



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

Diocese of Salt Lake City

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

Solidarity

Pope John Paul II referred to the virtue of solidarity as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* no. 38) In America we find, for the most part, a desire to help others in need but we also see indifference to the needs outside our small circle. Many persons in America carry too far the idea that charity begins at home and sometimes develop an isolationist attitude in the face of international needs and responsibilities.

Indifference or denial of the global issues is common; especially in the area of working conditions, health concerns, the plight of women and children, and extreme poverty. Our materialism does not promote a need for moderation for the good of others. Uncritical pursuit of wealth and consumption does not take into account the millions of persons around the world who may be in desperation from day to day. When one delves into the needs of the world community it becomes overwhelming; the scale of the problem can paralyze individual action. This should not effect our efforts because every act of charity, no matter how insignificant, makes the world a better place. At times, American arrogance gets in the way of reaching out to others beyond our borders. No one person or country should look down on another. Our blessings of freedom and material comforts often make us complacent.

Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions. Our world is interdependent and becoming more so as communication becomes easier. If we believe that we are our neighbor’s keeper, we are challenged to put our beliefs into actions.

Part of our school curriculum is to expose our students to each of the Catholic social teachings. What are some of the ways we promote global consciousness? Every school has charity projects and encourages our students to serve others. Many have introduced the concept of promoting fair trade which opens up the area of working conditions around the world. Our schools have sponsored public events which raise global consciousness. Bringing world events into the classroom exposes the students to something other than their day to day lives in America.

As a result of classroom exposure, many of our children have learned to share what they have with less fortunate persons around the world. The recent collection during Catholic Schools’ Week is one example. Children would not have been so ready to share if they had not been taught the needs of the projects for which they donated. Catholic social teaching also begins at home. We are aware that parents had to be a part of the Catholic Schools’ Week projects to make them successful. Families are challenged to be in solidarity with the human family, even though it takes us out of our comfort zone.

In our prayers throughout each day, teachers bring world conditions before the minds and hearts of the young. Maybe, each family could pray for a particular country or world issue which would bring even more awareness to your children. Our world cries out for a human connectedness.