

EXCELLENCE *in* TEACHING CONFERENCE

Making STEM a Force for Good

An (Introductory) Reading List on Catholic Social Teaching

The Building Blocks: Setting a Foundation for Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

1. [“Overview of Equity and Social Justice Principles”](#), Notre Dame Center for STEM Education

We propose a framework for thinking about equity and social justice that draws upon four principles founded in CST. Although there are other principles within CST, we limit ourselves to these principles due to their centrality to CST and their applicability for advancing equitable learning in STEM classrooms. This overview is intended to be a succinct 1-page ‘starter’ for practitioners.

2. [“Primer on Catholic Social Teaching”](#), Notre Dame Center for STEM Education

What is Catholic Social Teaching? What teachings does it include, where do they come from, and why are they relevant to me as an educator? Why is CST sometimes defined as a list of Church documents, while other times I see it as lists of 4, 7, or even 10 loosely connected themes? And why is it sometimes differently called “*Catholic Social Tradition*” or “*Catholic Social Thought*”? These and other questions are laid out in our 2-page “Primer on Catholic Social Teaching.”

3. [“Key Principles of Catholic Social Teaching”](#), Catholic Charities

Lists like this one from Catholic Charities on the CST ‘principles’ can be helpful for quickly becoming familiar with the recurrent social themes within the Catholic tradition. Lists like this are a common starting point for CST, but they are the fruits -- not the roots -- of the Catholic social tradition. Other lists may order or consolidate the themes differently, and not all the ‘principles’ are equally foundational or equally well-elaborated. This list draws from a summary of CST developed by a task force of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (see [here](#)).

4. [“The 10 Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching”](#), William Byron (*America Magazine*)

This 1998 article from *America*, a US-based Catholic magazine, drafts up a list of 10 ‘building blocks’ that undergird Catholic Social Teaching. The article provides some historical context for the ongoing articulation of a list of CST principles, which might “serve as a table of contents for the larger body of Catholic social teaching.” For our part, we like how *The Principle of Human Dignity* and *The Principle of the Common Good* bookend Byron’s list, acting as two foundational anchors to the whole of Catholic social thought.

Cultivating a CST Perspective: Understanding the CST Vision

1. *101 Questions & Answers on Catholic Social Teaching*, Kenneth Himes, OFM

This easy-to-read introduction to CST leads the reader through the most important elements of CST using a question-and-answer format. The Q&As we recommend as a starting point are #17 - 32, which highlight the basic, recurring perspective underlying CST documents and discusses the rudimentary ‘what’ and ‘why’ of the foundations of CST: **human dignity**, **human rights**, and the **common good**. We also recommend glancing at Fr. Himes’s “For Further Reading” suggestions at the end of the short book.

ISBN: [978-0-8091-4849-3](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780809148493)

2. *Handbook of Catholic Social Thought: A Guide for Christians in the World Today*, Martin Schlag (editor)

This brief handbook is a short topical index of the more-developed social teaching of the Catholic tradition. Following a familiar question-and-answer format, the handbook compacts a rich philosophical outlook into manageable pieces. We recommend the 3-page introduction (“Toward a Christian Humanism”) as a context for thinking about CST, and Chapter 4 (“The Principles of Catholic Social Teaching”) as a solid mid-level description of four consistent elements of CST: **human dignity**, the **common good**, **subsidiarity**, and **solidarity**.

ISBN: [978-0-8132-2932-4](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780813229324)

3. [“Catholic Social Teaching 101 Videos & Materials”](#), Catholic Relief Services

If you are looking for a different mode of representation, check out the theme-based videos and CST resources provided online by Catholic Relief Services, produced in collaboration with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The 3-5 minute videos serve as engaging and informative introductions to 7 key themes (or ‘principles’) drawn from CST. The accompanying resources may also provide inspiration for adaptation to your own classroom.

Book Club: Bringing a CST Imagination to Daily Life

1. [“Room for Christ”](#), Dorothy Day (short article)

Dorothy Day founded The Catholic Worker movement in 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression. The movement is best known for its commitment to welcoming the homeless, hungry, and forsaken for food and shelter in the communities’ *houses of hospitality*. The movement’s namesake newspaper - still in print today - can be purchased for a penny a copy. In its December 1945 issue, Day poses, with cutting clarity, the Christmas call to welcome Christ in everyone we come in contact with. “We are not born too late,” she writes. We do not need to have lived two thousand years ago to welcome Christ in the homeless or the stranger.

Do I see others in their inherent human dignity, and respond? Do I actively make room -- literally or metaphorically -- for the poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable?

2. *Adam: God’s Beloved*, Fr. Henri Nouwen (non-fiction)

Fr. Henri Nouwen tells the story of Adam, his friend, teacher, and guide who taught him how to tell God’s story and understand the mystery of the Creator during his 10 years as pastor at L’Arche Daybreak Community. It was there that Nouwen first met Adam, a young housemate at L’Arche Daybreak whom he cared for, since Adam could not speak or move without assistance. Through the story of Adam and his life, Nouwen finds words to express his deepest convictions about who God is and who we are called to be.

It is a story shot-through with the conviction that each person has immeasurable worth and each person -- including those often vulnerable and marginalized in society -- is an invaluable contributor to the common good. A discussion guide for the book can be found [here](#).

ISBN: [978-1-57075-994-9](#)

3. *The Plover*, Brian Doyle (novel)

The Plover is the story of a hardened, disillusioned young man who takes to the seas, only to find that his small, solo sailboat unexpectedly acquires an odd and entertaining crew of companions of every sort and stripe. An entertaining book written in wry prose, *The Plover* is at heart a novel about the unanticipated formation of a small society upon an (even smaller) schooner. Deeply woven into the story is an implicit commentary about the pursuit of the common good. For themes about the dignity of the human person, pay attention to the narrative arc of the relationship between father and daughter pair Piko and Pipa. Some elements may not be appropriate for younger audiences.

ISBN: [978-1-250-06245-1](#)

From the Vault: Excerpts from the Documentary Tradition of CST

1. [*Rerum Novarum: On rights and duties of capital and labor*](#) (1891), Pope Leo XIII

Rerum novarum is traditionally acknowledged as the beginning of the *documentary tradition of CST*. Written in response to an acute concern for the plight of industrial workers in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, it sets out to articulate the rights of workers and to protect the weak and poor in pursuit of justice. It affirms the dignity of work, the right to property, and the right to professional associations.

2. [*Populorum Progressio: On the development of peoples*](#) (1967), Pope Paul VI

A growing concern emerged in the post-war period as the development of low-income countries appeared to stagnate, with the onset of worsening economic conditions after decolonization. In *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI calls attention to this marginalization of the world's poor and offers several dimensions of an *integral human development* and makes notes of the conditions necessary for growing solidarity among peoples. The encyclical sets out a model of development that goes beyond economic growth as the sole pathway to human flourishing, but rather looks to promote genuine human values that can lead to a true development toward more humane conditions.

3. [*Caritas in Veritate: On integral human development in charity and truth*](#) (2009), Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI deepens the Church's social doctrine by refocusing on its foundations of *love in truth* and the *practice of justice for the common good*. The encyclical examines the connection between justice and charity, and seeks how we can develop the fundamental values of justice, love, and peace in order to build a better future together.

4. [*Laudato Si': On care for our common home*](#) (2015), Pope Francis

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis stresses the urgency of the present ecological crisis and calls for a conversion of heart in care for our common home both individually and communally, nationally and internationally. Pope Francis explains how we are part of a global, *integral ecology* that connects every living thing, and how our interactions with our environment have incremental and far-reaching impact. Consequences of environmental neglect or abuse often have unseen and silenced victims: the poor, *the marginalized and vulnerable*, and the children of future generations. *Caring for the environment* is an ethical responsibility, rooted in a respect for all of God's creation.

5. [*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*](#) (2004), Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

As the title suggests, this book is a compendium of the Catholic Church's social teaching. It is a "concise but complete" overview of CST. A glance at its table of contents can prove helpful. Its introduction elaborates the "why" of its audience of all people of good will; its first two

chapters draw on the background of the Catholic social tradition for context; Chapters 3 and 4 treat the personal and social dimensions of human person, respectively; Part 2 (Chapters 5-11) elaborate on several themes that recur throughout the *documentary tradition of CST*; and Part 3 articulates a course of action going forward.

6. [CST Major Documents](#), University of Notre Dame, Center for Social Concerns

The University of Notre Dame's Center for Social Concerns compiles a list of the 15 most notable CST documents and provides short summaries with links to each document.

7. Convocate.nd.edu

This resource houses a searchable CST document database that can be used as a tool to search by word or topic.