**Principles of Catholic Social Justice**

Every commentator has their own list of key principles and documents, and there is no official ‘canon’ of principles or documents.

**Human dignity**

The principle of Catholic social teaching is the correct view of the human person. "Being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give."

**Solidarity**

Solidarity is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, not merely vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of others. Solidarity, which flows from faith, is fundamental to the Christian view of social and political organization. Each person is connected to and dependent on all humanity, collectively and individually.

**Charity**

In [*Caritas in Veritate*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caritas_in_Veritate), the Catholic Church declared that "Charity is at the heart of the Church". Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law (Matthew 22:36-40). It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbour; it is the principle not only of micro-relationships but with friends, family members or within small groups.

The Church has chosen the concept of "charity in truth" to avoid a degeneration into sentimentality in which love becomes empty. In a culture without truth, there is a fatal risk of losing love. It falls prey to contingent subjective emotions and opinions, the word “love” is abused and distorted, to the point where it comes to mean the opposite. Truth frees charity from the constraints of an emotionalism that deprives it of relational and social content, and of a fideism that deprives it of human and universal breathing-space. In the truth, charity reflects the personal yet public dimension of faith in God and the Bible.

**Subsidiarity**

[Pope Pius XI](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_XI) said, "It is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and/or industry."

**Distributism**

[Distributism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distributism) holds that social and economic structures should promote wide ownership of corporations and is the basis for [anti-trust](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-trust) laws and economic cooperatives including credit unions. [Rerum Novarum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rerum_Novarum), [Quadragesimo Anno](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quadragesimo_Anno) and [Centesimus Annus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centesimus_Annus) are Catholic Social Teaching documents which advocate economic distributism.