***Major Themes of Catholic Social Teaching***

1) Dignity of the human person

ALL people are sacred and maintain dignity (their worth is not diminished) regardless of all circumstances including poverty, disability, race, or sex. Human life is sacred from conception until natural death and must be protected and valued infinitely above material possessions.

2) Common good and community

Humans are social beings with a right and duty to participate in society to seek the common good and well-being of ALL. Family is fundamental to this process.

3) Rights and responsibilities

ALL people have survival (basic needs) and thrival (opportunity to meet their potential) rights such as life, food, shelter, health care, education, and employment. ALL persons have a responsibility to not only respect the rights of others, but to also participate in social and political activities and institutions that promote the common good.

4) Option for the poor

The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. Society has a responsibility to examine the impact public policy decisions have on the poor.

5) Participation (Dignity of work and the rights of workers)

The economy (system for the distribution of goods and services) exists to meet the needs of the people. This relationship is very different from people existing to meet the needs of the economy. People come first. Workers have a right to:

productive work

fair wages

a safe work environment

participate in decisions that affect them in the workplace

security in the case of sickness, disability, unemployment or old age

form unions which are considered "indispensable" in the search for social justice

6) Economic Justice (Free markets, economic initiative, and private property)

The free market system (capitalism) is not necessarily just. It is the responsibility of the state and ALL of society to intervene when the needs of the people are not being adequately met by the free market. No one should be allowed to amass excessive wealth while others lack the basic necessities of life.

7) Stewardship of God's creation

The goods of creation are to be enjoyed by ALL and benefit EVERYONE. We are not to exploit the earth's resources for personal or commercial gain, but protect, care for, and responsibly use the goods of creation.

8) Solidarity (Global solidarity and development)

Global development must respect the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of the human person. Our responsibility to work for justice crosses national, racial, economic, and ideological differences because we are a global community; one human family.

9) Role of Government (and subsidiarity)

Government must promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. This requires the participation of ALL people. When people`s basic needs cannot be met the government has a moral obligation to provide assistance. Support should be as small as possible, and as big as necessary.

10) Promotion of peace

Peace requires action and effort, and thus involves doing. Peace is the fruit of justice and therefore requires mutual respect and collaboration between peoples and nations.

"If you want peace, work for justice."

- Pope Paul VI (1972)