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Catholic Teaching and a Moral Economy



Tea Party Catholics. That can't be a thing, right?

Tea Party advocates and others who tout extreme libertarian principles claim that government should have little or even no role in addressing our greatest social challenges like poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Tea Party Catholics often use the language of values to argue for a go-it-alone society.

Even a basic understanding of Catholic social teaching, however, shows that a libertarian economic philosophy and a Catholic vision of the common good aren't compatible. Just consider the most recent powerful messages from Pope Francis, who has captured the world's attention by reminding Catholics and other people of good will that we're all in this together.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, "[The Joy of the Gospel](#)," Pope Francis highlights the grave consequences of inequality:

Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system.

Pope Francis is the latest Catholic leader to talk about fair economic practices, but he is hardly the first.

His two immediate predecessors, [Pope Benedict XVI](#) and Pope John Paul II, denounced inequality and warned against making an idol of markets. In fact, back in 1891, Pope Leo XIII released the Church's first social encyclical, [Rerum Novarum](#), which affirmed the rights of workers to organize and called for a more humane capitalism that did not put profits before human dignity.

Closer to home, Msgr. John Ryan worked with U.S. bishops to create a bold proposal in 1919 for progressive reforms that included minimum wages, public housing for workers, labor participation in management decisions, and insurance for the elderly, disabled, and unemployed. His use of Catholic social teaching to shape practical responses to social challenges even helped inspire President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal reforms in the 1930s.

When so much wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, we all suffer. Democracy is weakened. Our politics becomes captive to corporate lobbyists with little regard for the common good. [Data](#) even shows dramatic income inequality is bad for economic growth.

And yet, many Catholic libertarians and the Tea Party faithful seem to care little about extreme inequality that undermines opportunity.

Take, for example, GOP presidential hopeful Rick Santorum, a politician who speaks frequently about his Catholic values.

"I'm for income inequality," the former senator from Pennsylvania told the *Des Moines Register*. "I think some people should make more than other people because some people work harder

*"[S]ome people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. ...Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us."
- Pope Francis*

and have better ideas and take more risks, and they should be rewarded for it. I have no problem with income inequality.”

Sure, hard work and innovation should be rewarded. Capitalism and open economies have created opportunities for shared prosperity. But today, millions struggle to eat while the top 1% have more wealth than they could ever spend. Santorum’s cavalier attitude flies in the face of Catholic teaching and Pope Francis’s warning about an “economy of exclusion and inequality.” His words are even more apt when we consider that the average pay for a top CEO today is 273 times the pay of the average worker! Compare that to 1965, when it was 20 times higher than the average worker.

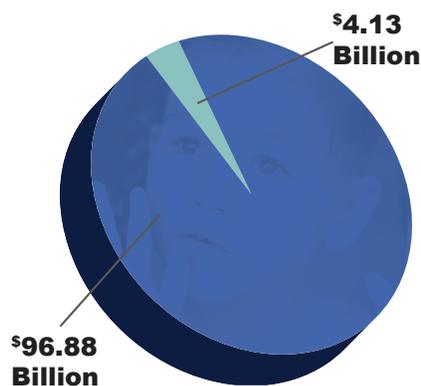
Not surprisingly, those who have a blind faith in the wonders of the free market also hold anti-government views. Consider Rep. Paul Ryan, the 2012 Republican vice presidential nominee and a leader in shaping budget proposals in Congress. Ryan credits the libertarian icon Ayn Rand, who frequently disparaged Christianity and the common good, as the reason why he entered politics. Ryan praised Rand for doing a better job than anyone else in “explaining the morality of capitalism, the morality of individualism.” Ryan has referenced his Catholic faith when talking about solutions for addressing poverty. Notably, though, he leaves out government.

“Through our civic organizations, through our churches, through our charities—through all our different groups where we interact with people as a community—that’s how we advance the common good,” he said.

Ryan is correct that churches and charities are essential. But what would our nation look like if we relied solely on charity? Consider this: Americans donated \$316 billion to charity in 2012. An impressive number for sure.

The federal government, by contrast, spent \$78 billion on food stamps, \$251 billion on healthcare for the poor, \$31 billion on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and \$773 billion on Social Security. Bread for the World demonstrates the disparity clearly:

“A budget that cuts food stamps, that cuts Medicaid, can’t be called a budget that follows Catholic social teaching or the Gospels.”
- Rev. Thomas Reese, SJ



Private vs. Federal Food Assistance

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE **PRIVATE CHARITY**

Private charity comes nowhere close to matching the great need in the US.

Source: <http://www.bread.org/ol/2013/engagement/downloads/churches-and-hunger-fact-sheet.pdf>

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Understanding the Catholic economic vision

Experts on Catholic teaching come to a dramatically different conclusion than Tea Party Catholics.

“Charities and individuals and churches can’t do it all. When charities are already stretched to their limit, Catholic social teaching expects the state to step up and to fill that gap,” Stephen Schneek, a professor at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. [said](#).

A closer look at what the church actually teaches about the role of government, workers’ rights, markets, and taxes shows that our Catholic tradition has a valuable contribution to make when it comes to moral and political challenges today.

In this together

Catholic social teaching rejects a philosophy of radical individualism that often shapes American attitudes. As Catholics, we are called to make sure the common good is served, not simply our own interests. Take a look at how the [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#), published by the Vatican, explains the idea.

The principle of the common good, it says, stems from “the dignity, unity and equality of all people.” It includes “the sum total of social conditions which allow people...to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”

The common good has been threatened in recent decades by rising income inequality, attacks on workers’ rights and unions, and the power of multinational corporations in shaping a culture of consumerism. These trends leave us all vulnerable and also responsible.

Vincent Miller, a theology professor at the University of Dayton, [suggests](#) that, “Few American citizens or politicians, including Catholics, are aware of the Church’s teaching that government is necessary to serve the common good.”

It’s our job as Catholics to make sure we’re informed, and then take action.

Charity or justice? Both.

Poverty threatens the sanctity of life and human dignity.

At least 50 million Americans [live](#) in poverty, and another 5 million are teetering on the edge. These staggering figures would be much worse without a solid safety net. For example, without Social Security, half of all Americans over 65 would live in poverty--an astonishing [figure](#).

“We can no longer tolerate the moral scandal of poverty in our land.”

Catholic bishops in the United States couldn’t have been any clearer when they made this [statement](#). So how should we respond?

Millennials are the most service-oriented generation ever -- spending spring breaks and summers volunteering here at home and around the world -- so it's natural that we immediately think of charity, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters.

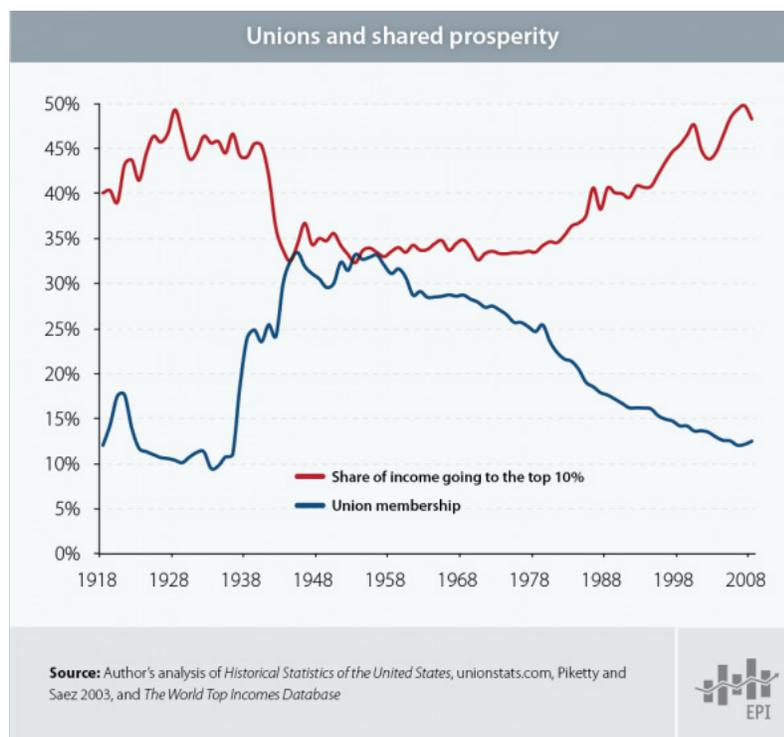
But charitable works are not enough when inequality is at record levels, unemployment is high, and parents working minimum wage jobs cannot lift their families out of poverty.

Saint Augustine, even in the 4th century, recognized this truth. "Charity is no substitute for justice withheld," he wrote.

Charity responds to immediate needs. Justice addresses the root causes of why people need charity. Charity feeds people who are hungry; justice ensures they don't go hungry again. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI describes justice as "the primary way of charity." A Brazilian bishop once remarked: "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a Communist." Catholic teaching [requires](#) us to have a "preferential option for the poor," which means that the basic moral test of society is not how much the stock market grows but how the vulnerable are faring.

Catholic bishops [write](#) that justice "requires action to confront structures of injustice that leave people poor." While the task may seem overwhelming when considering the obstacles in front of us, they remind us that government is "a means to do together what we cannot accomplish on our own."

This means that government has a vital role to play in ensuring that taxes are collected fairly, workers earn a living wage and can freely form a union, and that citizens have a voice in the halls of power.



Unions give workers a voice and help lift up their wages. As union membership declines, inequality goes up. From Pope Leo XIII in 1891 to Pope John Paul II in the 1980s to Pope Francis today, the Catholic social tradition supports the rights of workers to unionize.

Source: <http://www.epi.org/m/?src=http://www.epi.org/files/2012/snapshot-unionmembership.png&w=608>

Shared sacrifice means a fair tax system

Catholic theologians addressed the need for moral budgets in “[On All Our Shoulders](#),” pointing to the “deep cuts to Medicaid, Medicare and food stamps” advocated by some conservative lawmakers.

The scholars note that these budget cuts, which primarily impact the elderly and poor families, are used to give “massive new tax cuts for high earners and corporations.” The anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist, whose allies include hundreds of Republican lawmakers, once [said](#) he wanted to reduce government “to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub.”

Let’s be clear: the Catholic Church rejects these extreme positions on government and taxes.

“The tax system should be continually evaluated in terms of its impact on the poor,” Catholics bishops [wrote](#) in their 1986 pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*. The bishops called for a more progressive tax system “so that those with relatively greater financial resources pay a higher rate of taxation.”

In 2010, Catholic bishops wrote a letter to Congress noting that “too often the weak and vulnerable are not heard in the tax debate,” and called for lawmakers to preserve the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit that help many low-income Americans avoid falling below the poverty line. “Poverty is increasing in our nation,” the bishops wrote. “How you structure taxes can make this moral challenge better or worse.” Because the anti-tax crusaders have been active in shaping the narrative for decades, Americans believe they are taxed too highly. In fact, tax revenues collected by the government are now at the [lowest levels](#) since 1950.

Rev. Fred Kammer, S.J., of Loyola University in New Orleans and a former president of Catholic Charities USA, [notes](#) that the U.S. is one of the lowest-taxed nations in the developed world. Many states, particularly in the South, rely on regressive tax structures that shift the burden to the working class. You can think of it as the anti-Robin Hood -- robbing the poor to give to the rich. These tax policies contribute to a “widening of the gap between rich and poor to its current morally grotesque levels,” Kammer wrote.

It’s hard to believe, but the top 1% of income earners more than doubled their share of the nation’s earnings over the past 30 years, according to the nonpartisan [Congressional Budget Office](#). This happened in part because a greater tax burden has fallen on the working poor and struggling families.

Even billionaires such as [Warren Buffett](#) and Bill Gates are speaking out against the absurdity of a tax system that often expects more from taxi drivers and secretaries than the richest people on the planet. In a vivid example of how powerful corporations are protected at the expense of working families, the New York Times recently reported:

Come tax time, JPMorgan Chase will be able to write off the \$1.5 billion in debt relief it must

“While the income of a minority is increasing exponentially, that of the majority is crumbling. This imbalance results from ideologies which uphold the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation, and thus deny the right of control to States, which are themselves charged with providing for the common good.”
- Pope Francis

give homeowners to satisfy the terms of a recent settlement. But homeowners who receive the help will have to treat it as taxable income, resulting in whopping tax bills for many families who have just lost their homes or only narrowly managed to keep them.

In fact, it is not uncommon for wealthy corporations to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. Consider [General Electric](#). In 2010, it was one of many corporations to use special tax loopholes to pay zero taxes, despite the fact that it had \$14 billion in profits that year.

The Catholic Church believes that the government has a duty to levy taxes and collect funds to assist those in need. After all, the church [teaches](#) that every individual, regardless of his or her circumstances, is entitled to “life and to those things that are necessary to the proper development of life, including faith and family, work and education, housing and health care.”

Some Catholics didn’t get the memo.

Rep. Paul Ryan’s budget proposals, which Tea Party libertarians have cheered, would give tax breaks to the wealthy while shifting the tax burden to struggling families.

According to the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#), Ryan’s plans “would significantly worsen inequality and increase poverty and hardship” while raising taxes on the poorest Americans.

It’s not just Republicans, though. Democratic leaders, including Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, have at times been willing to accept deals with Congressional leaders that further shift the tax burden to the middle class and working poor.

Catholics need to stand up for just taxation regardless of politics or who’s in power.

The budget is a moral document

How and where we spend money speaks to our priorities. Whether it’s on beer, bills, savings, or charity, the way we use resources makes a statement. The same is true at the national and state level.

Our budgets show what we, as a people, value.

Recent efforts to gut our social safety net while giving generous tax breaks to a privileged few suggest we’re not all that concerned with protecting the common good.

In a [letter](#) to Congress in March 2012, Bishops Stephen Blaire and Richard Pates reminded lawmakers that “a just spending bill cannot rely on disproportionate cuts in essential services to poor and vulnerable persons.” The government, they wrote, has a “responsibility to promote the common good of all, especially ordinary workers and families who struggle to live in dignity.”

It often seems like many elected officials on Capitol Hill aren’t listening. Consider efforts to slash the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which helps low-income people afford groceries for their families. In fact, Congress passed an \$8.7 billion cut to the SNAP program, which means that 850,000 households will now lose an average of \$90 per month in food assistance.

Shifting spending priorities from things like nutrition assistance and education to tax breaks for

*“I think of how many, and not just young people, are unemployed, many times due to a purely economic conception of society, which seeks selfish profit, beyond the parameters of social justice.”
- Pope Francis*

the wealthy harms students, too. Rising tuition at both public and private colleges and universities means students now [average](#) more than \$29,000 in debt upon graduation.

This kind of debt can take away the freedom of young adults to move forward in their lives, causing them to postpone the purchase of a home or even marriage. One of Pope Francis's key advisors, Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston, laments this situation:

"If you have a \$150,000 debt when you graduate law school, are you going to marry a girl that has a \$130,000 debt and start off your marriage with over a quarter-million dollars' debt? So people are postponing marriage – are postponing a decision to go into the seminary or religious life – because they're saddled under this tremendous debt which former generations didn't have," he [said](#).

Pope Francis is helping to shine a spotlight on predatory lending, [saying](#) that when "a family doesn't have enough to eat because it has to pay" lenders, that it "isn't Christian" and "it's not human!"

His words apply both to payday lenders who prey on the poor and students who must turn to the \$150-billion private loan [industry](#) to pay for education. Both are subject to impossibly high interest rates come billing time.

Free market madness

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI warned that the free market isn't capable of addressing all our social ills. "Economic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of commercial logic," he wrote in his encyclical [Caritas in Veritate](#). And he challenged us all to address "the scandal of glaring inequalities."

Pope John Paul II was also a bold critic of unregulated capitalism who warned against the "idolatry of the market" and insisted that wealth was subject to "a social mortgage," meaning that financial resources should not be concentrated in the hands of a few at the expense of the many.

Not surprisingly, the Church's traditional teaching on economic justice is not accepted by free-market fundamentalists. Catholic libertarians are especially unhappy with Pope Francis's challenges to their ideology.

Take, for example, the Acton Institute, an advocacy group led by a Catholic priest, Fr. Robert Sirico. Acton describes itself as "dedicated to the study of free-market economics informed by religious faith and moral absolutes." Capitalism is the "economic component of the natural order of liberty," Fr. Sirico [writes](#). "Everywhere it has really been tried it has meant creativity, growth [and] abundance."

Sure, capitalism has spread growth in many places. But the real question is who benefits and who is left behind. In today's global market, abundance is increasingly what the wealthiest few experience while much of humanity is left with scarcity of food, water and access to basic health care.

As Lew Daly, a prominent thinker who has written about economics from a Catholic perspective, [said](#) in a recent interview: “Capitalism is not just ‘broken’; it is inherently out of control, in a late phase of development, because a libertarian creed with mistaken precepts about human nature has infected political institutions, economic elites and even the church.”

Even the president of the conservative American Enterprise Institute acknowledged that free market absolutists have gone too far. “Free enterprise does not mean shredding the social safety net,” Arthur Brooks wrote in a *New York Times* [op-ed](#).

But the Acton Institute’s research director, Samuel Gregg – the author of “Tea Party Catholic: The Catholic Case for Limited Government, a Free Economy, and Human Flourishing” – defends the supremacy of the market. He [writes](#) that Pope Francis’s warnings about a blind faith in the autonomy of markets are “rather questionable” and “less than convincing.”

Pope Francis would not be surprised by those who defend free-market orthodoxy and challenge a Catholic vision for the common good. As he writes in the [Joy of the Gospel](#):

“Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape.”

“Not to share one’s goods with the poor is to rob them and to deprive them of life. It is not our goods that we possess, but theirs.”

- St. John Chrysostom

Attacking the poor

[The National Journal](#) recently took note of the ugly stereotypes that frequently pollute conversations about poverty: “Despite ample and objective statistics showing that most welfare recipients are white families with children, the stereotype of the welfare queen persists.”

Rep. Paul Ryan [sums up](#) the Tea Party view of the social safety net like this: “a hammock that lulls able-bodied people into lives of dependency and complacency.”

In fact, the safety net has [helped](#) millions avoid falling into deep poverty. Abuse of government assistance is quite [low](#), with only [3%](#) of SNAP benefits going to ineligible households. And just 2% of welfare recipients test positive for drug use. While Ryan talks about “hammocks” and stigmatizes the poor as lazy and dependent, Pope Francis offers a stark contrast in thinking.

“Some simply content themselves with blaming the poor and the poorer countries themselves for their troubles; indulging in unwarranted generalizations,” he [said](#).

According to the [Urban Institute](#), the odds are stacked against the poor because wages haven’t

grown, they receive fewer benefits, and they face more housing and health challenges.

Why is there so much poverty? It's partly because the minimum wage today is much lower than it was 40 years ago when you account for inflation and the rising cost of living.

The federal minimum wage needs a boost.

Work shouldn't leave you poor

No matter how hard individuals are willing to work, too many people are trapped in poverty or one bill payment away from financial disaster. But Catholic leaders are not content with the status quo.

Bishop Robert McElroy of the Archdiocese of San Francisco **writes** that poverty "is a structural sin rooted in the very life of society and government."

Miami's Archbishop Thomas Wenski argues that wages should be sufficient to support a family and honor the dignity of work.

"The current state and federal minimum wages do not meet that standard," he **wrote** in a Florida newspaper. "Those who toil to harvest our produce, to cook and serve our food, and to clean our buildings, are our brothers and sisters – and they deserve to enjoy the same dignity in work that others enjoy."

Catholic support for a living wage, again, isn't new. Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI both defined living wages as enough for a single worker to support a family. In 1940, U.S. Catholic bishops published a "Statement on the Church and Social Order," in which they **wrote** that a living wage must be enough to "provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter together with essential spiritual and cultural needs."

U.S. Catholic bishops mince no words when they **write** that all people have rights "to productive work, to just wages." Work, they say, "should not leave people poor, but should provide wages sufficient to achieve a standard of living that is in keeping with human dignity." In fact, **raising the federal minimum wage to just \$10.10 per hour** – a proposal in Congress right now - would lift 5 million Americans out of poverty. Why can't we achieve this?



The Value of Minimum Wage, adjusted for inflation, has steadily declined for decades, leaving many workers in poverty.⁶

"If this is gonna be a Christian nation that doesn't help the poor, either we've got to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we've got to acknowledge that He commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition, and then admit that we just don't want to do it."

- Stephen Colbert

Conclusion

Catholic social teaching spans hundreds of years and thousands of documents. The bottom line, though, is actually pretty simple. As Jesus says, whatever we do for the least among us, we do for him.

Zoom out a little bit. When we fail to pay a living wage or unions are attacked, our church speaks out because that undermines human dignity and Catholic values. How we choose to collect tax revenue, where we spend it, and who benefits demonstrate our values. As inequality soars and a younger generation of Americans find paths of opportunity blocked, we are faced with stark choices.

Do we continue to accept proposals that widen the gap between rich and poor, hurt struggling families and undermine workers? Or do we inform ourselves about Catholic social thought and then apply it to public debates at the local, state, and national levels?

Do we become advocates for a living wage so that people who work hard aren't trapped in poverty?

Do we urge lawmakers to strengthen effective social safety nets that protect seniors, children, and struggling families?

Do we join church leaders and social justice advocates in calling for fair taxation so the burden is lighter on the working poor and middle class?

Our country's future depends on the choices we make. The Catholic Church has some ideas for us. How can you make a difference?

First, learn more about what the Catholic Church teaches about economic justice. Reading this guide is a great first step, but it's just the beginning. There's a list of further references to help you become even better informed.

Next, become a citizen advocate. Call and email your lawmakers. Speak up for public policies that serve the common good and protect the vulnerable. Use the Catholic social tradition as a way to get engaged.

Finally, share this resource with others who know in their gut that we have to do something about what Pope Francis calls "an economy of exclusion and inequality" but don't know where to turn.

We're in this together. Each of us has a part to play. Join us.

Catholic Social Teaching and the Economy Quick Facts

Here are four principles that sum up the kind of moral economy Catholics support.

- 1. A *pro-family economy*.** This means raising the minimum wage so it can support a family, protecting the rights of workers who want to join a union, and ensuring affordable childcare and paid sick days. All of these policies help strengthen families, build communities, and honor the dignity of work.
- 2. A *social safety net that protects the vulnerable*.** Catholic teaching argues for protecting the safety net, not shredding it. Seniors should not have to fear continual cuts and privatization schemes that would undermine Social Security and Medicare (two of the most effective anti-poverty initiatives ever). Food assistance initiatives like SNAP, as well as unemployment insurance and Medicaid, help some of the most vulnerable Americans get a fair shot at a

better life, and must be protected.

3. ***Moral budgets and a tax system where everyone pays their fair share.*** Federal and state budgets not only require a strong safety net, but also include investments that create economic opportunities: world-class schools, infrastructure projects that create good jobs, and quality health care. The first step to a fair tax system is to close tax loopholes and giveaways for big corporations and the top 1%. Instead, we need progressive taxation that ensures the wealthy pay their fair share and the burden isn't as heavy on the working poor and struggling families.
4. ***End the idolatry of markets and immoral corporate practices.*** In the words of Pope Francis, this means that we need say “no to a financial system which rules rather than serves.” As Catholics, we are called to bring our values to the public square. We must be passionate advocates for those on the margins. We must hold politicians and business leaders accountable when they put ideology, profit and partisanship before human dignity. The bottom line is that some things are always morally unacceptable: treating workers as objects by outsourcing jobs or paying poverty wages; predatory lending that traps people in a cycle of debt; reckless gambling on Wall Street that sparked a global financial crisis and forced millions of Americans into poverty.

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[Catholic Campaign for Human Development](#)

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[The Jesuit Conference](#)

[Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice](#)

[Interfaith Worker Justice](#)

[NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby](#)

[Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good](#)

[Catholics United](#)

[Franciscan Action Network](#)

[Sisters of Mercy of the Americas](#)

[Leadership Conference of Women Religious](#)

[Conference of Major Superiors of Men](#)

[Pax Christi USA](#)

READ MORE

Want to see for yourself what the Church teaches? Here are some great reads.

[“The Joy of the Gospel,” Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis, 2013](#)

[“Charity in Truth,” papal encyclical by Pope Benedict XVI, 2009](#)

[“Populorum Progressio,” papal encyclical by Pope Paul VI, 1967](#)

[“Rerum Novarum,” papal encyclical by Pope Leo XIII, 1891](#)

[“On All Our Shoulders,” a call to protect the common good, 2012](#)

[“Saving Subsidiarity,” by Vincent Miller in America magazine, 2012](#)

[“A Place at the Table,” from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002](#)

[“The Living Wage and Catholic Social Teaching” in America magazine](#)

[“Federal Budget Choices Must Protect Poor, Vulnerable People, Says U.S. Bishops’ Conference” from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012](#)

[“A Church for the Poor,” by Bishop Robert McElroy in America magazine, 2013](#)

[“Address wage gap between upper, worker and lower classes,” by Archbishop Thomas Wenski in South Florida Sun-Sentinel, 2014](#)

[“The Living Wage and Catholic Social Teaching,” by William Quigley in America magazine, 2006](#)

[Michael Sean Winters on the Acton Institute in National Catholic Reporter, 2014.](#)

[Selected quotes from Pope Francis compiled by Catholic Relief Services](#)

SPREAD THE WORD

Want to have an impact? A simple way to make a difference is to start a conversation with your friends.

- ***Tweet us up!*** Social media is an easy way to share ideas and articles, and to spread the word about www.InThisTogether.org.
- ***Talk about it*** – You have a lot of influence on your friends, so be a conversation starter. What do they think the Church says about the economy?
- ***Start a reading group*** – Meet monthly or weekly and read a different short article each time. This guide is one place to start, or choose another reading from here. It’s a great way to share ideas, discuss what’s happening in the news and politics, and talk about the kind of justice we seek as Catholics.