

God & Caesar: Summer Sessions on Catholic Social Doctrine
Saint Ambrose Catholic Church | Annandale, VA | July 1, 2024
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God and Mammon: Catholic Perspectives on Economic Life

God created everything. Everything—*everything*—we have is a gift.

Quotation #1 – *Laudato Si*, by Pope Francis, §66-67 (2015)

- We are not God. The earth was here before us and it has been given to us. “The earth is the Lord’s” (Ps 24:1); to him belongs “the earth with all that is within it” (Dt 10:14). Thus God rejects every claim to absolute ownership: “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine” (Lev 25:23).
- The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). “Tilling” refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while “keeping” means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving.

Quotation #2 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2415

- Man’s dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.

Quotation #3 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2402

- In the beginning, God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labor, and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race.

Work dignifies man. The *worker* is more important than the *work*.

Quotation #4 – *Laborem Exercens*, by John Paul II, §4 (1981)

- The Church finds in the very first pages of the Book of Genesis the source of her conviction that work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth.

- Man is the image of God partly through the mandate received from his Creator to subdue, to dominate, the earth. In carrying out this mandate, man, every human being, reflects the very action of the Creator of the universe.

Quotation #5 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2427

- Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another.
- Hence, work is a duty: “If anyone will not work, let him not eat (2 Thess 3:10). Work honors the Creator’s gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive.
- Man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. Man shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish.

Quotation #6 – *Laborem Exercens*, by John Paul II, §6 (1981)

- The primary basis of the value of work is man himself, who is its subject. This leads immediately to a very important conclusion of an ethical nature: however true it may be that man is destined for work and called to it, in the first place work is "for man" and not man "for work".
- Through this conclusion one rightly comes to recognize the pre-eminence of the subjective meaning of work [the worker] over the objective one [the work].

Quotation #7 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2428

- In work, the person exercises and fulfills in part the potential inscribed in his nature. The primordial value of work stems from man himself, its author and its beneficiary.

Quotation #8 – *Laborem Exercens*, by John Paul II, §10 (1981)

- Work constitutes a foundation for the formation of family life, which is a natural right and something that man is called to.
- Work and industriousness also influence the whole process of education in the family, for the very reason that everyone "becomes a human being" through, among other things, work, and becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education.

- It must be remembered and affirmed that the family constitutes one of the most important terms of reference for shaping the social and ethical order of human work.

Work is important for life. So, too, are leisure, prayer and rest.

Quotation #9 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2172, 2184-2187

- God’s action is the model for human action. If God “rested and was refreshed” on the seventh day, man too ought to rest and should let others, especially the poor, be refreshed. The sabbath brings everyday work to a halt and provides a respite. *It is a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money.*
- The Lord’s Day helps everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social and religious lives.
- Sunday is a time for reflection, silence, cultivation of the mind, and meditation.
- Sanctifying Sundays and holy days requires a common effort. Every Christian should avoid making unnecessary demands on others that would hinder them from observing the Lord’s Day.

The Church understands the good of profit—but it is not the only goal.

Quotation #10 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2429

- Everyone has the right of economic initiative; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all and to harvest the just fruits of his labor.

Quotation #11 – *Centesimus Annus*, by John Paul II, §35, 25 (1991)

- The Church acknowledges the legitimate role of profit as an indication that a business is functioning well. When a firm makes a profit, this means that productive factors have been properly employed and corresponding human needs have been duly satisfied. But profitability is not the only indicator of a firm's condition.
- Where self-interest is violently suppressed, it is replaced by a burdensome system of bureaucratic control which dries up the wellsprings of initiative and creativity.

Quotation #12 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2432

- Those responsible for business enterprises are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of profits.
- Profits are necessary, however. They make possible the investments that ensure the future of a business and they guarantee employment.

Quotation #13 – *Centesimus Annus*, by John Paul II, §41 (1991)

- The historical experience of the West, for its part, shows that even if the Marxist analysis and its foundation of alienation are false, nevertheless alienation—and the loss of the authentic meaning of life—is a reality in Western societies too.
- This happens in consumerism, when people are ensnared in a web of false and superficial gratifications rather than being helped to experience their personhood in an authentic and concrete way.
- Alienation is found also in work, when it is organized so as to ensure maximum returns and profits with no concern whether the worker, through his own labor, grows or diminishes as a person.

Quotation #14 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2423-2424

- Any system in which social relationships are determined entirely by economics factors is contrary to the nature of the human person and his acts.
- A theory that makes profit the exclusive norm and ultimate end of economic activity is morally unacceptable. The disordered desire for money cannot but produce perverse effects.
- Every practice that reduces persons to nothing more than a means of profit enslaves man, leads to idolizing money, and contributes to the spread of atheism.

Quotation #15 – *Centesimus Annus*, by John Paul II, §36 (1991)

- It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards "having" rather than "being", and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself.
- It is therefore necessary to create lifestyles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common

growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments.

Private property is inscribed in the natural law. It helps society flourish.

Quotation #16 – *Quadragesimo Anno*, by Pope Pius XI, §46 (1931)

- Accordingly, twin rocks of shipwreck must be carefully avoided. For, as one is wrecked upon, or comes close to, what is known as "individualism" by denying or minimizing the social and public character of the right of property, so by rejecting or minimizing the private and individual character of this same right, one inevitably runs into "collectivism" or at least closely approaches its tenets.

Quotation #17 – *Rerum Novarum*, by Pope Leo XIII, §22 (1891)

- Private ownership, as we have seen, is the natural right of man, and to exercise that right, especially as members of society, is not only lawful, but absolutely necessary.
- "It is lawful," says St. Thomas Aquinas, "for a man to hold private property; and it is also necessary for the carrying on of human existence."
- But if the question be asked: How must one's possessions be used? - the Church replies without hesitation in the words of the same holy Doctor: "Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need."

The universal destination of goods: ownership is not absolute.

Quotation #18 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2402-2405

- The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race. The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all his family.
- Goods of production—material or immaterial—such as land, factories, practical or artistic skills, oblige their possessors to employ them in ways that will benefit the greatest number.

The state has a role in the economy, but the state shouldn't do too much.

Quotation #19 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2431

- Economic activity, especially the activity of a market economy, cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical, or political vacuum. On the contrary, it presupposes sure guarantees of individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services.
- Hence the principal task of the state is to guarantee this security, so that those who work and produce can enjoy the fruits of their labors and thus feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly.
- Another task of the state is that of overseeing and directing the exercise of human rights in the economic sector. However, primary responsibility in this area belongs not to the state but to individuals and to the various groups and associations which make up society.

Quotation #20 – *Centesimus Annus*, by John Paul II, §48 (1991)

- In recent years the range of such intervention has vastly expanded, to the point of creating a new type of State, the so-called "Welfare State". This has happened in some countries in order to respond better to many needs and demands, by remedying forms of poverty and deprivation unworthy of the human person. However, excesses and abuses, especially in recent years, have provoked very harsh criticisms of the Welfare State, dubbed the "Social Assistance State."
- By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending.

Solidarity: The Christian has a preferential option for the poor—always.

Quotation #21 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2443-2445

- God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them.
- It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones.
- The Church's love for the poor is a part of her constant tradition.

- Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use

The Church's Social Doctrine ≠ Capitalism + Socialism

Quotation #22 – *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, by John Paul II, §41 (1987)

- The Church's social doctrine is not a “third way” between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another: rather, it constitutes a category of its own.
- Nor is it an ideology, but rather the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition.
- Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to guide Christian behavior.

Quotation #23 – *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2431

- The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with "communism" or "socialism."
- She has likewise refused to accept, in the practice of "capitalism," individualism and the absolute primacy of the law of the marketplace over human labor.
- Regulating the economy solely by centralized planning perverts the basis of social bonds; regulating it solely by the law of the marketplace fails social justice, for there are many human needs which cannot be satisfied by the market.
- Reasonable regulation of the marketplace and economic initiatives, in keeping with a just hierarchy of values and a view to the common good, is to be commended.

Quotation #24 – *Quadragesimo Anno*, by Pope Pius XI, §120 (1931)

- ‘Religious socialism’, ‘Christian socialism’, are contradictory terms; no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist. We have also summoned Communism and Socialism again to judgment

and have found all their forms, even the most modified, to wander far from the precepts of the Gospel.

Further Readings on Economic Life and the Faith

- 1.) *Papal Economics: The Catholic Church on Democratic Capitalism* by Rev. Maciej Zięba, OP
- 2.) *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* by Michael Novak
- 3.) *Citizens Yet Strangers: Living Authentically Catholic in a Divided America* by Kenneth Craycraft, Ph.D., J.D.
- 4.) *Handbook of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Christians in the World Today* by Monsignor Martin Schlag