

NETWORK's Catholic Social Justice Principles

Uphold the dignity of each person as an equally valuable member of the human family

Catholic Social Justice teaches us that all people are made in the image of God and so possess an equal and inalienable worth. Because of this essential dignity, each person has a right to all that is needed to allow him or her to live their full potential as intended by God. As God is love, we were created to love and be in relationship with each other. Human dignity is upheld when each person's needs are met and when he or she lives in harmony with others in a community that together pursues the common good.

NETWORK celebrates human dignity by working to end discrimination. We work to ensure that all people are equally valued and that all have a roof over their head and food to put on the table. We strive to create a society where all have access to meaningful employment, affordable healthcare, and quality education. We work to end unjust policies that tear families apart, including mass incarceration and detention and deportation of immigrants.

Embrace our right and responsibility to participate with others in our shared public life

Catholic Social Justice teaches us that we have a responsibility to participate in politics out of a concern and commitment to the good of the community. This means that we cannot be bystanders who scoff at the political process. Instead, we are called to vote, to inform ourselves about the issues of the day, to engage in serious conversation about our nation's future, and to learn to listen to different perspectives with empathy. This responsibility to participate means each person also has a fundamental right to participate, and must be equipped with the resources needed to do so.

NETWORK embraces our responsibility to participate by advocating for all people to be equally represented in the public sphere and by opposing the harmful effects of money in politics. We work to ensure that all people are able to exercise their fundamental right to vote and to have their voices heard. We encourage and support the efforts of all people to hold their elected officials accountable to the promises they make and to those they represent. We challenge all people of faith to live out their values in the public square and work together for justice.

Be in solidarity with those who are living in poverty in the struggle against structures of injustice

Catholic Social Justice teaches us to look at reality through the eyes of those who have been made poor by oppression and injustice. We do this when we join together to end poverty. People forced into poverty have the single most urgent claim on the conscience of the nation because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity. The responsibility to uphold the dignity of each person means that we must judge our lifestyles, policies, and social institutions in terms of how they impact those suffering from the injustice of poverty.

NETWORK acts in solidarity with those in poverty to change the status quo where a few have excess wealth while many are not able to meet their most basic needs. We advocate for a robust social safety net that allows people to support themselves and their families during hard times, while simultaneously working to dismantle the underlying structures that perpetuate the cycle of poverty. NETWORK hears the voices of people who are often ignored by those in power and we act with them to ensure that national policy serves the needs of those our society excludes.

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Bridge divisions, rising above individual interest for the good of the whole community

Catholic Social Justice teaches us that all people are children of God so every person belongs to a single and interconnected human family. As sisters and brothers, our needs are met in relationship with one another. When making individual and collective decisions, we have a responsibility to consider the good of the whole community over and above the interests of the few. Authorities at every level must work together for the good of the entire community. A just community is united in creating the conditions for every person to flourish and realize their full human potential as children of God.

NETWORK bridges divisions for the common good by supporting programs that create vibrant, healthy communities. We work to ensure that there is reasonable revenue to support these responsible programs by reforming the tax system so that each person pays their fair share. We work to build a world in which we see every child as one of "our kids," and where we look out for the needs of each person as a member of our own family.

Unite with workers to build an economy that puts people, not profit, at the center

Catholic Social Justice teaches us that work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. Work should enhance the dignity of the person by allowing all workers to express their uniqueness in a way that contributes to the common good. The community must also recognize the dignity of work by ensuring that it is justly rewarded with a living wage. As human beings are social, they have a fundamental right to organize collectively to create better working conditions for themselves and others.

NETWORK unites with workers to build an economy where each person can find a job that provides for her or his family. No worker should have to choose between losing a job and caring for a sick child, and all workers should be afforded rest so that they can contribute to family and community life. We support the strengthening of unions since they allow people to advocate for work environments that recognize their essential human dignity.

Nurture the earth, recognizing that we are interdependent with the rest of God's creation

God gave human beings the task of caring for and nurturing all of creation. As human beings are intimately united with all that exists, our health and well-being are dependent upon that of the earth and all its creatures. We must cultivate and care for the earth in such a way that its bounty can provide for and sustain future generations. As creation was entrusted to all of God's children, all people have an equal right to breathe clean air and drink clean water. Because those on the margins of society are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, concern for creation is inseparable from concern for justice.

NETWORK cares for creation by supporting sustainable development, calling for investments in green jobs, and advocating in solidarity with people living in poverty. We follow Pope Francis in challenging a "throwaway culture" and an "economy of exclusion" as sources of harm to our common home. We want future generations to thrive in a peaceful and healthy world, free from war over resources, where all have clean air to breathe, safe water to drink, and nourishing food to eat.