

## Catholic Social Teaching (CST) - Handout

In dealing with various social problems and needs in society, the Catholic Church has given statements on human coexistence and formulated the scholarly reflected „Catholic Social Teaching“ in various papal pronouncements, especially encyclical writings, the first being *Rerum Novarum* from Pope Leo XIII. The CST can be considered to part of the **Christian teaching** on morality and its norms and is be seen in the tradition of the Church Teachers and the tradition of the thinking of the Occient.

The basic idea of the Catholic Social Teaching is the *Ordo Socialis*, a just and reasonable order of human coexistence to be striven for. The guarantor of such an order is none other than God himself: “On the religion by which God is worshipped depends the welfare of the state and society.“ (Pope Leo XIII.) God gives instructions for the realization of such an order through his **revelation** in the Holy Scriptures, one thinks for example of the Decalogue or the Greatest Commandment and the teachings of Jesus Christ.

In addition to revelation, Catholic Social Teaching is founded on insights of reason, which can discern certain so-called **natural law** principles of order. One of those principles would be the Golden Rule. These principles find their basis in a certain philosophy and anthropology. Based on these two sources, the Church has elaborated the following **principles** of the Social Teaching:

### Human Dignity

Christianity teaches that human beings have a rooted dignity that must be respected and preserved. People are not equal in themselves, but they have equal **human dignity** because they are created in God's image (according to the Bible). This is based on the responsible development of the personality of the individual, i.e. the exercise of his duties and the protection of his rights.

### Solidarity

Man never lives completely autonomously; he is a social being and as such depends on others for his own sake, to survive and for the development of his personality. From the commandment to love one's neighbor springs a mutual consideration for the whole of creation and especially for the poor; Christian solidarity is to be distinguished from the class-struggle socialist solidarity.

### Subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity states that small social units (such as the family or, in times of globalization, the nation-state) should regulate their own life together and only receive subsidiary, i.e. helping, support from a superordinate unit when necessary.

### Common good

The common good is the central concept of Catholic Social Teaching and can be seen as the overall goal of a community and can also be described as the „all-round realization of **justice**“: All present and future as well as material, political, cultural, and religious goals of a community are placed in right order to one another. The common good is a whole and this is more than the sum of the individual partial goals. The basic principle is that the common good takes precedence over the individual good.

The more the partial areas of a society, such as the legal or market order, come closer to the principles of social teaching, the more the political and economic reality corresponds to the ideal of justice. In its concern for the common good, the state has an important role to play here. The fruit of justice is peace, which, according to the Church Teacher Augustine, is tranquility in order.