

# Basic Principles of Catholic Mission

. . . as they are applied by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development

When the Catholic Bishops of the United States established the Campaign for Human Development (CHD) in 1970, they mandated the Campaign to fund "such projects as voter registration, community organizations, community-run schools, minority-owned cooperatives and credit unions, capital for industrial development and job training programs, and setting up of rural cooperatives." 1

Today the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) can point to numerous CCHD-funded organizations which have grown and now extend significant influence in their communities.

In the light of the Catholic Church's moral and social teachings and tradition, CCHD asks organizations requesting funding to understand and adhere to some basic principles which are central to the Catholic mission. CCHD asks those responsible for seeking and managing funds from CCHD to carefully consider the following statements:

**Dignity of the Human Person** -- The dignity of the human person is a central theme running throughout Catholic Social Teaching. This principle asserts that the human person is made in the image and likeness of God, that human life is sacred and must be preserved from conception through natural death, and that each person possesses a basic dignity that comes from God. Therefore, the test of every institution or policy is whether it enhances or threatens human life and human dignity.

**The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) will consider favorably only those organizations which demonstrate respect for the dignity of the human person. CCHD will not consider organizations which promote or support abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, or any other affront to human life and dignity.**

Poor and vulnerable people have a special place in Catholic social teaching. A basic moral test of a society is how its most vulnerable members are faring ... Our tradition calls us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

**Family Living Wage** -- Ever since *Rerum Novarum*, issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, the issue of just wages has been a consistent concern of Catholic Social Teaching. In their 1986 economics pastoral, the bishops of the United States wrote: "The first line of attack against poverty must be to build and sustain a healthy economy that provides employment opportunities at just wages for all adults who are able to work." (196) CCHD gives priority to business development initiatives that pay a living wage.

**Institutional Change** -- CCHD's mission "is to address the root causes of poverty in the U.S." In Catholic Social Teaching, the causes of poverty are understood to be an aspect of "social sin" rooted in our social and economic structures and institutions. In their economics pastoral, the bishops of the United States describe "A New American Experiment" that calls for "an imaginative vision of the future that can help shape economic arrangements in creative new ways." (295) This will require alternative economic structures that will "expand economic participation, broaden the sharing of economic power, and make economic decisions more accountable to the common good." (297)

In addition to just wages, CCHD seeks a just balance of individual- and community-held assets. In *Rerum Novarum* this vision was described in the following way: "If working people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share of the land, the consequence will be that the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over, and the respective classes will be brought nearer to each other." (47) Much more recently in 1963, Pope John XXIII wrote in *Pacem in Terris*, The right of private property is an effective means for safeguarding the dignity of the human person and for the exercise of responsibility in all fields; it strengthens and gives serenity to family life, thereby increasing the peace and prosperity.

Flowing from our God-given dignity, each person has basic rights and responsibilities. These include the rights to freedom of conscience and religious liberty, to raise a family, to immigrate, to live free from unfair discrimination, and to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family. People have a fundamental right to life and to those things that make life truly human: food, clothing, housing, health care, education, security, social services, and employment. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities - to one another, to our families, and to the larger society, to respect the rights of others and to work for the common good.

**Participation and Control** -- Catholic Social Teaching holds that all people have the right and duty to participate in society and its organization. In his 1999 papal exhortation upon the completion of the Synod of America, *Ecclesia in America*, Pope John Paul II relates the dignity of the human person to social interaction, "It will be especially necessary to nurture the growing awareness in society of the dignity of every person and therefore to promote in the community a sense of the duty to participate in political life in harmony with the Gospel. Involvement in the political field is clearly part of the vocation and activity of the lay faithful."

The right to participate in society has been emphasized frequently in Catholic Social Teaching. Pope John XXIII in 1961 wrote: "Basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the human community for all persons." In 1986, one of six principal themes articulated in the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on the economy was: "All people have a right to participate in the economic life of the society." (15)

**For the purposes of CCHD funding, the participation of poor people in the shaping and ongoing direction of organizations is a central criterion. While "advisory" groups may also strengthen an organization, poor and low income people must have and maintain a strong voice in the organization's leadership both in terms of its governance structure and policy decisions, especially through their direct participation in the board of directors.**

The common good is 'the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups, and their individual members, relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment.'

**Solidarity** -- Rooted in the dignity of the human person and their participation in society, CCHD's funding programs promote solidarity. Pope John Paul II has stressed the need for solidarity as a part of "the growing awareness of interdependence among individuals and nations." Solidarity is "a moral and social attitude" that requires "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all." (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 38.5-6, 1988)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church relates the need for solidarity as we collectively face challenges to the common good: "[Solidarity] also presupposes the effort for a more just social order where tensions are better able to be reduced and conflicts more readily settled by negotiation. Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all the forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, or workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business, solidarity among nations and peoples."(1940-1)

Peace is not simply the absence of conflict; it must include efforts which build and promote 'a civilization of love'. The goal of peace, so desired by everyone will certainly be achieved ... through the practice of virtues which favor togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity, so as to build in unity, by giving and receiving a new society and a better world.

**CCHD will not consider organizations which promote or support violence, racism, sexism, or other prejudices, in any form. We realize that conflict is inevitable and often an element of social change. However, conflict must take place in an atmosphere of non-violence and respect for human persons. Signatures of authorized organization officials on the Grant Agreement indicate adherence to these principles in the administration of any CCHD-funded organization.**

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1 Resolution on Crusade Against Poverty, adopted by National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Nov. 14, 1969. NOTE: The Crusade Against Poverty was later renamed the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. Questions about grants? Email us at [cchdgrants@usccb.org](mailto:cchdgrants@usccb.org)

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