

# Catholic Social Teaching and Healthcare: Advancing the Relationship

Mark Repenshek, PhD  
Columbia-St. Mary's, Milwaukee, WI

John Paul Slosar, PhD  
Ascension Health, St. Louis, MO

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Setting the Context...

[E]very discourse bears within itself the anonymous and repressed actuality of highly particular arrangements of power and knowledge...above all, our discourses exclude those others who might disrupt the established hierarchies or challenge the prevailing hegemony of power.

And yet the voices of the others multiply...the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized—all those considered "nonpersons" by the powerful and declared by the great prophets to be God's own privileged ones. All the victims of our discourses and our history have begun to discover their own discourses in ways that our discourse finds difficult to hear, much less listen to. Their voices can seem strident and uncivil—in a word, other. And they are. But only by beginning to listen to those other voices may we also begin to hear the otherness within our own discourse and within ourselves. What we might then begin to hear, above our own chatter, are possibilities we have never dared to dream.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Outline

- Historical Overview
- Key Principles
- Issues
- Application
- Discussion/Q&A

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Historical Overview

- Leo XIII, 1891, "On the Condition of Work" (*Rerum novarum*)
  - Industrial Revolution/Scientific Advancement/Nationalism in the context of widespread poverty, unsafe and exploitive work conditions
  - Revival of "Social Catholicism;" Corporative model of society to address: Just distribution of wealth, basic human rights, right to unionize
  - Central Tenet of CST: Human Dignity as endowed (*imago dei*)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Historical Overview

- Pius XI, 1931, "Reconstruction of the Social Order" (*Quadragesimo Anno*)
  - Great Depression, Fascism and Communism
  - Religious intolerance in Soviet Union and Anticlerical movements in Mexico and Spain
  - Reinforced property rights and collective bargaining
  - Central Tenets of CST: Social Dimension of Justice and principle of subsidiarity

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Historical Overview

- John XXIII, 1961, Christianity and Social Progress (*Mater et magistra*)
  - Soviet Expansion, Cold War, Self-determination of Nations, Increasing political participation; social awareness about the interdependency of the modern world
  - Stronger connection between Human Dignity and Common Good; Definition of Common Good
  - Central Tenet of CST: The person is not the subject of economic and social life, but the purpose of it.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Historical Overview

- October 11, 1962 Opening of Vatican Council II
  - Central Tenets of CST:
    - Emphasis on Natural Law to an emphasis on Sacred Scripture in relationship/dialogue with existential reality
    - Classicist worldview to a Historical Consciousness
    - Naïve Realism to a Critical Realism
    - From Pyramidal Ecclesiology to Collegial Ecclesiology
  - *Gaudium et spes*: to bring the Church into dialogue with the rest of the world (70 drafts).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Historical Overview

- John XXIII, 1963, "Peace on Earth" (*Pacem in terris*)
  - Cuban Missile Crisis; Berlin Wall; Vatican II: *Gaudium et spes*
  - First encyclical addressed to "all [persons] of good will," role of individuals, society and government, "enumerates the most complete and systematic list of human rights in the modern Catholic tradition."
  - Central Tenet of CST: Constitutive elements of human rights *with* corresponding duties

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Historical Overview

- Paul VI, 1967, The Development of Peoples (*Popularum progressio*)
  - Relationship between human dignity and human flourishing (development)
  - Central Tenets of CST: Principles of human solidarity, social justice and universal charity
- Paul VI, 1971, A Call to Action (*Octogesima adveniens*)
  - Human dignity and its relationship to an aspiration to equality and an aspiration to participation
  - Central Tenet of CST: preferential treatment of, or option for, the poor.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Historical Overview

- World Synod of Bishops, 1971, *Justice in the World*
  - Central Tenet of CST: Justice demands breaking down unjust social structures on the basis of the principle of participation
- John Paul II, 1981, “On Human Work” (*Laborem exercens*)
  - 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “On the Condition of Work,” high unemployment, exploitation of migrant workers
  - Objective and Subjective critique of capitalism where rights of property are subordinate to common use; transcendent significance of work
  - Central Tenet of CST: Economic systems should be evaluated according to the impact they have on workers, instead of the impact they have on production or capital.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Historical Overview

- John Paul II, 1987, The Social Concern of the Church (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*)
  - Stewardship understood within the subjective critique of capitalism; private property as a ‘social mortgage’
  - Central Tenet of CST: Universal destination of goods.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Historical Overview

- JP II, 1991, “The Hundredth Year” (Centesimus annus)
  - Collapse of communism; 1<sup>st</sup> Gulf War; fall of Berlin Wall; Tiananmen Square Massacre
  - Fundamental error of socialism with continued critique of capitalism; work is spiritual; primary purpose of unions is to form community
  - Central Tenet of CST: Obligation of justice not to allow fundamental human needs to go unmet *and* not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Key Principles

- Dignity of the Human Person
  - Endowed moral worth based in *Imago Dei*
  - Physically & spiritually integrated beings
  - Relational/Social Interdependence
  - Establishes absolute negative obligations and conditional positive obligations
    - Respect for Persons & Basic Human Rights
    - “Voice for the Voiceless”
    - Promote the Common Good

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Key Principles

- Common Good
  - Sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby [all] are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection.
  - Includes food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, leisure, education, meaningful work & security in old age
  - Three Basic Features: Respect for Persons; Social Welfare; Peace and Security
  - New ways of respecting human dignity can lead to new social conditions that define the common good

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Key Principles

- Subsidiarity
  - Decisions should be made at the most appropriate level
  - Those affected by a decision have a right to participate in the decision-making (Principle of Participation)
  - A higher authority rightly intervenes only when necessary for securing the rights of all or for securing some aspect of the common good

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Key Principles

- Justice

- Simple Justice: giving to each what each is due in accord with human dignity
- Commutative Justice: what is owed between individuals as a matter of agreement/contract
- Contributive Justice: what individuals owe to society
- Distributive Justice: what society owes to individuals, in proportion to individual need & societal resources
- Biblical Justice: what is owed to the least well-off

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Key Principles

- Preferential Option for the Poor

- As those with the greatest need, the poor have a special claim on society and its resources
- Priority for the least well-off re: resource allocation
- The poor must be our first, but not our only, concern
- Effect on poor considered first, then on everyone else
- Special attention given to those who are marginalized by society and are therefore especially vulnerable
- Driven by human dignity and justice

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Key Principles

- Stewardship

- Presumes God's Dominion over creation
- Creation as gift
- Humanity shares in this dominion in a limited way (co-creators)
- Responsibility to use resources in ways that
  - Cultivate individual & communal well-being
  - Respect and secure the gifts of creation for future generations
  - Account for justice, equity & basic human rights

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Labor Relations/Work Environment\*
- Socially Just Wage & Benefits\*
- Socially Responsible Investing\*
- Provider Partnerships
- Outsourcing & Offshore Arrangements
- Vendor Relations
- Healthcare as a Social Good (Access & Disparities)
- Disaster Preparedness Planning in Community

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Labor Relations/Work Environment
  - Persons are more than the sum of their production
  - Work is primarily spiritual/transcendent
  - All rights carry corresponding responsibilities
  - Everyone has a right to have a voice in the workplace
  - Individuals have a right to the fruits of their labor
  - Workers have a right to form unions, *when necessary to secure individual rights and promote human dignity*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Labor Relations/Work Environment
  - Promote the significance of work
  - Be based upon mutual trust, commitment & respect
  - Promote diversity, equal opp. & non-discrimination
  - Encourage participative decision-making
  - Include fair and consistent supervisory practices
  - Be safe, healthy & productive
  - Provide for personal & professional growth
  - Support a reasonable work/life balance
  - Provide competitive & just compensation

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Socially Just Living Wage & Benefits

Central Norms:

- The inviolable Dignity of the Human Person
- Essentially Social Nature of Human Persons
- Principle of Stewardship

*The Principle of Justice in the context of CST must consider commutative, distributive and contributive justice in the context of our central norms.*



22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Socially Just Living Wage & Benefits

- Premium Funding Models

- Wage-based, annual base, household income based
- Increase access through:
  - Redistributing disproportionate financial burdens
  - Subsidizing the benefits of low-paid employees

- Plan Design Models

- Funded health reimbursement, health care savings account, catastrophic plan
- Increase access through:
  - Participant assessment of cost and risk

- CST Critique: Increased access should not be achieved through a compromise of benefit package such that a disparity exists in plan design based on affordability. **Equitable distribution of benefit vs. financial burden to employer as primary consideration.**



23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Socially Responsible Investment Practices

- “Do Good and Avoid Evil”
- Direct investments and fund pools
- Case by case basis
- Primary Concerns
  - Stewardship
  - Protecting Human Dignity
  - Promoting the Common Good
  - Acting on Behalf of Justice



24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Socially Responsible Investment Practices
  - Stewardship
    - Positive rate of return
    - Has the company ever been cited for environmental protection violations?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Socially Responsible Investment Practices
  - Protecting Human Dignity
    - Is the company involved in abortions or the manufacturing of abortifacient agents?
    - Does the company engage or fund human embryonic stem cell research?
    - Is the company involved in publishing, producing or selling pornography?
    - If engaged in HSR, are IRB regulations and standards met?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Socially Responsible Investment Practices
  - Promoting the Common Good
    - Does the company earn more than 20 % of total revenue from production of military weapons, WMD, Nuclear and/or chemical weapons, gambling, tobacco and/or alcohol
    - If provider, do they accept Medicare/Medicaid? Do they have charity care and community benefit policies? Do they engage philanthropic activities?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## CST: Issues in Healthcare

- Socially Responsible Investment Practices
  - Act on behalf of justice
    - Does the company employ a workforce outside the U.S.? Do they have child protection laws?
    - Has the company ever been cited for EEOC violations?
    - Does the company have a socially just wage and benefits policy/package?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Conclusions

Effective integration of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching can transform our ministries in a way that moves us away from:

*... the voices of the others multipl[ing]...the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized—all those considered "nonpersons" by the powerful and declared by the great prophets to be God's own privileged ones.*

**AND CLOSER TO:**

*...Beginning to listen to those other voices...we also begin to hear the otherness within our own discourse and within ourselves. What we might then begin to hear, above our own chatter, are possibilities we have never dared to dream.*

*David Tracy*  
Plurality and Ambiguity, 1994 University of Chicago Press

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---