

Summerville Catholic School Social Justice Program



Just as the social teaching of the Church is integral to Catholic faith, the social justice dimensions of teaching are integral to Catholic education and catechesis. They are an essential part of Catholic identity and formation. – Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, 1998

The Educational Challenge

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Catholic schools, religious education, adult education, and faith formation programs are vitally important for sharing the substance and values of Catholic social teaching. Just as the social teaching of the Church is integral to Catholic faith, the social justice dimensions of teaching are integral to Catholic education and catechesis. They are an essential part of Catholic identity and formation.

In offering these reflections, we want to encourage a fuller integration of the Church's social tradition into the mainstream of Catholic education and catechesis. We seek to encourage a more integral sharing of the substance of Catholic social teaching in Catholic education and catechesis at every level. The commitment to human life and dignity, to human rights and solidarity, is a calling all Catholic educators must share with their students. It is not a vocation for a few religion teachers, but a challenge for every Catholic educator and catechist.

The Church has the God-given mission and the unique capacity to call people to live with integrity, compassion, responsibility, and concern for others. Our seminaries, colleges, schools, and catechetical programs are called to share not just abstract principles but a moral framework for everyday action. The Church's social teaching offers a guide for choices as parents, workers, consumers, and citizens.

Therefore, we emphasize that the values of the Church's social teaching must not be treated as tangential or optional. They must be a core part of teaching and formation. Without our social teaching, schools, catechetical programs, and other formation programs would be offering an incomplete presentation of our Catholic tradition. This would fall short of our mission and would be a serious loss for those in our educational and catechetical programs.

Summerville Catholic School rises to meet the educational challenge of the USCCB, by implementing our Mission statement of "Following the life and example of Jesus Christ, we strive to build character while teaching compassion." Using Matthew 25:31-43, each grade K5 through 8th grade, participates in a year long ministry based on the Corporal Works of Mercy.

Goals of program

- to live our Baptismal call to serve others as Jesus taught us
- coming together as a faith community to challenge the status-quo which allows oppression to continue
- empowering the students to live their Catholic education by going beyond their comfort zones and the walls of the classroom & into their community
- actively respond to real needs of real people
- developing sense compassion for others

Student Ministries

K5 learns a life of a saint who lived the Social Justice teachings as a child / youth

1st grade feed the hungry babies; partners with Neighborhood House, Palmetto House

2nd grade give drink to the thirsty / water conservation; partners with Water Missions International

3rd grade clothing for the needy babies / diapers; partners with Neighborhood House

4th grade sheltering the homeless; partners with Habitat for Humanity

5th grade medical needs of the poor; partners with Saint Paul Medical Clinic

6th grade visiting the imprisoned; partners with Sister Carol Gnau, SSND

7th grade stewardship of the earth; partner with forester – John Martin

8th grade bury the dead / ministering to grieving families;

partner with Hospice of Charleston & J. Henry Stuhr Funeral Home

Note: As the students are growing in their understanding that they are each responsible to live their call, there will be occasions when part of our students learning to reach out to others will include monetary support from the students. Students are instructed to earn all monies which are contributed to any project, thus truly being the involved in and accountable for their part. Handouts from parents are strongly discouraged. It is also important to help students understand that while one student may earn twice what another student earns, it is the sincerity of their intention and not the \$ amount that matters.

Helpful scripture references

- Who is our neighbor? The story of the Good Samaritan Luke 10: 30 - 37
- How do we serve our neighbor? The Corporal Works of Mercy, Matt 25: 31 - 46
- Who deserves to be forgiven? Saul's Conversion story, Acts 7: 54 – 60, 9: 1 – 25, 21: 37 – 22: 29, 23: 12 – 14

The Forgiving Father Luke 15 : 11 - 32

- Loving Our Enemies Matthew 5: 43 - 48

Helpful web site to find all the Church's documents on Catholic Social Justice teachings

www.usccb.org

Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

The 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 creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

Solidarity

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice."¹ The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.