

HELPING KIDS AND TEENS
EMBRACE THE FULLNESS OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

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A U.S. Church Divided

- The Situation
 - 2016 Pew Research Center poll shows 54% of self-identified Catholics saying abortion should be legal in all or most cases.
 - 2014 Pew Research Center poll shows a large number of Catholics in disagreement with the US Bishops over immigration reform (with 47% saying a rise in deportations is “a good thing,” and 20% saying undocumented immigrants should not be allowed to stay in the US even if they meet certain requirements)

A Nation (and U.S. Church) Divided

Possible Causes and subsequent needs

- Identification with political party or group more than faith; As a group, US Adults have little attachment to their faith.
- A 2015 study by the Pew Research Center indicates that 42% of adults in the United States have left the faith of their childhood.
 - **Need for attention to the process of attachment**
- Secularization of culture/compartmentalization of faith (I wouldn't *personally...*)
- Lack of understanding of Catholic teaching
 - **Need for formation**
 - What do Catholics believe?
 - How do we live it out?
 - How do we articulate it?

Attachment to the faith

- Sherry Weddell points out that the lack of *attachment* to one's childhood faith is particularly significant among Catholics. She cites a Pew study that showed only 30% of Americans who were raised Catholic are still attending Mass at least once a month.
- The “God Gene” and the development of attachment and relationship
 - The “God Gene” (VMAT2: Dean Hamer vs. Carl Zimmer)
 - Attachment: An alternative explanation
 - Preschool years: An introduction to Christ and the Church

Some other reasons to focus on kids and teens

- It's (in large part at least) the audience we have
- They are in the midst of a more general process of conscience development; it's easier to learn it correctly the first time
- The psychological principle of inoculation is quite relevant to this time of life
- Past efforts at changing social consensus by focusing on youth have been effective
 - It can work for us
 - It can work against us

Why Catholic Social Teaching can Resonate Especially with Teens

- They are beginning to gain more capacity for empathy
- They have a strong sense of justice, though this may be perceived differently for kids 6-12, versus teens and older.
- They are idealistic, not cynical

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Younger Children: Because God made each person, we should be kind and fair to everyone. We should try to protect others, because every life is important to God.

Teens: God created each one of us, and every person is unique and valuable to God. We should treat each person with dignity, from the unborn to the elderly, from people of different races to people with special needs to the prisoner on death row.

Maternity Shelter Supplies Drive/Angel Tree

Pro-Life Legislative Advocacy

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Younger Children: God gives us families and communities because he knows it would not be good for us to live our lives alone. In families and parish communities, we work together to take care of one another and to become the people God made us to be.

Teens: Because we are created in the image of God who is a communion of Persons, we have a responsibility to build a sense of communion with our families, our parish, and our local community.

Family Gathered Sessions

Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person

- Young Children: Because God made every person, everyone has rights and responsibilities. Rights are freedoms or things every person needs and should have. Responsibilities are our duties, or the things we must do.
- Teens: Because God made every person, each of us has rights and responsibilities. Rights are freedoms every person should have. Responsibilities are our duties, the things we must do.

Group and family discussions of rights and responsibilities

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

- Younger Children: Our Church teaches that we should have special love and care for those who are poor and put their needs first. When people need food, drink, clothing, housing, or medical care, or when they are lonely, we should try extra hard to help.
- Teens: We should treat people in need the same way we would treat Jesus himself. We should give special priority to people who are hungry, thirsty, homeless or alone.

Real-life application

- Act it out
- Service activities and projects

A Legacy of Giving

Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

- Younger Children: Jobs allow people to work together with God and his creation. Work is part of God's plan for people, and everyone who is able to work should work, either in the home or in a job outside the home.
- Teens: All adults have a right and responsibility to work. Everyone should have access to meaningful work, inside or outside the home. Workers should be treated fairly by their employers.

Activity for older kids and teens

Design your own business

- Who would you hire?
- How would you decide what to pay them?

- What rights would your workers have?
- How would company decisions be made?

Solidarity of the Human Family

- Younger Children: People around the world are different in many ways. But one way we are all alike is that God made us. We are one human family.
- Teens: Our world includes people of different nations, races, cultures, beliefs and economic levels. But God created each one of us. We are one human family.

Activity

- Invite participants to share with the class some ways they have been peacemakers at school, at home, or in their neighborhoods.
- Work together to identify nations or parts of the world where wars are currently going on.
- Brainstorm alternative ways these places could reach their goals without war or conflict.

World Peace and Other 4th Grade Achievements

Care for God's Creation

- Young Children: God created the whole world. Our Church teaches that God gave the plants and animals for the good of all people. We need to work to take care of the plants and animals and the places where they live, so everyone can enjoy them now and in the future.
- Teens: God made people the stewards of Creation. That means humans have a special responsibility to care for everything God made.

How Families Can Live Laudato Si – (Holly Taylor Coolman)

- A thanksgiving prayer before meals
- Passing food to others before taking one's own share
- Family celebrations that focus more on togetherness than expensive presents
- Cooking at home with locally grown food
- Careful use of electricity and gasoline in the home and family travel
- Expressing trust in God's care in the midst of family trials
- Looking for ways to serve the needy together

Saints and Social Justice (Vogt)

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

- *Bl. Teresa of Calcutta*
- *St. Peter Claver*

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

- *St. Frances of Rome*
- *Bl. Anne-Marie Javouhey*

Rights and Responsibilities

- *St. Roque Gonzalez*
- *St. Thomas More*

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

- *Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati*
- *St. Vincent de Paul*

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

- *St. Benedict of Nursia*
- *Servant of God Dorothy Day*

Solidarity

- *St. John Paul II*
- *St. Damien of Molokai*

Care for Creation

- *St. Giles*
- *St. Isidore the Farmer*

Addendum

- Francis of Assisi
- Clare of Assisi

Five Ways to Help Kids and Teens Embrace the Fullness of Catholic Social Teaching

- Start young.
- Use developmentally-appropriate language.
- Encourage kids to brainstorm and dream.
- Role-play and practice acting with justice and mercy.
- Provide positive role models.