

Catholic Social Teaching Quotes on Poverty and Hunger



It is not from your own possessions that you are bestowing aims on the poor, you are but restoring to them what is theirs by right. For what was given to everyone for the use of all, you have taken for your exclusive use. The earth belongs not to the rich, but to everyone. Thus, far from giving lavishly, you are but paying part of your debt.

— St Ambrose

Its [the Church's] desire is that the poor should rise above poverty and wretchedness, and should better their condition in life; and for this it strives.

— Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), paragraph 23

The solidarity which binds humanity together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist.

— Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* (1961), paragraph 157

Every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services.

— Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1963), paragraph 11

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the [men] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.

— Documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), paragraph 1

Faced with a world today where so many people are suffering from want, the council asks individuals and governments to remember the saying of the Fathers: "Feed the people dying of hunger, because if you do not feed them you are killing them," and it urges them according to their ability to share and dispose of their goods to help others, above all by giving them aid which will enable them to help and develop themselves.

— Documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), paragraph 69

Today the peoples in hunger are making a dramatic appeal to the peoples blessed with abundance.

— Pope Paul VI, ***Populorum Progressio*** (1967), paragraph 3



... the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations.

— Pope Paul VI, ***Populorum Progressio*** (1967), paragraph 49

In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society; the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.

— Pope Paul VI, ***Octogesima Adveniens*** (1971), paragraph 23

Those who are more influential because they have greater share of goods and common services should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess... the church feels called to take her stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests and to help satisfy them, without losing sight of the good of groups in the context of the common good.

— Pope John Paul II, ***Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*** (1987), paragraph 39

A consistent theme of Catholic social teaching is the option or love of preference for the poor. Today, this preference has to be expressed in worldwide dimensions, embracing the immense numbers of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care, and those without hope.

— Pope John Paul II, ***Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*** (1987), paragraph 42

...love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to [the Church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel. The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word.

— Pope Benedict XVI, ***Deus Caritas Est*** (2005), paragraph 22

Jesus taught his disciples to pray by asking the Heavenly Father not for "my" but for "our" daily bread. Thus, he desired every person to feel co-responsible for his brothers so that no one would want for what he needs in order to live. The earth's produce forms a gift which God has destined "for the entire human family".

— Pope Benedict XVI, ***Angelus***, 12 November 2006

'Feed the hungry' (cf. Mt 25: 35, 37, 42) is an ethical imperative for the universal Church as she responds to the teachings of her Founder, the Lord Jesus, concerning solidarity and the sharing of goods. Moreover, the elimination of world hunger has also, in the global era, become a requirement for safeguarding the peace and stability of the planet.

— Pope Benedict XVI, ***Caritas in Veritate*** (2009), paragraph 27



Let us never forget that authentic power is service, and that the Pope too, when exercising power, must enter ever more fully into that service which has its radiant culmination on the Cross. He must be inspired by the lowly, concrete and faithful service which marked Saint Joseph and, like him, he must open his arms to protect all of God's people and embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

— Pope Francis, ***Installation Homily***, March 2013

Let us remember well, however, that whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor, from the hungry!

— Pope Francis, ***General Audience***, June 5, 2013

A way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the affluent and those who must be satisfied with the crumbs falling from the table, but above all to satisfy the demands of justice, fairness and respect for every human being.

— Pope Francis, ***Address to the Food and Agricultural Organization***, June 20, 2013