

Reading List on Catholic Social Teaching

Introductory Works

- **Doing FaithJustice: An Introduction to Catholic Social Thought**, Fred Kammer, S.J. (Paulist Press, New York; 1991.)

An excellent place to begin. Written in a very popular style, this book is both interesting and inspirational. It includes stories, commentaries on the Church's teaching, and brief summaries of many of the official papal encyclicals on social justice. ([Purchase online](#))

- **Living Justice : Catholic Social Teaching in Action**, Thomas Massaro, S. J. (Sheed and Ward, 2000.)

This small paperback provides a succinct, plain-English synopsis of Catholic social teaching. It's especially good for people who are new to this subject matter. It is clearly written and covers the basics of the teaching very well. Includes a list of nine key themes from the teaching. The themes are not discussed in detail, but the big picture is presented very clearly. ([Purchase online](#))

- **Responses to 101 Questions on Catholic Social Teaching**, Kenneth R. Himes O.F.M. (Paulist Press, 2001)

Organized in a very readable question-and-answer format, this small paperback gives "a concise overview of what the major documents of the tradition say about political, economic, and social life." The 101 answers are grouped by topics and presented in a clear, accessible style with numerous references to the official documents. Especially good in explaining the social, communitarian nature of Catholic social teaching. ([Purchase online](#))

- **Catholic Social Teaching and Movements**, Marvin L. Krier Mich (Twenty-third Publications, Mystic, CT; 1998)

This is a very good introduction to Catholic social teaching. It covers not only the official documents and encyclicals but also describes the movements and people who embodied the struggle for social justice in the last 100 years. Very well written. Makes the Catholic tradition of social justice come alive. ([Purchase online](#))

- **Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret**, Peter Henroit, Edward DeBerri, Michael Schultheis, (Orbis Books; Maryknoll, NY; 1992.)

If you're looking for the "Cliff Notes" version of 100 years of Catholic social thought, this small paperback by three Jesuit priests -- Peter Henriot, Edward DeBerri, and Michael Schultheis -- is a "must have." This handy resource begins with a brief overview of the development of social teaching. The core of the book consists of detailed outlines of the major social teaching documents. It's a very convenient reference to have. Now in its 4th edition! ([Purchase online.](#))

Basic Reference Works

- **Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage**, David J. Obrien and Thomas A. Shannon, ed. (Orbis Books; Maryknoll, NY; 1995.)

Are you looking for all of the official documents in one place? This is the most complete compendium of Catholic social encyclicals and other official papal documents on Catholic social teaching. Includes U.S. bishops pastoral letters on peace and on economic justice. It is indexed by subject and author. Available in paperback. ([Purchase Online](#))

- **Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church**, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004
- **Proclaiming Justice and Peace: Papal Documents from Rerum Novarum through Centesimus Annus**, Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, ed., (Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, Conn., 1991.)

Another compendium of official documents, published a few years earlier. ([Purchase online.](#))

- **The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought**, Judith Dwyer, ed., (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minn., 1994.)

Provides analysis and commentary on the major social encyclicals. Also includes discussion of major movements, figures, themes and social issues that have been a part of Catholic social thought for the last century. A good reference work but too expensive for most individual readers. ([Purchase online.](#))

- **John Paul II: The Encyclicals in Everyday Language**

Joseph Donders, ed.
(Orbis Books; Maryknoll, NY; 1995.)

If you want to get the content of Pope John Paul II's encyclicals, but are put off by some of the dense prose style in the original texts, then get a copy of this paperback. Why didn't somebody think of this earlier? ([Purchase online.](#))

Commentaries

- **Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations**

Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M, editor
(Georgetown University Press, Washington D.C., 2004)

This is an extraordinary collection of commentaries and essays by some of the most respected experts in Catholic social teaching. It covers the full range of major documents from modern Catholic social teaching and includes commentary on many of the important questions of our day. An outstanding resource for both scholars and students. ([Order online.](#))

- **Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching**

Donal Dorr
(Orbis Books; Maryknoll, NY; 1992.)

This is an excellent commentary for those who want a more in-depth review of the Catholic social tradition. The author reviews the tradition thoroughly, examines historical developments in the teaching, and lifts up the moral theme of care for the poor. ([Order online.](#))

- **One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Thought**

J. A. Coleman, S.J., ed.
(Orbis Books; Maryknoll, NY; 1991)

This is an excellent collection of essays by a wide range of authors. The six general essays on CST are especially useful. The remainder of the book is divided into three sections that cover themes of 1. Family, 2. Work and Economics, 4. Justice, 5. Peace Issues.

- **Preaching the Just Word**

Walter J. Burghardt, S.J
(Yale University Press; New Haven, Conn.; 1996)

Are you a preacher or a consumer of Catholic preaching who wants to know more about why and how the Church's social teaching should be integrated into every Sunday's homily? Try a small hardcover book entitled Preaching the Just Word by Walter J. Burghardt, S.J. He is one of the best Catholic preachers in America, and this book is a gem.
([Order online.](#))

- **The Faith That Does Justice - Examining the Christian Source for Social Change**

John Haughey, ed. - 1977
(Paulist Press; New York, NY; 1977)

A very useful collection of essays by scholars such as Avery Dulles, John Donahue, John Langan, Jr., David Hollenbach and John Haughey. The essay by Donahue on biblical justice is an excellent overview. The essay by Hollenbach entitled, "Modern Catholic Social Teachings Concerning Justice" is an excellent summary.

- **Fullness of Faith**

Michael and Kenneth Himes
(Paulist Press; Mahwah, NJ; 1993)

A very insightful work that provides theological reflection on Catholic social thought and public theology. Notable chapters include "Original Sin", "The Trinity and Human Rights", "Grace and a Consistent Ethic of Life," and "The Communion of Saints and an Ethic of Solidarity." This is a very thoughtful and inspiring work.

- **Confident and Competent - A Challenge for the Lay Church**

William L. Droel and Greg Pierce
(Ave Maria Press; Notre Dame, IN; 1987)

This small paperback provides an insightful and straight forward challenge to lay persons to fulfill the Vatican Council's mandate "to be church in the world". The authors contend that lay spirituality is based on "work in the world". Excellent brief treatment of topics such as definition of social justice, social teaching, and spirituality of work. ([Order online.](#))

- **An American Strategic Theology**

John A. Coleman
(Paulist Press; New York; 1982)

The author presents a strong argument for the public possibilities of the Christian gospel in contemporary American culture. The book presents the church as a sacrament to the world, as a community that is gathered precisely for the purpose of being sent into the world. The first chapter, entitled "The Church's Mission to Justice," is a very thoughtful essay on the topic. ([Order online.](#))

- **Claims in Conflict - Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition**

David Hollenbach
(Paulist Press; New York, NY; 1979)

This is a clear and thoughtful work that summarizes and analyzes Catholic social teaching on the topic of human rights. It situates Catholic teaching in the context of the wider public debate about human rights, both nationally and internationally. A very useful work that helps interpret one of the foundational themes of the Church's social teachings. ([Order online.](#))

- **The Moral Core of Judaism and Christianity**

Daniel C. Maguire

This is a powerful and bold attempt to refute the myth that there is no commonality in the Jewish and Christian traditions of moral thought. The theme of justice is prominent in this work. It provides a good opportunity to better understand CST in the wider context of Judeo-Christian thought. ([Order online.](#))

- **Ownership - Early Christian Teaching**

Charles Avila
(Orbis Books; Maryknoll, NY; 1983)

This is a rich anthology of early church teachings on the theme of ownership. Patristic writers in the third and fourth centuries had a surprisingly radical and consistent tradition of thought on ownership and property. Works of Clement of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, and Augustine are among those included. [\(Order Online.\)](#)

- **Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters**

Walter J. Burghardt, S.J.
(Paulist Press; Mahwah, NJ; 1998)

An excellent collection of homilies by one of the Catholic Church's best preachers. The focus is on biblical justice and the homilies cover a wide range of dates within the liturgical year, as well as special events. Also includes a comprehensive index of all Fr. Burghardt's published homilies. [\(Order online.\)](#)

- **Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent**

Thomas Groome
Thomas More: Allen, Texas, 1998)

If you're looking for one general essay that summarizes and explains Catholic social teaching, it's hard to beat the eighth chapter of this recent book by Thomas Groome. This is an exceptional work overall, and the chapter on Catholic social teaching is superb. As the title suggests, it's directed at teachers and parents. [\(Order online.\)](#)