

Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

The directions for our public witness are found in Scripture and Catholic social teaching. Here are some key themes at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.

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 & 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 & 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 & 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 & 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. Pope 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 three times annually with periodic special editions. Subscriptions are \$5 and may be obtained by contacting the WCC.

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.

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 Catholic voice to the Capitol. Information on the next *Catholics at the Capitol* is available from the WCC office or on the WCC website.

Wisconsin Catholic Conference

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WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

The Public Policy Voice
of Wisconsin's Bishops
Since 1969



The Church...cannot and should not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper.

Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, #26, 2006

The Catholic presence in Wisconsin includes:

- Nearly 1.6 million Catholics in five dioceses;
- 777 Catholic parishes;
- 1,824 priests and deacons;
- 3,458 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;
- 343 Catholic elementary and high schools annually enrolling nearly 65,000 students;
- Five Catholic newspapers with a combined weekly circulation of over 105,700;
- Officiating at over 5,800 marriage ceremonies, or over 18% of all marriages performed in Wisconsin every year;
- Nine Catholic colleges and universities, enrolling over 32,500 students of all ages, races, and religions;
- Thirty-eight Catholic hospitals and numerous clinics and long-term care facilities; and
- Over 600 Catholic cemeteries.

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) was founded in 1969 by the bishops of Wisconsin. The Conference seeks to fulfill the vision of Vatican Council II, 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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Over the years, the WCC has engaged a broad range of public policy issues. Part of that engagement includes issuing policy statements and developing resources to guide and educate Catholics. These include:

- *A Call for Health Care Reform (2008)*
- *Serving All and Sacrificing None: Ethical Stem Cell Research (2008)*
- *Faithful Citizenship (2008)*
- *Guidelines for Church Involvement in Electoral Politics (2008)*
- *Parish Administrator's Reference Guide to State Law and Regulations (2008)*
- *Now and at the Hour of Our Death: A Pastoral on End of Life (rev. 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)*
- *Raising Children in a World of Work Not Welfare (1998)*
- *A Consistent Ethic of Life: A Demand of Discipleship (1997)*
- *The Changing Role of Rural Life in Wisconsin: Implications for Family Farms and the Church (1997)*
- *Reforming Welfare by Valuing Families (1995)*
- *Parish Involvement in Welfare Reform (1995)*