



Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching is part of the Catholic intellectual and moral tradition rooted in the Bible and developed through history. Modern Catholic social teaching finds its origin in Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which addressed the conditions of workers and the moral economic order in the industrialized world. Since that time, a number of popes, bishops, and councils of bishops have written documents responding to the social issues of the day. These documents, along with applications and reflections from practitioners and scholars, make up the broader Catholic social tradition. The University of St. Thomas embraces Catholic social teaching and actively participates in Catholic social tradition.

THE DIGNITY OF PERSONS

Respect for the dignity of persons is the cornerstone of the moral life. It is one of the "Seven Convictions" of the University of St. Thomas and a principle of Catholic Social Teaching. Encountering and responding to the dignity in others is central to being a morally responsible leader who thinks critically, acts wisely, and works skillfully to advance the common good. In other words, it is part of being a "Tommie."

TOMMIES ENCOUNTER THE DIGNITY OF OTHERS

The Catholic Church teaches: Dignity demands that we "feel personally affected by the injustices and violations of human rights" and are "moved by the suffering of others." We "see" others, particularly the poor and marginalized as "neighbors" and "sharers in life" and we "hear the cry of the poor." "No one can remain insensitive to the inequalities that persist in the world." We "never tire of working for a more just world, marked by greater solidarity."

What this means: Dignity calls us to an active and relational engagement in the well-being of others. We are moved by compassion, solidarity, and social friendship. We open ourselves up to the experience of the other and we allow ourselves to be open to the other. We see the particular identities of persons through which their sacredness shines forth. We seek mutuality through dialogue. We seek understanding as we care. In our attitudes and actions, we encounter the dignity of others.

TOMMIES RESPECT THE DIGNITY OF OTHERS

The Catholic Church teaches: "Human life is sacred and the dignity of the person is the foundation for a moral society." "Dignity is identical in each one of us" and is a "gift from God." "We all have the same nature, origin, calling, and destiny." "Each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God's creative work." Because of dignity, there is a "unity and equality of all people." Blindness to human dignity is a cause of racism and prejudice.

What this means: We value persons and their ability to direct their own lives. We recognize that we share a common humanity with all persons. In our attitudes and actions, we encounter and respect the dignity of others.

TOMMIES RESPOND TO THE DIGNITY OF OTHERS

The Catholic Church teaches: "The dignity of the human person is realized in community with others." We are thus called to advance the common good - "to create the social conditions that enable people to flourish." "Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family." Because of dignity, all people "have rights and duties that are universal and inviolable." We are to have a "preferential concern" for "those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need."

What this means: We understand that dignity is universal and equal among persons. We also know that one's awareness of dignity and the lived expression of dignity occur in social groups. Language, actions, symbols, patterns of relationships, laws, and customs can promote or repress dignity. We respond to dignity in one-to-one settings as well as in the practices of institutions and our society. In our attitudes and actions, we encounter, respect and respond to the dignity of others.



We respect the dignity of each person and value the unique contributions that each brings to the greater mosaic of the university community.
Conviction of the **University of St. Thomas**

Human dignity is a universally-held moral claim. It is grounded in sacred texts, championed by religious and political leaders, protected in professional codes of conduct, written into the constitutions of nations, recognized in international relations, and is one of the basic convictions of the University of St. Thomas. In our attitudes and actions, Tommies encounter, respect and respond to the dignity of others.

Dignity is grounded in sacred texts, championed by religious and political leaders

"So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." – Genesis 1:27

"O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other." – Qur'an 49:13

"God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters." – Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb and Pope Francis (2019)

"I believe in human dignity as the source of national purpose, human liberty as the source of national action, the human heart as the source of national compassion, and in the human mind as the source of our invention and our ideas." – John F. Kennedy, speech in New York (1960)

"The American dream reminds us ... that every man is an heir to a legacy of dignity and worth." – Martin Luther King, Jr., "The American Dream" (1965)

Dignity is written into the constitutions of nations and recognized in international relations.

"We the peoples of the United Nations determined ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small ... have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims." – Charter of the United Nations (1945)

Dignity is protected in professional codes of conduct

"A physician shall be dedicated to providing competent medical care, with compassion and respect for human dignity and rights." – American Medical Association, "Code of Medical Ethics"

"Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality and self-determination." – American Psychological Association, "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct"

"Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person." – National Association of Social Workers, "Code of Ethics"

"Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." – United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948)

