UNCC100 MODULE 3:
THE HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

Introduction
Dignity of the Human Person
Common Good and Community
Subsidiarity
More principles of Catholic Social Thought
Deepening Understanding
MODULE 3: THE HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

Activities and materials in this module will help you to meet:

**Learning Outcome 1:** Describe coherently in writing the principles of Catholic Social Thought (CST), and through a personal written commentary on each one, explain that the concepts of 'self' and 'community' are interrelated.

**Learning Outcome 2:** Analyse and evaluate the principles of CST in order to write an argument that shows how issues relating to the dignity of the human person and the realisation of the common good may be addressed by you in your professional practice (i.e. the degree program you are studying) now and in the future.

**Graduate Attribute 2:** recognise your responsibility to the common good, the environment and society.

**Graduate Attribute 4:** think critically and reflectively.

**Graduate Attribute 8:** locate, organise, analyse, synthesise and evaluate information.

**WARNING**

Topics considered in UNCC LEO materials and in class discussions may be disturbing for some students.

If you are affected, please contact your Campus Leader and/or the University Counselling Service.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are advised that this site may include voices or images of people who have passed away. It may also contain links to sites that may use images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now deceased.
3.1 DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

In Module 1, you were introduced to the idea of the good life and the golden rule, and to a series of principles designed to promote that flourishing. Module 2 focused on the individual and society (and the relationship between the two).

3.1.1 CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

Catholic Social Thought has had a significant impact on developing more peaceable and compassionate societies over the centuries. This embraces more than just Catholic Social teaching.

Catholic Social Teaching is the official teaching of the Church via the magisterium (teaching authority).

In the Catholic tradition the contributions that other learned thinkers make beyond magisterium teaching is also respected and valued. Catholic Social Thought embraces this 'non-official' material that emanates from Catholic scholars. It is perhaps best understood as the material that emanates from official teaching but further explains it and contextualises it in the contemporary world.

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition values both official teaching and non-official scholarship that emanates from such teaching. The two are interdependent as all teaching must be applied in particular circumstances.

3.1.2 THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Four expert views:

SEAN MCKENNA

Dignity of the human person - Sean McKenna (transcript):

KATH BOYLE

Dignity of the human person - Kath Boyle (transcript):

NAOMI WOLFE

Dignity of the human person - Naomi Wolfe (transcript):

MARGARET FYFE

Dignity of the human person - Margaret Fyfe (transcript):
ACTIVITY 1

The resource below will help you to gain a basic understanding of the concept of CST

Before you read, go to this guide and use the questions to help you unpick the texts below as you read.

Make key critical notes as you read the resource.

After reading the resource, write a 100 word definition of the Catholic Social Thought

Read: Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, "Overview of the Principles of CST"

Critical Thinking: What Does Human Dignity Recognise?

1. How would you define the dignity of the individual human person?
2. Does every person have the right to more than just the basic necessities of life?
3. How do people ensure that the marginalised in the community have access to more than just the basics of life?
4. Does dignity bring with it natural rights and duties? What are they?
3.2 COMMON GOOD AND COMMUNITY

3.2.1 FURTHER REFLECTION ON THE COMMON GOOD

In previous modules we discussed the common good. But what does this mean?

The preferential option for the poor - Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer (transcript):

3.2.2 THE IDEA OF THE COMMON GOOD HAS SEVERAL DIMENSIONS

1. It means that the needs of all people are met—not just a few, not just the wealthy or the powerful or the educated or the healthy—but all.

2. It includes the flourishing and fulfilment of all people in all the different dimensions of their humanity (for example, intellectual, physical, relational, spiritual, affective, and so on).

3. It refers to what is good that can only come about by being shared, “in common.”

When we speak about seeking the common good, then, we are not simply referring to meeting everyone’s material needs, but also to meeting relational and other needs that are fundamental to human existence as unique individuals who live in community.

3.2.3 THE COMMON GOOD IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH PERSON AS WELL AS INSTITUTIONS

Working towards the common good (that is, the good of all) is the responsibility of each citizen as well as all the institutions that are created to order a society.

[The common good] implies that every individual, no matter how high or low, has a duty to share in promoting the welfare of the community as well as a right to benefit from that welfare. Common implies ‘all inclusive’: the common good cannot exclude or exempt any section of the population. If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participation in the life of the community, even at a minimal level, then that is a contradiction to the concept of the common good and calls for rectification.¹

So, for example, if people are excluded by poverty from participation in society and full flourishing as human beings, then governments have a duty to act to alleviate that poverty so the common good can be met. More than this, each individual person and organisation or corporation also has a duty to act to alleviate that poverty.

¹ Bishops of England and Wales, The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching (1996), n.70.
3.3 WHAT IS SUBSIDIARITY?

DAVID CARTER

Subsidiary - [David Carter](transcript):

3.3.1 WHAT DOES IT FACILITATE?

1. Enables participation of and among those who make up the community or organisation
2. Fosters life within the group, without undue social control and unwarranted interference
3. Ensures participation in decision-making processes affecting personal and organisational life
4. Promotes decision-making that is empowering of those involved in and affected by the process
5. Ensures that decision-making processes include consultation with those who will be most affected by them.

KATH BOYLE

Subsidiary - [Kath Boyle](transcript):
3.3.2 TASKS TO ASSIST

Task: Using the resources provided below, write a summary definition of these principles in your own words:

- Dignity of the Human Person
- Preferential Option for the Poor
- Subsidiarity
- The Universal Purpose of Goods
- Stewardship of Creation
- Promotion of Peace
- Participation
- Global Solidarity

Pssst...! Did you notice that we wrote “in your own words”? Remember the work you did on plagiarism at the start of the unit? Making notes always using your own words is a helpful way of avoiding plagiarism when you come to use those notes later on.

Resources

- Promoting Human Flourishing
- Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching
- Principles of Catholic Social Teaching
- Catholic Social Teaching: Faith in a Better World
- Explanation of Preferential Option for the Poor
- Subsidiarity explained
- The Caritas New Zealand website provides a brief definition and video for each of the Principles of Human Flourishing. Watch Caritas’ video, Subsidiarity: Empowering Communities (or read the transcript), then browse the other principles presented on this site.

Be prepared with solid definitions as these will form the basis of an activity.
3.4 MORE PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

3.4.1 THE UNIVERSAL PURPOSE OF GOODS
Here is an example: The right to private property and the right to free trade are instruments that respect the greater principle of the universal destination of goods. For example, private property can be taxed to assist in providing goods and services that service the entire community. Examples include: The police, healthcare, the building of roads and infrastructure and public libraries.

3.4.2 STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION
The Stewardship of Creation - Naomi Wolfe (transcript):

3.4.3 PROMOTION OF PEACE
Promotion of Peace - David Carter (transcript):

3.4.4 GLOBAL SOLIDARITY
Global Solidarity - Chris Saenz (transcript):

3.4.5 SYNTHESIS
1. Subsidiarity (and participation) means that all people should have a say.
2. It also means that the voice of any one person should be theirs, rather than the voice of an advocate (or person in a position of power) who, by speaking for another, is speaking instead of another.
3. If that other can speak for themselves, then the advocate should support or enable that. This promotes Human Dignity rather than undermining it. It promotes the Common Good. It helps ensure we all function together.
4. This means there is greater participation.

3.4.6 IN SUMMARY SUBSIDIARITY REQUIRES:
- Human dignity
- The Common Good
- Solidarity
- Participation.
ACTIVITY 2

REFLECTION:
How does CST relate to your profession?

How would you relate it to scenarios in which you as students find yourselves?

Example Situations:
If you are a Teacher: Children with challenging behaviour that disrupt learning of their classmates.

If you are studying Business or Law: The cost of installing a disabled ramp in the workplace for one employee.

If you are studying Paramedicine: Attending the scene of an accident where the victim’s religion/beliefs prevents him or her from blood transfusions or medication by intravenous drip.

If you are a Nursing student: Preserving the dignity of a patient by closing the privacy blinds during a routine medical examination.
3.5 DEEPENING UNDERSTANDING: RESOURCES

3.5.1 ALTERNATIVE RESOURCES

The principles of CST do not belong exclusively to the Church, but they provide an important avenue for the Church to enter into dialogue with the world and a way to offer a critique of how societies and institutions function.

Listen to this BBC broadcast of “Analysis” (or read the transcript) for a discussion of CST in a contemporary political context.

The following reading is an academic article from the University of Navarra Business School and provides an excellent explanation of what subsidiarity means and the history of the term.