

# Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic social teaching is part of the Catholic intellectual and moral tradition rooted in the Bible and developed through history. Modern Catholic social teaching finds its origin in Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which addressed the conditions of workers and the moral economic order in the industrialized world. Since that time, a number of popes, bishops, and councils of bishops have written documents responding to the social issues of the day. These documents, along with applications and reflections from practitioners and scholars, make up the broader Catholic social tradition. The University of St. Thomas embraces Catholic social teaching and actively participates in Catholic social tradition.

## THE DIGNITY OF PERSONS

Respect for the dignity of persons is the cornerstone of the moral life. It is one of the "Seven Convictions" of the University of St. Thomas and a principle of Catholic Social Teaching. Encountering and responding to the dignity in others is central to being a morally responsible leader who thinks critically, acts wisely, and works skillfully to advance the common good. In other words, it is part of being a "Tommie."

### TOMMIES ENCOUNTER THE DIGNITY OF OTHERS

***The Catholic Church teaches:*** Dignity demands that we "feel personally affected by the injustices and violations of human rights" and are "moved by the suffering of others." We "see" others, particularly the poor and marginalized as "neighbors" and "sharers in life" and we "hear the cry of the poor." "No one can remain insensitive to the inequalities that persist in the world." We "never tire of working for a more just world, marked by greater solidarity."

***What this means:*** Dignity calls us to an active and relational engagement in the well-being of others. We are moved by compassion, solidarity, and social friendship. We open ourselves up to the experience of the other and we allow ourselves to be open to the other. We see the particular identities of persons through which their sacredness shines forth. We seek mutuality through dialogue. We seek understanding as we care. In our attitudes and actions, we encounter the dignity of others.

### TOMMIES RESPECT THE DIGNITY OF OTHERS

***The Catholic Church teaches:*** "Human life is sacred and the dignity of the person is the foundation for a moral society." "Dignity is identical in each one of us" and is a "gift from God." "We all have the same nature, origin, calling, and destiny." "Each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God's creative work." Because of dignity, there is a "unity and equality of all people." Blindness to human dignity is a cause of racism and prejudice.

***What this means:*** We value persons and their ability to direct their own

