

We hope you enjoy these sample pages. For ordering information, visit Liguori.org.

Faith *MEETS* World

The Gift and Challenge of Catholic Social Teaching

Barry Hudock



Imprimi Potest:
Harry Grile, CSsR, Provincial
Denver Province, The Redemptorists

Published by Liguori Publications
Liguori, Missouri 63057

To order, call 800-325-9521
www.liguori.org

Copyright © 2013 Barry Hudock

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hudock, Barry.
Faith meets world : the gift and challenge of Catholic social teaching / Barry Hudock.
p. cm
I. Christian sociology—Catholic Church. I. Title.
BX1753. H75 2013
261.088'282—dc23
2012044126
p ISBN 978-0-7648-2224-7
e ISBN 978-0-7648-2303-9

Excerpts from Vatican Council II, *The Basic Edition: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, edited by Reverend Austin Flannery, OP, copyright © 2007, Costello Publishing Company, Inc., Northport, NY, are used by permission of the publisher, all rights reserved. No part of these excerpts may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without express permission of Costello Publishing Company, Inc.

Excerpts from other Vatican documents are used with permission. Copyright *Libreria Editrice Vaticana* (© *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*)

Excerpts from English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for the United States of America © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—*Libreria Editrice Vaticana*; English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica* © 1997, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—*Libreria Editrice Vaticana*.

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Compliant with *The Roman Missal*, third edition.

Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of The Redemptorists. To learn more about The Redemptorists, visit Redemptorists.com.

Printed in the United States of America
17 16 15 14 13 / 5 4 3 2 1
First Edition

Contents

Dedication	7
Acknowledgments	8
Introduction	9
Part 1: Getting to Know Catholic Social Teaching	13
Chapter 1	
What Is Catholic Social Teaching?	15
Chapter 2	
What Mr. Newcomen Started	21
Chapter 3	
Hammered Out in History	29
The Major Documents of Modern Catholic Social Teaching	34
Part 2: The Big Ideas	35
Chapter 4	
Human Dignity	37
Chapter 5	
Solidarity	45
Chapter 6	
Human Rights	53

Chapter 7	
The Common Good	61
Chapter 8	
The Universal Destination of Goods	69
Chapter 9	
Preferential Option for the Poor	75
Chapter 10	
Subsidiarity	83
Part 3: Ideas Into Action	89
Chapter 11	
Family	91
Chapter 12	
Work	99
Chapter 13	
Economy	105
Chapter 14	
Politics	113
Chapter 15	
The Environment	119
Chapter 16	
Peace and War	127
Chapter 17	
Life and Death	133
Conclusion	141
Sources and Further Reading	145

Chapter 1

What Is Catholic Social Teaching?

A high school athlete stops in the midst of a state championship race to help a collapsed opponent struggle across the finish line. A man runs into a burning house to save an elderly neighbor. An Olympic champion sells her medal to help pay the medical expenses of a sick child.

We know goodness when we see it, don't we? Like me, you're surely struck with admiration when you hear the stories of Meghan Vogel, Jeremie Wentworth, and Zofia Noceti-Klepacka. (A quick Internet search will offer you more information about each of them.) We know what it means to do the right thing, and we recognize it in action.

We know evil, too, in versions big and small, though we're sometimes uncomfortable calling it that. A woman raped in a neighborhood park. An airline ignoring safety procedures for the sake of profit. Children at play in a back yard, belittling and humiliating the smallest one among them.

Doing good and avoiding evil are important parts of being the people God created us to be. But not all choices, not all moral issues, are individual ones. Actually, in a very real way, none are (as the examples above demonstrate well). But some have a profoundly social character to them. The ways we choose to structure our society through business, finance, politics, government, and more—these, too, are issues with serious moral elements.

If Christian morality is about what it means to be and to authentically live as a human person, CST is about living together as persons in society.

Where do these teachings come from? The Church identifies two paths to moral truth available to us. They are closely connected. In fact,

they are simply two ways God communicates with humanity about the kind of people we are made to be. These paths are reason and revelation.

Natural law

After World War II, many Nazi leaders were tried and convicted at the famous Nuremberg Trials. Grave sentences were handed down to Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, Hans Frank, and others responsible for the atrocities of the Holocaust. Yet most of these atrocities were completely legal at the time they were committed. The Nazi party had crafted the laws that permitted what they wanted to do. At Nuremberg, Nazi leaders were convicted of “crimes against humanity” and “crimes against peace,” terms that were created for the purpose of the trial.

How can a person be convicted of breaking a law that was not in effect when they acted? Most of the time, they can’t. But in this case, the international court recognized that there are some things that any person is able to understand to be gravely wrong, regardless of what the law says. With our reasoning, each person is able to reflect on human experience, learn from it, and draw conclusions about morality. Moral standards are derived from the very nature of what it means to be human. These standards are called natural law.

Natural law is not simply “what we do naturally.” It’s “natural” for us to become jealous of one another, angry with one another, even violent with one another. But these are not demonstrations of natural law. Natural law is what serves our well-being best, what we should do in order most truly to flourish as persons. It is our moral common sense. Because human nature is universal, so is natural law.

Not everyone agrees with this. (The philosopher Thomas Hobbes, for example, saw our human laws as nothing more than what the lawmaker wants, so there can be no “unjust law.”) But everyone lives as though we’re certain natural law is real. If someone steals my car, I don’t wonder if that person was perhaps from a culture where taking someone else’s car is a good moral choice. I want the thief found and my car returned! If a neighborhood bully has been picking on my daughter at the playground, I don’t think that perhaps the other child has a different and equally valid value system; I know something needs to be done and the bullying must stop.

The Declaration of Independence cites natural law when it speaks of truths that are “self-evident” and rights that are “unalienable.” Martin Luther King, Jr., referred to natural law as a keystone of the civil rights movement, citing it as the reason that not all human laws are just laws and that unjust laws must be rejected and changed.

The Nuremberg judges, the authors of the Declaration, and Dr. King all shared a confidence in human reason, in the fact that one need not be Christian or the citizen of a certain nation to sort out important moral questions. The same confidence has allowed the Church to engage the secular world in important issues related to the good of the human community. The popes can talk about human dignity, human rights, and the common good, knowing that everyone can understand them and their value to us as persons. They can address their encyclicals not only to the faithful members of their own flock, but to “all people of good will.”

Divine revelation

A second way we come to understand moral truth is by divine revelation—God’s revelation of God’s self and God’s plan of love, goodness, and salvation for humanity. This revelation has been carried out in stages. It happened when God entered into a covenant with Noah, when God chose Abraham and Sarah to form a family that would become a great people, and when God led that people out of slavery into a new land of promise. In Jesus, it reached its culmination and its fullness.

God’s revelation is transmitted through sacred Scripture and sacred tradition. Because interpreting it and its meaning to us is not always a simple matter (as Church history makes obvious), he provides the magisterium of the Church (the teaching of the pope, bishops, and councils) as an authoritative guide. The magisterium does not control revelation, and it is not superior to the Scriptures or tradition that transmit it to us. Rather, it serves, listens to, guards, and proclaims the content of revelation.

Popes, bishops, and councils convey their teachings through letters and documents that vary in importance and doctrinal weight. Among the weightiest, at least in recent centuries, are papal encyclicals. As we’ll see, these documents have an important place in the formation of modern CST.

Not all revelation is about morality, but some of it is. (The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, a summary of all Church teaching, has four major parts: on the creed, the sacraments, the moral life, and prayer.) CST is one aspect of the Church's magisterium, and it falls under the broader category of morality. Like the rest of the teachings of the magisterium, it is rooted in Scripture and sacred tradition. Like the rest of its moral teachings, the Church believes that CST is also accessible through the natural law.

Living out Jesus' commandment to love one another in the context of society is what CST is all about. Pope Benedict XVI writes, "To love someone is to desire that person's good and to take effective steps to secure it. Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of 'all of us,' made up of individuals, families, and intermediate groups who together constitute society."

What CST is not

That's not to say that CST offers a clear and ready answer to every question we have about our lives together. God's revelation is not a list of policy guidelines and economic regulations. Sometimes the answers to problems are not absolutely clear, and certainty about them is difficult or even impossible to reach.

What constitutes a just wage for a worker or fair price for a product? Can a nuclear bomb ever be used in a moral way? How can energy providers operate their businesses in ways that allow them to both earn a profit and respect the environment? The questions go on and on. Very often, CST provides principles that help talented people come up with good answers; it does not provide them all ready-made. It is up to individual believers to make the best decisions they can—prudential judgments—about how best to apply the principles to real life.

Of course, making space for prudential judgment also introduces the opportunity for any of us fudge things a bit, to twist the principles into something they are not in order to justify conclusions we're partial to. Employers, for example, must certainly use prudential judgment in making decisions about workplace policies and how they deal with employees; that's far from saying that whatever an employer chooses

to do is right or morally acceptable. Some prudential judgments are simply wrong ones. How the principles of CST are applied in specific situations are often open to our personal judgment, but for the faithful Catholic, whether they must be applied is not.

The point of CST is not to get the Church's doctrines transferred into civil laws. The Church is not out to establish a theocracy based on doctrines revealed by God. But civil laws, policies, institutions, and social attitudes all reflect moral judgments about what it means to be a person in society. The Church is convinced that both reason and revelation tell us something important about that.

And so it seeks, says the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, "to proclaim the Gospel in the context of society, to make the liberating word of the Gospel resound in the complex worlds of production, labour, business, finance, trade, politics, law, culture, social communications, where men and women live....Because of the public relevance of the Gospel and faith, because of the corrupting effects of injustice, that is, of sin, the Church cannot remain indifferent to social matters."

As we'll see in the chapters ahead, at the heart of this gospel vision is human dignity and solidarity. When you take human dignity and solidarity seriously, you end up with human rights and the common good. When you apply human rights and the common good to lived reality, you find the universal destination of goods, preferential option for the poor, and subsidiarity. Some of the real-life contexts and circumstances in which all of this must be applied is within family life, work, the economy, politics, the environment, decisions related to peace and war, and some major social issues related to life and death. That is the path this book will follow.

Along the way, we will discover what Archbishop Óscar Romero called "the beautiful but harsh truth that the Christian faith does not cut us off from the world but immerses us in it." Beautiful and harsh, CST presents both a gift and a challenge. If, at any point, either of these two sides of CST don't seem to be quite the case, then there is surely something more about it left to be learned.