

Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

The directions for our public witness are found in Scripture and Catholic social teaching. Here are the key principles of our social teaching:

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

We believe that human life is sacred from conception to natural death, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it protects and respects human persons.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The human person is not only sacred, but social. Every person has a right to participate in social, economic, and political life, and a corresponding duty to work for the common good.

Rights and Responsibilities

Each person also has a right to the conditions for living a decent life – faith and family life, food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing. We also have a duty to secure and respect these rights not only for ourselves, but for others, and to fulfill our responsibilities to our families, to each other, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Scripture teaches that God has a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. Jesus, who identified himself with "the least of these", came to preach "good news to the poor, liberty to captives...and to set the downtrodden free." The Church calls on all of us to embrace this preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, to embody it in our lives, and to work to have it shape public policies and priorities.

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's act of creation.

Solidarity

We are one human family. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Saint John Paul II insists, "We are all really responsible for all."

Care for God's Creation

The world that God created has been entrusted to us. Our stewardship of the Earth is a form of participation in God's act of creating and sustaining the world.

Join the Work of the WCC

The WCC needs the help of informed and interested Catholics like you. Here are some of the legislative resources that the WCC provides:

Capitol Report

The *Capitol Report* newsletter comes out several times annually with periodic special editions. Contact the WCC to subscribe.

E-Advocacy

Join our free electronic member list:

- Receive special legislative alerts;
- Contact your elected officials;
- Subscribe to the bi-weekly *Capitol Update* for information on upcoming hearings, newly introduced legislation, legislative activity, and WCC advocacy.

To subscribe, visit our website and click on "Join the WCC E-Advocacy Network."



Like us on Facebook.

Search for "Wisconsin Catholic Conference" or visit www.facebook.com/CatholicConference.

Catholics at the Capitol

Convened in the spring of each new legislative session (odd numbered years), *Catholics at the Capitol* helps you understand the legislative process and enhances your advocacy skills. Through workshops and networking, Catholics from across the state join together to bring a united voice to the Capitol. Information on the next *Catholics at the Capitol* is available from the WCC.

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WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

The Public Policy Voice
of Wisconsin's Bishops
Since 1969



The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters. If indeed "the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics," the Church "cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice."

Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* #183

The Catholic Presence in Wisconsin

The Catholic presence in Wisconsin includes:

- Over 1.4 million Catholics in five dioceses;
- 722 Catholic parishes;
- 1,821 priests and deacons;
- 2,184 religious sisters and brothers;
- Catholic churches and agencies across the state that spend tens of millions of dollars annually to provide food, clothing, shelter, day care, elder care, adoption services, and pregnancy, family and personal counseling to people of all races and religions;
- 292 Catholic elementary, middle and high schools annually enrolling approx. 58,712 students;
- Five Catholic publications with a combined regular circulation of over 80,000;
- Officiating at over 3,587 marriage ceremonies, or over 13% of all marriages performed in Wisconsin annually;
- Nine Catholic colleges and universities, enrolling over 27,328 students of all ages, races, and religions;
- Forty Catholic hospitals, as well as numerous clinics and long-term care facilities; and
- Over 600 Catholic cemeteries.

Our History and Mission

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) was founded in 1969 by the bishops of Wisconsin. The Conference seeks to fulfill the vision of the Second Vatican Council, which called upon the Church to be more involved in the world.

With the message of the Gospel and the social teachings of the Church as its foundation, the WCC offers a specifically Catholic contribution to state and federal public policy debates. The Conference also offers a statewide response to issues common to its five dioceses. It achieves this in several ways:

- **Serves** as an advocate on matters related to the interests and values of the Church;
- **Provides** decision makers with studied positions on social and moral issues;
- **Offers** a forum for diocesan personnel to meet, exchange information, deliberate, and recommend policies or actions; and
- **Formulates and publishes** opinions and positions on legislation and public policy.

Structure

The bishops of Wisconsin comprise the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference. The President of the Board is the Archbishop of Milwaukee. The Board meets three times a year to review issues and set the WCC's legislative agenda.

WCC Staff

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WCC Publications

WCC policy statements and resources to guide and educate Catholics include:

- *2017 Public Policy Positions*
- *Parish Administrator's Reference Guide to State Laws and Regulations* (2017)
- *A Letter to Catholics in Wisconsin on Faithful Citizenship* (2016)
- *Now and at the Hour of Our Death: A Pastoral on End of Life* (rev. 2013)
- *Upholding the Dignity of Human Life: A Pastoral Statement on POLST* (2012)
- *Traveling Together in Hope: A Pastoral Letter on Immigration* (2011)
- *Pastoral Guidance on Conceal and Carry Law* (2011)
- *Catholic Schools and Our Church: Faith Moving Forward* (2011)
- *Guidelines for Church Involvement in Electoral Politics* (2010)
- *Statement on Insurance Mandate for Contraceptive Services* (2009)
- *Serving All and Sacrificing None: Ethical Stem Cell Research* (2008)
- *A Call for Health Care Reform* (2008)
- *A Letter to Catholics in Wisconsin on Defining Marriage in Our State Constitution* (2006)
- *A Letter to Catholics in Wisconsin on the Death Penalty* (2006)
- *Making Wisconsin Work Well: A Labor Day Challenge* (2001)
- *Renewing Participation in Public Life: A Call for Campaign Finance Reform* (2000)
- *Public Safety, the Common Good and the Church: A Statement on Crime and Punishment in Wisconsin* (1999)