

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING:

Teachings of the Church in the Realm of Natural Law addressed to every person of good will and every legitimate government

TAXATION

“In a system of taxation based on justice and equity it is fundamental that the burdens be proportioned to the capacity of the people contributing.” (Mater Et Magistra Encyclical of Pope John XXIII on May 15, 1961 <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/John23/j23mater.htm>)

“These three important benefits, however, can be reckoned on only provided that a man's means be not drained and exhausted by excessive taxation. The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man; and the State has the right to control its use in the interests of the public good alone, but by no means to absorb it altogether. The State would therefore be unjust and cruel if under the name of taxation it were to deprive the private owner of more than is fair.” (Rerum Novarum on Capital and Labor, Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, May 15, 1891. <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113rerum.htm>)

“Tax revenues and public spending take on crucial economic importance for every civil and political community. The goal to be sought is public financing that is itself capable of becoming an instrument of development and solidarity. Just, efficient and effective public financing will have very positive effects on the economy, because it will encourage employment growth and sustain business and non-profit activities and help to increase the credibility of the State as the guarantor of systems of social insurance and protection that are designed above all to protect the weakest members of society.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, Pope John Paul II, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html#Participation%20and%20democracy)

“Public spending is directed to the common good when certain fundamental principles are observed: the payment of taxes as part of the duty of solidarity; a reasonable and fair application of taxes; precision and integrity in administering and distributing public

resources. In the redistribution of resources, public spending must observe the principles of solidarity, equality and making use of talents. It must also pay greater attention to families, designating an adequate amount of resources for this purpose.” (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris*.)

ABORTION

“In conformity with these landmarks in the human and Christian vision of marriage, we must once again declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun, and, above all, directly willed and procured abortion, even if for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as licit means of regulating birth.” (On the Regulation of Birth, *Humanae Vitae*, Encyclical Letter of his holiness Pope Paul VI.

<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul06/p6humana.htm>)

“The first right presented in this list is the right to life, from conception to its natural end, which is the condition for the exercise of all other rights and, in particular, implies the illicitness of every form of procured abortion and of euthanasia.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html)

“Concerning the ‘methods’ for practicing responsible procreation, the first to be rejected as morally illicit are sterilization and abortion. The latter in particular is a horrendous crime and constitutes a particularly serious moral disorder; far from being a right, it is a sad phenomenon that contributes seriously to spreading a mentality against life, representing a dangerous threat to a just and democratic social coexistence.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html)

“Brother kills brother. Like the first fratricide, every murder is a violation of the ‘spiritual’ kinship uniting mankind in one great family, in which all share the same fundamental good:

equal personal dignity. Not infrequently the kinship "of flesh and blood" is also violated; for example when threats to life arise within the relationship between parents and children, such as happens in abortion or when, in the wider context of family or kinship, euthanasia is encouraged or practiced.

In order to facilitate the spread of abortion, enormous sums of money have been invested and continue to be invested in the production of pharmaceutical products which make it possible to kill the fetus in the mother's womb without recourse to medical assistance. On this point, scientific research itself seems to be almost exclusively preoccupied with developing products which are ever more simple and effective in suppressing life and which at the same time are capable of removing abortion from any kind of control or social responsibility.

It is frequently asserted that contraception, if made safe and available to all, is the most effective remedy against abortion. The Catholic Church is then accused of actually promoting abortion, because she obstinately continues to teach the moral unlawfulness of contraception. When looked at carefully, this objection is clearly unfounded. It may be that many people use contraception with a view to excluding the subsequent temptation of abortion. But the negative values inherent in the 'contraceptive mentality'—which is very different from responsible parenthood, lived in respect for the full truth of the conjugal act—are such that they in fact strengthen this temptation when an unwanted life is conceived. Indeed, the pro-abortion culture is especially strong precisely where the Church's teaching on contraception is rejected. Certainly, from the moral point of view contraception and abortion are specifically different evils: the former contradicts the full truth of the sexual act as the proper expression of conjugal love, while the latter destroys the life of a human being; the former is opposed to the virtue of chastity in marriage, the latter is opposed to the virtue of justice and directly violates the divine commandment 'You shall not kill'. The contemporary scene, moreover, is becoming even more alarming by reason of the proposals, advanced here and there, to justify even infanticide, following the same arguments used to justify the right to abortion. In this way, we revert to a state of barbarism which one hoped had been left behind forever. There are two ways, a way of life and a way of death; there is a great difference between them... In accordance with the precept of the teaching: you shall not kill... you shall not put a child to death by abortion nor kill it once it is born ... The way of death is this: ... they show no compassion for the poor, they do not suffer with the

suffering, they do not acknowledge their Creator, they kill their children and by abortion cause God's creatures to perish; they drive away the needy, oppress the suffering, they are advocates of the rich and unjust judges of the poor; they are filled with every sin. May you be able to stay ever apart, O children, from all these sins!" (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html)

“It is true that the decision to have an abortion is often tragic and painful for the mother, insofar as the decision to rid herself of the fruit of conception is not made for purely selfish reasons or out of convenience, but out of a desire to protect certain important values such as her own health or a decent standard of living for the other members of the family. Sometimes it is feared that the child to be born would live in such conditions that it would be better if the birth did not take place. Nevertheless, these reasons and others like them, however serious and tragic, can never justify the deliberate killing of an innocent human being.

As well as the mother, there are often other people too who decide upon the death of the child in the womb. In the first place, the father of the child may be to blame, not only when he directly pressures the woman to have an abortion, but also when he indirectly encourages such a decision on her part by leaving her alone to face the problems of pregnancy: in this way the family is thus mortally wounded and profaned in its nature as a community of love and in its vocation to be the "sanctuary of life". Nor can one overlook the pressures which sometimes come from the wider family circle and from friends. Sometimes the woman is subjected to such strong pressure that she feels psychologically forced to have an abortion: certainly in this case moral responsibility lies particularly with those who have directly or indirectly obliged her to have an abortion. Doctors and nurses are also responsible, when they place at the service of death skills which were acquired for promoting life.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html)

CONTRACEPTION

“Equally to be excluded, as the teaching authority of the Church has frequently declared, is direct sterilization, whether perpetual or temporary, whether of the man or of the woman.¹⁵ Similarly excluded is every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible.

But despite their differences of nature and moral gravity, contraception and abortion are often closely connected, as fruits of the same tree. It is true that in many cases contraception and even abortion are practiced under the pressure of real-life difficulties, which nonetheless can never exonerate from striving to observe God's law fully. Still, in very many other instances such practices are rooted in a hedonistic mentality unwilling to accept responsibility in matters of sexuality, and they imply a self-centered concept of freedom, which regards procreation as an obstacle to personal fulfillment. The life which could result from a sexual encounter thus becomes an enemy to be avoided at all costs, and abortion becomes the only possible decisive response to failed contraception.”

(Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html)

“Also to be rejected is recourse to contraceptive methods in their different forms: this rejection is based on a correct and integral understanding of the person and human sexuality and represents a moral call to defend the true development of peoples. On the other hand, the same reasons of an anthropological order justify recourse to periodic abstinence during times of the woman's fertility. Rejecting contraception and using natural methods for regulating births means choosing to base interpersonal relations between the spouses on mutual respect and total acceptance, with positive consequences also for bringing about a more human order in society.” (Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*)

DEATH PENALTY

“The Church sees as a sign of hope *a growing public opposition to the death penalty*, even when such a penalty is seen as a kind of ‘legitimate defence’ on the part of society. Modern society

in fact has the means of effectively suppressing crime by rendering criminals harmless without definitively denying them the chance to reform.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html)

“Bloodless methods of deterrence and punishment are preferred as “they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person”. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2267.) The growing number of countries adopting provisions to abolish the death penalty or suspend its application is also proof of the fact that cases in which it is absolutely necessary to execute the offender “are very rare, if not practically non-existent”. The growing aversion of public opinion towards the death penalty and the various provisions aimed at abolishing it or suspending its application constitute visible manifestations of a heightened moral awareness.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html)

LIBERTY

“It is surely undeniable that, when a man engages in remunerative labor, the impelling reason and motive of his work is to obtain property, and thereafter to hold it as his very own. If one man hires out to another his strength or skill, he does so for the purpose of receiving in return what is necessary for the satisfaction of his needs; he therefore expressly intends to acquire a right full and real, not only to the remuneration, but also to the disposal of such remuneration, just as he pleases. Thus, if he lives sparingly, saves money, and, for greater security, invests his savings in land, the land, in such case, is only his wages under another form; and, consequently, a working man's little estate thus purchased should be as completely at his full disposal as are the wages he receives for his labor. But it is precisely in such power of disposal that ownership obtains, whether the property consist of land or chattels. Socialists, therefore, by endeavoring to transfer the possessions of individuals to the community at large, strike at the interests of every wage-earner, since they would deprive him of the liberty of disposing of his wages, and thereby of all hope and possibility of

increasing his resources and of bettering his condition in life.” (Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*)

“The reason is that Socialism is founded on a doctrine of human society which is bounded by time and takes no account of any objective other than that of material well-being. Since, therefore, it proposes a form of social organization which aims solely at production, it places too severe a restraint on human liberty, at the same time flouting the true notion of social authority.” (Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*)

“Furthermore, relations between States must be regulated by the principle of freedom. This means that no country has the right to take any action that would constitute an unjust oppression of other countries, or an unwarranted interference in their affairs.” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html)

SUBSIDIARITY

“Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.

The supreme authority of the State ought, therefore, to let subordinate groups handle matters and concerns of lesser importance, which would otherwise dissipate its efforts greatly. Thereby the State will more freely, powerfully, and effectively do all those things that belong to it alone because it alone can do them: directing, watching, urging, restraining, as occasion requires and necessity demands. Therefore, those in power should be sure that the more perfectly a graduated order is kept among the various associations, in observance of the principle of ‘subsidiary function,’ the stronger social authority and effectiveness will be the happier and more prosperous the condition of the State.” (Pope

Pius XI, *Quadregesimo Anno*,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadregesimo-anno_en.html)

FAMILY/MARRIAGE

“No human law can abolish the natural and original right of marriage, nor in any way limit the chief and principal purpose of marriage ordained by God's authority from the beginning: ‘Increase and multiply.’ Hence we have the family, the ‘society’ of a man's house - a society very small, one must admit, but none the less a true society, and one older than any State. Consequently, it has rights and duties peculiar to itself which are quite independent of the State.” (Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html)

“Provided, therefore, the limits which are prescribed by the very purposes for which it exists be not transgressed, the family has at least equal rights with the State in the choice and pursuit of the things needful to its preservation and its just liberty. We say, ‘at least equal rights’; for, inasmuch as the domestic household is antecedent, as well in idea as in fact, to the gathering of men into a community, the family must necessarily have rights and duties which are prior to those of the community, and founded more immediately in nature.” (Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html))

“The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family... Yet the excellence of this institution is not everywhere reflected with equal brilliance, since polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love and other disfigurements have an obscuring effect. In addition, married love is too often profaned by excessive self-love, the worship of pleasure and illicit practices against human generation.

The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws, and is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent. Hence by that human act whereby spouses mutually bestow and accept each other a relationship arises which by divine will and in the eyes of society too is a lasting one. For the good of the spouses and their off-springs as well as of society, the existence of the sacred bond no longer depends on human decisions alone. For, God Himself is the author of matrimony, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes.

Thus the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church, and as a participation in that covenant, will manifest to all men Christ's living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church.” (Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*)

“Signs are not lacking of a disturbing degradation of some fundamental values: a mistaken theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses in relation to each other; serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children; the concrete difficulties that the family itself experiences in the transmission of values; the growing number of divorces; the scourge of abortion; the ever more frequent recourse to sterilization; the appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality.

At the root of these negative phenomena there frequently lies a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others, for one's own selfish well-being...Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy. Either one is, in its own proper form, an actuation of the most profound truth of man, of his being ‘created in the image of God.’

Consequently, sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death.” (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html)

“If, from the legal standpoint, marriage between a man and a woman were to be considered just one possible form of marriage, the concept of marriage would undergo a radical transformation, with grave detriment to the common good. By putting homosexual unions on a legal plane analogous to that of marriage and the family, the State acts arbitrarily and in contradiction with its duties.” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20030731_homosexual-unions_en.html)

HOMOSEXUALITY

“We cannot ignore, in this regard, the growing phenomenon of mere de facto unions and the unrelenting public opinion campaigns to gain the dignity of marriage even for unions between persons of the same sex...It is opposed, first of all, by the objective impossibility of making the partnership fruitful through the transmission of life according to the plan inscribed by God in the very structure of the human being. Another obstacle is the absence of the conditions for that interpersonal complementarity between male and female willed by the Creator at both the physical-biological and the eminently psychological levels. It is only in the union of two sexually different persons that the individual can achieve perfection in a synthesis of unity and mutual psychophysical completion.” (John Paul II, *Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19990121_rota-romana_en.html)

“Homosexuals must certainly be treated with understanding and sustained in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulties and their inability to fit into society.” (*Persona Humana*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html)

IMMIGRATION

“The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the *foreigner* in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.

Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2241)

WAR/SELF DEFENSE

“In our generation when men continue to be afflicted by acute hardships and anxieties arising from the ravages of war or the threat of it, the whole human family faces an hour of supreme crisis in its advance toward maturity. Moving gradually together and everywhere more conscious already of its unity, this family cannot accomplish its task of constructing for all men everywhere a world more genuinely human unless each person devotes himself to the cause of peace with renewed vigor...Consequently, as it points out the authentic and noble meaning of peace and condemns the frightfulness of war, the Council wishes passionately to summon Christians to cooperate, under the help of Christ the author of peace, with all men in securing among themselves a peace based on justice and love and in setting up the instruments of peace.

Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice. Peace results from that order structured into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice.” (Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*,

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

“Everyone must sincerely co-operate in the effort to banish fear and the anxious expectation of war from men's minds. But this requires that the fundamental principles upon which peace is based in today's world be replaced by an altogether different one, namely, the realization that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust.” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html)

“Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others. The defense of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm. For this reason, those who legitimately hold authority also have the right to use arms to repel aggressors against the civil community entrusted to their responsibility” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2265)

“The strict conditions for legitimate defense by military force require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time: the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain; all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective; there must be serious prospects of success; the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition. These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the ‘just war’ doctrine. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2309)

EDUCATION

“Parents, moreover, have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive. Government, in consequence, must acknowledge the right of parents to make a genuinely free choice of

schools and of other means of education, and the use of this freedom of choice is not to be made a reason for imposing unjust burdens on parents, whether directly or indirectly.

Besides, the rights of parents are violated, if their children are forced to attend lessons or instructions which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs, or if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all.” (Pope Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae*,

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html)

“Parents have the right to freely choose schools or other means necessary to educate their children in keeping with their convictions. Public authorities must ensure that public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to exercise this right without incurring unjust burdens. Parents should not have to sustain, directly or indirectly, extra charges which would deny or unjustly limit the exercise of this freedom.” (Holy See, *Charter of the Rights of the Family*,

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_19831022_family-rights_en.html)

“The function of the State is subsidiary: its role is to guarantee, protect, promote and supplement. Whenever the State lays claim to an educational monopoly, it oversteps its rights and offends justice. It is parents who have the right to choose the school to which they send their children and the right to set up and support educational centres in accordance with their own beliefs. The State cannot without injustice merely tolerate so-called private schools. Such schools render a public service and therefore have a right to financial assistance.” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*,

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860322_freedom-liberation_en.html)

“Education in love as self-giving is also the indispensable premise for parents called to give their children a clear and delicate sex education. Faced with a culture that largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something common place, since it interprets and lives it in a

reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure, the educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person-body, emotions and soul-and it manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love.

Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the Church reaffirms the law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it cooperates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents.” (John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html)

WATER

“Water plays a central and critical role in all aspects of life – in the national environment, in our economies, in food security, in production, in politics... Respect for life and the dignity of the human person must be the ultimate guiding norm for all development policy, including environmental policy. While never overlooking the need to protect our ecosystems, it is the critical or basic needs of humanity that must be operative in an appropriate prioritisation of water access. Powerful international interests, public and private, must adapt their agendas to serve human needs rather than dominate them...The human person must be the central point of convergence of all issues pertaining to development, the environment and water. The *centrality of the human person* must thus be foremost in any consideration of the issues of water. The first priority of every country and the international community for sustainable water policy should be to provide access to safe water to those who are deprived of such access at present...Water by its very nature cannot be treated as a mere commodity among other commodities. Catholic social thought has always stressed that the defence and preservation of certain common goods, such as the natural and human environments, cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces, since they touch on fundamental human needs which escape market logic.” (Holy See, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Water, an Essential Element for*

Life. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20030322_kyoto-water_en.html)

POVERTY ERADICATION

“Without going into an analysis of figures and statistics, it is sufficient to face squarely the reality of an innumerable multitude of people - children, adults and the elderly - in other words, real and unique human persons, who are suffering under the intolerable burden of poverty. There are many millions who are deprived of hope due to the fact that, in many parts of the world, their situation has noticeably worsened. Before these tragedies of total indigence and need, in which so many of our brothers and sisters are living, it is the Lord Jesus himself who comes to question us (Mt 25:31-46).”

“Looking at all the various sectors - the production and distribution of foodstuffs, hygiene, health and housing, availability of drinking water, working conditions (especially for women), life expectancy and other economic and social indicators - the general picture is a disappointing one, both considered in itself and in relation to the corresponding data of the more developed countries. The word ‘gap’ returns spontaneously to mind.”

“It should be noted that in today's world, among other rights, the right of economic initiative is often suppressed. Yet it is a right which is important not only for the individual but also for the common good. Experience shows us that the denial of this right, or its limitation in the name of an alleged ‘equality’ of everyone in society, diminishes, or in practice absolutely destroys the spirit of initiative, that is to say the creative subjectivity of the citizen. As a consequence, there arises, not so much a true equality as a ‘leveling down.’ In the place of creative initiative there appears passivity, dependence and submission to the bureaucratic apparatus which, as the only ‘ordering’ and ‘decision-making’ body - if not also the ‘owner’- of the entire totality of goods and the means of production, puts everyone in a position of almost absolute dependence, which is similar to the traditional dependence of the worker-proletarian in capitalism. This provokes a sense of frustration or desperation and predisposes people to opt out of national life, impelling many to emigrate and also favoring a form of ‘psychological’ emigration.”

“We should add here that in today's world there are many other forms of poverty. For are there not certain privations or deprivations which deserve this name? The denial or the limitation of human rights - as for example the right to religious freedom, the right to share in the building of society, the freedom to organize and to form unions, or to take initiatives in economic matters - do these not impoverish the human person as much as, if not more than, the deprivation of material goods?” (Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html)

“Rightly then the poor, both in developing countries and in the prosperous and wealthy countries, ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity to work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all. The advancement of the poor constitutes a great opportunity for the moral, cultural and even economic growth of all humanity. Let us look at the poor not as a problem, but as people who can become the principal builders of a new and more human future for everyone.” (Pope John Paul II, *For the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*, January 1, 2000. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121999_xxxiii-world-day-for-peace_en.html)

EUTHANASIA

“There exists in contemporary culture a certain Promethean attitude which leads people to think that they can control life and death by taking the decisions about them into their own hands. What really happens in this case is that the individual is overcome and crushed by a death deprived of any prospect of meaning or hope. We see a tragic expression of all this in the spread of euthanasia-disguised and surreptitious, or practised openly and even legally. As well as for reasons of a misguided pity at the sight of the patient's suffering, euthanasia is sometimes justified by the utilitarian motive of avoiding costs which bring no return and which weigh heavily on society. Thus it is proposed to eliminate malformed babies, the severely handicapped, the disabled, the elderly, especially when they are not self-sufficient,

and the terminally ill. Nor can we remain silent in the face of other more furtive, but no less serious and real, forms of euthanasia.”

“In this context the temptation grows to have recourse to euthanasia, that is, to take control of death and bring it about before its time, "gently" ending one's own life or the life of others. In reality, what might seem logical and humane, when looked at more closely is seen to be senseless and inhumane. Here we are faced with one of the more alarming symptoms of the "culture of death", which is advancing above all in prosperous societies, marked by an attitude of excessive preoccupation with efficiency and which sees the growing number of elderly and disabled people as intolerable and too burdensome. These people are very often isolated by their families and by society, which are organized almost exclusively on the basis of criteria of productive efficiency, according to which a hopelessly impaired life no longer has any value.”

“...euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written word of God, is transmitted by the Church's Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.”

“Even when not motivated by a selfish refusal to be burdened with the life of someone who is suffering, euthanasia must be called a false mercy, and indeed a disturbing "perversion" of mercy. True "compassion" leads to sharing another's pain; it does not kill the person whose suffering we cannot bear. Moreover, the act of euthanasia appears all the more perverse if it is carried out by those, like relatives, who are supposed to treat a family member with patience and love, or by those, such as doctors, who by virtue of their specific profession are supposed to care for the sick person even in the most painful terminal stages.” (Pope John

Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html)

ASSISTED SUICIDE

“To concur with the intention of another person to commit suicide and to help in carrying it out through so-called "assisted suicide" means to cooperate in, and at times to be the actual perpetrator of, an injustice which can never be excused, even if it is requested. In a remarkably relevant passage Saint Augustine writes that "it is never licit to kill another: even if he should wish it, indeed if he request it because, hanging between life and death, he begs for help in freeing the soul struggling against the bonds of the body and longing to be released; nor is it licit even when a sick person is no longer able to live.

The choice of euthanasia becomes more serious when it takes the form of a murder committed by others on a person who has in no way requested it and who has never consented to it. The height of arbitrariness and injustice is reached when certain people, such as physicians or legislators, arrogate to themselves the power to decide who ought to live and who ought to die. Once again we find ourselves before the temptation of Eden: to become like God who ‘knows good and evil’ (cf. Gen 3:5). God alone has the power over life and death: ‘It is I who bring both death and life’ (Dt 32:39; cf. 2 Kg 5:7; 1 Sam 2:6). But he only exercises this power in accordance with a plan of wisdom and love. When man usurps this power, being enslaved by a foolish and selfish way of thinking, he inevitably uses it for injustice and death. Thus the life of the person who is weak is put into the hands of the one who is strong; in society the sense of justice is lost, and mutual trust, the basis of every authentic interpersonal relationship, is undermined at its root.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html)

CLONING

“Human cloning belongs to the eugenics project and is thus subject to all the ethical and juridical observations that have amply condemned it.

Women are radically exploited and reduced to a few of their purely biological functions (providing ova and womb) and research looks to the possibility of constructing artificial wombs, the last step to fabricating human beings in the laboratory.

In the cloning process the basic relationships of the human person are perverted: filiation, consanguinity, kinship, parenthood. A woman can be the twin sister of her mother, lack a biological father and be the daughter of her grandfather. *In vitro* fertilization has already led to the confusion of parentage, but cloning will mean the radical rupture of these bonds.

As in every artificial activity, what occurs in nature is "mimicked" and "imitated", but only at the price of ignoring how man surpasses his biological component, which moreover is reduced to those forms of reproduction that have characterized only the biologically simplest and least evolved organisms.

The idea is fostered that some individuals can have total dominion over the existence of others, to the point of programming their biological identity—selected according to arbitrary or purely utilitarian criteria—which, although not exhausting man's personal identity, which is characterized by the spirit, is a constitutive part of it. This selective concept of man will have, among other things, a heavy cultural fallout beyond the—numerically limited—practice of cloning, since there will be a growing conviction that the value of man and woman does not depend on their personal identity but only on those biological qualities that can be appraised and therefore selected.

Human cloning must also be judged negative with regard to the dignity of the person cloned, who enters the world by virtue of being the "copy" (even if only a biological copy) of another being: this practice paves the way to the clone's radical suffering, for his psychic identity is jeopardized by the real or even by the merely virtual presence of his "other". Nor can we suppose that a conspiracy of silence will prevail, a conspiracy which, as Jonas already noted, would be impossible and equally immoral: since the "clone" was produced because he resembles someone who was "worthwhile" cloning, he will be the object of no less fateful expectations and attention, which will constitute a true and proper attack on his personal subjectivity.

A prohibition of cloning which would be limited to preventing the birth of a cloned child, but which would still permit the cloning of an embryo-foetus, would involve

experimentation on embryos and fetuses and would require their suppression before birth—a cruel, exploitative way of treating human beings.

In any case, such experimentation is immoral because it involves the arbitrary use of the human body (by now decidedly regarded as a machine composed of parts) as a mere research tool. The human body is an integral part of every individual's dignity and personal identity, and it is not permissible to use women as a source of ova for conducting cloning experiments.

Halting the human cloning project is a moral duty which must also be translated into cultural, social and legislative terms. The progress of scientific research is not the same as the rise of scientific despotism, which today seems to be replacing the old ideologies. In a democratic, pluralistic system, the first guarantee of each individual's freedom is established by unconditionally respecting human dignity at every phase of life, regardless of the intellectual or physical abilities one possesses or lacks. In human cloning the necessary condition for any society begins to collapse: that of treating man always and everywhere as an end, as a value, and never as a mere means or simple object.” (Pontificia Academia Pro Vita, *Reflections on Cloning*,

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdlife/documents/rc_pa_acdlife_doc_30091997_clon_en.html)

LABOR / RIGHTS OF WORKERS

“Rights must be religiously respected wherever they exist, and it is the duty of the public authority to prevent and to punish injury, and to protect every one in the possession of his own. Still, when there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and badly off have a claim to especial consideration. The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. And it is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong in the mass of the needy, should be specially cared for and protected by the government.” (Pope Leo XIII,

Rerum Novarum, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html)

“...the Church considers it her task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to help to guide the above-mentioned changes so as to ensure authentic progress by man and society.” (John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, September 14, 1981

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens_en.html)

CONSCIENCE

“This too must be listed among the rights of a human being, to honor God according to the sincere dictates of his own conscience, and therefore the right to practice his religion privately and publicly.” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem In Terris*, 1963)

“Since the right to command is required by the moral order and has its source in God, it follows that, if civil authorities pass laws or command anything opposed to the moral order and consequently contrary to the will of God, neither the laws made nor the authorizations granted can be binding on the consciences of the citizens, since ‘God has more right to be obeyed than men.’ Otherwise, authority breaks down completely and results in shameful abuse. As St. Thomas Aquinas teaches: ‘Human law has the true nature of law only in so far as it corresponds to right reason, and in this respect it is evident that it is derived from the eternal law. In so far as it falls short of right reason, a law is said to be a wicked law; and so, lacking the true nature of law, it is rather a kind of violence.’” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem In Terris*, 1963)

PRISONS

“The State has the twofold responsibility to *discourage* behaviour that is harmful to human rights and the fundamental norms of civil life, and to *repair*, through the penal system, the disorder created by criminal activity. In a *State ruled by law* the power to inflict punishment is

correctly entrusted to the Courts: ‘In defining the proper relationships between the legislative, executive and judicial powers, the Constitutions of modern States guarantee the judicial power the necessary independence in the realm of law.’ (John Paul II, *Address to the Italian Association of Judges*, March 31, 2000)

“Unfortunately, the conditions under which prisoners serve their time do not always foster respect for their dignity; and often, prisons become places where new crimes are committed. Nonetheless, the environment of penal institutions offers a privileged forum for bearing witness once more to Christian concern for social issues: ‘I was ... in prison and you came to me’ (*Mt 25:35-36*).”

Healthcare

“The demands of the common good are dependent on the social conditions of each historical period and are strictly connected to respect for and the integral promotion of the person and his fundamental rights (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1907). These demands concern above all the commitment to peace, the organization of the State's powers, a sound juridical system, the protection of the environment, and the provision of essential services to all, some of which are at the same time human rights: food, housing, work, education and access to culture, transportation, basic health care, the freedom of communication and expression, and the protection of religious freedom.”

(Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 1046-1047)