

Introduction

**Our commitment to the Catholic social mission
must be rooted in and strengthened by our spiritual lives.
In our relationship with God we experience
the conversion of heart that is necessary
to truly love one another as God has loved us. ¹**

The *Leader's Guide to Sharing Catholic Social Teaching*, published by the United States Catholic Conference in 2000, reminds us that : “The key is to look at the social meaning of symbols and texts, not just at their personal meanings. Given our individualistic culture, this is a challenge.”

One of the graces in the liturgical movement coming out of the Second Vatican Council was to see more clearly the communal character of the sacraments. The sacraments are a celebration of the community—not something that is normally done in private. They are a celebration for the nourishment of the community. It is in the renewal of the communal aspect of our sacramental life, that we find a powerful challenge to our social life and the possibility to receive the grace to put our faith into practice more powerfully.

**In a global culture driven by excessive individualism, our tradition
proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. . . .
The Catholic tradition teaches that human beings grow and
achieve fulfillment in community. . . .
While public debate in our nation is often divided between those
who focus on personal responsibility and those who focus on social
responsibilities, our tradition insists that both are necessary.²**

A Pre-note: Do not force your justice concerns into the liturgy. One does not need to do violence to the liturgy in order to acknowledge our social teaching or in order to be empowered into action on behalf of justice. A healthy celebration of the sacraments supports social ministry. Our sacraments are meant to be communal celebrations and to empower us into action. The following reflections are not an invitation to make every sacramental celebration into a rally against the death penalty or a reflection on the moral issues around world trade and globalization or a spelling out of right to life issues or a call for an increase in the minimum wage. Rather, these thoughts are presented to promote awareness—an awareness of the social values imbedded in our liturgical practice when it is at its best—an awareness of the larger implications that flow from the story of Jesus and the living practice of Christ among us. Our desire is to nurture awareness, not a political ideology. As Jesus says: “The truth will set you free.”

¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, 1998, <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/contents.htm>

² Ibid.



CONFIRMATION AND CST

Liturgical Practice	Comment	Connection to Catholic Social Teaching	Implications
Usually done by a Bishop	The ministry of the Bishop connects us with the bigger church – the church beyond our individual local community.	Catholic Social Teaching challenges us to look beyond our little world or our personal private spirituality to the bigger world. We are invited to be concerned with the common good and to act out of the Principle of Solidarity.	Our Church is a global church. Our world is a global world. John Paul II reminds us “Today political solidarity requires going beyond single nations or a single block of nations, to a consideration on a properly continental and world level.” ¹
Preparation for the sacrament and the value of reflection, service and community in this preparation	The sacrament is not just a “magic event.” Preparation is in community with others. This preparation is not just an intellectual preparation. It involves work in service of others (especially the poor) both inside and outside the community. It involves prayer and reflection on life and the situation of the world.	Catholic Social Teaching involves a concern for the common good, a concern that grows out of a real contact with those in need, especially the poor.	Adult Catholics are concerned with more than their own little world or with the particular issues of their family. Adult Catholics learn to pray and to reflect on the events of the world. Adult Catholics learn to respond to the needs of the world with charity and also with work for justice.
Delegation of the Spirit	The gifts of the Spirit belong not only to the hierarchy or to a few in the church. The gifts are shared with the whole community of believers.	In Catholic Social Teaching the principle of solidarity is in dialogue with the principle of subsidiarity.	Individual Catholics are challenged to take action on their own to make the social teaching real and effective. It is not all done by the hierarchy.
Anointing with Oil	In Old Testament times, only kings and priests were anointed. Now, since the time of Christ, we are all anointed into the body of Christ.	This anointing affirms the dignity of the person being confirmed. The person shares this dignity and proclaims this dignity to the world.	Confirmation challenges us to treat all men, women, and children of the world with the dignity that they possess. The same applies to all of creation (stewardship).

¹Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html

A charity that loves and serves the person is never able to be separated from justice. Each in its own way demands the full, effective acknowledgment of the rights of the individual, to which society is ordered in all its structures and institutions.¹

Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions in an interdependent world.²

With this spiritual “unction,” Christians can repeat in an individual way the words of Jesus: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19, Is. 61:1-2).³

We believe in the triune God whose very nature is communal and social. God the Father sends his only Son Jesus Christ and shares the Holy Spirit as his gift of love. God reveals himself to us as one who is not alone, but rather as one who is relational, one who is Trinity. Therefore, we who are made in God’s image share this communal, social nature. We are called to reach out and to build relationships of love and justice.⁴

¹Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html

²United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, 1998, <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/contents.htm>

³Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html

⁴United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, 1998, <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/contents.htm>

Questions for Reflection

How has this study guide expanded your ideas about the implications of Confirmation?

Brainstorm ways in which you can creatively weave Catholic Social Teaching into your parish’s celebrations of Confirmation.