

Session 9



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

BUILDING A
CIVILIZATION OF LOVE



SYMBOLON
THE CATHOLIC FAITH EXPLAINED

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Building a Civilization of Love

INTRODUCTION

Washing the feet was the kind of task a slave would perform for his master. Yet this is what Jesus did for his disciples the night before he died at the Last Supper. He rose from the table, poured water into a basin, and began to wash his disciples' feet.

Jesus, the Divine Son of God, lowered himself, taking on the role of a slave, to humbly serve his disciples. In doing so, he also wanted to teach them a crucial lesson, a new commandment: "Love one another; even as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15).

Ever since the time of the Apostles, Christians have been striving to build a community that is shaped by Christ's command to "love one another" as he loved us. Indeed, already in the early Church, the Gospel message touched on all aspects of human life—marriage and family, education, work, culture, serving the poor, caring for widows, and protecting human life. And it inspired Christians not just to seek their own interests, but to serve each other in all these areas. Through a rich 2,000-year history of striving to live out Christ's call to "wash one another's feet," the Church has also reflected on how to build a just society in which all human beings can flourish. That reflection has been embodied in various principles and guidelines from the Church known as Catholic social teaching.

THIS SESSION WILL COVER:

- **How the Church’s social teaching helps us love one another as Christ loves us**
- **How we are called to imitate Jesus in serving the people right around us: in our families, workplaces, churches, and local communities**
- **How serving and caring for others, especially the poor, is a key characteristic of being a disciple of Christ**
- **How some of the greatest poverty in the world is not material poverty, but a poverty of love or what Pope Francis calls a “poverty of relationships”**
- **The ways that Catholic social teaching affects our lives today and helps us to apply the Gospel to the many social issues we face**
- **The call to responsibility encounter and care for the poor and the most vulnerable around us**



OPENING PRAYER

Father and maker of all,
you adorn all creation
with splendor and beauty,
and fashion human lives
in your image and likeness.
Awaken in every heart
reverence for the work of your hands,
and renew among your people
a readiness to nurture and sustain
your precious gift of life.

Grant this through our Lord
Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in
the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.
Amen.

—Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers at www.usccb.org

“To love God and neighbor is not something abstract, but profoundly concrete: it means seeing in every person and face of the Lord to be served, to serve him concretely. And you are, dear brothers and sisters, in the face of Jesus.”

—Pope Francis



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From the very beginning, the Church cared for the poor, the sick, and the abandoned. The Church created the education system and the health care system, and has fed, clothed, and housed more people than any other group or institution in history.

How does this statement embody Catholic social teaching: “To know Jesus is to want to make him known”?

2. St. Katharine Drexel witnessed with her life that joy is found in what you give and not in what you have. Why do you think true joy is found in generosity and service?
3. How is “encounter” at the heart of social justice?

CALL TO CONVERSION

After spending a few moments in prayer, write down your thoughts and reflections on the following questions:

#1 Reflect on the following quote from Saint Teresa of Calcutta:

“We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked, and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.”

- In what ways does this statement speak to you?

#2 What poverty do you see around you? Who do you know who is unwanted, unloved, or uncared for? How do you treat the members of your own family? Do you know someone who is going through a very difficult time in their lives?

#3 What is one concrete action you can take this week to begin to meet the needs of those God has placed in your life?





CLOSING PRAYER

Come, O Holy Spirit!

Come, open us to the wonder, beauty,
and dignity of the diversity found in each culture,
in each face, and in each experience we have of the other among us.

Come, fill us with generosity as we are challenged to let go and allow
others to share with us the goods and beauty of earth.

Come, heal the divisions that keep us from seeing the face of Christ in all
men, women, and children.

Come, free us to stand with and for those who must leave their own lands
in order to find work, security, and welcome in a new land, one that has
enough to share.

Come, bring us understanding, inspiration, wisdom, and the courage
needed to embrace change and stay on the journey.

Come, O Holy Spirit,
Show us the way.

— www.usccb.org



SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Here is a verse from the Bible that you can memorize and reflect on this week to help you apply today's session to your daily life:



“Open your mouth, judge justly, defend the needy and the poor!”

—Proverbs 31:9

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT BUILDING A CIVILIZATION OF LOVE?

TO ENRICH YOUR CATHOLIC FAITH, VISIT formed.org

Where you'll find helpful videos, audio presentations, ebooks, and feature films from the most trustworthy presenters in the Catholic world.

For Further Reading:

For more in-depth reading about building a civilization of love, see the following *Catechism* passages:

- *Respect for the Human Person: CCC 1928–1933*
- *Solidarity as Part of Social Justice: CCC 1939–1942*
- *Love of Neighbor: CCC 1878*
- *Human Person at the Center of Every Social Organization: CCC 1892*

Other Resources:

- *The United States Catechism for Adults, Chapter 24*
- *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (available online from www.vatican.va)
- *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- *Encyclical Letter, Caritas in Veritate* by Pope Benedict XVI

