"[Erin Brigham helps] students not only bridge insights from the Catholic tradition with contemporary justice issues but also reexamine their perceptions and convictions in light of community encounters. Her treatment of Catholic social theory and praxis remains accessible without sacrificing depth. The embedded reflection questions will support educators as they navigate this demanding yet indispensable pedagogy."

—Kristin E. Heyer
Bernard J. Hanley Chair in Religious Studies
Santa Clara University

"Erin Brigham provides an accessible introduction to the riches of the Catholic social tradition for twenty-first-century students. . . . The reflection questions, summaries, and vignettes in each chapter situate Catholic social teaching as a living tradition . . . [and encourage students] to reflect upon the assumptions and values that influence their interpretations of social issues and their practices of responsible action."

—Jennifer Reed-Bouley
College of Saint Mary, Omaha, NE

"Erin Brigham's *See, Judge, Act* . . . applies key principles in Catholic social thought . . . to contemporary concerns. Vignettes show how students grapple with racism and white privilege, immigration, unemployment, living wage and workers, rights, poverty and economic justice, war and peace making, climate change, environmental racism, and other issues in service activities."

—Lois Ann Lorentzen
Professor, Theology and Religious Studies, and Co-Director,
The Center for Latino/a Studies in the Americas
at the University of San Francisco

Created by the publishing team of Anselm Academic.

Cover image: © AP Photo / The Joplin Globe, T. Rob Brown
Steve Willey, co-owner of Willey Construction of Joplin, Mo., works with his crew to install trusses over the Volunteer House Friday morning, Jan. 20, 2012, in the Joplin tornado zone near the intersection of 25th Street and Joplin Avenue. The Volunteer House has been signed by many hundreds of volunteers who have helped with Joplin's recovery. The city of Joplin plans to move the house and make a memorial out of it.

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See, Judge, Act

Catholic Social Teaching and Service Learning

Erin M. Brigham

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INTRODUCTION

The main title of this text repeats a phrase—*see-judge-act*—that is associated with Belgian Catholic priest Joseph Cardijn who worked with lay Catholics to connect their faith with social action. During the post–World War I era, an era marked by economic depression, Cardijn reached out to young working-class Catholics by founding the Young Christian Workers (YCW) in 1924.[1] The organization provided a place for laypeople to relate their struggles for justice in the workplace to an emerging tradition of Catholic social thought.[2] Cardijn introduced the process of seeing, judging, and acting in meetings of the YCW to encourage people to observe situations, to evaluate them based on the Gospels, and to act in ways that respond to observed injustices. The YCW was just one of a number of Catholic associations that mobilized laypeople to address social issues during this era. Others include the Catholic Worker movement founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin and Friendship House established by Catherine De Hueck.[3] As the young people involved in the YCW moved on to new phases of life, new types of movements emerged. For example, in 1949, Pat and Patty Crowley founded the Christian Family Movement, which went beyond the earlier movements by encouraging Catholics and adherents of other religions to work together to bring about social justice for families.[4] Cardijn's use of the see-judge-act process with the YCW highlights an important aspect of the Catholic social tradition: everyone—lay and ordained—shares responsibility for social analysis and action.

1. Joseph Willke, "The Worker-Priest Experiment in France," *America* (April, 1984): 253.

2. Ibid.

3. See Marvin Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 62–72.

4. Ibid., 72.

Though the phrase *see-judge-act* emerged in a Catholic context, it describes a process that people use implicitly and explicitly in many different contexts to observe situations, to evaluate them in light of understandings of what is good and right, and to act in ways to improve the situation. History is full of examples of inspiring people who model this process. Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. observed the social injustices perpetuated by racism in the United States, drew on his faith and values to denounce racism as morally wrong, and acted out of his convictions to advocate for racial justice. Nobel Peace Prize recipient Mother Teresa saw the suffering caused by poverty on the streets of Calcutta, reflected on the situation in light of teachings of the Gospels, and responded with compassionate service. Also, consider the college student who observes educational inequalities in her city, evaluates the situation based on her conviction that everyone should have the opportunity to receive a good education and decides to tutor low-income youth on a regular basis.

This book provides an introduction to both the Catholic social tradition and the process of seeing, judging, and acting. It is designed especially for service-learning courses that invite students to *see* social situations, *judge* them in light of principles drawn from the Catholic Church's social teaching and from their own values and beliefs, and *act* in response to observed injustices. This introduction will provide an overview of the three steps or stages of the see-judge-act process, discuss the use of the process in conjunction with service learning, and explore the relationship between the process and the Catholic social tradition.

The See-Judge-Act Process

See: Social Analysis

Seeing, or social analysis, goes beyond first impressions, which tend to yield incomplete pictures. An observer's first impressions are often influenced by his or her expectations and assumptions and based on limited information. Catholic social ethicists Peter

Henriot and Joe Holland define social analysis as "the effort to obtain a more complete picture of a social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships."[5] Whereas historical analysis considers how a situation developed and changed over time, structural analysis assesses how structures such as the economy, politics, and social and cultural norms relate to the situation. Social analysts also consider who makes decisions affecting people in the situation and the values underlying the decisions. Henriot and Holland point out that social situations are complex and that the results of one's analysis is always limited.[6] Despite this, social analysis can help people see a situation more accurately than they could based on impressions, and this analytical seeing can lead to more effective judgments and actions.

Judge: Ethical Reflection

The second step, judging, involves evaluating a situation in light of guiding principles that define what is good and right, which can be drawn from any number of sources—religious doctrine, scriptures, cultural mores, philosophical perspectives, the teachings of inspirational figures. The goal of this step is to formulate a response to a problematic social situation.

Individuals evaluate the data differently, in part, because of differences in their values, priorities, and visions of what is good and right. Judging involves selecting a set of principles to use as criteria for evaluation, but it also involves recognizing that no one approaches a reality as a blank slate and assessing one's own beliefs and values and how they shape one's judgments.

Reflection makes explicit the values, commitments, and beliefs that are constantly shaping how a person relates to the world. In doing so, it challenges people to be cognizant of how they judge what they see and also whether or not what they see in the world *and* how they act in the world conforms to their deepest convictions.

5. Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis and Washington, DC: Center of Concern, 1983), 14.

6. Ibid., 15–16.

Act: Charity and Justice

Seeing and judging lead to step three—acting. The concepts of charity and justice help distinguish types of action. Charity responds to people's immediate needs, often for food, shelter, safety, and clothing. It tends to flow from a spirit of altruism and generosity or a feeling of compassion for other people. Justice aims to address the reasons why people are without adequate resources and usually requires long-term collaborative efforts with community members. This is because acting to bring about justice can involve changing systems, policies, and institutions. People who work for justice are often motivated by a sense of obligation to a vision of goodness, justice, and fairness. Charity and justice are not isolated actions and so one's response to a particular situation may involve both. However, distinguishing between charity and justice can be a helpful reminder that both aims are important and incomplete without the other. Justice without charity can downplay the importance of meeting people's immediate needs. Charity without justice can ignore structural inequalities that set up the need for charity in the first place.

Service, Learning, and the See-Judge-Act Process

Many people associate the term *service* primarily with charitable acts aimed at meeting immediate needs such as providing meals, clothing, or shelter to people living in poverty. These actions are sometimes referred to as direct service; however, the term *service* also encompasses actions aimed at bringing about justice. One type of justice-oriented service is advocacy, using one's voice to speak on behalf of someone who lacks social, political, and economic influence. For example, someone might serve hotel workers trying to form a union by writing letters to the hotel management in support of the workers' struggle. Justice-oriented service can involve empowering individuals and communities to create structural changes. Service as empowerment might involve helping residents of a marginalized neighborhood develop a community garden. Take a moment to consider your understanding of the term *service*. How does your understanding relate to direct service, advocacy, and empowerment?

How have experiences of providing or receiving service influenced your perspective?

Learning by Serving

Many college and university students today have opportunities to participate in courses that combine service with class instruction, discussions with classmates, and academic research. Learning by serving, often referred to as service learning, is an experiential educational methodology that connects students' service to specific learning objectives by engaging students in critical thinking and reflection.

Educator Andrew Furco, known for his work in the area of experiential and service learning, locates service learning within a spectrum of service and experiential learning activities according to focus (either on service or learning) and beneficiary (the recipient of the service or the provider). Service learning, Furco stresses, is unique in its balance of focus and beneficiary. Unlike volunteer work, which lacks the explicit educational intention, service learning benefits the students by enabling them to achieve the learning outcomes of the course. Unlike an internship, which focuses on the professional development of the student, service learning places as much emphasis on the interests of those served as the student.[7] Effective service learning is characterized by relationships of mutual respect between all participants—leaders of service organizations, those served by the organizations, students, and teachers.

Effective service learning[8] is related to the process of seeing, judging, and acting. First, students engaged in service learning carry out social analysis to adequately see a situation and to uncover assumptions and stereotypes that bias their observations. Second, students learn to judge situations and to draw meaning from service

7. Andrew Furco, "Service Learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education," in *Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit: Resources for Faculty* (Providence, RI: Campus Compact, 2001), 10.

8. John Eby identifies a number of pitfalls associated with service learning while also offering suggestions for making service learning successful. See John Eby, "Why Service-Learning Is Bad," (March, 1998) available online at *http://www.messiah.edu/external_programs/agape/servicelearning/SLResources.html*.

experiences through critical thinking and reflecting. Third, students consider how their seeing and judging leads to action.

Seeing in Service-Learning Settings

In a traditional classroom, textbooks and lectures are the primary facilitators of learning. In a service-learning course, the community outside the classroom functions something like a required text, raising questions and presenting new ways of thinking. Just as different individuals encounter texts differently, they also encounter communities differently based on their unique set of experiences, assumptions, and values. It is widely accepted in contemporary theories of learning that a person's background knowledge shapes the way he or she sees and understands reality. This suggests that before beginning service in a community, service learners should consider their knowledge about the community and on what this knowledge is based. Students might consider the following: (1) one's relationship to the people in the community; (2) any personal experiences related to the community; (3) one's existing knowledge of the community; (4) aspects of the community one has no or inadequate knowledge of; (5) what one hopes to learn from the people in the community.

Service learning provides students with an opportunity to enter into relationships that will challenge them to reflect on who they are and what they bring—knowledge, values, assumptions, biases, ideas, convictions—to the encounter with the community in which they serve. This reflection prepares students to see the situation of those they serve more clearly and to engage in effective social analysis.

Judging Situations Encountered in Service-Learning Settings

Experience in a service-learning setting alone does not guarantee learning. In fact, experience without reflection often confirms one's expectations about a situation rather than expands one's understanding. Reflection on service experiences and social situations can take many forms—written and oral, within groups or as individuals. One basic structure for facilitating reflection involves asking questions that prompt a movement from descriptive (what?) to interpretive (so what?) to contextual (now what?) understanding. Descriptive questions invite consideration of relevant facts or events

in the service-learning experience. What happened? Interpretive questions move to the realm of significance for the learner. What do these facts or events mean? Finally, application questions invite learners to identify implications of their interpretations of situations encountered in service-learning settings. How does this knowledge shape future plans or contribute to a bigger picture?[9]

Reflection permits service to take the participants into a deeper realm where the service brings to light new understandings about situations and about the course content. "Reflection activities direct the student's attention to new interpretations of events and provide a means through which the community service can be studied and interpreted, much as a text is read and studied for deeper understanding,"[10] according to educators Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher. Thinking of the context of service as a required text reinforces the importance of connecting service experiences to learning outcomes of the course. In a course on Catholic social thought, for example, service learners might reflect on their service experience and the situation of those served in light of the Gospels and the Catholic Church's teaching about justice. They might also gain new insight into the Gospel message and the Church's teaching by observing others putting the principles underlying this message and teachings into practice.

Acting in a Service-Learning Setting

When students are involved in a service-learning setting they are usually engaged in some type of service that involves action, but not all of this action is related to the third step of the process. The action that is the third step of the see-judge-act process refers to actions deliberately undertaken to correct an unjust situation following social analysis and ethical judgment or reflection. This action differs from service-oriented action that students may engage in prior to analysis and reflection, actions often undertaken in conjunction with seeing and judging. On the surface, however, these different actions

9. Julie Reed and Christopher Koliba, "Facilitating Reflection: A Manual for Leaders and Educators," available online at *http://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual/index.html*.

10. Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher, "Reflection in Service-Learning: Making Meaning of Experience" in *Introduction to Service Learning Toolkit*, 114.

may appear the same. A student may arrive at a service-learning setting early in the semester and be asked to tutor a young student, perhaps alongside a person who has assessed and judged a situation and committed to regular service as a tutor to give younger students an opportunity for a better education.

Motivation for Serving

Because one's motivation to serve can influence his or her approach to service and affect their relationships with recipients of service, it is important to consider one's motivation before beginning service learning. Service learners should consider the following questions: What are your motivations for taking a service-learning course? What kinds of service are you drawn to and why? What do you hope to accomplish through service? What do you hope to take away from the service?

Motivations for participating in service learning vary. For some students, service is a requirement or a strongly encouraged résumé-enhancing activity. In this context it is especially important to keep the goal of mutuality at the forefront of the service-learning relationship so the community partners' interests are valued and the service is not solely perceived as a means to one's personal ends.

Examining one's motivations to serve can also be helpful in reflecting on the preconceptions about the community. Recall that this is the first step in *seeing* the community adequately. When service is understood as a way to fulfill an unmet need of the community or remedy a problem in the community, the primary focus going into the community can be on the need or the problem. This can deflect one's attention away from the community's strengths and resources. John McKnight and John Kretzmann offer a helpful tool to avoid focusing on a community's deficiencies. In their model of "Asset-Based Community Development," they suggest working with communities to identify the resources and skills that already exist in their neighborhoods and building on those strengths.[11] This approach to service is particularly helpful in service learning because

11. John L. McKnight and John P. Kretzmann, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research, 1993).

it not only empowers the community but it also helps the learner gain a more adequate understanding of the community.

See-Judge-Act and the Catholic Social Tradition

Many educators incorporate service learning in courses designed to introduce students to the Catholic social tradition—the Catholic Church's tradition of addressing social issues through teaching and actions. When the process of see-judge-act is made explicit in such courses, the process can serve as an effective tool for promoting learning for students and improving situations for those who are served. This is because the see-judge-act process can lead to changes in unjust situations, but, also, the individuals engaged in seeing, judging, and acting have the opportunity to learn much through the process. In ongoing service learning, the see-judge-act process takes on a cyclical rather than linear character. Henriot and Holland note that the action that emerges out of observation and reflection shapes subsequent seeing, judging, and acting.[12]

In 1961, Pope John XXIII identified in *Mater et magistra* (*Christianity and Social Progress*) the process of seeing, judging, and acting as a way to bring the church's teachings on social matters to bear in concrete situations:

> The teachings in regard to social matters for the most part are put into effect in the following three stages: first, the actual situation is examined; then, the situation is evaluated carefully in relation to these teachings; then only is it decided what can and should be done in order that the traditional norms may be adapted to circumstances of time and place. These three steps are at times expressed by the three words: *observe, judge, act.* (No. 236)

John XXIII presents Catholic social teaching as a set of norms to apply to specific circumstances. This text is designed to help service learners do just that by moving from universal principles to concrete application. The text presents principles drawn from the Catholic

12. Holland and Henriot, *Social Analysis*, 8.

social tradition and encourages readers to apply them to issues using the methodology of see-judge-act. By presenting Catholic social thought in this way, the text invites students to discover the meaning and significance of this thought in relation to concrete situations they may be familiar with through service learning.

This text, in chapter 1, provides an overview of the Catholic social tradition and introduces the Catholic Church's official social teachings. The remaining chapters, chapters 2 through 8, each feature a major principle drawn from these teachings. The chapters, designed especially for readers engaged in service learning, provide information and tools for using the principles of Catholic social teaching as a basis for evaluating unjust situations and identifying actions aimed at promoting justice.

CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Catholic Social Tradition

The Catholic social tradition (CST), broadly understood, refers to the thoughts, actions, and teachings that have emerged as members of the Catholic Church have responded to social injustices throughout history. This chapter will briefly discuss Catholic social thought and action and then will explore in more detail the Catholic Church's modern-era social teaching, the teaching that this text invites readers to learn about and apply to social problems encountered in service-learning situations using the see-judge-act process. The chapter will introduce the major documents that comprise CST and explore the sources that inform it, its methodology, and the major principles it articulates.

Catholic Social Thought and Action

Christians have thought about and acted on the implications of the gospel message for their relationships since the beginnings of the church. This message includes a call to Christians to love both God and neighbor: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39). Christians have wrestled to understand what the love of neighbor means and what actions it demands. Catholic social thought, in its broadest sense, refers to the ongoing reflection on the social implications of Christian discipleship—being a follower of Jesus Christ. Catholic social thought emerges through the work of many people, including church leaders, theologians, ethicists, leaders of movements for social change, and the many other Catholics trying to live out their faith in the world.

Listed here is a small sampling of key figures who have contributed to Catholic social thought and action in recent centuries. These people have worked to bring about a more equitable and just world; in this they epitomize the see-judge-act process.

Wilhelm Emmanuel von Kettler. Von Kettler (1811–1877) was the archbishop of Mainz, Germany, during the emergence of modern Catholic social teaching in Europe. In the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, he encouraged fellow Catholics to address the social and economic problems of the day. He inspired the work of the Fribourg Union, a predominantly lay Catholic think-tank that defended the rights of workers and the right to private property while advocating for an alternative to unfettered capitalism and socialism.

John Ryan. Ryan (1869–1945), a Catholic priest and economist, applied insights of Catholic social teaching to social problems in the United States in the early twentieth century. He taught moral theology at the Catholic University of America and published writings that defended a worker's right to employment, a living wage, and just working conditions. Many of his ideas are also found in Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which put into place many safety nets still present in American society.

Jacques Maritain. Maritain (1882–1973), a French philosopher influenced by the work of Thomas Aquinas, had a lasting impact on modern Catholic theology and ethics. His writings on human dignity and freedom contributed to the Catholic Church's embrace of human rights and democracy.

Dorothy Day. Day (1897–1980) is regarded by many as one of the most important activists in the history of American Catholicism. Along with Peter Maurin, she established the Catholic Worker movement in 1933 as a way to promote social justice, peace, and simplicity. Her thoughts on nonviolence, hospitality, and solidarity with people living in poverty have made an important contribution to the Catholic social tradition.

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin. Bernardin (1928–1996), a bishop from Chicago, inspired the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, which encourages collaboration among all Catholics on important social and political issues. He challenged Catholics to transcend partisan politics and embrace a consistent ethic of life—an ethic that opposes abortion,

the death penalty, war, euthanasia, and poverty by defending human dignity across the entire life span and all circumstances.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Mother Teresa (1910–1997), founder of the Missionaries of Charity and winner of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, dedicated her life to serving people living in extreme poverty in Calcutta. She consistently related her care for the most vulnerable to her love for Christ.

Gustavo Gutierrez. Gutierrez (1928–), a Catholic priest from Peru, is considered by many to be the "father of liberation theology." His theology, which emphasizes God's commitment to the liberation of oppressed people through the transformation of unjust social structures, is rooted in his observation of the reality of poverty in Latin America. Liberation theology's insistence on the preferential option for the poor has made a lasting impact on the Catholic social tradition.

Dorothy Stang. Stang (1931–2005), a Catholic sister from Ohio, spent thirty years in Brazil, advocating for economic justice and environmental sustainability in the Amazon. Her vocal opposition to logging and ranching practices that destroyed the rain forest and displaced local farmers led to her assassination in 2005. She dedicated her life to caring for creation and working for environmental justice.

Helen Prejean. Prejean (1939–) is a Catholic sister and leader in the US movement to abolish the death penalty and reform the prison system. Her advocacy is rooted in her experience ministering to inmates on death row and witnessing their executions.

The nine people highlighted—men and women; young and old; lay, ordained, or vowed members of religious communities—have dedicated themselves to the Catholic social mission in different ways, including through direct service, advocacy, education, prayer, and leadership. They each illuminate multiple expressions of charity and work for justice and highlight the importance of each in the Catholic social tradition. For example, Mother Teresa's compassionate service to the impoverished and Gustavo Gutierrez's prophetic truth telling in the face of oppression have both revealed something about what it means to love one's neighbor. The sampling of people and their contributions also reveals the practical orientation of Catholic social thought. Most of these individuals

are remembered not only for their ideas about social justice but also for their actions.

The Catholic social tradition has been shaped by well-known individuals but also by untold numbers of other people whose actions have helped to bring about justice. Many of these people—lay, ordained, and vowed religious—have worked in association with parishes and dioceses and with Catholic movements and organizations. Listed here is a small sampling of organizations whose work provides examples of Catholic social action:

The Society of Saint Vincent DePaul. Founded in 1833 when French law student Frederick Ozanam gathered a group of lay Catholics together to serve the needs of people living in poverty, this society has grown into an international association of over six-hundred-thousand men and women who promote charity and social justice by providing food, shelter, clothing, and care to people in need. Since its origin, the Society of Saint Vincent DePaul has emphasized the importance of person-to-person assistance. Web site: *www.svdpusa.org/*.

Pax Christi. This international organization dedicated to peacemaking originated in France through the initiative of lay Catholics who began gathering together to pray for peace. Pax Christi today offers resources for prayer and spirituality as well as education and advocacy related to peacemaking. It welcomes pacifists and just-war advocates while promoting the rights of conscientious objectors, nonviolent conflict resolution, and disarmament. Web site: *www.paxchristi.org*.

The Center of Concern. This center engages in analysis, education, and advocacy for the promotion of social justice. Located in Washington, DC, the center works to influence US policies, especially those impacting global justice. Though it is autonomous, ecumenical, and interreligious, the center began in 1971 through the collaboration of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and is rooted in the Catholic social tradition. Web site: *www.coc.org*.

Network. Network is a nationally recognized Catholic lobbying group based in Washington, DC, and informed by Catholic social teaching. Network promotes just policies related to immigration, healthcare, the environment, and the economy. It was founded in 1972 following a meeting of US Catholic sisters and continues to

draw on the experiences of women religious involved in direct service and social justice work in the United States. Web site: *www.networklobby.org*.

The Ignatian Solidarity Network. This network promotes justice education and advocacy opportunities for people affiliated with Jesuit ministries. Their Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice attracts over a thousand participants each year and provides an opportunity to learn, reflect, and advocate for justice on Capitol Hill. Web site: *www. ignatiansolidarity.net*.

Catholic Charities USA. This national association of local charities, which provides basic need assistance and advocacy for millions of Americans each year, is one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the country. Catholic Charities also works closely with local Catholic parishes and the US bishops to provide adoption services and programs to strengthen families. Web site: *www.catholiccharitiesusa.org*.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS). This organization was founded in 1943 by the USCCB and remains the official humanitarian relief organization of the Catholic Church in the United States. CRS provides international aid in the form of disaster relief, microfinance programs, peacebuilding initiatives, and assistance for communities struggling with food insecurity and HIV/AIDS. Web site: *www.crs.org*.

Catholic Climate Covenant. This initiative was launched by the US bishop-sponsored Catholic Coalition on Climate Change in 2009. The Catholic Climate Covenant encourages Catholic individuals and organizations to take the Saint Francis Pledge to pray and learn about the moral dimensions of climate change, to change their lifestyle to promote environmental responsibility, and to advocate for the care for creation. Web site: *www.catholicclimatecovenant.org*.

These organizations highlight some of the issues to which Catholics have responded—poverty, violence, global inequalities, and environmental destruction—and some of the ways they have done so. The causes of social problems, such as poverty are often embedded in the political and economic structures of society, requiring not only immediate attention but also long-term solutions and widespread commitment. Organizations dedicated to social justice can facilitate such action. Bishops' conferences, dioceses, parishes, and Catholic institutions such as universities and hospitals also can facilitate action aimed at furthering justice. The many organizations dedicated

to putting Catholic social thought into action extend the reach of the Catholic Church beyond its membership and often present an opportunity to collaborate with Christians who are not Catholic, adherents of other religious and nonreligious groups, and individuals.

Catholic Social Teaching

In addition to thoughts and actions, the Catholic social tradition includes teachings. The term *Catholic social teaching* (*CST*) is commonly used to refer specifically to modern-era teachings issued officially by the Catholic Church, beginning with the social encyclical, *Rerum novarum* (*On the Condition of Labor*), promulgated by Pope Leo XIII in 1891. Many of the major writings that make up CST are papal encyclicals, which are substantial letters issued by a pope intended for wide circulation. Other major writings of CST are issued by groups of bishops, gathered in councils or synods, in conjunction with the pope. There is no official list of documents that make up Catholic social teaching, but there is broad consensus about the writings CST includes. The following list of major documents generally considered to comprise CST provides the Latin title and English title of each document along with its date, source, context, and major themes:

- *Rerum novarum* (*On the Condition of Labor*), 1891, Pope Leo XIII. Responding to industrialization and the emergence of capitalism in Europe, Leo XIII defends the right to just wages, fair working conditions, and the formation of workers' unions. Responding to socialism, the pope defends the right to private property and the importance of religion.
- *Quadragesimo anno* (*The Reconstruction of Social Order*), 1931, Pope Pius XI. Writing during the Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe, Pius XI argues for subsidiarity as guide for the government to protect the common good (in CST this means the flourishing of all) without overpowering local communities.
- *Mater et magistra* (*Christianity and Social Progress*), 1961, Pope John XXIII. Observing an increasingly interconnected world, John XXIII argues for solidarity between nations. He argues

specifically for the protection for traditional agricultural workers in the context of rapid economic changes.

- *Pacem in terris* (*Peace on Earth*), 1963, Pope John XXIII. In the context of the global arms race of the 1960s, John XXIII advocates for peace and disarmament. He claims that protecting human rights, which he observes to be embedded in human nature, is the foundation of peace.
- *Gaudium et spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*), 1965, Second Vatican Council. The council declares that the church and world are linked in human history, and the gospel remains relevant in the modern age as it gives meaning to human existence. The text defends the dignity of the human person against discrimination and modern threats to human life.
- *Populorum progressio* (*The Development of Peoples*), 1967, Pope Paul VI. Recognizing the urgent problem of global inequalities in the aftermath of colonization, Paul VI argues for integral human development that promotes the economic, social, cultural, and spiritual flourishing of all.
- *Octogesima adveniens* (*A Call to Action*), 1971, Pope Paul VI. The pope challenges the world to recognize the roots of inequalities and promote political and economic justice on national and international levels. He invites the church around the world to participate in applying CST to local contexts.
- *Justice in the World,* 1971, Synod of Bishops. Observing structural injustices and revolutionary uprisings in Latin America, the synod promotes the preferential concern for the poor. The synod declares the work for justice to be an essential part of promoting the gospel.
- *Laborem exercens* (*On Human Work*), 1981, Pope John Paul II. Recognizing that both capitalism and communism can diminish worker's dignity, the pope advocates for workers' rights and presents a personalist (person-centered) understanding of work.
- *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (*On Social Concern*), 1987, Pope John Paul II. Observing the widening gap between rich and poor nations, the pope calls for international solidarity. He denounces global economic systems that oppress impoverished nations to benefit the wealthy.

- *Centesimus annus* (*On the Hundredth Anniversary of* Rerum Novarum), 1991, Pope John Paul II. Commemorating *Rerum novarum*, the pope critiques both socialist collectivism for undermining personal freedom and unrestrained capitalism for placing competition above the needs of the impoverished.
- *Caritas in veritate* (*Charity in Truth*) 2009, Pope Benedict XVI. Commemorating *Populorum progressio* (*The Development of Peoples*), Benedict XVI addresses challenges to development in the context of globalization. Specifically, he argues that solidarity and a spirit of gratuitousness are needed to promote economic and environmental justice.

Catholic social teaching developed and will continue to develop in response to particular social issues, so over time the body of official teaching grows and new insights emerge. Central ideas, however, recur throughout the teachings, as the documents' authors aim to apply fundamental principles to particular historical situations. For example, the principle of human dignity that guided Leo XIII's response to industrialization in 1891 informed Benedict XVI's response to globalization over one hundred years later.

The remainder of the chapter will explore some of the sources that inform CST, the methodology the authors of CST employ, and major principles CST articulates.

Sources of Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching is rooted in principles drawn from the Old and New Testaments, the doctrines of the Catholic Church, and the work of theologians. Catholic social teaching, however, has never relied solely on Christian sources, drawing on philosophy and most recently, the social sciences. This section of the chapter will briefly highlight a few of the sources that inform CST—Scripture, theology, and a type of philosophical argumentation known as natural law.

Scripture

The Christian Scriptures, made up of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament are normative sources of Catholic social teaching. This is because the Catholic Church views the

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965)

The Second Vatican Council, also called Vatican II, was an ecumenical council held from 1962 to 1965. When Pope John XXIII announced his plan to convene the Catholic bishops of the world for a council he used the term *aggiornamento*, an Italian word that means "updating," to describe his hope that the council would renew the Catholic Church and make it more responsive to contemporary realities. The council issued sixteen documents on topics related to the life of the Church and its relationship to the world. Some of the most significant developments at Vatican II include changes in the liturgy (including allowing Mass to be celebrated in the spoken language of the local churches rather than in Latin), greater emphasis on the importance of religious liberty, the need for reconciliation with other Christians, the importance of dialogue with people of other religious traditions, and openness to the wisdom of scientific discovery and secular ideas. *Gaudium et spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*), generally viewed as part of CST, was one of four major documents, called constitutions because they articulate central teachings or principles, issued by Vatican II.[1]

Old and New Testaments as the Word of God. In *Dei verbum* (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*), the Second Vatican Council explains the Catholic view that sacred Scripture is the Word of God, and in sacred Scripture, God speaks through human authors in a "human fashion"(no. 12). Aligned with the two ideas—that Scripture is the Word of God and that the Word is expressed through humans—the Catholic Church rejects fundamentalist understandings of the Bible. In other words, Catholics maintain that the Scriptures are inspired by God and, taken as a whole and

1. The three other major documents are *Lumen gentium* (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*), *Dei verbum* (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*) and *Sacrosanctum concilium* (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*).

interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit, reveal the truths of the Christian faith. At the same time, because the Scriptures are written by human authors in particular historical moments, the interpretation of Scripture must also consider the human factors expressed in the writings. Biblical scholars use several tools to arrive at a better understanding of these factors including archeology, cultural anthropology, and literary tools.

The authors of CST draw on the Scriptures for insight into fundamental principles including the meaning of social justice and the nature of the human person in relation to God. One example is John Paul II's use of the Bible to develop an understanding of human work in his encyclical, *Laborem exercens* (*On Human Work*):

> When man, who had been created "in the image of God . . . male and female" (Gen 1:27) hears the words: "Be fruitful and *multiply, and fill the earth and subdue* it" (Gen 1:28) even though these words do not refer directly and explicitly to work, beyond any doubt they indirectly indicate it as an activity for man to carry out in the world. Indeed, they show its very deepest essence. 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. (No. 4)

Pope John Paul II interprets the biblical story of creation to articulate the relationship between human nature and work. Referring to the mandate to subdue the earth, the pope suggests that work is one of the ways that humanity participates in the creative activity of God and therefore manifests God's image in the world. In the pope's reading, the biblical text is understood in light of the whole story of creation, which highlights the unique ability of humanity to reflect God's image. The pope draws on the Bible in this case to argue for the dignity of work.

Theology

Christian theology, grounded in Scripture, the Christian tradition, and the experiences of Christians, is also a source for Catholic

social teaching. The classic definition of theology offered by Saint Anselm (1033–1109) is "faith seeking understanding." This definition reveals two important dimensions of theology. First, theology presupposes the experience of faith and seeks to understand the object of faith—God. Theology is not limited to reasoning about God. Second, theology tries to make sense of reality in light of belief in God. Professional theologians take up in a more systematic way what many people of faith do throughout their lives. When individuals reflect on a significant experience such as falling in love or suffering an injury or on an aspect of nature or themselves in light of Christian belief, they sometimes come to new understandings of their faith. This reflection is theologizing. The work of theology is never ending because human beings continue to reflect on experiences in light of Christian faith.

One example of theology informing Catholic social teaching can be found in the way that Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) defines the human person:

> The root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin man is already invited to converse with God. For man would not exist were he not created by God's love and constantly preserved by it; and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to His Creator. (No. 19)

A theological understanding of the human person is different from nontheological understandings because theology tries to make sense of human existence in light of faith in God. In *Gaudium et spes*, the origin, purpose, and meaning of the human person is understood in relationship to God. These theological assumptions inform how the Catholic Church understands human dignity, resulting in different perspectives on human dignity than might be found in other approaches.

Natural Law Philosophy

Traditionally, philosophy has been an important source for Catholic thought, particularly a form of philosophical argumentation

known as *natural law.* A natural law argument begins with the assumption that through the use of reason, the human mind is capable of discerning God's will in creation. Following this assumption is the claim that people's actions should conform to the order of creation as observed in the natural world and common human experience. For example, the natural inclination to preserve one's life can be used to develop a moral mandate against suicide. The advantage of a natural law argument is that it transcends religious and cultural differences. For instance, the Catholic Church uses natural law argumentation to claim the universal significance of certain teachings such as the insistence on universal human rights. The following excerpt from Pope John XXIII's encyclical on peace, *Pacem in terris* (*Peace on Earth*), provides another example of natural law informing Catholic social teaching:

> All created being reflects the infinite wisdom of God. It reflects it all the more clearly, the higher it stands in the scale of perfection. But the mischief is often caused by erroneous opinions. Many people think that the laws which govern man's relations with the State are the same as those which regulate the blind, elemental forces of the universe. But it is not so; the laws which govern men are quite different. The Father of the universe has inscribed them in man's nature, and that is where we must look for them; there and nowhere else. (Nos. 5–6)

The pope expresses the idea that God has ordered human nature, and this order should govern human relationships. From this perspective, peace will be achieved by transcending differences of opinion and following the laws of human nature.

One of the limitations of natural law is that it can fail to take into account historical and cultural differences that shape understandings of human nature. With the shift to a more historically conscious approach to theology and ethics in the second half of the twentieth century, Catholic thinkers have relied less on natural law. Many insights of natural law, however, particularly the claim that there are universal aspects of human nature, continue to inform Catholic social teaching.

Methodology of Catholic Social Teaching

In *Gaudium et spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*), the Second Vatican Council identified the significance of history in shaping social life and described the Catholic Church's task as reading or "scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (no. 4). The signs of the times[2] are significant events, developments, struggles, and opportunities that characterize an era. The methodology of reading the signs of the times requires an ongoing process of understanding the world and discerning how to think and act in response to what is happening. Reading the signs of the times—a process with a close affinity to the see-judge-act process because both involve social analysis, ethical reflection, and informed action—is a helpful way to think about the methodology that has spurred the development of CST.

Recognizing the diverse social situations that exist in the world, in *Octogesima adveniens* (*A Call to Action*), Pope Paul VI instructs local churches to carry out a process of reading the signs of the times, or of seeing, judging, and acting, within their own contexts.

> In the face of such widely varying situations it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. . . . It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment, and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church. (No. 4)

2. The phrase, reading the signs of the times, has biblical roots, appearing in the Gospel of Matthew (16:1–3): "The Pharisees and Sadducees came and, to test him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven. He said to them in reply, "In the evening you say, 'Tomorrow will be fair, for the sky is red'; and, in the morning, 'Today will be stormy, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times." The passage depicts Jesus responding to religious leaders who are skeptical about his teaching authority. In his reply, Jesus challenges them to open their eyes to what is going on around them. He points out that they can read weather patterns in the signs of nature, but they do not recognize signs of God at work in the world—healing the sick, forgiving sinners, comforting those who are suffering.

The process Paul VI describes is useful for individuals and communities seeking to understand and respond to social situations, but it also describes the type of reflection that those who have authored the Church's official teachings have engaged in.

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching develops a number of recurring themes, which are often referred to as principles. Though no definitive listing of these principles exists, Catholic Church leaders and scholars have developed various listings helpful to those seeking to understand and apply CST.[3] The lists can provide a framework for organizing CST's central ideas, and therefore can facilitate both learning about CST and its application in particular situations.

The organization of the chapter topics in the remainder of this text reflects the list of seven major themes the USCCB articulated in 1997:[4]

The Dignity of the Human Person. The foundation for all of the Church's social teaching and ethical reflection is its theological understanding of the human person: the human person is created in the image and likeness of God. The belief that each person bears the image of God—regardless of characteristics such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, physical attributes, intelligence, behavior, or nationality—grounds Catholic social teaching's affirmation of the dignity of every individual. Furthermore, the conviction that every person bears the image of God regardless of his or her actions grounds the Church's defense of the immeasurable worth of each individual, despite their worse actions and beyond their greatest achievements.

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3. For example, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace lists four major principles (human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, and the common good) in *The Compendium for the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004). Social ethicist, Thomas Massaro names nine key themes of Catholic social teaching (the dignity of the human person and human rights; solidarity, common good and participation; family life; subsidiarity and the proper role of government; property ownership: rights and responsibilities; the dignity of work, rights of workers, and support for labor unions; colonialism and economic development; peace and disarmament; and option for the poor and vulnerable) in his book *Living Justice: Catholic Social Teaching in Action* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011).

4. See USCCB, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 1997).

Call to Family, Community, and Participation. Catholic social teaching recognizes that people participate in various communities, including families, neighborhoods, and nations. Because the family provides the primary experience of community for most people, the Catholic Church emphasizes the importance of supporting families.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers. The Catholic social tradition affirms the dignity of work and the rights of workers, including the right to a living wage and the right to form labor unions. CST has consistently challenged economic systems that exploit people for their labor or place the value of profit over the value of the human person.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable. The option for those who are poor and vulnerable calls for putting the needs of certain people first. Social injustices such as poverty that hinder human development create the conditions in which people are prevented from participating in society. The common good, defined in this context by the flourishing of all, cannot be achieved when individuals are marginalized. Empowering everyone to participate strengthens the common good.

Solidarity. Upholding the dignity of all individuals and empowering them to participate fully in community requires solidarity; a recognition that all people are interconnected and a commitment to work for the good of all people. Solidarity affirms the social nature of the human person and the interdependence of creation. As an ethical stance, solidarity goes beyond the observation that people are interconnected to the conviction that people are responsible for one another.

Care for Creation. This theme emphasizes human beings responsibility toward the whole of creation—human and nonhuman. CST advocates for environmental justice, recognizing that marginalized people (through situations such as poverty or racism) are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation.

Rights and Responsibilities. The Catholic Church teaches that human rights flow from human dignity, making them universal and intrinsic. The Church also teaches that the human person is social by nature and meant to live in relationship with others. Therefore, the Church emphasizes responsibilities alongside rights.

Applications of Catholic Social Teaching in the United States

The major writings of CST described earlier in the chapter are universal in scope, which means the pope or bishops who issued them intended to speak to the entire church and in some cases the world. The leaders of local churches are responsible for applying the universal teachings to situations that arise in local settings. The USCCB has carried out this responsibility by addressing numerous social, economic, and political issues particular to the United States. This list of selected writings illustrates the range diversity of topics the USCCB addressed in recent decades through official statements:

- *Brothers and Sisters to Us, Pastoral Letter on Racism,* 1979
- *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response,* 1983
- *Economic Justice for All,* 1986
- Labor Day Statements, published annually since 1986
- *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching,* 1991
- *The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace,* 1993
- *Called to Global Solidarity,* 1997
- *A Fair and Just Workplace: Principles and Practices,* 1999
- *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,* published before each presidential election since 1999
- *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good,* 2001
- *A Place at the Table*, 2002
- "*For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food:" Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers,* 2003
- *Strangers No Longer: Together on a Journey of Hope, A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States,* 2003

Looking Ahead

The seven remaining chapters of this text are designed to help service learners understand CST's central principles, gain insight into how these principles have been applied to particular situations by the USCCB, and prepare to apply the principles to situations they are familiar with, using the see-judge-act process.

Each chapter begins by briefly introducing a principle of CST and offering two sets of reflection questions designed to help readers identify their prior knowledge, assumptions, and expectations related to the principle and to an issue the chapter will explore in relation to the principle and consider how these may influence what they see in service-learning settings. Next, each chapter presents more detailed information about the principle in CST, and then considers how the USCCB applied the principle to an issue in the United States. Next, the chapters draw on social science data and insights from Christian ethics that may help readers begin the process of analyzing a contemporary social situation with which they are familiar. The chapters continue with a summary followed by a fictionalize vignette drawn from an actual service-learning setting and a series of questions designed to help readers practice aspects of the see-judge-act process. The questions encourage readers to draw on principles of Catholic social teaching as a resource for evaluating social situations and to actions that might further the goal of promoting social justice. Each chapter concludes with suggestions for further reading and research.

For Further Reading

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