

**Implementing Catholic Social Teaching
at the University of St. Francis, IL
in keeping with its mission as a
Catholic Franciscan Institution of Higher Education**

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Note: This paper is based on the presentation given at the 2010 AFCU Symposium: Implementing Catholic Social Teaching at the University of St. Francis.

What contribution has the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition made to the Catholic Intellectual tradition and how is this articulated in our Catholic, Franciscan institutions? This paper will focus on how the overarching themes of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) are and have been implemented at the University of St. Francis in Joliet, IL in its curriculum, student affairs, and university events and sponsorships. The tenets of CST were first expressed by Leo XIII in 1891 in *On the Condition of Labor (Rerum Novarum)*, and developed by subsequent Popes up to Pope Benedict's most recent encyclical *Charity in Truth (Caritas in veritate) (2009)*. All of these documents have been reviewed and summarized by the United States Catholic Bishops in their report: *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*. I will suggest that Franciscans made a unique contribution to the Catholic Intellectual tradition as they were the first to promote Catholic social teaching by actually living it.

It is quite exciting to realize that the basic principles of Catholic Social Teaching have been developed in the past one hundred years and are still a work in progress. Pope Leo XIII wrote the Encyclical *On the Condition of Labor (Rerum Novarum)* in 1891 to address some of the profound changes that were affecting the living conditions and lives of so many of the faithful. He was the first to articulate what were to be known as the "themes of Social Justice" which is now called the Church's "Social doctrine," "social teaching" or "social Magisterium" (O'Brien & Shannon, 2002). Pope Leo XIII was a member of the Franciscan Third Order and one could propose that CST is an embodiment of the Franciscan spirit we strive to promote in our colleges.

The importance of *Rerum Novarum* cannot be underestimated. This document was the first time that the Church gave direct instruction to the laity on how they were to live their secular lives if they are truly infused by the teachings of their religion. Subsequent Popes have reiterated the importance of *Rerum Novarum* and published other encyclicals on anniversaries of this document: Pius XI wrote *The Reconstruction of the Social Order (Quadragesimo Anno)*, on May 15, 1931 (in the Great Depression that followed the end of WWI); John XXIII wrote *Christianity and Social Progress (Mater et Magistra)* on May 15, 1961 (in a time of great economic inequalities); Paul VI wrote *A Call to Action (Octogesima Advenien)* on May 14, 1971 (during a period of violent racial and social discrimination); and John Paul II wrote *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (Centesimus Anus)* on May 1, 1991 (after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe) in addition to several other encyclicals also on issues of Social Justice (See Figure 1).

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Pope Benedict's (2009) recent encyclical *Charity in Truth* was written on the 40th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's 1967 *On the Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio)*. Both encyclicals call for economic justice for all, human development, and global inter-dependence and respond to the moral problems of their day. Pope Benedict delayed the publishing of his encyclical by two years to address the economic crisis that had just devastated the global economy.

Thus, we can see that the social doctrine of the Church was formed over the course of time as the Magisterium intervened on social issues. This Social Doctrine is of a theological nature in the religious and moral order, finding its foundation in biblical revelation and the tradition of the Church but availing itself of all branches of knowledge, especially philosophy, the human sciences and social sciences (Benedict XVI, 2009). I would like to suggest that Catholic Social Teaching is an embodiment of the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition we strive to promote in our colleges (Osborne, 2008).

FIGURE 1- IMPORTANT CHURCH DOCUMENTS ON SOCIAL DOCTRINE

On Work

<u>Latin Title of Document with translation</u>	<u>English title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Pope</u>	<u>Main Topic</u>
Rerum Novarum “New Things”	On the Condition of Labor	1891	Leo XIII	Labor
Quadragesimo anno “On the 40 th Year”	The reconstruction of the social order	1931	Pius XI	Property
Mater et Magistra “Mother and Teacher”	Christianity and social progress	1961	John XXIII	Development
Octogesima Adveniens “On the 80 th Anniversary”	A call to action	1971	Paul VI	Justice for all
Laborem Exercens	On Human Work	1981	John Paul II	Work
Centesimus Annus “100 th Year”	On the 100 th anniversary of Rerum Novarum	1991	John Paul II	Universal Destination of Goods

On Global Concerns

Optatissima Pax	Longed for Peace	1947	Pius XII	Peace in world
Pacem in Terris	Peace on earth	1963	John XXIII	World Peace
Populorum Progressio	On the development of peoples	1967	Paul VI	Development & Peace
Sollicitudo Rei Socialis	On social concern	1987	John Paul II	International Solidarity
Caritas in veritate	Charity in Truth	2009	Benedict XVI	Justice in Global Economy

On Family

Casti Connubii “Chaste wedlock”	On Christian Marriage	1939	Pius XI	Marriage as a sacrament
Humanae vitae	On Human Life	1968	Paul VI	Sanctity of the sexual act
Familiaris Consortio “Family Partnership”	On the Role of the Christian Family in the World	1981	John Paul II	Sanctity of marriage and openness to life
Evangelium Vitae	The Gospel of Life	1985	John Paul II	Sanctity of life at all stages

Church Documents

Gaudium et Spes “Hopes and Joys”	Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world	1965	Vatican Council II	Challenges of Catholics living in the modern world
Iustitia in mundo	Justice in the world	1971	Synod of Bishops	Care for the poor in Africa, Latin America and Asia
	Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions	1998	U.S. Catholic Bishops	Teaching Catholic Social Doctrine to All Catholics
Iustitia et Pax “Peace and Justice”	Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church	2004	Pontifical Council for Justice & Peace	Excerpts from all documents dealing with social teachings

Catholic social teaching is that part of Catholic moral teaching that deals with human social life. It suggests what society should look like in its social, political and economic aspects, based upon the ultimate purpose of temporal life in society. It is the embodiment of the Franciscan intellectual tradition because it is inter-disciplinary; an inclusive theology applied to praxis (Ingham, 2007). Catholic Social Teaching “helps men and women to discover what it means to live as children of God in every dimension of their lives, including those related to social, economic and political contexts” (Pontifical Council for J& P, 2004). This is congruent with the Franciscan emphasis on the dignity of the person (Nothwehr, 2005).

Modern Catholic Social Teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents that explore and express the social demands of our faith (USCCB, 2005). The Social Doctrine of the Church is clearly articulated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2419 to 2449 with principles for reflection and guidelines for action. In order to highlight the themes that they thought were most important to address at this time in the United States, the U.S. Bishops established a Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education in 1995. This group reviewed all of these documents and summarized their findings three years later in a report *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (U.S. Catholic Conference, 1998) in which they outlined a framework for discussing CST under seven areas. These are:

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- Call to Family, Community and Participation
- Rights and Responsibility
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
- Solidarity in an Interdependent National and International Community
- Care for God’s Creation - Ecology and Safeguarding the Environment

Using these overarching themes of Catholic Social Teaching as outlined by the United States Catholic Bishops in *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (1998) and citing the appropriate Church documents, I will show how we implement Catholic Social Teaching at the University of St. Francis, in Joliet, IL, in keeping with our mission as a Catholic, Franciscan University. According to Beaudin (2007), if schools are to take their Catholic, Franciscan religious identity seriously they need to examine how their investments of time, energy and financial resources reflect their identity both inside and outside the classroom.

Mission

Looking at the mission of my school, <http://www.stfrancis.edu/about/mission/> one can see that the main social justice themes are articulated within our framework of being a “Catholic university ...challenged by Franciscan values and charism.” We “pursue justice,” have “reverence for creation, compassion and peacemaking” and “strive ...to prepare women and men to contribute to the world through service and leadership.” Our mission statement is posted throughout the campus and on our internet homepage, included as an honored document in all ceremonies (it is carried in procession and placed on a stand), found on all syllabi, and referred to in making decisions. The University subscribes to four values (Respect, Integrity, Compassion, and Service) which flow from the mission statement. We include these values on all school publications and refer to them on course and student life expectations.

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Dignity of the Human Person

John XXIII (1961), in *On Christianity and Social Progress*, Paul VI (1968), in *On Human Life (Humanae Vitae)* and John Paul II (1985) in *Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)*, address the attacks on life, especially on the vulnerable who cannot defend themselves - the unborn, the elderly, the disabled. At the core of these attacks is an erroneous view of human autonomy and freedom and a lack of relationship with God. The value of human life is made apparent in the incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity. Jesus became man, and as such is the definitive proclamation of the Gospel of Life. This reflects the Franciscan emphasis on the human person as image of God (Delio, 2002). As a result of the value of human life, humans have inviolable and inalienable rights. The most basic is the right to life. John Paul II emphasized the basic evil of intentionally killing any of the innocent through abortion or euthanasia. He argued that governments need to eliminate these evils and support life.

To address the challenge proposed by the United States Bishops in their document *Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics*, we have a "Right to Life" club at our school that holds prayer vigils, writes to representatives of Congress to support pro-life legislation, and collects money and supplies for homes for unmarried pregnant women. Postcard campaigns against the FOCA (Freedom of Choice Act) clearly express the belief that if you are committed to social justice you must be pro-life.

In an effort to educate ourselves and our students on the many current life issues, we invited Father Tad Pacholczyk, a national columnist in Catholic newspapers, as a speaker for the community and our students (especially the biology and theology majors). He explained the important ethical difference between stem cell research and embryonic stem cell research; and why in vitro fertilization, test tube babies, cloning and any kind of artificial birth control including sterilization are against human ethics and especially sexual ethics.

In order to educate the entire community in support of John Paul II's teaching in the *Gospel of Life* (#56) that the "absolute necessity" of the death penalty today is "practically non-existent," Sister Helen Prejean came to campus citing statistics that show the death penalty is unjustly administered to the poor and minorities because they cannot afford costly lawyers. She documented this reality in her book *Dead Man Walking* which was later made into a movie.

Call to Family, Community and Participation

In keeping with Pope John XXIII's challenge in *On Christianity and Social Progress* (1961) that the Church should encourage the People of God not only to "give life to her children but also to teach and guide them," the University sponsors activities for the family and the community through a special office called "Solutions" <http://www.stfrancis.edu/business-solutions/>.

These activities include parenting classes, weeklong camps for children, seminars on educational issues for parents, finance/investment portfolio advice and retirement seminars, medical seminars and numerous other events throughout the year. Although some of these events charge a fee, others are offered free in order to help the less fortunate; many of these free events are service learning for our students who conduct these seminars as part of their educational training.

In his apostolic exhortation *On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)* (1981), John Paul II talked about the role of the Christian family and itemized objectives that the family must fulfill to be "an intimate community of life and love." He pointed out that mutual self-giving is based on the indissolubility of marriage and that the roles of the spouses are complementary and that women have equal dignity with men. He noted that families are the foundation of society and urged the state to support the family and defend its rights and duties.

The College of Education students, along with students from other majors, work with the Big Brothers program tutoring and mentoring students, hold college preparation leadership camps for high school students from the inner city of Joliet, and help run fine arts and music camps in the summer for local elementary school children. The Recreation Department runs afternoon programs for students from the local elementary school.

The University of St. Francis Health and Wellness Center <http://www.stfrancis.edu/hwc/> is a primary care clinic that is managed by advanced practice nurses on the faculty of the University's College of Nursing and Allied Health. Its mission is to "treat the whole person – not just the disease or the symptoms." It is also dedicated to treating victims of domestic violence and offers services at the Domestic Violence Shelter.

Rights and Responsibility

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (1998) explained the importance of this component: "In a world where some speak mostly of 'rights' and others mostly of 'responsibilities,' Catholic Social Justice teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Every person has a right to life and a right to those things required for human decency and a responsibility—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society."

One of the most important parts of Leo XIII's groundbreaking encyclical, *On the Condition of Labor*, was his discussion of private property. He saw it as a good that would help to solve the economic disparities of the 19th century in which socialism was promoted. Private property was the very thing the average worker wanted to attain

- that is, the means to support his family and provide shelter, clothing and food. One hundred years later in John Paul II's encyclical, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, he stated that although progress has been made, many of the problems cited in *Rerum Novarum* still exist for the economically poor. Economic inequality is rampant today, both within and between countries. God created the material world and its resources for all people. The extreme concentration of the material world in the hands of the few results in the economic inequalities prevalent in the world.

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In order to help our students understand these issues, we have invited relevant speakers to campus. Dr. Vandana Shiva, physicist, environmentalist, author of *Sustainability and the Global Food Crisis* spoke on the global food crisis. Greg Mortenson (author of *Three Cups of Tea*) spoke about his effort to promote peace by changing the world - building one school at a time in remote regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Students at USF were so moved by Mortenson that they sponsored their own penny drives in the local elementary schools and had a fund raiser at the University. Jen Marlowe, author of *Darfur Diaries*, visited campus and showed the film *Darfur Diaries: Messages from Home* moving the students to become active through fundraising and writing letters.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Pope Paul VI challenged developed nations to help developing nations in *On the Development of Peoples, (Populorum Progressio) (1967b)* saying that this is the way that true peace can be found on earth as Pope John XXIII explained in his *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)*. The University of St. Francis, in conjunction with the Joliet Diocese, participates each summer in a service project. Students and professors spend two weeks in Sucre, Bolivia ministering in several orphanages, day care centers, a home for delinquent/ abandoned boys, at the hospital and in schools, giving classes and seminars, and building and repairing buildings. In addition, the University sponsors two or three Bolivian college students to spend a semester at the University of St. Francis providing them with tuition, room and board. I have mentored Bolivian students in my education courses each spring term for the past four years. It is a mutually enriching experience.

The Spanish professor and Hispanic Outreach Coordinator at the University of St. Francis sponsors immigrant workshops each year to help people to complete essential paperwork, enroll in English as a Second Language classes, take citizenship information seminars and register to vote. She, along with our Hispanic students, serve over 500 people during these three day events.

In addition, College of Education students work as teachers' aides in the poorer, diverse Catholic schools in the area. This elective field experience is becoming very popular with students because they see how needed they are in these schools that lack the basic necessities. Our students also run book drives, clothes drives and school supplies drives in order to help these students.

Although hopefully it is obvious that all the components of Catholic Social Teaching fit well within a Franciscan tradition, perhaps the option for the poor and vulnerable is the most Franciscan tenet of all (Blastic, 2007).

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

One could state that all the encyclicals on Catholic Social Teaching deal with the question of work, but perhaps none states its importance as well as John Paul II's *On Human Work (Laborem Exercens)* (1981) written on the 90th anniversary of Leo XIII's encyclical. At the time that Leo XIII wrote *On the Condition of Labor*, the worker had almost no rights. Work was difficult and unsafe; wages were low; leisure time was limited because 40 hour work weeks, paid vacation, and coffee breaks were non-existent; there was no differentiation by age and sex (i.e., men, women and children were expected to work); and social security and health insurance were not even available.

Now that these basic work needs have been addressed through the formation and efforts of labor unions and professional associations, John Paul II sought to go much deeper into the value of work. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation for, as seen from the very beginning in Genesis, all human beings were made to work. All work has dignity; through work we become more fully human and participate in the creation of a better world. This too is a very Franciscan tenet (Hayes, 2005). If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative. Respecting these rights promotes an economy that protects human life, defends human rights, and advances the well-being of all.

Although Leo XIII was the first to articulate this theme of Social Justice in *On the Condition of Labor*, perhaps the ethical challenges of work today are best articulated in Benedict XVI's most recent encyclical, *Charity in Truth*. He states that the current economic crisis is due in part to the fact that unions have demanded high wages for employees while cutting down work expectations. Workers have a right to form associations, but these groups should help them to do their job better and improve themselves through on-going professional development. Workers have a duty to perform their work conscientiously and not harm the work property or do harm to their employers. If people followed these tenets, perhaps we would not have the unethical scandals that result when workers think only of themselves and not of their duty to their company (McKenna, 2002).

The University sponsors a Center for Contemporary Ethics that invites speakers to deal with the challenges encountered in various professions, i.e., health care, banking, education. The College of Business & Health Administration takes up Pope Benedict's challenge by providing free tax preparation (with accounting majors working under the direction of professors) for local community members, many of them poor, immigrant or elderly. A required Business Ethics course which includes Catholic Social Teaching, is a part of the undergraduate business degree programs. One business professor dedicated his sabbatical to studying how to further integrate CST in accounting classes and other business courses. This college was the first to develop a totally on-line degree program so that work, family, religious and professional development requirements can be met with consideration for the personal circumstances of each person.

The Social Work department spearheads the University-wide drives and benefits for the poor and those victims of national disasters such as hurricanes, floods, etc. Guest speakers come to campus to highlight world problems such as the AIDS epidemic, civil rights issues, and the social needs after the hurricane in New Orleans and the earthquake in Haiti; we encourage the students to take action after these speakers present the different challenges. This becomes a true service learning opportunity.

Solidarity

John Paul II explained what solidarity is in his encyclical *On Social Concern (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis)* (1987); this virtue is “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” (no. 38). In other words, the virtue of solidarity means learning that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions in an interdependent world. Catholic Social Teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. No country can turn inward and become indifferent and isolationist in the face of international responsibilities. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences (USCCB, 1998).

Each spring term USF student groups go with Campus Ministry to the Appalachians or to Kentucky to help those who are out of jobs to build and repair houses. Responding to the U.S. Bishops (1983) *Pastoral Letter on War and Peace*, USF student groups go with several professors each year to Fort Benning, Georgia to protest outside the School of the Americas (SOA), a combat training school for Latin American soldiers, in an effort to close it.

The University has also sponsored speakers such as Arun Gandhi who spoke on *Lessons Learned from My Grandfather*; Scott Ritter, author of *Target Iran*, who narrated the events that lead to the invasion of Iraq and the Middle East conflict; and Julian Bond, civil rights leader and past president of the NAACP who spoke on current challenges to equal opportunity for all.

Ecology

It was interesting to learn that as early as 1961 John XXIII, in *On Christianity and Social Progress*, began the conversation on the importance of respecting the earth’s natural resources; the Bishops reiterated this call in their statement *On Renewing the Earth*. In 1979 John Paul II named St. Francis of Assisi, our University patron, the patron saint of ecology. Perhaps no other tenet of Catholic Social Teaching is so much a part of what it means to be Franciscan (Delio, 2002; Delio, Warner, & Wood, 2007), and our university excels in this area with the science department spearheading these initiatives.

USF students conduct field research as part of service learning in their botany class with their professor assisting them at the Midewin Prairie in Joliet; this is one of the largest prairie restoration projects ever undertaken where USF has actually adopted a wetlands. A few years ago, through the efforts of the chemistry professor, USF received a large grant to purchase recycling bins for the whole campus. The whole university is “going green” and Earth Week is celebrated each April with informative events all week sponsored by *The Greening of the Campus Committee*.

Robert Kennedy Jr., a member of a family famous for its public service, spoke on campus regarding his crusade for clean air and water. Kennedy has retold Saint Francis’s story as a lesson and inspiration for children in his book, *Saint Francis of Assisi: A Life of Joy*.

It is our desire that students who graduate from the University of St. Francis will be well aware of issues of social justice and ethics and convinced of their responsibility to be active in this area. We hope that graduates will be leaders who serve others and live the gospel message by living the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching; trying to support every individual, especially the poor and marginalized; fostering values that support marriage and family; caring for our environment and our earth; and voting for officials and laws that will help those economically in need in our country and in our world. This is “the Franciscan difference” at our institution. We believe that this difference will help our graduates to change our dehumanized world and make it more human in our global and multi-culturally diverse world (Blastic, 2007).

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Note: The author would like to thank Dr. Cynthia Toolin for her encouragement to publish this paper.

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