

ALIVE IN CHRIST

GRADE 8

The Church

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Our Sunday Visitor

The Dignity of All

Let Us Pray

Leader: God of all that is loving and just, challenge us, humble us, and call us to reach out with open hands and hearts to our brothers and sisters.

“LORD, what is man that you take notice of him;
the son of man, that you think of him?” **Psalm 144:3**

All: LORD, remind us that you are in every one of us.

Scripture

“The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.” **Acts 4:32-35**



Have you ever thought...

- How are we supposed to take care of each other?
- What can you do to show others the dignity they are due?

Getting Started

In this chapter, you will begin to comprehend what the Catholic Church means when we speak about “the common good,” explore the role of the Church in today’s society, and realize that Jesus is the core of how we live and show our faith.

Catholic Faith Words

- common good
- New Commandment
- solidarity
- personal sin
- social sin

In the chart below, describe a situation when you thought someone was treated with dignity in each setting.



At School

With Friends



At Home

In Your Community

DESCRIBE AND EXPLAIN

The Good of Everyone In the space provided, reflect on the following questions.

Describe a time when you saw someone make a sacrifice so someone else could have a need met.

When have you experienced personal fulfillment?

Why does everyone deserve the opportunity to seek and reach fulfillment?



The Common Good

What is the common good, and how is it achieved?

Preschool teaches children a basic lesson: the need to share. One child cannot hoard all the toys. Everyone shares. They have to “play nice,” or chaos erupts.

Humans are social beings. Each individual must take others into account. We live with others. As Catholics, however, we know this is more than just a matter of cooperation. It is more than just the notion of “you work with me, and I’ll work with you.”

Society functions best when each person respects everyone else as “another self,” as real people like himself or herself, with real needs, hopes, and dreams: In other words, not seeing others as a means to

Catholic Faith Words

common good the good of everyone; the Christian principle that all people, either in groups or as individuals, have the opportunities to reach their fulfillment more fully and easily

get something for one’s self, but as people with the same basic rights that need to be respected and met.

The Basis of a Just Society

The right kind of society is one that remains at service to people on every level. Societies that are organized in this way promote the **common good**, which means that all people, either in groups or as individuals, are given the opportunities to reach their fulfillment more fully and easily.

The common good is made possible by three essential elements:

- respect for the person and promotion of the fundamental rights that flow from human dignity
- social well-being and prosperity for everyone
- security and order as well as global peace

Not one single part of society is exempt from the common good. Society itself owes to every group, organization, and association the conditions that promote their own



The Common Good

In his papal writing and in a 1979 speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations, Pope Saint John Paul II specified what is meant by the common good.

What are the fundamental rights of persons?

- the right to life (from conception to natural death)
- the right to live in a united family
- the right to develop oneself in a moral environment
- the right to develop one's intelligence
- the right to seek and know the truth
- the right to share in work that wisely uses Earth's resources
- the right to support one's family
- the right to establish a family
- the right to religious freedom
- _____

What does prosperity mean?

- general development of spiritual goods so all may benefit
- general development of physical goods so all may benefit
- _____

How can peace and security be achieved?

- the absence of war, along with:
- effective and fruitful justice between individuals and nations and
- the practice of love between individuals and nations
- _____

Write an example that expands on one item in each of these three categories.



effectiveness and liveliness according to the common good. When society does this, it promotes social justice.

Every group, organization, and association must try to improve human life and the common good. Likewise, those in political authority cannot exercise leadership beyond the boundaries of these three essential elements that define the common good.

IDENTIFY

In small groups, choose a basic right and discuss how it is being met. Identify some ways that people your age could promote that right.



Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, greets people waiting for groceries at an interfaith Feeding Our Neighbors event.

Living as a Catholic Today

Why does the Church comment on political authority and structures?

The Church is concerned with the way in which society is organized and the way in which it functions because everyone and everything in this world is oriented—or should be oriented—toward God.

The Church speaks out about social and economic matters, because sometimes groups or individuals undermine our human rights. The Church takes action to help society function properly.

In striving for the common good, the Church teaches about family and marriage as the basic “unit” of society, the value of human work and workers’ rights, economic institutions in service to people, political authority, the international community, safeguarding the environment, and promoting peace.

Each of us has a responsibility to respect the rights of others and to make sure our actions do not make it hard for people to have their needs met. We are called to accept Gospel values and the Church that teaches them. We say “yes” to things that make the common good possible. We work within society to promote virtue in all aspects of life.

This means that sometimes we will have to say “no” to practices in society that do not correspond to the common good, that go against the Gospel and Church teaching. The standard by which we judge our “yes” or “no” is the good of every human person. What truly helps people in their physical needs by giving them access to food, shelter, and basic human rights? What helps people become closer to one another and God? What deprives people of their human rights and dignity? What brings them down and prevents them from becoming closer to God?

- **What are some things that you can say “yes” to in society?**
- **What are some things that you should say “no” to in society because they do not promote the dignity of the person?**

Society

The structure and character of society should be geared toward love. Jesus says: “This is my commandment: love one another as I love you” (**John 15:12**). His **New Commandment** is not meant just for individuals, but is also to be followed by groups and organizations, and even by nations in how they deal with their citizens and with other nations.

Political authority and governments are not higher than God. Their authority is legitimate when they are committed to the common good and use morally good actions to lead and govern. It is the responsibility of citizens to work with the authorities to build up a society based on truth, justice, freedom, and solidarity. Members of society have the right to information (such as news) based on the values of truth, justice, and freedom. We all have to be careful in the ways we use the media to communicate.

Solidarity means that we stand with and are related to people who are deprived of their human rights. We don't just help from afar those who are poor or oppressed; we get to know them and their situations.

Sometimes, citizens must disobey the immoral directives of civil authorities and follow their consciences to uphold truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom.

Global peace and security is one of the three elements of the common good. So

the Church teaches that everything possible must be done to avoid war. The impact and result of war is devastating for the entire human race, and especially harms the poor, because it diverts precious resources that could be used to make their lives better.

Entering into war as a last resort does not relieve a country or its armed forces from following national laws and the moral law. For example, targeting innocent civilians or harming an enemy soldier who has surrendered goes against the moral law.

The highest compliment we could pay to society is the same that we would pay to an individual: love. Each of us can take action to build society according to Jesus' command.

Catholic Faith Words

New Commandment Jesus' command for his disciples to love one another as he has loved us

solidarity a Christian principle that motivates believers to share their spiritual gifts as well as their material ones

RESEARCH

What are some ways that a government does or does not promote the common good through laws, programs and organizations, and policies? Record three ways here, and then explain to a classmate how each does or does not reflect Jesus' command to love one another as he has loved us.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The Significance of One

How do the actions of some affect the whole group?

We can't underestimate the power of one. Building a just, loving world—contributing to the common good—starts with a single person, Jesus Christ. Like a stone that creates ever outward ripples in a pond, Jesus, through the continuing action of the Church, creates ripples in our world and society.

Justice, love, and peace are furthered by the specific, concrete actions of each individual. One small step within our own homes and in our neighborhoods, towns, and counties can have a real effect on the world. If every person waited for someone else to contribute to the common good, nothing good would happen. The good from each person's action to promote justice, peace,

and love is combined to have a greater and greater influence on the world.

The same is true when we turn from God. Our sins do not damage just ourselves and our relationship with God. **Personal sin** wounds our human nature—who we are, and how we relate beyond ourselves—and therefore it injures human solidarity.

A personal act of discrimination against someone who is of a different skin color ends up wounding the common good. An individual act of bullying by one classmate against another will end up wounding the common good of the whole school.

Why? All sins are social, even thoughts or actions that seem to go no further than one's self, because we are social in nature. The same is true of our virtues, because what strengthens or makes each of us personally, individually better does not remain isolated. By our human nature, we are social.

Therefore, **social sin**, the sum of personal sins that then become part of society—like discrimination and prejudice—can only be combated by an accumulation of virtue, that is, many just, peaceful, and loving actions by many individuals.



Catholic Faith Words

personal sin a deliberate thought, word, deed, or omission that violates the law of God

social sin a term that refers to the sinful social structures that result from personal sin and that lead to social conditions that do not reflect or promote the New Commandment

Pope Francis has said, “The Son of God became incarnate in the souls of men to instill the feeling of brotherhood. All are brothers and all children of God.” The Church condemns all forms of social and cultural discrimination as incompatible with

God’s design. Each person is created in the image of God and is gifted with dignity equal to all other humans. That equality—guaranteed by the Creator—requires our heartfelt efforts to reduce sinful social and economic inequalities.

NAME

How often do you hear or make the statement, “It’s not my problem!”? Name two social sins that might change if we stopped saying “It’s not my problem.”

Then explain how you would go about making this change if you could. Tell how your plan would benefit the common good and promote the human dignity of people in your community or around the world.



IN SUMMARY Catholics Believe

Because God created us with equal human dignity, we are required to work for the common good so that all people have what they need and can reach their fulfillment more fully and easily.

- The common good comes about in a society when the fundamental rights of the person are met, social well-being of all people is the goal, and there is security and peace.
- The Church works to make sure that public and political authority acts within the truth, justice, freedom, and solidarity. Each and every member of the Church can do this by making wise decisions based upon the human dignity of the person.
- Our individual actions to promote Catholic Social Teaching, peace, and love begin close to home. We can make a difference.

Our Catholic Life

The Catholic Church is active all over the world in charitable outreach missions that promote the **human dignity** of all. Go online to research outreach efforts that help people in poorer countries with better living conditions or more healthful diets. After investigating their activities, you may want to persuade your family members, friends, or classmates to contribute to these outreach efforts or become involved in some other way. Research the following Catholic organizations:

- Catholic Relief Services
- Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
- Catholic Near East Welfare Association



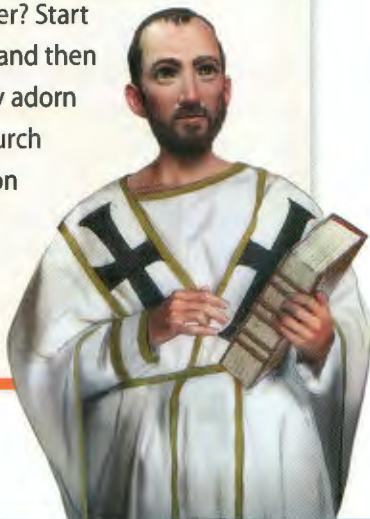
> Which organization's work interests you most? How could you help?

People of Faith

Saint John Chrysostom, 347–407

Saint John Chrysostom is one of the most important early Church fathers. He is best known for his writing and homilies on the Bible. He spoke in words that all could understand, but his teachings were so profound, he was given the title "chrysostomos," which means "golden mouthed" in English. John was particularly concerned with taking care of the poor. He wrote: "What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well." The Church celebrates his feast day on **September 13**.

For more, go to aliveinchrist.osv.com



IDENTIFY

Make a point this week to find out about local and global political issues and needs, and what might be needed from you. For example, you might set aside part of your money from your allowance or jobs and donate to people in need in your neighborhood, school, or town, or clean out your closet and give away unnecessary clothes. List some of your ideas on the lines below:



A Prayer for Peace

Leader: God, you made Pope Paul VI a bold champion of peace and justice for our world. He understood so well that every single human being has a God-given dignity. Each person should be treated with loving respect and justice. We still remember his wise words, “If you want peace, work for justice.” Let’s pray his prayer for peace.

Reader 1: Lord, God of peace, who has created man, the object of your kindness, to be close to you in glory, we bless you and we thank you because you have sent us your beloved Son, Jesus, the source of all peace, the bond of true friendship.

Reader 2: We thank you for the desire, the efforts, which your spirit of peace has roused in our day: to replace hatred with love, shyness with understanding, unconcern with care. Open yet more our hearts to the needs of all our brothers and sisters, so that we may be better able to build a true peace.

Reader 3: Remember, Father of mercy, all who are in pain, who suffer and die in the cause of a more friendly world.

For people of every race, of every tongue—may your Kingdom come: your Kingdom of justice, of peace, of love; and may the Earth be filled with your glory.

All: Amen.

Adapted from a prayer by Pope Paul VI

Leader: Let’s now conclude our prayer by praying the prayer Jesus gave us for the Kingdom—the Our Father.

All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

 *Sing or play “Justice Shall Flourish”*

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A Work with Words Circle the letter of the choice that best completes the sentence.

- Societies organized to promote the ___ give opportunities to all people to reach their fulfillment more fully and easily.
 - common good
 - justice system
 - global peace
 - Theological Virtues
- The ___ of people include(s) the right to life, to a moral environment, to a united family, and to religious freedom.
 - Theological Virtues
 - fundamental rights
 - common good
 - fundamental values
- The standard by which the Church judges "yes" or "no" to social practices is the good of every ___.
 - liturgy
 - Tradition
 - human person
 - social sin
- ___ mean(s) that we stand with and are related to people who are deprived of their human rights.
 - Common good
 - Justice
 - Solidarity
 - Fortitude
- ___ is the effect of personal sins over a period of time that affect society.
 - Social sin
 - Common sin
 - Discrimination
 - Prejudice

B Check Understanding Indicate whether the following statements are true or false. Then rewrite false statements to make them true.

- Human dignity and global peace are essential to the common good. **True/False**

- Pope Saint John Paul II founded many of his writings in the area of human rights. **True/False**

- Three essential elements to promote the common good are respect for fundamental rights, prosperity, and security for some. **True/False**

- Citizens must obey the directives of civil authorities unless the directives are immoral. **True/False**

- Personal sin does not wound our human nature and therefore cannot contribute to social sin. **True/False**

C Make Connections On a separate sheet of paper, write a response to the question: "Justice, love, and peace are furthered by the specific, concrete actions of each individual." What specific, concrete actions can you take to promote the common good?