent a fairly typical, though often unnoticed, form of poverty within our Diocese. Bill works full-time throughout the year for wages that keep him at or

slightly above the poverty line. He lives with his wife and two children in a very modest home with no luxuries and very little spending money after monthly bills are paid. Sometimes he takes a second job when extra money is needed to pay off medical bills, replace an old car, or buy Christmas gifts. At entry level jobs paying minimum wage and minimum health benefits, the prospects of Bill and his family moving a comfortable distance from the poverty line are not good.



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*Arlene is a single mother with two young children. She works when she can but the cost of child care prevents her from working full time at the kind of jobs her limited education can bring her. Arlene is very dependent upon public assistance but with recent state cutbacks in this area, her financial situation is far from secure and offers her no way to better her situation.*

Poverty has many faces and touches all of the people and communities mentioned in this reflection.<sup>6</sup> In a geographical area so blessed with natural resources it is difficult to picture a serious poverty problem. Yet, perception is part of the problem. In an area like this, economic poverty is not easily seen, but it is present in alarming percentages. Approximately 12 percent of the people of our Diocese live in poverty. In some communities, the rate is much higher.

Central Minnesota is not immune to some of the more alarming aspects of poverty found elsewhere in the United States. One in five children lives in poverty. The fastest-growing segment of the poverty population is single-parent families headed by women. The nature of poverty in rural areas increasingly resembles that found in inner cities where poverty rates are rising and are persistent.

People find themselves in poverty for many reasons: lack of work or adequate income from one's job, a health crisis, a major financial set-back, a divorce, lack of education, and the list could continue. Very few persons are economically poor because they choose to be so. The most common form of economic poverty in our Diocese is that found among people who are working. Many of these adults, like Bill, work full-time at minimum wage, but remain below the poverty level. Others, like Arlene, receive no benefits in their part-time employment, leaving them and their families vulnerable to even minor illnesses. Many employers have shifted from full-time to part-time employment, leaving large numbers of low-paid workers without health



insurance. During this national economic recession, many workers in Central Minnesota struggle with finances after months and sometimes years of unemployment.

While I focus upon economic poverty, I also recognize that poverty has many other forms, and people have many other needs. Some of these we find particularly difficult to acknowledge and to receive into our communities – persons with mental illness or with chemical dependencies, individuals or families who are homeless, farm laborers without legal immigrant status, and former prison inmates now on parole. These, too, we must include in the vision of the last judgment.

*As long as you did it to one of these  
the least of my sisters and brothers.*

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Describe what you know as the beginnings of your parish. How has it evolved – family life, mobility, ethnic diversity? How have parishioners earned their living?
2. Does your parish community accept, respect, and treat all of its worshipers with dignity?
  - a. How do you welcome new members?
  - b. How do you attempt to utilize the gifts that all age groups have to offer?
  - c. How do you help each other bear life's burdens – loneliness, poor health, financial problems?
  - d. What are some barriers that prevent the full participation of all members of your parish community in decision-making?
3. How has the Diocese changed in your lifetime? (Culture, economy, age, etc.) What are your observations of the population change?
4. What are the challenges you see? What opportunities do you see in those challenges?

## THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING

### WHAT IS THIS?

The Church has a vital interest in these areas of concern. The joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears of the People of God, relate directly to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus proclaimed the good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed (Lk 4:18-19). Throughout his ministry, Jesus addressed the daily physical needs of people – especially those who were poor, those who were struggling in any way, those who were vulnerable. The Church that Jesus founded also reaches out, as part of its central mission, to people with these same needs.

It is not for the Church to resolve complex problems facing individuals and communities in Central Minnesota or anywhere else. Nor is the mission of the Church restricted to or exhausted by social concerns. Rather, the Church is called to be leaven in the world, a sacrament or effective sign of the communion of love that will be fully revealed only in the kingdom of heaven. Still, the Church can offer guidance to individual Christians and to Catholic parishes that are themselves in positions to respond to needs in their areas. For the past one hundred and twenty years, the Church has been developing its teaching on social, economic, and political issues as an extension of its broader moral teaching.<sup>7</sup>



In 1891, Pope Leo XIII gave us the first of these modern Catholic social encyclicals. *On the Condition of Labor* (Rerum Novarum) focused on the rights and responsibilities of workers, as well as other issues of importance during the late 19th Century. From that time to the present, other popes have written documents addressing important social, economic, and political problems of their day. Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 presented us with his first social encyclical, *Charity in Truth* (Caritas in Veritate).

These teachings offer fundamental principles about the human person and how we are to live together in society. They are rooted in the Scriptures and in the long teaching tradition of the Catholic Church. From these teachings, we in the Diocese of Saint Cloud can draw valuable insights on how we might respond to the areas of concern already mentioned – families, the elderly and the youth, women and racial minority groups, immigrants, and refugees, the plight of many rural communities, and those who live in economic poverty.

In 1998, the United States Catholic Bishops identified seven foundational themes in Catholic social teaching. Our continuing reflection upon the needs and concerns within the Diocese of Saint Cloud is structured around these seven themes:

- Life and dignity of the human person
- Call to family, community, and participation
- Rights and responsibilities
- Dignity of work and the rights of workers
- Option for the poor and vulnerable
- Solidarity
- Care for God's creation

## SEVEN THEMES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

### LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

For many years, Crosier priest Father David Gallus, along with the faith communities and the civic and reservation leaders of the Mille Lacs area, has worked to develop and sustain the Mille Lacs Area Human Rights Commission – an effort to promote respect for the life and dignity of everyone living in the Mille Lacs Lake and surrounding area. Most recently this Human Rights Commission joined with the Blandin Foundation to provide training to leaders from the reservation and the communities around the lake. The hope is that these efforts will improve relations between members of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and the non-Indian communities.



Every human being is created by God, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and called to communion with God.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, every person enjoys a sacred dignity. Therefore every person's life and dignity must be respected and supported from conception through natural death. In this sacred dignity, all humans are equal. Respect for the dignity of others allows for no discrimination based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, or social conditions. Respect for the dignity of all persons is not compatible with oppressive economic and social structures within God's human family.

Every human life is a sacred gift from God and demands unconditional respect. Christians respect the lives of all humans and extend this respect to all of creation. Our response – always and everywhere – must be to show loving respect for such a gift. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of the Church’s teaching about people and about how we organize our society. The measure of every institution (social, cultural, economic, political) is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person. The Mille Lacs Area Human Rights Commission calls us to examine how well we are doing, as individuals and institutions, in promoting this sacred dignity of every person.

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Choose a word or phrase from this section that stands out to you. Explain the meaning it has for you and how it relates to your everyday life and actions.
2. Can you think of examples in your parish or larger community where human dignity has been respected? Where human dignity has not been respected?
3. When have you felt treated as less than a person of dignity due to your role, age, gender, income, or race?
4. When have you treated someone else as a child of God, deserving of dignity? When have you treated another as less than a child of God deserving of dignity?

## THE CALL TO FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND PARTICIPATION

In the midst of our nation's economic recession, the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls joined persons who experienced job loss and other community and faith leaders to address the needs of people who lost their jobs. The result was the creation of the Mid-Minnesota Job Loss Action Committee (Job-LAC). The program offers practical information on topics such as health care, mortgage foreclosures, and tax implications of unemployment as well as spiritual and emotional care. Jeff Odendahl, a member of the committee, points out that the health of the larger community requires that we reach out to those who are hurting. He further states, "People are out there who are still struggling; they need prayers and pragmatic support."

**E**very human person is not only sacred, but social. All of us are made in the image of the Triune God, who is a communion of persons. We depend upon our social relationships to help us grow as responsible persons and to become the people God has called us to be. Therefore, how we organize our society – socially, economically, legally, and politically – greatly affects human dignity and the ability of everyone to grow in community.

It is necessary for every member of society to contribute to the common good – to help make our communities places where all residents can find what they need to live a reasonably dignified life. Most of us do this through work, volunteering, paying taxes, and through the many ways we take part in community activities and programs. Our duty to participate in building a healthy society is realized by using the gifts and talents that God already has placed within each of us.

This kind of society that promotes the well-being of all members requires healthy families. The family is the central social institution. It is where children learn the meaning of service and the fundamental Christian call to look beyond themselves and reach out to persons in need. The family is where all of us learn to live as responsible, contributing members of society. For this reason, the systems of society – especially in such areas as education and economics – must be designed to support strong, flourishing families.



Just as every person has a duty to contribute to the common good, so also everyone has a right to participate in this great challenge. No one's social or economic status should exclude him or her from participation in society. With that in mind, it is important for all of us to help change conditions that make it difficult for some persons to lend their gifts and talents to the building up of the community – conditions like poverty, homelessness, hunger, and joblessness. Programs like Mid-Minnesota Job Loss Action Committee in Little Falls are hope-filled models of community organizing for all of us to consider anywhere in the Diocese.

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Who are the persons in your community who are poor, vulnerable, marginalized, or in need in any way?
2. If you worked together as a parish community, how could you reach out to them, building relationships and assessing their needs?
3. What can you as a parish community, and as individuals, learn from assessing needs and building relationships?
4. What organizations might help you in these efforts?

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Each year some fifty youth and a dozen adult volunteers from our Diocese spend one June week in the Twin Cities engaged in an intercultural, inner city service learning project. A Call to Service (ACTS) provides an opportunity for these students and adults to connect with the life experiences of people who are economically poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. As they reflect on the seven themes of Catholic social teaching during this experience, the students develop an appreciation for the meaning of human rights, as well as the responsibility we all share in making them a reality.

**C**atholic social teaching offers a balanced view of rights and responsibilities. Human rights flow from our God-given dignity. They belong to us precisely as humans and they belong to all people.<sup>9</sup> Rights are not optional. They are not granted by individual accomplishments or by human laws. Human rights are part of what it means to be human, and they surround and protect the dignity of each person.

The most fundamental right we can name is the right to life. From conception to natural death, people have the right to live their lives as fully as they can. Catholic teaching condemns abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide as grave sins against the Creator of Life. The Church also is becoming increasingly clear on its condemnation of the evil of capital punishment, because society has other ways to protect public safety and the common good without resorting to this irreversible act. Another basic human right is having the means necessary to live our lives in dignity. The right to life means that each and every person on this planet has the right to a share of earthly goods sufficient for one's self and one's family. This includes the right to adequate food, clothing, housing, health care, education, employment, and a safe environment. To speak of the right to life in our tradition includes the right to live that life in the dignity reflective of creatures made in the image of God.

Discussion of individual rights is never complete without talking about responsibilities. Rights and responsibilities always go together. It is especially necessary to balance individual human rights with community responsibilities. Every time we claim our individual right, we must

consider the impact of that claim upon the larger society. As an example, ownership of private property must never be regarded as an absolute right.<sup>10</sup> Establishment of a large-scale poultry or hog facility must respect the environment and the neighbor's right to clean air and safe water. The right to own carries with it a responsibility to use one's property in a manner that respects the neighbor, in a manner that contributes to the common good. Ownership also requires us to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by God.

Christians understand that responsibilities derive from love of neighbor. We have responsibilities to one another, to our families, to our communities, to the larger society. Our response to God's love for us must itself be a loving concern for people around us and for the communities and societies we build. As Christians, we must never focus solely on our own needs, on claiming our own rights, without asking how our actions affect the larger community. And, like the youth of our Diocese who take part in A Call to Service, we can reflect on how we might help people who are living in poverty and are marginalized to realize their basic human rights. One area for all of us to consider in this regard is the political process and our own responsibility to be active, informed voters.



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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. In many of the rural areas in our Diocese, poverty is well hidden. How can you become more aware of those in your community who are living in poverty?
2. What rights are you afforded, because of race or social status, that others within this community and in the world do not share?
3. How can you better live this theme of Catholic social teaching as it pertains to abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and the death penalty?



## DIGNITY OF WORK AND THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS

The Social Justice Committee at Saint Andrew's Parish in Elk River supports the rights of workers in the United States and other countries. They sell Juan Anna coffee along with Equal Exchange products, including tea and chocolate. The project helps promote awareness within the parish about conditions of coffee farmers around the world and about the need to pay them a just wage so that they can be self-sustaining. Committee member Sharon Kampa points out that this project teaches her and other parishioners that working people anywhere do not want handouts, but they do want to support their families and feel proud of what they have accomplished.

**T**he struggles of workers in the late 19th Century led to the articulation of modern Catholic social teaching. It remains one of the foremost concerns of the Church today, especially among the Catholic Bishops here in the United States. That concern is expressed around the twin issues of dignity of work and the rights of workers.

As Pope John Paul II stated in his encyclical, *On Human Work*, the dignity of work is found in the person doing the work – that human person created by God, redeemed by Christ, and called to communion with God. As humans, work is both necessary and personal. It is necessary because this is the normal way for most of us to make a living. We need to work in order to earn money for our personal and family needs. We need to work also as one way of contributing to the larger society, by providing needed services or products, as well as by paying income taxes.



Our work also is personal. It is through our work that most of us develop the gifts and talents that God has placed within us. We both develop and use these gifts in our jobs to meet our own needs and those of our family members and the communities to which we belong. Work is one important way in which we continue to grow and become the people God has called us to be.

The dignity of work, then, is found in the person doing the work, not in the job itself. From that perspective, any kind of work and every job should grant

the utmost respect for the person doing the work. Because that is not always the case in the real world of work, it is necessary to speak about the rights of workers.

Every person in society who is capable of work should have the opportunity to do so. A well-structured and properly functioning economy will allow everyone to work at jobs that are suitable for their talents and interests. Catholic social teaching always has regarded unemployment as an evil. In his final social encyclical, Pope John Paul II warned that a society in which “economic policies do not allow workers to reach satisfactory levels of employment cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can that society attain social peace.”<sup>11</sup>

A second and related point is that workers have a right to fair and livable wages. Exactly what that wage is will vary from one country to another, and from one region to another within a nation. It certainly means a wage sufficient to permit the worker and his or her family to live a dignified life – to be able to afford adequate food, housing, health care, and education among other basic necessities. Sadly, the wages for millions of full-time workers here in the United States, especially those earning minimum wage, do not provide for those necessities.

One of the means available to workers for securing just wages and other rights related to employment is the labor union. The earliest social encyclicals recognized that workers have the right to form and join unions that can represent employees collectively in bargaining with employers. In his great encyclical, *On Human Work*, Pope John Paul II referred to unions as an “indispensable element of social life, especially in modern industrialized societies.”<sup>12</sup>

Among the tools available to unions for protecting the interests of workers is the labor strike. Prior to any strike, both labor and management should engage in honest negotiations to resolve their differences, always keeping before them the interests of the larger community – the common good. The strike should be used only as a last resort and never in a situation that may bring serious harm to society. Pope Benedict XVI, in fact, encourages workers and their unions to not limit their focus to issues important to union members but “to address some of the new questions arising in society.”<sup>13</sup>

The global context within which work takes place today also suggests that labor unions should pay attention to the often-violated social rights of

workers in developing countries. This is a message we take, as well, from the work of the Social Justice Committee at Saint Andrew's Parish in Elk River and the other parishes and groups that sell Fair Trade items.

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Frederick Buechner writes that "The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world needs most to have done . . . That place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."<sup>14</sup> Discuss your thoughts about this statement.
2. Does your work or job allow you to develop and use the gifts God has given you?
3. What are some of the responsibilities you have as an employee/ employer?
4. If you feel that your rights as a worker are not always respected, what options do you have to address the problem?
5. Who do you know who is unemployed and what are some of the challenges they face?

## OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE

Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Big Lake tithes and does parish projects for social ministry. A percentage of the parish's weekly collection, along with project contributions, are distributed by its Almsgiving Committee to programs serving persons living in poverty and other persons with unmet needs. One example is its contribution to Catholic Charities' Domus Transitional Housing, a home for women with children who have difficulty finding housing, but who are committed to making positive change in their lives. Some of the women are exiting substance abuse programs or abusive relationships. All are seeking a place for a fresh start. A parish Almsgiving Committee member, Barb Gardetto, points out that their goal is not only to provide the women and their children with material support, but also "to help each woman understand that there are people in the world who care about her and want her to be successful."

**T**he Catholic Church always has shown a special concern for persons who are poor and vulnerable. The Hebrew prophets remind us that fidelity to God is tested by our attitude toward the marginalized members of society.<sup>15</sup> Jesus' parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew's Gospel teaches us that Christian discipleship requires caring for those in need, especially those in economic poverty. Over the past century, papal and episcopal documents have named this obligation the "preferential option for the poor."<sup>16</sup>



This option for the poor does not mean that the Church should neglect the many needs of those who are not poor. Rather, it is a helpful way of understanding how we should respond to anyone in need – like the response of the members of Our Lady of the Lake Parish to the women and children at Domus Transitional Housing. Yet, it does call us to give particular attention to the needs of persons who are economically poor.

The option for the poor means that as individuals and as parishes, we address these needs in our communities and beyond. It means that we strengthen, not diminish, already-existing programs such as food shelves, parish-sponsored meals for persons in need, and shelters for the homeless. It means

that when we contribute to programs or to individual persons, we do so out of our substance rather than from the spare change in our pockets.<sup>17</sup> It means that parishes regularly contribute a share of their income to the poor.

People in any kind of need deserve our help. We know that as Christians we are obligated to practice the corporal works of mercy. Acts of charity, helping people meet their immediate needs, are necessary ways of living out our faith. But, they are not enough! While acts of charity, such as financial giving, are essential, they are not a sufficient response to the poor and the needy within our Diocese or anywhere else.

*Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers.*<sup>18</sup>

This option for the poor means that we not only respond in charity with money, time, and programs we initiate. It also requires that we bring about changes in our society – in social and economic institutions, laws, public policies – that will make it easier for people to move out of poverty.<sup>19</sup> It could mean legislation on wages to ensure that all workers earn a living wage. It also could mean striving for changes in our health care system that will guarantee every person's right to basic life-giving medical treatment.

The option for the poor is not an easy principle to live out. It means that we support legislation, as well as programs and public policy changes, that is of particular benefit to those who are most in need, even when these changes might not benefit ourselves. This is a serious test of our Christian faith and love.

*As long as you did it to one of these,  
the least of my sisters and brothers, you did it to me.*

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. When in your life have you been poor or vulnerable?
2. Do you believe that persons who are poor and vulnerable deserve this preferential option? Why or why not? Give examples of what this preferential option looks like in action.
3. What is your response to the statement that justice is at the very heart of our faith?
4. What are you doing as a parish community to promote the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable?

## SOLIDARITY

Saint Mary's Parish in Alexandria promotes global solidarity in practical ways. In preparation for a youth mission trip to Mexico, the parish's Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Committee sponsored an immigration awareness event with Saint Mary of Mount Carmel Church of Long Prairie. About thirty parishioners from Alexandria travelled to Long Prairie for a day of learning and community building with their Hispanic sisters and brothers. Celebrating the Eucharist in a bilingual Mass was followed by a lunch with Mexican food and faith-sharing discussions. Parishioners from both parishes enjoyed the time together and the lesson that while our cultures may be quite different, our faith is one and it calls us to be in solidarity in this universal church.

**A**s Catholics, we know what it means to belong to a universal Church. While our experience of Church comes primarily through our local parish, we know that through our Diocese we are connected to all other Catholic churches in Central Minnesota. Through our Holy Father, we are united with the Church throughout the world. In that same way, we must see our connectedness to all members of the human community. We are one family, regardless of our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Whether it is our neighbor next door or across the globe, we all share the same Creator; all of us are redeemed in Jesus Christ; all of us are called to communion with God. We all possess the same dignity as God's children and the same rights and responsibilities that protect this dignity.

This is the virtue of solidarity – to recognize that we are one human family and that we really are responsible for all. It is to work for a just and peaceful world where goods are distributed fairly, opportunity is promoted equally, and the dignity of all is respected. This solidarity crosses national and regional boundaries. It recognizes that the denial of dignity and rights to people anywhere on the globe diminishes each of us. It seeks connections between us and people living in poverty, through our charity and our support of international assistance programs. It also calls for economic relationships and trade agreements that benefit the poorest nations. Pope John Paul II reminded us that solidarity “involves sacrificing the positions of income and of power enjoyed by the more developed economies.”<sup>20</sup>

We, in the Diocese of Saint Cloud, enjoy many ties to people in other parts of the world. Recent immigrants and refugees, like generations before them, enrich our lives immeasurably. They also connect us with their homelands and with the needs of the people they left behind.

Our solidarity with the poor throughout the world is fostered through various economic ties, perhaps none so clearly as agriculture. Minnesota farmers are among the most productive in the world. So blessed are we with natural resources and with farmers able to produce abundant crops! For many decades, the fruit of Minnesota farms has fed people in other nations. Yet, we know there are countless people who do not have enough to eat – millions actually facing starvation! This tragic reality should remind us that it is not our task to feed the world but to help people in other nations produce what they need to feed themselves. May we also learn from farmers elsewhere such values as small-scale agriculture and caring for limited and precious resources.

Our diocesan ties to people in other parts of the world are found also in the many priests, religious, and laity who have served the Church in different nations. This Diocese for many decades has had a ministry presence in Maracay, Venezuela. In more recent years, we have benefited from a similar relationship with the Diocese of Homa Bay, Kenya. These two Dioceses have now become our Global Solidarity Partners. People from our Diocese have shared in the Good News of Jesus' love in all parts of the world. Through their experiences, we share in the mission of the universal Church. Through their experiences, we also become aware of human suffering beyond our borders, experience the gifts other cultures have to share with us, and are offered opportunities to respond.



My own past work on the Board of Directors of Catholic Relief Services has taken me to many countries where basic needs of people have been unimaginably great. Living in Central Minnesota makes it difficult to believe that so many people in so many countries suffer so greatly from unmet human needs – hunger, disease, homelessness, illiteracy, and political repression. In the face of such tragic scenes, I am encouraged by the efforts of Catholics and other Christians who so generously offer their talents, time, and money to help relieve the suffering of their sisters and brothers around the world. Many from our own Diocese have dedicated a great part of their lives to this work and have benefited greatly by the relationships they have formed.



To be a Christian means that we love our neighbor, both near and far. Love of neighbor includes doing what we can to ease one's suffering. It means giving what we can to meet someone's immediate needs. It also means trying to understand why people today have such serious unmet needs. It means acknowledging our own contribution – as individuals and as a nation – to the suffering of others. It means, finally, acting to change whatever causes people to be dependent upon another's charity. This love, and this action, must be shown to people in need here in our own Diocese and throughout the world. For this is what it means to be a Christian, to be the Church, to be a parish. The shared experience of parishioners from Alexandria and Long Prairie, and the trip to Mexico that followed, provide a simple, practical example of how to move in that direction.

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What effect does the welfare of people in other countries – for example, Kenya, Venezuela, Sudan, Afghanistan, Mexico, Haiti – have on us here in the Diocese of Saint Cloud?
2. Have you or people you know traveled to impoverished parts of the world? What have been your observations? In spite of the great need, were there any positive things that you discovered?
3. Is your parish connected globally? If yes, how? If not, should it be? Can you be?
4. What gifts do people in other countries have to offer us in Central Minnesota?

## CARE FOR GOD'S CREATION

“We are called by our Church and by God to care for creation and to recognize the gift that it is. It is a day that reminds people in the Diocese to be thankful and to recognize the responsibility we have to the earth.” With these words, Kathy Langer of Catholic Charities described the purpose of the annual Rural Life Celebration held in August in our Diocese. Sponsored by parishes or clusters of parishes and held on a local farm or some other rural property, the Diocese comes together to be reminded of the gift and the challenge creation is to the followers of Christ. Celebration of the Eucharist is followed by a meal, family games, displays, and performance by local talent.

**T**he starting point for caring for the earth is to recognize that creation belongs to God. The Scriptures could not be clearer on this point. Psalm 24:1 tells us that “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.” Leviticus 25:23 offers a similarly blunt message: “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but strangers and guests.” Though we may hold legal title to property, our faith bids us to take a humble stance and recognize that everything belongs to God.

Creation also is good. In the first creation story (Genesis 1:1-2:3), the refrain is repeated: “And God saw that it was good.” God delights in his creation and sees it as good even before humans are created. The goodness of creation is spoken of in Catholic social teaching as a “sacramental universe.” In *Renewing the Earth*, the United States Catholic Bishops speak of “a sacramental universe – a world that discloses the Creator’s presence by visible and tangible signs.”<sup>21</sup> They quote Pope John Paul II to make the point that all of creation deserves our respect. “Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person, extends also to the rest of creation which is called to join man in praising God.”<sup>22</sup>

Clearly humans enjoy a special place and a particular responsibility among all the creatures God has made. We are told to have dominion over the rest of creation, that is, to care for all that God has made and to do so in a loving and nurturing way. All of our interactions with the natural world must reflect our role as stewards of creation, caring for something that belongs to God. At the same time, we are to work with the Creator in making the earth flourish



so that it may satisfy human needs today and into the future. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that caring for the earth and for one another are related obligations. “Our duties toward the environment are linked to our duties toward the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other.”<sup>23</sup>

In spite of the special role that humans enjoy, we are a part of creation. The second creation story (Genesis 2:4-25) reminds us that we are made from “the dust of the ground” as are the trees and the animals and the birds, a humble reminder of our connectedness to the rest of God’s creation. We are not separate from it but are members of God’s created order, more creatures than creators.

As part of creation, we are expected to share its gifts. The universal purpose of the goods of creation reminds us that God has provided generously and sufficiently to meet the needs of all people. One of our tasks as stewards of God’s creation is to make sure that these gifts are shared equitably so that all peoples’ needs are met. This certainly calls for systemic changes in economic relationships and global systems. It also means that each of us must examine our lifestyles and ask if our consumption and living habits honor the special role we have in God’s creation. Do we recognize the difference between our needs and our wants? Do we appreciate the value of living more simply? This is a task that goes beyond an annual Rural Life Celebration, and it belongs to all of us wherever we may live.

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How do you see and encounter God in nature?
2. How do you see care for creation in action in your parish community and the greater community?
3. How do you celebrate and/or care for creation in your own life?
4. How can your consumption of the world’s goods be curbed to reflect more faithful stewardship of God’s creation?

## WHAT PARISHES CAN DO

Effective parishes make it easier for individual Catholics to join in Jesus' ministry to persons who are living in poverty and are marginalized. The most important commitment parishes can make to this task is to be the Church as fully as they can be. Each parish can realize in its own setting the mission of the Church: to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to celebrate the presence of Christ among us, to develop faith communities, and to be in service to people both near and far. I believe there are three ministry areas where parishes could do more to guide individual Catholics in actions on behalf of persons most in need. These areas include the following: liturgical celebrations, religious education/faith formation, and parish social ministry.

### LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

Our liturgies, especially our Eucharistic celebrations, are the most important moments in the life of parishes. It is here that we come together to proclaim our faith in Jesus Christ, to celebrate and give thanks for what has happened



to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and to acknowledge that we are one in Christ. It is in these liturgical celebrations that we commit ourselves to eradicating from our lives and our society anything that may cause tension and divisions. Poverty and human suffering caused by greed, neglect, oppression, or any other form of injustice must be targets of that commitment.

Our liturgies, therefore, must not be moments when we forget about what is happening in our lives and in the world. Rather, through our public worship, we are called and empowered to go out and work for a society and a world in which God's love is more easily recognized. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us: "A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented."<sup>24</sup> The proclamation of the Word, the preaching, the prayers of the faithful, even the environment within the church – all should help us see that our faith leads us to reach out to anyone in need. At the end of Mass, we are not simply dismissed; we are sent forth with the mission to love and serve the Lord. I ask pastors and liturgists to examine how parish Eucharistic celebrations might draw us into this ministry to put Catholic social teaching into action.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION/FAITH FORMATION

Our parish formation/education programs are also moments when Jesus' ministry to persons who are poor and in need must be presented as our ministry. Religious education, Catholic schools, adult faith formation, RCIA, youth ministry – all such programs provide opportunities to learn how rich and challenging is the call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. These structured faith formation efforts help us to realize that being a Christian means putting our faith into action every day and everywhere.

All parish education programs can help us to live out the social implications of our faith. These programs are incomplete if they do not help participants to know who the poor and marginalized are and to know how we might respond to their needs in faithfulness to the Gospel. The United States Catholic Bishops are asking that Catholic social teaching be incorporated creatively into all forms of Catholic education. I ask Catholic educators to develop strategies to make service learning and justice a concrete component of every parish education and formation program. I urge all Catholic educators to develop models of adult education and formation to enable participants to grapple with the complex issues of poverty and structural change.



## SOCIAL MINISTRY

Each parish has opportunities to become directly involved with persons who have material needs, persons within the parish itself, as well as others who have no direct connection with the parish. The Church does not exist for itself. It lives to proclaim Jesus Christ to the world. It does this through preaching and teaching, and through acts of justice, service learning, and organizing efforts within the local community and in the world.

Parishes can participate in local food shelves, shelters for the homeless, referral services, safe houses for persons who suffer abuse, congregate dining sites, and many other forms of direct service. It is not for parishes to duplicate existing services. But it is the challenge of every faith community to call its members into relationship and service of those who are in need and at the same time recognize that it is a learning experience for the parish members. Helping to open doors to such service learning opportunities is an appropriate task of the parish. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Saint Cloud, as well as other human service organizations, can be helpful to parishes seeking ways to involve parishioners in this ministry. Parishes are encouraged to work with other agencies and churches, especially where resources are limited, and the need is great. In order to do this, the first step for the committee/team is to identify the needs and the persons who are struggling.

Each parish also must work for changes in our society and the world that will enable persons of greater need to pursue their lives in freedom and dignity. This is the justice dimension of social ministry. Love of neighbor calls us to seek justice for the neighbor. It is never enough to offer financial help for immediate needs without giving attention also to the unjust policies or social structures causing persons to be in need and to be trapped there. Unjust wages, lack of health care, inaccessible child care, unjust immigration laws, discrimination, unfair farm prices and policies, unaffordable housing, policies that disrupt or diminish family life and security – these and many other wrongs must be confronted on a policy level. Parishes can participate in this effort by working with the Minnesota Catholic Conference, formed by the Catholic Bishops of Minnesota, to address issues of social justice at the Minnesota State Legislature. We can work on an interfaith basis with the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC) in Minnesota and on national issues with the offices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

An effective way for parishes to carry out this social ministry is to create within the parish structure a Social Concerns Committee or team. This committee



can provide leadership for the parish and for individuals to engage in both service learning and justice actions. Committee members can be valuable social ministry resources to pastors, parish staff, parish councils, and to leaders of parish liturgy and religious education programs. Every parish should initiate some effort in social ministry. Parish clustering offers a great opportunity to work together in this area, not only to meet community needs, but also to build community among parishes. Where resources are limited or parishes are very small, let two or three parishes work together.

The United States Catholic Bishops, through their *Communities of Salt and Light* statement, provide support and directives to any parish that is engaging or hoping to engage in this ministry. Within the Diocese of Saint Cloud, Catholic Charities Social Concerns staff is available to help parishes and individual Catholics develop this parish social ministry through individual consultation and educational opportunities. I urge all parishes to turn to Catholic Charities Social Concerns Department for support and direction in carrying out this important ministry.

## CONCLUSION

The Diocese of Saint Cloud in recent years has initiated a more formal social ministry effort than it has had in the past. In this letter, I have indicated some of the areas of concern that this ministry might address, across the Diocese, within parishes, and in the world. These are not the only areas of human need that call for a response from faith communities. Parishes themselves can best determine which issues and needs they will address. Each parish can determine how it will carry on Jesus' ministry of justice and mercy. I ask that in each parish, a Social Concerns Committee take on the task of identifying needs and developing strategies for individuals and families to engage in social ministry.

I offer encouragement especially to priests, deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers whose leadership in this diocesan social ministry effort is essential. This ministry will bear fruit only if it is rooted in the life of each parish. All parish leaders and staff members are necessary to the success of this ministry. I ask the pastors, with their staffs and parish councils, to consider how they might initiate or expand this effort in their parishes. I encourage the clergy to reflect on how their preaching can help build faith communities that know and live out the seven themes of Catholic social teaching.

To the young people in our Diocese, I say that you have a special reason for becoming more active in service learning and social justice. This is your Church. Your Church is not focused only on rules, obligations, and warnings against various behaviors. Your Church is especially concerned about building a better world – a world that more closely reflects the reign of love, mercy, and justice that Jesus Christ proclaimed. Your Church needs you in this effort. I beg you to become involved and let us all benefit from your fresh perspectives and unique gifts.

Finally, I ask every Catholic in the Diocese of Saint Cloud – and every person of good will – to reflect upon the biblical text with which I began this pastoral letter. In Jesus' parable of the last judgment, the Son of Man tells those awaiting judgment that he stood before them every day of their lives.

*For I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.  
I was naked and you gave me clothing,  
I was sick and you took care of me,  
I was in prison and you visited me.*

(Mt. 25:35-36)

A lesson of this parable is that Jesus is present in the suffering, the hurts, and the everyday needs of people around us. Another rather harsh lesson is that some of us see these needs and act, and some of us don't. Perhaps the most important lesson in this parable is that to be a Christian – to be a disciple of Jesus Christ – means that we serve everyone in need without judging and without expecting a reward.

Catholic social teaching can help us live this critical lesson of the parable in our own time and setting. That teaching shows us how to reach out in our communities and around the world today to all who are hungry and thirsty, to all who are strangers or in need of clothing, to all who are ill or in prison. Catholic Charities Social Concerns staff is ready to help parishes and individuals respond to that challenge of our faith.

As Christians, we are called to love one another as Jesus has loved us. This love must show itself in daily acts of charity and in the more difficult work of justice. May all of us take up the wonderful challenge to do for one another as Christ has done for us and in the doing, encounter Christ.



CHRIST YESTERDAY & TODAY



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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. To be a parish means that you help carry out the Church's social ministry as presented to us in Catholic social teaching. How are you doing with that ministry?
2. In what ways might your liturgical celebrations, especially the Sunday Eucharist, appropriately reflect the call to justice?
3. Do your parish education and faith formation programs include the seven themes of Catholic social teaching in a way that integrates them into daily life?
4. Does your parish have a Social Concerns committee/team that offers service learning opportunities, as well as justice education, to parishioners?

## ENDNOTES

1. *Charity in Truth*, 7.
2. *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998, p. 2.
3. Yzermans, Vincent A. *The Spirit in Central Minnesota: A Centennial Narrative of the Church of Saint Cloud 1889-1989*. St. Cloud, MN: Sentinel Printing, 1989.
4. 2006 Census of Employment and Wages. Positively Minnesota: Dept. of Employment & Economic Development at <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com>.
5. 2008 Minnesota Data Trends at <http://www.mndata.org/workforce>.
6. The definition of poverty used throughout this pastoral letter is that provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2009, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$21,954. For more information on the poverty threshold, see “How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty” at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html>.
7. The papal documents on social justice, from *Rerum Novarum* (1891) through *Centesimus Annus* (1991), can be found in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, edited by David O’Brien and Thomas Shannon. NY: Orbis Books, 1999. The more recent social encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI (*Charity in Truth*, 2009) can be found in Catholic bookstores, on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, or the Diocesan Social Concerns Office. These also are places where one can purchase social documents of the United States Catholic Bishops. Most of these documents can be found online and a place to begin that search is the Saint Cloud Diocesan website (<http://www.stcdio.org>). Two other official church publications offer information on Catholic social teaching. One is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, especially “Part Three: Life in Christ” (pp. 421-611). The other is the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.
8. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 31.1; 63.2.
9. *Peace on Earth*, 9.
10. *On the Development of Peoples*, 23.
11. *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, 43.
12. *On Human Work*, 20.
13. *Charity in Truth*, 64.

14. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1973, 118-119.
15. Isaiah 1:11-20; 58:1-12; Jeremiah 7:107.
16. *A Call to Action*, 23.
17. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 69.
18. *A Century of Social Teaching: A Common Heritage, A Continuing Challenge*, 1.
19. *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, 58.
20. *Ibid.*, 52.
21. *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on the Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*. 6.
22. *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility*, 16.
23. *Charity in Truth*, 51.
24. *God is Love*, 14.

## RESOURCES FOR PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

### A. Vatican Documents

- *On the Condition of Labor* (Rerum Novarum), Pope Leo XIII, 1891.
- *On Reconstructing the Social Order* (Quadragesimo Anno), Pope Pius XI, 1931.
- *Christianity and Social Progress* (Mater et Magistra), Pope John XXIII, 1961.
- *Peace on Earth* (Pacem in Terris), Pope John XXIII, 1963.
- *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Gaudium et Spes), Vatican Council II, 1965.
- *On the Development of Peoples* (Populorum Progressio), Pope Paul VI, 1967.
- *A Call to Action* (Octogesima Adveniens), Pope Paul VI, 1971.
- *Justice in the World* (Justicia in Mundo), World Synod of Bishops, 1971.
- *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (Evangelii Nuntiandi), Pope Paul VI, 1975.
- *Redeemer of Man* (Redemptor Hominis), Pope John Paul II, 1979.
- *Rich in Mercy* (Dives in Misericordia), Pope John Paul II, 1980.
- *On Human Work* (Laborem Exercens), Pope John Paul II, 1981.
- *On Social Concerns* (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis), Pope John Paul II, 1987.
- *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum* (Centesimus Annus), Pope John Paul II, 1991.
- *God is Love* (Deus Caritas Est), Pope Benedict XVI, 2005.
- *Charity in Truth* (Caritas in Veritate), Pope Benedict XVI, 2009.

### B. General Resource

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., 2000. (Catholic social teaching is integrated throughout the text, and includes major social teachings in Part 3, “Life in Christ”).

### C. United States Catholic Bishops’ Documents

- *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response*. Pastoral Letter of the United States Catholic Bishops, 1983.
- *Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*. Pastoral Letter of the United States Catholic Bishops, 1986.

- *A Century of Social Teaching: A Common Heritage, A Continuing Challenge*. Pastoral Letter of the United States Catholic Bishops on the 100th Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, 1990.
- *Putting Children and Families First*. Pastoral Letter of the United States Catholic Bishops, 1991.
- *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on the Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*. Pastoral Letter of the United States Catholic Bishops, 1991.
- *Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes*. Statement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998.
- *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity and Diversity*. Statement of the United States Catholic Bishops, 2000.
- *Communities of Salt and Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of the Parish*. Statement of the United States Catholic Bishops, 4th ed., 2001.
- *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*. Statement of the United States Catholic Bishops, 2001.
- *A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Creatures*. Statement of the United States Catholic Bishops, 2002.
- *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*. Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States, 2003.
- *For I Was Hungry & You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farm workers*. Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004.
- *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility*. Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007.

## WORKS RELATED TO CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

- Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage. Edited by David J. O'Brien and Thomas Shannon. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992. (A collection of the social documents prior to Pope Benedict XVI.)
- The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought. Edited by Judith Dwyer. Collegeville, MN: Glazier/Liturgical Press, 1994. (Scholarly articles on the documents and on the broader development of Catholic social thought.)
- Lazarus at the Table: Catholics and Social Justice. Bernard Evans. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006. (A discussion of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching.)
- My Lord and My God: Engaging Catholics in Social Ministry. Jeffrey Korgen. New York: Paulist Press, 2007. (A discussion of Catholic social teaching as seen lived out in parish life.)
- Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching. Donal Dorr. Revised edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992. (Development of the Church's teaching leading up to the preferential option for the poor.)
- Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret. Edward DeBerri and James Hug with Peter Henriot and Michael Schulteis. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988. (A discussion of Vatican social documents as well as regional bishops' statements from throughout the world.)

## PROGRAMS FOR PARISHES

Parish resource materials are available from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for many of the Bishops' statements, including the following:

- *Called to Global Solidarity*
- *Catholic Campaign for Children and Families*
- *Communities of Salt and Light* (Parish Social Ministry)
- *Renewing the Earth* (Environmental Justice Program)
- *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us* (Justice for Immigrants Program)

Websites for programs, resources, and agencies to help parishes in social ministry include the following:

- Diocesan Social Concerns Department at [www.ccstcloud.org/socialconcerns](http://www.ccstcloud.org/socialconcerns)
- Catholic Charities at [www.ccstcloud.org](http://www.ccstcloud.org)
- Catholic Charities USA at [www.catholiccharitiesusa.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org)
- Minnesota Catholic Conference at [www.mncc.org](http://www.mncc.org)
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at [www.usccb.org/sdwp/](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/)

# “AS I HAVE DONE FOR YOU ...SO YOU ALSO SHOULD DO.”

## *A Pastoral Letter*

+ John F. Kinney  
Bishop of Saint Cloud

“The Gospels could not be clearer. To be followers of Jesus Christ – to be Christians – means above all that we love one another, precisely because God has loved us. To love as Jesus loves calls us to serve anyone in need - without judging and without expecting a reward: Do to one another as I have done to you.”

This rewrite of the 1998 pastoral letter explores the changing face of the Diocese of Saint Cloud. Using local stories, the seven themes of Catholic social teaching, and discussion questions, readers will engage in a deeper understanding of what it means to be disciples of Christ. The challenge to act on behalf of persons in need is central to our faith and how we are to live our lives.

This pastoral letter is ideal for reading and studying individually or in small faith-sharing groups.



Diocese of Saint Cloud  
P.O. Box 1248  
St. Cloud, MN 56302-1248  
[www.stclouddiocese.org](http://www.stclouddiocese.org)