



Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

Catholic Social Teaching (also known as Catholic Social Doctrine) sums up the teachings of the Church on social justice issues. It promotes a vision of a just society that is grounded in the Bible and in the wisdom gathered from experience by the Christian community as it has responded to social justice issues through history.¹ CST encapsulates the accumulated social teaching of the Church through the lens of six guiding principles:²

- **Human dignity**
All life is sacred, every person has inherent dignity and worth. Human rights and responsibilities are founded in this essential, shared human dignity.
- **The common good**
People have responsibility for one another in their shared life together, and are called to work for the common good of all. Catholic Christians must advocate for a just society in which all people, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised, are able to flourish and meet their needs.
- **Subsidiarity**
All people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Subsidiarity requires that decisions are made by the people closest and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community.³ Everyone should have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to decision processes that closely affect them.
- **Solidarity**
Humans are social by nature and depend on one another. We seek to stand in unity with each other, particularly those who are powerless or disadvantaged, and recognise each person's rights regardless of our differences.
- **Preferential option for the poor**
The needs of the socially disadvantaged and vulnerable are prioritised.
- **Stewardship of creation**
Humans have a special responsibility to care for the earth, recognising that all of creation is inter-connected and all are part of and dependent on the environment. Pope Francis has referred to this as *integral ecology*.⁴

¹ Australian Catholic Social Justice Commission, *Brief Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching*. Accessed at <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/social-teaching>

² NB The number of CST Principles can vary, with some agencies noting up to ten. However varying descriptions of the principles will align to these six.

³ Caritas Australia, *Catholic Social teaching – Subsidiarity and Participation*. Accessed at <https://www.caritas.org.au/learn/catholic-social-teaching/subsidiarity-and-participation>

⁴ Catholic Social Services Australia, *Catholic Social Teaching*. Accessed at <http://www.cssa.org.au/about-us/mission-and-vision/catholic-social-teaching/>