

Catholic Social Teaching

The Preferential Option for the Poor

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- **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**
 - **Solidarity**
 - **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**
 - **Call to Family, Community, and Participation**
 - **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**
 - **Care for God's Creation**
 - **Rights and Responsibilities**

WHAT IS IT?

A core principle of Catholic Social Teaching.

Calls Christians to place the needs of poor and vulnerable people first.

Reflects God's special concern for those who suffer from poverty, exclusion, or injustice.

FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

- Exodus story of liberation from oppression
- Legislative Codes – guides for right relationship with God and others, including society
- Temple tithe/tax to care for widow, orphan, stranger, priests: Dt. 14:28-29; 26:12-15
- Welcome the stranger: Lev. 19:33-34
- Debt forgiveness: Ex. 23:10-11, Lev. 25:8-17
- Prophets – social justice as response to God's gifts
- E.g. Hosea 4, Is. 1, 5, 32, 58; Jer. 5:26-29; 7; 9; 22:13; 34; Ez. 18:5; 22; 34; Amos 5:7-8:6; Mic. 2; Mal. 1:6-29

Deuteronomy 24: Catholic Social Teaching 101

- ▶ “17 'You must not infringe the rights of the **foreigner** or the **orphan**; you must not take a **widow's** clothes in pledge.
- ▶ 18 Remember that you were once a slave in Egypt and that Yahweh your God redeemed you from that. That is why I am giving you this order.
- ▶ 19 'If, when reaping the harvest in your field, you overlook a sheaf in that field, do not go back for it. The **foreigner**, the **orphan and the widow** shall have it, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all your undertakings.
- ▶ 20 'When you beat your olive tree, you must not go over the branches twice. The **foreigner, the orphan and the widow** shall have the rest.
- ▶ 21 'When you harvest your vineyard, you must not pick it over a second time. The **foreigner, the orphan and the widow** shall have the rest.
- ▶ 22 'Remember that *you were once a slave in Egypt*. That is why I am giving you this order.'

New Testament

- ▶ Beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12 and Lk. 6:20-22) affirm dignity of the most marginalized; manner in which we must act.
- ▶ Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:17-48) – going beyond the Law to do what is just and good
- ▶ Kingdom of God involves mercy, pardon, healing, justice.
- ▶ Parables of Talents, Sheep and Goats (Mt. 25:14-40) – right use of wealth; mandate to care for poor and oppressed.
- ▶ Servant Leadership model (Mk. 10:35-45, Lk. 22:24-27) – Right use of power for common good.

WHO IS THIS JESUS ?

- ☐ God Identifies Himself With the Poor
- ☐ In the Incarnation, God becomes poor:
 - ☐ Born in a stable
 - ☐ Lives as a laborer
 - ☐ Owns nothing
 - ☐ Dies dispossessed
- ☐ Jesus does not merely help the poor—He becomes one of them.

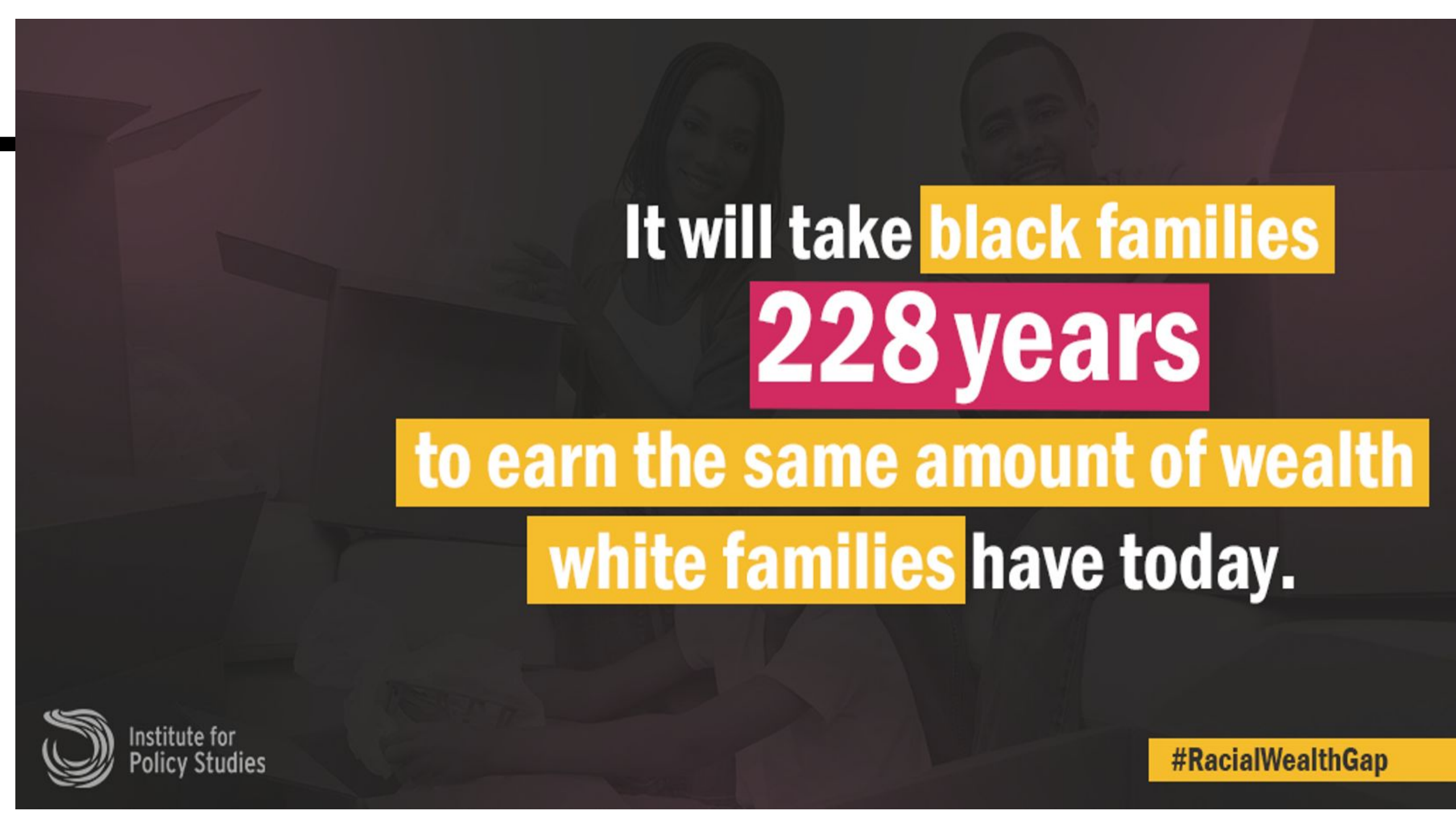


WHERE ARE WE?

- Only 31% of Black households have liquid assets exceeding \$10,000, vs. 56% of white households
- Black families own 1/15th the wealth of white families
- Black households hold 40% of their wealth in home equity, vs. 28% for white households
- 22% of Black households are unbanked or underbanked, vs. 8% of white households
- Black small business owners are 3 times more likely to be denied loans than white owners
- 15% of Black households use payday loans, vs. 4% of white households (Consumer Financial Protection).

- ❑ About 15 percent of Americans—close to 47 million people—live in poverty. The overall poverty rate hasn't been this high for this long in over forty years.
- ❑ 1 in 5 American children live in poverty. Child poverty hasn't been this persistently high since the early '90s.
- ❑ For half of all American households, income is still significantly lower than it was before the recession even began.
- ❑ In 2010, 27.4 percent of blacks lived in poverty, compared to the overall U.S. poverty rate of 15.1 percent.
- ❑ 45.8 percent of black children under age 6 lived in poverty, more than three times the rate for young white children
- ❑ [stateofworkingamerica](http://stateofworkingamerica.org)





It will take **black families**

228 years

to earn the same amount of wealth

white families have today.



Institute for
Policy Studies

#RacialWealthGap

DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, THE CHURCH WAS OUT FRONT

MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM

AUGUST 28, 1963

LINCOLN MEMORIAL PROGRAM

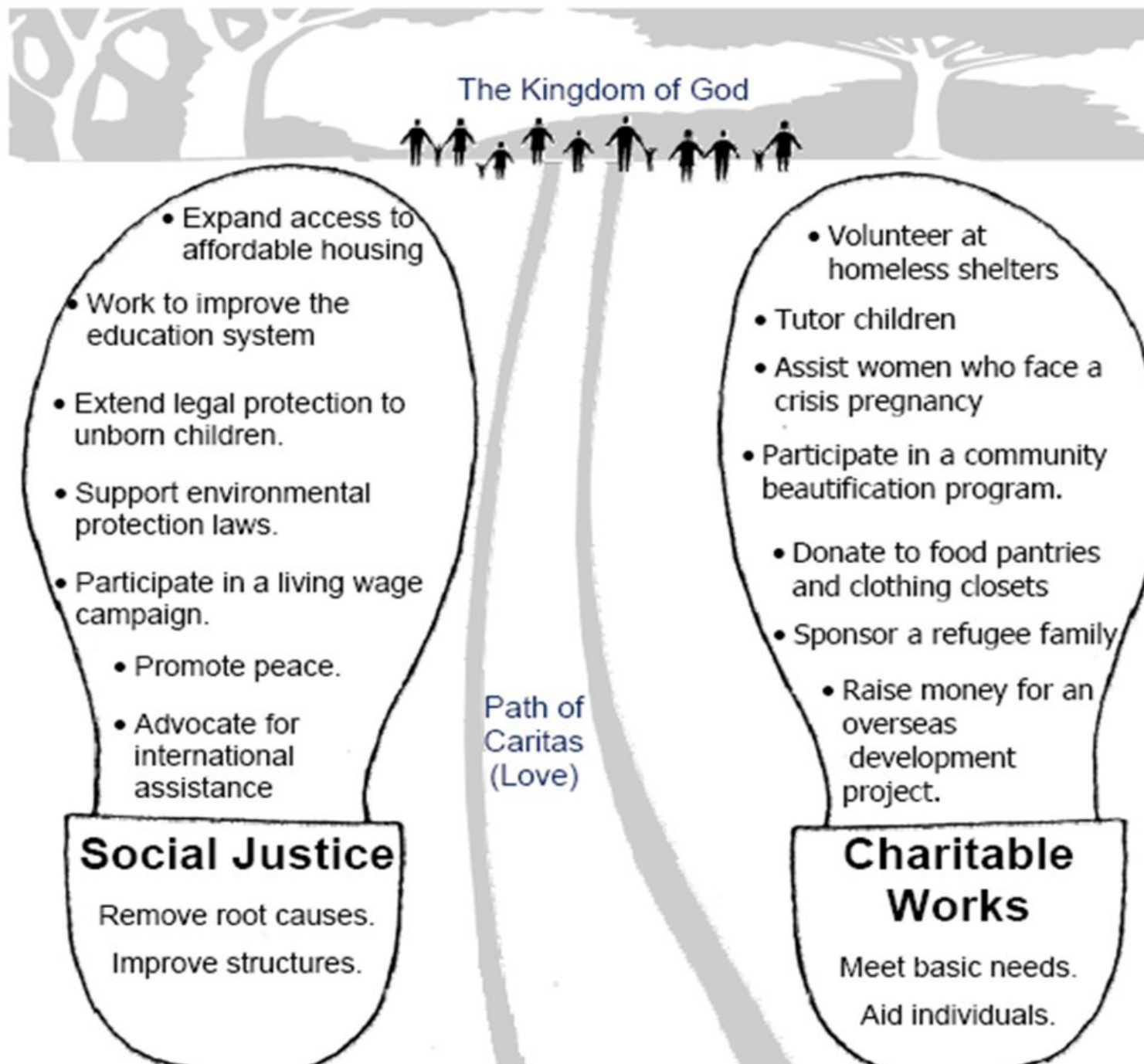
1. The National Anthem
Led by Marian Anderson.
2. Invocation
The Very Rev. Patrick O'Boyle, Archbishop of Washington.
3. Opening Remarks
A. Philip Randolph, Director March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.
4. Remarks
Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Stated Clerk, United Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A.; Vice Chairman, Commission on Race Relations of the National Council of Churches of Christ in America.
5. Tribute to Negro Women Fighters for Freedom
*Daisy Bates
Diane Nash Bevel
Mrs. Medgar Evers
Mrs. Herbert Lee
Rosa Parks
Gloria Richardson*
Mrs. Medgar Evers
6. Remarks
John Lewis, National Chairman, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.
7. Remarks
Walter Reuther, President, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, AFL-CIO; Chairman, Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO.
8. Remarks
James Farmer, National Director, Congress of Racial Equality.
9. Selection
Eva Jessye Choir
10. Prayer
Rabbi Uri Miller, President Synagogue Council of America.
11. Remarks
Whitney M. Young, Jr., Executive Director, National Urban League.
12. Remarks
Mathew Ahmann, Executive Director, National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice.
13. Remarks
Roy Wilkins, Executive Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
14. Selection
Miss Mahalia Jackson
15. Remarks
Rabbi Joachim Prinz, President American Jewish Congress.
16. Remarks
The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference.
17. The Pledge
A Philip Randolph
18. Benediction
Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, President, Morehouse College.

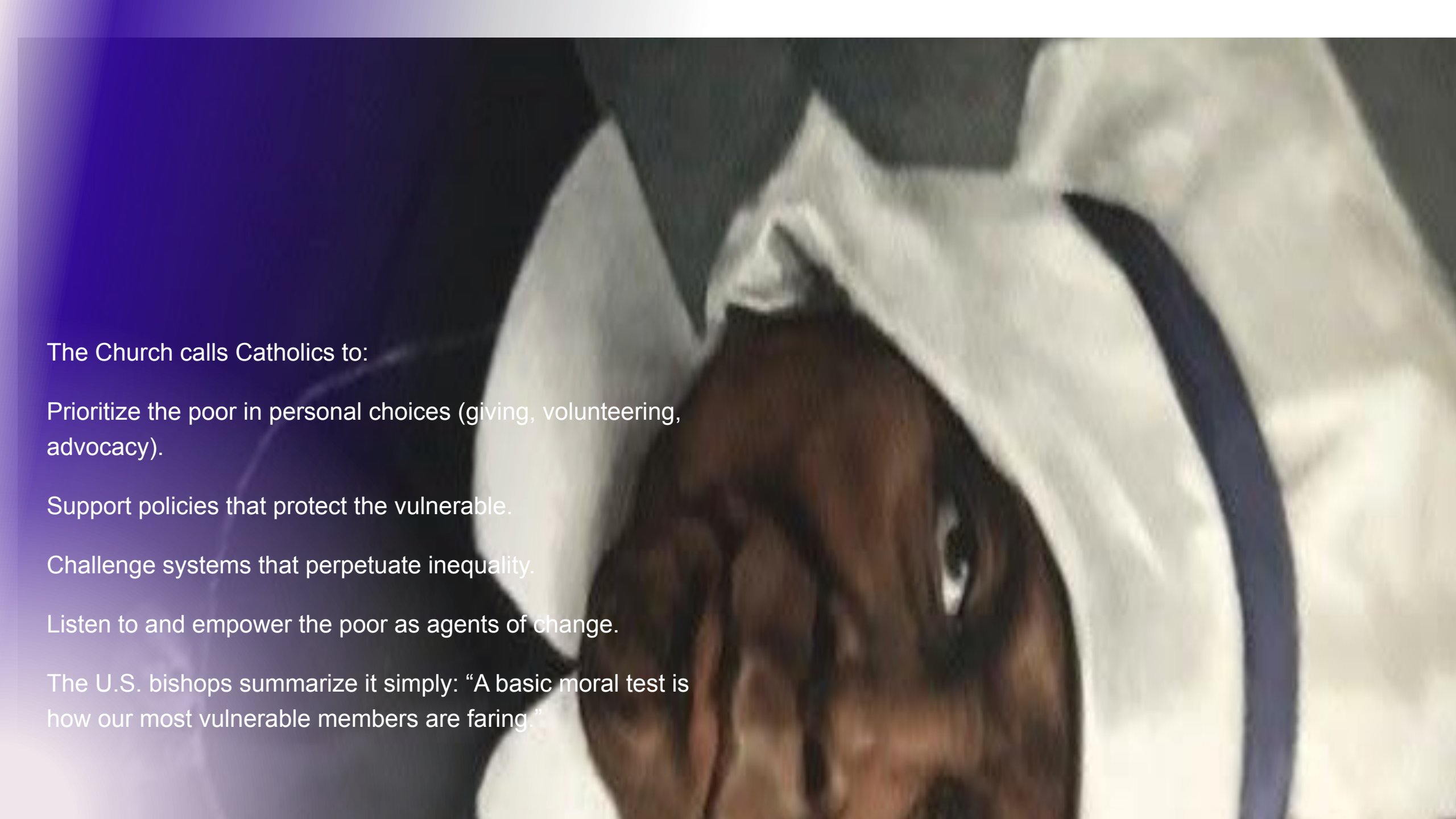
"WE SHALL OVERCOME"



Comment

Share





The Church calls Catholics to:

Prioritize the poor in personal choices (giving, volunteering, advocacy).

Support policies that protect the vulnerable.

Challenge systems that perpetuate inequality.

Listen to and empower the poor as agents of change.

The U.S. bishops summarize it simply: “A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring.”



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EXCLUSION

■ ■ ■ ■

When we speak of exclusion, we immediately think of concrete people, not useless objects but precious persons. The human person, set by God at the pinnacle of creation, is often discarded, set aside in favor of ephemeral things. This is unacceptable, because in God's eyes man is the most precious good. It is ominous that we are growing used to this rejection. We should be worried when our consciences are anaesthetized and we no longer see the brother or sister suffering at our side, or notice the grave problems in our world, which become a mere refrain familiar from the headlines on the evening news.



KEY CHURCH TEACHINGS

- Human dignity belongs to every person.
- Economic and social decisions should consider their impact on the poor.
- Solidarity requires standing with those who are vulnerable.

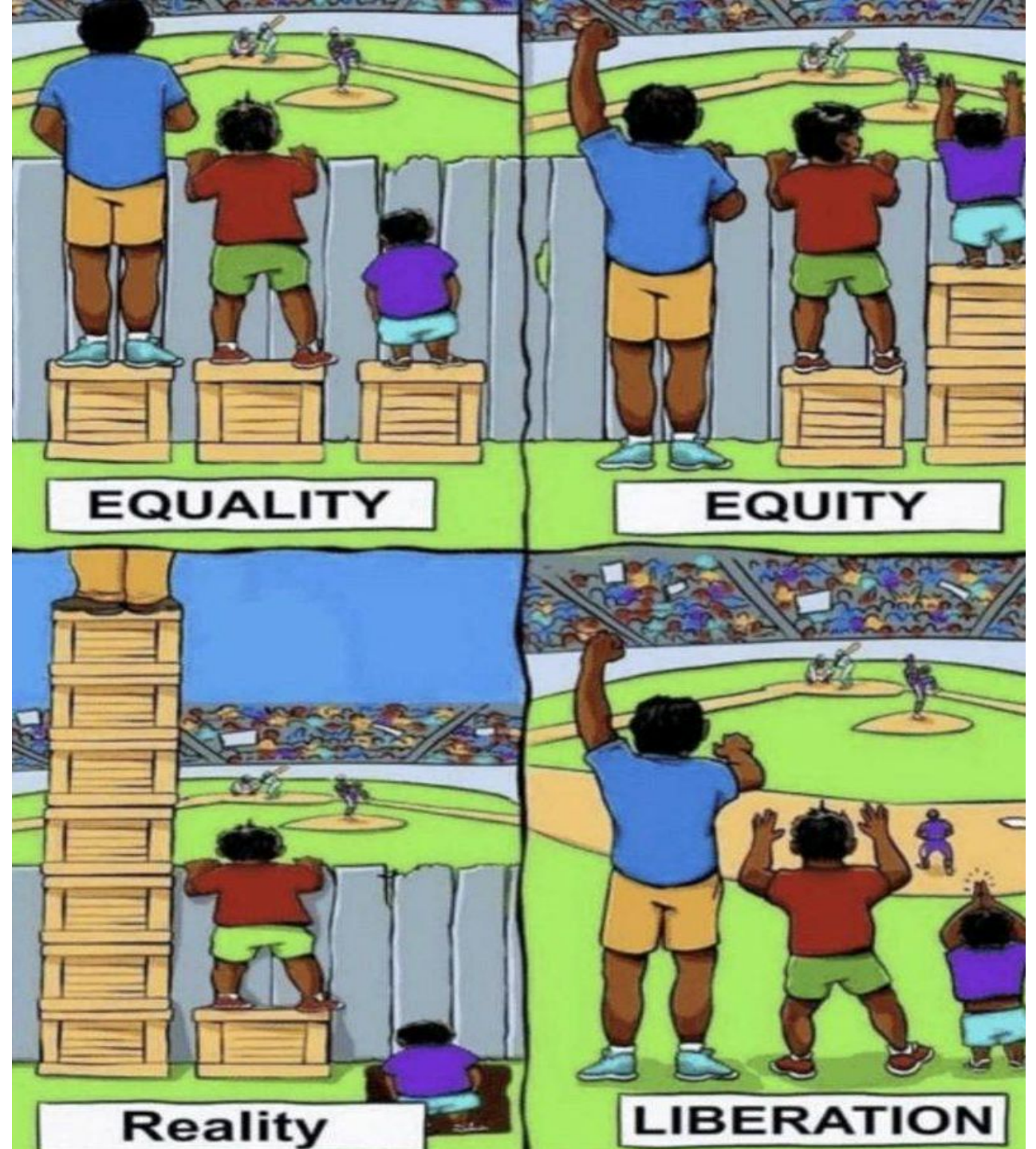


EXAMPLES IN ACTION

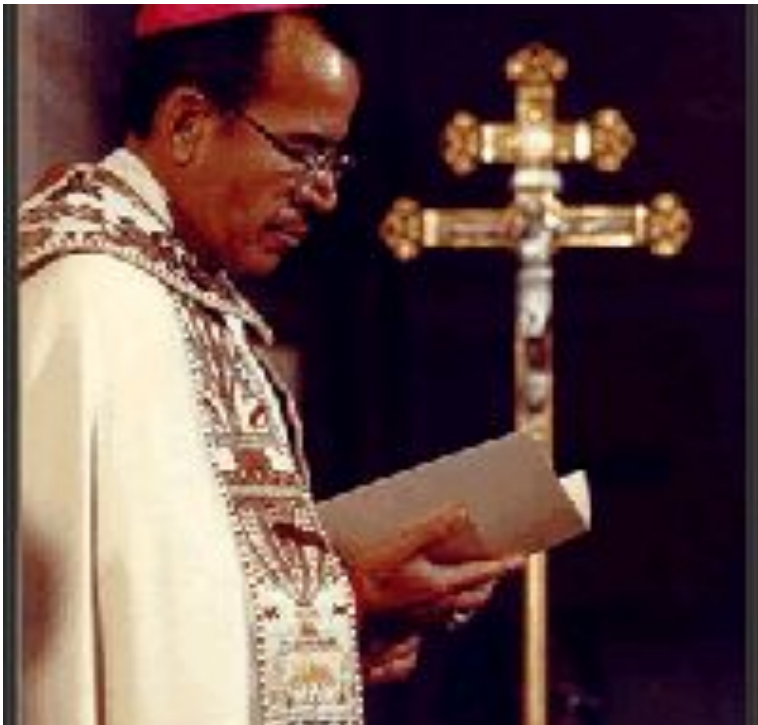
- Catholic Relief Services and local food banks.
- Parish outreach to homeless families.
- Service projects that empower communities rather than create dependency.



- Poverty is a wound caused by injustice, healed through solidarity, structural reform, and spiritual accompaniment. The poor are not objects of charity but bearers of hope and partners in building a just world.



WHAT WE BRING



Unbroken 2000-year witness to the Gospel

Eucharist as Unity

Consistent call to holiness worldwide community of faith

Tradition not swayed by fads

Worldwide network of charity

Profound respect for human reason and natural truth

Diocese and parishes serving the poor all over the world

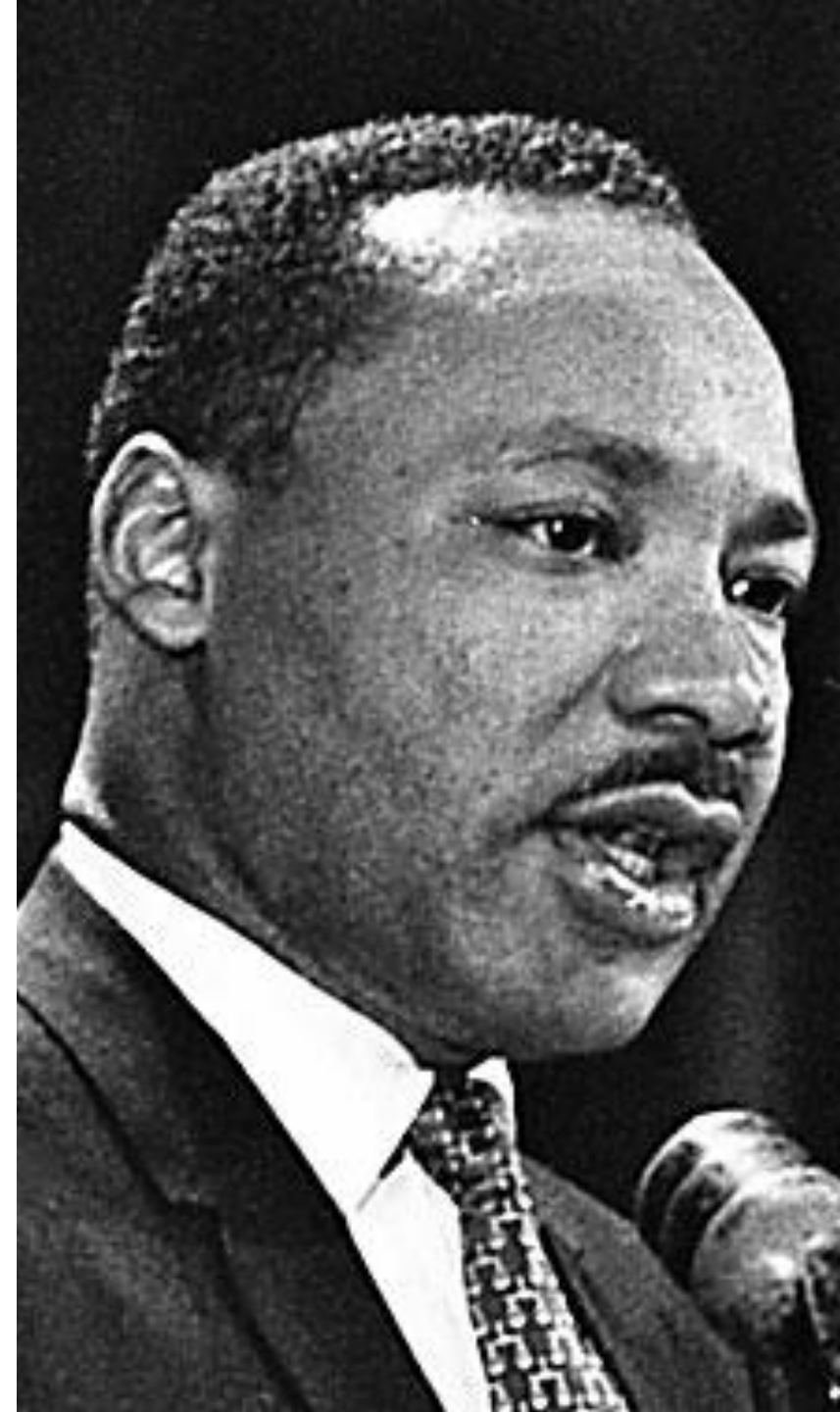
Uphold human rights and dignity

Communion of all classes, races and languages

Actively ecumenical and interfaith

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- Support charities and community services.
- Advocate for fair wages, housing, education, and healthcare.
- Promote policies that reduce poverty and inequality.



PAPAL AND VATICAN DOCUMENTS

RERUM NOVARUM (ON THE CONDITION OF LABOR)—POPE LEO XIII, 1891

QUADRAGESIMO ANNO (AFTER FORTY YEARS)—POPE PIUS XI, 1931

MATER ET MAGISTRA (CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS)—ST. JOHN XXIII, 1961

PACEM IN TERRIS (PEACE ON EARTH)—ST. JOHN XXIII, 1963

GAUDIUM ET SPES (PASTORAL CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD)—SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, 1965

DIGNITATIS HUMANAЕ (DECLARATION ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM)—SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, 1965

POPULORUM PROGRESSIO (ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLES)—BLESSED PAUL VI, 1967

OCTOGESIMA ADVENIENS (A CALL TO ACTION)—BLESSED POPE PAUL VI, 1971

EVANGELII NUNTIANDI (EVANGELIZATION IN THE MODERN WORLD)—BLESSED PAUL VI, 1975

LABOREM EXERCENS (ON HUMAN WORK)—ST. JOHN PAUL II, 1981

SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS (ON SOCIAL CONCERN)—ST. JOHN PAUL II, 1987

THE CHURCH AND RACISM: TOWARDS A MORE FRATERNAL SOCIETY—PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, 1989

CENTESIMUS ANNUS (THE HUNDREDTH YEAR)—ST. JOHN PAUL II, 1991

VERITATIS SPLENDOR (THE SPLENDOR OF TRUTH)—ST. JOHN PAUL II, 1993

EVANGELIUM VITAE (THE GOSPEL OF LIFE)—ST. JOHN PAUL II, 1995

DIGNITAS PERSONAE (THE DIGNITY OF A PERSON)—CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, 1998

ECCLESIA IN AMERICA (THE CHURCH IN AMERICA)—ST. JOHN PAUL II, 1999

FIDES ET RATIO (FAITH AND REASON)—ST. JOHN PAUL II, 1998

DOCTRINAL NOTE ON SOME QUESTIONS REGARDING THE PARTICIPATION OF CATHOLICS IN POLITICAL LIFE - CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, 2002

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH—PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, 2004

DEUS CARITAS EST (GOD IS LOVE)—POPE BENEDICT XVI, 2005

SACRAMENTUM CARITATIS (THE EUCHARIST AS THE SOURCE AND SUMMIT OF THE CHURCH'S LIFE AND MISSION)—POPE BENEDICT XVI, 2007 (ESPECIALLY PARAGRAPHS 47, 49, 82-84, AND 88-92)

CARITAS IN VERITATE (CHARITY IN TRUTH)—POPE BENEDICT XVI, 2009

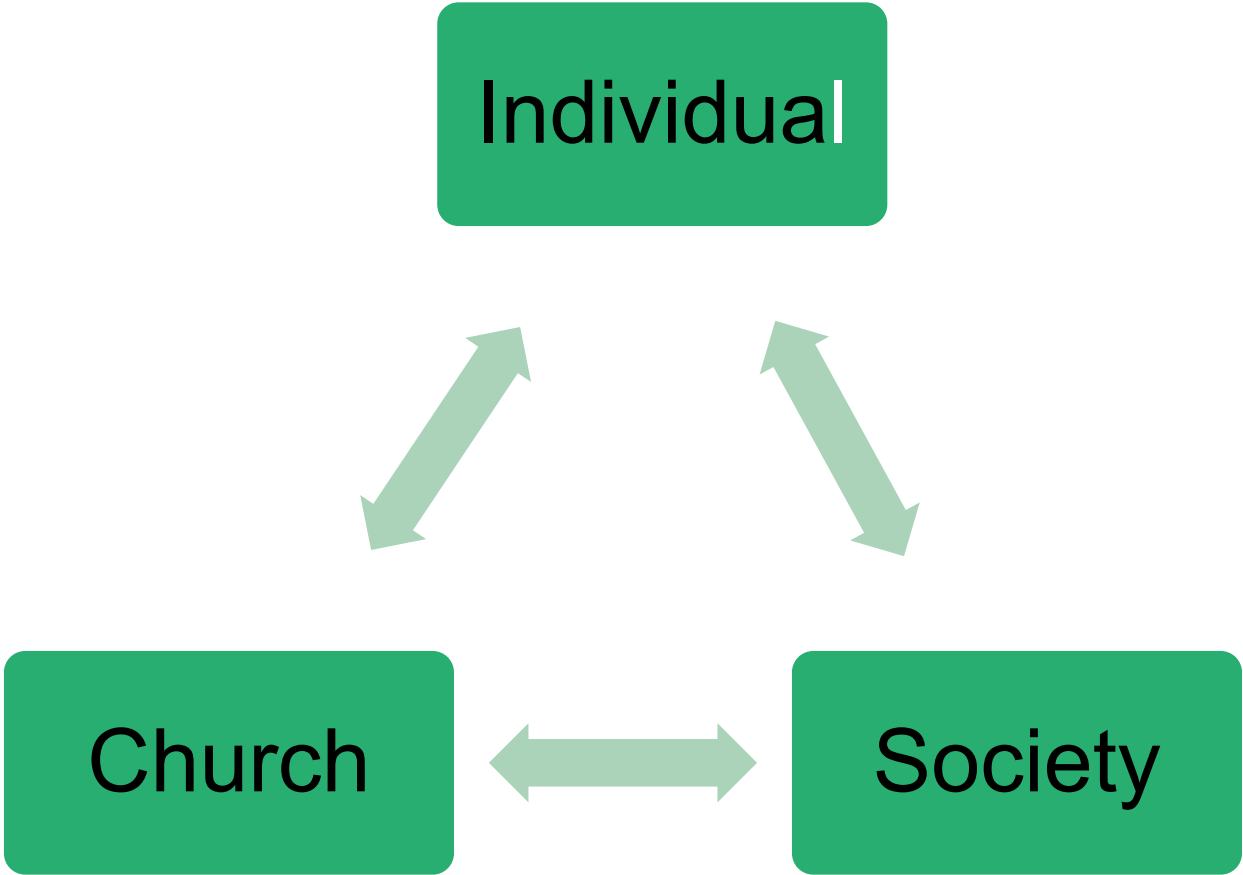
EVANGELII GAUDIUM (THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL)—POPE FRANCIS, 2013

LAUDATO SI' (ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME)—POPE FRANCIS, 2015



From Pope Francis

- "202. The need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed, not only for the pragmatic reason of its urgency for the good order of society, but because society needs to be cured of a sickness which is weakening and frustrating it, and which can only lead to new crises. Welfare projects, which meet certain urgent needs, should be considered merely temporary responses. As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, [173] no solution will be found for the world's problems or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills.



DISCUSSION & REFLECTION

- **How can we recognize the needs of the poor in our community?**
- **What personal actions can we take to promote justice?**
- **How does this principle influence decision-making?**



QUESTIONS?

