

INTEGRATING CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT INTO THE THOUGHT AND LIFE OF THE UNIVERSITY

A PROGRAM OF STUDY OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

A CONCEPT PAPER

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Proposed Program of Study and Discourse

Catholic Social Thought has generated a substantive body of literature, that requires a continuing study, starting from a thematic approach and then moving to a broader and deeper approach. The thematic approach initiates a reader into the basic content of Catholic Social Thought.

The proposed Program of Study and Discourse is divided into three phases. The approach taken in all the phases will be interfacing Catholic Social Thought with contemporary social issues through the critical lens of human sciences. The goal is to show that Catholic Social Thought is not a century old tradition of abstract and esoteric teachings but, rather is vital and progressive, with an enduring message which can be brought into critical dialogue with other systems of thought and world views.

A multi-level methodology will be followed, using the evocative power of film viewing, lectures, and discussions. A program for each phase will be designed to concretize how the approach will be implemented. This program will delineate the learning goals, content, methods, calendar, and resources such as readings, films, and speakers.

The proposed Program of Study and Discourse is divided into three phases, as follows:

Phase One: A Thematic Approach to the Study of Catholic Social Thought

Part One of this phase focuses on the study and discourse of Catholic Social Thought relative to the problems of poverty, racism, and interreligious dialogue through a direct reading of quotations and excerpts from Catholic Social Thought documents.

Articles written as commentaries on Catholic Social Thought and as specific studies on poverty, racism, and interreligious dialogue will be included, together with relevant films.

Part Two focuses on a study and discourse on the ten key themes that form the heart of Catholic Social Thought as it has developed over the course of its one-hundred-year tradition. Through study and discussion of selected texts and readings which pertain to these themes, with a critical reflection on how they are brought to bear on contemporary problems, this phase offers an expanded study of the central arguments of the social teachings.

- a. The Dignity of Every Person and Human Rights
- b. Solidarity, Common Good, and Participation
- c. Family Life and Gender Relations
- d. Subsidiarity and the Proper Role of Government
- e. Property Ownership in Modern Society: Rights and Responsibilities
- f. The Dignity of Work, Rights of Workers, and Support for Labor Unions
- g. Colonialism and Economic Development
- h. Peace and Disarmament
- i. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- j. Stewardship: Care for God's Creation

Phase Two: A More In-Depth Study of Catholic Social Thought

Parts One and Two of Phase One offer starting points for those interested in Catholic Social Thought. A full understanding, however, can only be achieved by reading the papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents that make up this rich tradition. Not every one may choose to move to Phase Two, which offers a more in-depth study of Catholic Social Thought, through the reading and analysis of texts with the help of commentaries. The main books to be used for Phase two are *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* by David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon and *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretation*, ed. by Kenneth R. Himes, O.F. M. and *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching* by Donal Dorr. (6 meetings)

The documents to be read and discussed are the following:

- a. *Rerum Novarum*: The Condition of Labor (Leo XIII, 1891)
- b. *Quadragesimo Anno*: After Forty Years (Pius XI, 1931)
- c. *Mater et Magistra*: Christianity and Social Progress (John XXIII, 1961)
- d. *Pacem in Terris*: Peace on Earth (John XXIII, 1961)
- e. *Dignitatis Humanae*: Declaration on Human Freedom (Second Vatican Council, 1965)
- f. *Gaudium et Spes*: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Second Vatican Council, 1965)
- g. *Populorum Progresso*: On the Development of Peoples (Paul VI, 1967)
- h. *Octogesima Adveniens*: A Call to Action on the Eightieth Anniversary of *Rerum*

- Novarum (Paul VI, 1971)
- i. *Justitia in Mundo*: Justice in the World (Synod of Bishops, 1971)
 - j. *Familiaris Consortio*: Apostolic Exhortation on the Family (John Paul II, 1981)
 - k. *Laborem Exercens*: On Human Work (John Paul II, 1981)
 - l. *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*: On Social Concern (John Paul II, 1987)
 - m. *Centesimus Annus*: On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (John Paul II, 1987)
 - n. The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response (U.S. Bishops, 1983)
 - o. Economic Justice for All (U.S. Bishops, 1986)

Phase Three: Incorporation of Catholic Social Thought into Teaching and Research.

In this phase, faculty shall present and/or propose the incorporation of Catholic Social Thought into their research and teaching—e.g. a research proposal on Catholic Social Thought, a paper written in their discipline incorporating Catholic Social Thought, a revised course syllabus that draws on themes and documents of Catholic Social Thought, etc. The number of sessions for this phase will depend on the number of faculty who will sign up.

Methodology

Those who wish to participate in the study of Catholic Social Thought are expected to read the materials prior the group discussions, which will be conducted during lunch breaks from 12:00 to 1:30 P.M. on scheduled dates. The discussions, thus, only enrich the information and knowledge that one has already gathered from his/her own reading. This methodology heavily depends on the participants' personal reading, which allows them to participate fruitfully in the discussions.