

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

- LIBBY: What do hymns, holy water and incense have to do with defending human rights around the world?
- KAI: Um?
- LIBBY: Starts with an “s.”
- KAI: Oh, OK. Hymns, holy water, incense, starts with an “s.” Singing, sprinkling, smelling our way to justice.
- LIBBY: Social-
- KAI: Social media. Social Security. Socialism.
- LIBBY: Catholic Social Teaching. It's a set of principles for a decent, just, and peaceful society. Whether we're Catholic, practice another faith or aren't religious at all.
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- KAI: I knew that. These principles flow from a question Catholics try to ask themselves. How do they apply church on Sundays to the way that they the rest of the week?
- LIBBY: Well, how should they live their daily lives?
- KAI: Singing, sprinkling and smelling.
- LIBBY: We have a lot to learn.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

- Welcome to Catholic Central, I'm Libby.
- KAI: And I'm Kai.
- LIBBY: And we're here to ask the musical question, what makes a good Catholic?

GUY IN HOODIE: What makes a good Catholic? Good question. I'll Google it, I guess.

HIPSTER: Catholicism is first and foremost an artisanal church. This is an ironic selfie.

ACADEMIC: Catholics believe that God lived on Earth in the form of Jesus Christ.

LIBBY: OK, OK, OK. That's correct, but it's not the whole story. The faith Catholics celebrate in church offers wisdom for how humans should treat each other in all of society. Jesus preached all the time about caring for the poor and needy and living in peace.

KAI: The Church has been striving for a just society since its beginnings. For 2,000 years the Church has played a key role in opposing evils like slavery, eugenics, fascism, Communism.

LIBBY: Jesus taught, love your neighbor as yourself.

KAI: But Libby, have you met my neighbors? I mean, you try loving Justin Bieber songs blasting through the walls at 3:00 AM.

LIBBY: OK, yes, Kai, but even though your neighbors are insufferable, they're still made in the image of God, which gives them fundamental worth, that can't be erased by anything they do or don't do. And just as God exists as a Trinity -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit, relating to each other -- we humans are made to be communal and social. We're not complete without each other. ... even the insufferable ones. And Catholics recognize the reality of sin. People do bad things, but sin isn't only individual things like kicking a puppy. Because we're social, sin can take root in cultures, nations and social groups.

KAI: Racism, prejudice, injustice, sin can be part of social structures and systems.

LIBBY: Yeah, but so can the grace of God.

KAI: We are made in the image of God and called to bring gospel values to society.

LIBBY: The Church has identified seven major tenets of Catholic Social Teaching. Full disclosure, we are imperfect and living them out, but they are our goals.

First, every human life has value and dignity.

Catholics are called to protect life from its beginning in the womb all the way until natural death. And those who have disabilities, illness, who are poor, or are persecuted for any reason.

KAI: Because each life is precious, Christians are called to work for peaceful resolution of conflicts and preservation of human rights.

LIBBY: Second, Catholics believe that the most basic building block for society to flourish is families. The unique bond shared by spouses, parents and children, siblings and extended family.

KAI: See, families form groups like parishes, trade unions, social clubs and charitable organizations.

LIBBY: People have a right and duty to participate in their community because if these relationships aren't healthy, forget it. Society as a whole suffers.

KAI: Third, in every society there are rights and responsibilities.

LIBBY: A just society comes from striking the right balance between our rights about how other people treat us and the responsibilities we have to those around us.

KAI: Rights without responsibilities isn't community; it's just everyone out for themselves.

LIBBY: And of course, responsibility without rights is tyranny.

KAI: Fourth, Catholics call this one “the option for the poor.” A basic moral test for a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members.

LIBBY: Catholic Social Teaching instructs us that putting the needs of the poor and vulnerable first is the key to the kingdom of Heaven, not just in eternity but here and now. It's how we can bring about a just society.

KAI: "Whatever you did for the least of mine, you did for me, now enter into eternal life."

Fifth, Catholics believe in the dignity of work and rights of workers.

LIBBY: Work is more than just a way to make a living, it's a form of continuing participation in God's creation.

KAI: And if the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected.

LIBBY: Take that, Mr. Monopoly.

KAI: Sixth, solidarity. Catholics are called to empathize and stand with people who suffer.

LIBBY: Pope Paul VI taught that if you want peace, work for justice, even when it doesn't personally affect you.

KAI: Finally, seventh, humans are stewards of God's creation. Care for the environment is a requirement of the Catholic faith.

LIBBY: It comes from recognizing we're not the ultimate owners of creation. God has entrusted creation to us, we're called to treat the world around us with care and reverence. It means

preserving the world's resources for our children. It's about living in a healthy relationship with all of creation.

KAI: Boom. Yes. I'm gonna buy my ticket to Brazil. I'm gonna go save the rainforest. Whoa. \$1,700. That is ... unselect, unselect, un-confirm. But how am I supposed to be a steward if I can't even get there?

LIBBY: Well, you could ...

KAI: Africa. I will walk to Africa and feed orphans.

LIBBY: It is great if you're called to go to a poor nation to help out, but not necessary because wherever you are, you can help build a more decent society.

KAI: Not as glam, but probably get more done.

LIBBY: Someone asked Mother Teresa, now Saint Teresa of Calcutta, what they could do to promote world peace. She answered, "Go home and love your family." Another said, "I want to go and join you in your work in Calcutta." She replied, "Find your own Calcutta."

KAI: I get it. Maybe your Calcutta is speaking out about an injustice law, volunteering for a charity or talking to a friend who's feeling lonely.

LIBBY: It's also important to learn all you can about the world. Watch documentaries online, read about disasters in far-off places we never hear about, make friends from different walks of life. We do all this to better understand how we can help.

KAI: And prayer ... remember, all things happen according to God's will and in God's time, so pray.

LIBBY: The tenets of Catholic Social Teaching give us guidance on what kind of society we're working to create.

KAI: At its best, the Church focuses on seven areas: The dignity and value of human life, the essential role of strong families and community, recognition of rights and responsibilities.

LIBBY: The option for the poor and vulnerable, the dignity of work and the rights of workers, solidarity with those who suffer and care for God's creation.

KAI: Catholics are by no means perfect. But imagine a world in which these ideals were lived out fully.

LIBBY: Kind of like the Kingdom of God.

KAI: Could be. With God's grace and our care for others.

I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby.

Peace out.