



# RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Catholic Social Teaching Series

# BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

- Every person has individual human rights BUT also responsibilities toward society and oneself
  - Focusing on Rights and not Responsibilities leads to ENTITLEMENT
    - **What does the word “Entitlement” mean to you?**
  - Focusing on Responsibilities and not Rights can lead to denial of dignity
- Fundamental Human Rights
  - True rights do not come from society or consensus...
    - But being made in the image of God
      - **Do you feel like you are made in the image of God? If so, How?**
- Basic Human Rights are
  - Universal – does not matter who you are!
  - Inviolable – should never be violated
    - **What are some ways human rights are being violated today?**
  - Inalienable – they cannot be taken away because they are from God

# FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACCORDING TO JOH XXIII IN *PACEM IN TERRIS*

- Right to Life – to all the basics of life
- Moral and Cultural Rights – we all deserve respect
- Right to Worship God (Tell story of Maury Middleton going overseas)
- Right to choose freely one's state of life
- Economic rights – we should all have opportunity to work
- Right of Meeting and Association
- Right to Emigrate and Immigrate (Go over what is on USCCB website)
  - First Principle: People have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families
  - Second Principle: A country has the right to regulate its borders and to control immigration
  - Third Principle: A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy
- Political Rights

# RESPONSIBILITIES IN CIVIL SOCIETY

- Civil Society – term for all communities outside of the family and Church
  - Government should...
    - Defend, police, fire, essential services
  - We should...
    - Vote, join associations, clubs
- Being part of a civil society means being informed
  - **What are ways to do this and what are some of the obstacles/pitfalls?**

# SUBSIDIARITY – A HIERARCHY OF RESPONSIBILITY IN CIVIL SOCIETY

- Individual Responsibility
- Family Responsibility
- The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and groups
- Pope Pius XI described contradicting the principle of subsidiarity as a “grave evil”
  - Leads to denial of human dignity
  - Person becomes a number (what are some examples of this?)
- People should take responsibility for their own welfare
- Discourages attempts to maximize or centralize the power of the state
- Government should free people to exercise their own responsibility
- There are different stratifications of societies that have specific purposes (What might be some examples of this?)

# THE GOVERNMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

- Government exists primarily to promote the welfare, growth and development of individuals – should not be based on duty but based on the virtue of charity (**what does this mean to you?**)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment – Honor your Father and Mother applies to legitimate authorities – in other words, we are called to respect them
- Authority is necessary in any social structure – God's authority is present in just government and laws (**Why is this necessary?**)
- Legitimate Authority
  - Seeks the common good for the group concerned and if it employs morally licit means to attain it (CCC 1903)
  - We do not have an obligation to follow unjust law – Thomas Aquinas would argue a law is not truly a law if it goes against reason formed by natural law

# THE GOVERNMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

- Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church gives guidelines on true authority
  - Guided by moral law
  - Recognizes, respects, and promotes essential human and moral values
  - Enacts just laws
- Since all authority ultimately comes from God, and necessary authority is subject to divine law
- We are ultimately called to be a citizen of Heaven
- Divine Law – also known as eternal law – source is the Trinity and can be natural or revealed
- Natural Law – inscribed in the human heart and known by human reason
- Revealed Law – found in Old Testament and teaching of Christ (What are some examples?)

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND FAMILY

- Family helps government by passing on procreation, education, culture, and values
- Society and the State exists for the family – not the other way around
- Government should protect family from outside **abuses (What are some laws that maybe violate this?)**
- Families have the responsibility to show their great dignity and value to the world.
- Families have a duty to thrive



# CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING OF GOVERNMENT

- Church is NOT a political society nor bound to the government
- Primary purpose of church is spiritual affairs
- Primary purpose of government is temporal affairs
- Often the Church and government should cooperate to allow men and women to flourish
- In a democratic system, those in power are always held accountable to the people
- Those elected should always serve the common good
- Responsible authority requires putting power at the true service of others
- The 8<sup>th</sup> commandment calls all serving society to truthfulness – You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

# CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING OF GOVERNMENT

- Totalitarianism - A society in which the state exercises total control of the life and conduct of the citizens – rejects human dignity and thus the common good
- Relativism – claims there are no absolute, universal truths (How is this dangerous?)

# POLITICS AND CONSCIENCE

- Conscience – judgment of reason
- Cardinal John Henry Newman stated “conscience has rights, because it has duties – in other words, we have freedom, but we are called to use it correctly
- Our conscience is conformed to Truth to the same level it is informed (**What does this mean and why is it important?**)
- Conscientious Objection – refusal to not follow unjust laws
- John Paul II wrote – In a world without truth, freedom loses its foundation and man is exposed to the violence of passion and to manipulation, both open and hidden.

# POLITICS AND CONSCIENCE

- CCC 2243 states resistance to political authority can be legitimate if all the following criteria are met:
  - There is certain, grave, and prolonged violation of fundamental rights
  - All other means of redress have been exhausted
  - Such resistance will not provoke worse disorders
  - There is well-founded hope of success
  - It is impossible reasonable to foresee any better solution
- We are all called to participation – we are called to transform the world with Christ