**Catholic Social Teaching and Global Solidarity: An Introduction  
Office of Catechesis, Archdiocese of Indianapolis**

*“In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.* *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.” (1 John 4:10-11)*

This document provides a first glance at Catholic Social Teaching with a focus on Global Solidarity and resources for further study. It explores three movements:

* Call
* Encounter
* Mission

By reflecting on these three areas, those in ministry may come to understand the beauty of God’s love poured out and the Christian response of love through service to others, rooted in the Catholic faith.

**The Experience of *Call***

Service requires giving of self, breaking beyond comfort zones, and an on-going commitment that takes time, energy, and motivation to fulfill. Those who choose to serve and minister to others will testify that service for its own sake can quickly become burdensome and void of meaning. At its most fruitful and life-giving, service is the response to a greater call which motivates, inspires, and strengthens the work that is done and those who give and receive it.

The call that compels women and men to give their time, talent and treasure for the needy in all circumstances is two-fold: In the words of Jesus,

*“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39)*

*Caritas* or charity - the love of God - is the source of all ministries and all service. The love of the Father moves His people to recognize His presence in all men and women because they are made in God's image and likeness.

It is in baptism that the call to ministry finds its roots. The Sacrament which makes each person a son or daughter of God binds the faithful to one another and establishes a very real solidarity between persons, in all their complexity and diversity. In the waters of baptism, the faithful are adopted into the family of God, becoming His sons and daughters.

St. John Paul II explains:

*“Jesus refers to this same unity in the image of the vine and the branches: "I am the vine, you the branches" (John 15:5), an image that sheds light not only on the deep intimacy of the disciples with Jesus but on the necessity of a vital communion of the disciples with each other: all are branches of a single vine.” (Apostolic Exhortation: The Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the World, No. 12)*

This baptismal call to love inspires the faithful to the ministry of service. Overwhelmed by God's bountiful love, women and men seek to respond by taking action and going forth to love others, as Jesus Christ models in the Gospels. Filled with the zeal of His love and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, the people of God go forth to the highways and byways, neighborhoods and work places, and every corner of society to serve all His children.

**The Experience of *Encounter***

It is important to recognize, however, that this zeal for the good work of the Gospel is a response to a call from God; a call that is received through an encounter with God. Without encounter, there can be no call and no purpose for the mission. Missionaries - that is, all baptized Christians - must open their hearts to encounter the living God as much as they go forth to proclaim liberty to captives and healing to the wounded. In God's plan for His people, both charitable action and prayerful reflection are necessary. This prayerful encounter with the Lord begins notably with the Sacrament of Baptism and continues throughout a lifetime of relationship with Jesus Christ.

By developing a life of prayer, hearts are opened to hear the small whispering wind of God's voice, within the scriptures and within the hearts of the faithful, calling all to love of God and neighbor. Nourished and strengthened in the sacraments, the solidarity among all men and women is strengthened as they become more fully the mystical body of Christ, particularly through participation in the celebration of the Eucharist. As Christ nourishes the faithful through His body and blood, the Holy Spirit continues to inspire the Church that Jesus Christ established by guiding the faithful through the teaching of the Magisterium, particularly through key encyclicals and writings meant to stir the fervor of the faithful and explain the doctrine that enlightens the Christian mission to go forth into all the world and proclaim the good news.

**The Experience of *Mission***

Pope Francis describes mission at the service of others in this way:

*“Loving others is a spiritual force drawing us to union with God; indeed, one who does not love others ‘walks in darkness’ (1 John 2:11), ‘remains in death’ (1 John 3:14) and ‘does not know God’ (1 John 4:8). Benedict XVI has said that ‘closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God,’ and that love is, in the end, the only light which ‘can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working.’ When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord’s greatest and most beautiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. If we want to advance in the spiritual life, then, we must constantly be missionaries.” (Apostolic Exhortation: Joy of the Gospel, no. 272)*

The work of charity exists not only to provide for the physical and material needs of God's children, but precisely as His children to embrace them in the love of the Father. Christians have an obligation to feed the spiritually poor with heavenly sustenance even as their other needs are provided for. It is for the purpose of this missionary activity that the Catholic Church has compiled its transforming Catholic Social Teaching.

**What is Catholic Social Teaching?**

Catholic Social Teaching is simply part of Catholic moral teaching. It is addressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) and applied as needed in various complementary documents like papal encyclicals, diocesan pastoral statements, episcopal conference guidelines etc.

In an address given on April 16, 2014, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin explained:

*“If you want the Catholic social doctrine in a nutshell… it’s to be of service of the human person, to serve the dignity of individuals, and, at the same time, preserve solidarity and the common good.” (https://www.archindy.org/criterion/local/2014/05-09/marian.html)*

Catholic Social Teaching is not one large document, but rather, a school of thought and a series of documents containing the official doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church as it pertains to social issues. The most complete documentation of Catholic Social Teaching – drawing on the Bible, the Catechism, and the ongoing guidance of the Magisterium - is the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. (See “Where Can I Learn More?” for more information on these resources).

**What is Global Solidarity?**

Global solidarity, properly understood, is a natural part of Catholic life. Just as the Faith is universal and Jesus commissions us to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20) so each Catholic must be aware of worldwide events, cultures and the status carrying out this commission from Jesus within reason. Archbishop Tobin has identified a sense of global Catholicism as important for missionary disciples living our faith today.

**Catholic Social Teaching, Global Solidarity, and Social Action**

In all cases, the organic nature of our Catholic faith must be appreciated and celebrated. Catholic Social Teaching and global solidarity help unite various efforts focused on the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional wellbeing of each human person from womb to tomb. Global solidarity ministries flow from a life of full communion with the Church, connected to and supported by all her basic doctrinal and moral teaching.

**Where Can I Learn More About Catholic Social Teaching and Global Solidarity?**

**Primary Sources:**

1. **Sacred Scripture  
   *New American Bible, Revised Ed.***

***www.usccb.org/bible***

Some verses to get you started include:

* + **Matthew 22:34-40** “When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them [a scholar of the law] - tested him by asking, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it:You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”
  + **1 Peter 3:15** “…but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.”
  + **John 13:13-15** “You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am.If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him.”
  + **1 John 4:20** “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”
  + **Matthew 5:1-12** The Beatitudes
  + **Matthew 5:13-16** “Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”

1. **“United States Catholic Catechism for Adults”   
   *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops***

***http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catechism/us-catholic-catechism-for-adults/***

* + "The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of 'friendship' or 'social charity', is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood" (CCC, no. 1939).   This involves a love for all peoples that transcends national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences.   It respects the needs of others and the common good in an interdependent world.

1. **“Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church”  
   *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace***

**http://www.vatican.va/roman\_curia/pontifical\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\_pc\_justpeace\_doc\_20060526\_compendio-dott-soc\_en.html**

Includes the following:

* + God’s Plan of Love for Humanity
  + The Church’s Mission and Social Doctrine
  + The Human Person and Human Rights
  + Principles of the Church’s Social Doctrine
  + The Family, The Vital Cell of Society
  + Human Work
  + Economic Life
  + The International Community
  + Safeguarding the Environment
  + The Promotion of Peace
  + Social Doctrine and Ecclesial Action
  + For a Civilization of Love

**Wisdom from Our Popes:**

1. **“The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium” Apostolic Exhortation   
   *Pope Francis***

**http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\_esortazione-ap\_20131124\_evangelii-gaudium.html**

* + “An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily life; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice.”

1. **“God Is Love: Deus Caritas Est” Encyclical Letter  
   *Pope Benedict XVI***

**http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\_ben-xvi\_enc\_20051225\_deus-caritas-est.html**

* + “The unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbor is emphasized. One is so closely connected to the other that to say that we love God becomes a lie if we are closed to our neighbor or hate him altogether. Saint John’s words should rather be interpreted to mean that love of neighbor is a path that leads to the encounter with God, and that closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God.”

1. **“On the Hundredth Anniversary Of *Rerum Novarum*: Centesimus Annus” Encyclical Letter  
   *St. John Paul II***

**http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\_jp-ii\_enc\_01051991\_centesimus-annus.html**

* + “Thus the Church's *social teaching*is itself a valid *instrument of evangelization.*As such, it proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself. In this light, and only in this light, does it concern itself with everything else: the human rights of the individual, and in particular of the "working class", the family and education, the duties of the State, the ordering of national and international society, economic life, culture, war and peace, and respect for life from the moment of conception until death.”

**From the U.S. Catholic Bishops:**

1. **“Called to Global Solidarity: International Challenges for U.S. Parishes”  
   *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops***
   * “In many ways our community of faith practices solidarity every day. Missionaries preach the Gospel and celebrate the Eucharist. Catholic relief workers feed the hungry and promote development. Our prayers, donations, and volunteers assist the Church in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. However, these international institutions, programs, and collections have not yet awakened a true sense of solidarity among many Catholics in the United States. …The demands of solidarity require not another program, but greater awareness and integration into the ongoing life of the parish. The Church’s universal character can be better reflected in how every parish prays, educates, serves, and acts. A parish reaching beyond its own members and beyond national boundaries is a truly “catholic” parish. An important role for the parish is to challenge and encourage every believer to greater global solidarity.”

**In Conclusion**

Catholic Social Teaching and Global Solidarity, in the context of the overall moral and doctrinal teaching of the Church, offer Christians the framework to go and be the hands and feet of Christ, following His example and responding in love to God who loved us first by loving our neighbor as our self.

***For more information on Catholic Social Teaching contact the Office of Catechesis, Archdiocese of Indianapolis by visiting*** [***www.archindy.org***](http://www.archindy.org)***.***