

There are needs and common goods that cannot be satisfied by the market system. It is the task of the state and of all society to defend them. An idolatry of the market alone cannot do all that should be done.

Quadragesimo Anno (“After Forty Years”), Pope Pius XI, 1931 #40

Even though economics and moral science employs each its own principles in its own sphere, it is, nevertheless, an error to say that the economic and moral orders are so distinct from and alien to each other that the former depends in no way on the latter. Certainly the laws of economics, as they are termed, being based on the very nature of material things and on the capacities of the human body and mind, determine the limits of what productive human effort cannot, and of what it can attain in the economic field and by what means. Yet it is reason itself that clearly shows, on the basis of the individual and social nature of things and of men, the purpose which God ordained for all economic life.

Quadragesimo Anno (“After Forty Years”), Pope Pius XI, 1931 #42.

Just as the unity of human society cannot be founded on an opposition of classes, so also the right ordering of economic life cannot be left to a free competition of forces. For from this source, as from a poisoned spring, have originated and spread all the errors of individualist economic teaching. Destroying through forgetfulness or ignorance the social and moral character of economic life, it held that economic life must be considered and treated as altogether free from and independent of public authority, because in the market, i.e., in the free struggle of competitors, it would have a principle of self-direction which governs it much more perfectly than would the intervention of any created intellect. But free competition, while justified and certainly useful provided it is kept within certain limits, clearly cannot direct economic life...

Quadragesimo Anno (“After Forty Years”), , Pope Pius XI, 1931 #88.

First, one may not take as the ultimate criteria in economic life the interests of individuals or organized groups, nor unregulated competition, nor excessive power on the part of the wealthy, nor the vain honor of the nation or its desire for domination, nor anything of this sort. Rather, it is necessary that economic undertaking be governed by justice and charity as the principal laws of social life.

Mater et Magistra (“Mother and Teacher”), Pope John XXIII, 1961 #38, 39.

We therefore consider it our duty to reaffirm that the remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful. It must be determined in accordance with justice and equity; which means that workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations in a worthy manner.

Mater et Magistra (“Mother and Teacher”), Pope John XXIII, 1961 #71.

But it is unfortunate that on these new conditions of society a system has been constructed which considers profit as the key motive for economic progress, competition as the supreme law of economics, and private

ownership of the means of production as an absolute right that has no limits and carries no corresponding social obligation. This unchecked liberalism leads to dictatorship rightly denounced by Pius XI as producing “the international imperialism of money”. One cannot condemn such abuses too strongly by solemnly recalling once again that the economy is at the service of man.

Populorum Progressio (“On the Development of Peoples”), Pope Paul VI, 1967 #26.

Individual initiative alone and the mere free play of competition could never assure successful development. One must avoid the risk of increasing still more the wealth of the rich and the dominion of the strong, whilst leaving the poor in their misery and adding to the servitude of the oppressed.

Populorum Progressio (“On the Development of Peoples”), Pope Paul VI, 1967 #33.

In other words, the rule of free trade, taken by itself, is no longer able to govern international relations. Its advantages are certainly evident when the parties involved are not affected by any excessive inequalities of economic power: it is an incentive to progress and a reward for effort. That is why industrially developed countries see in it a law of justice. But the situation is no longer the same when economic conditions differ too widely from country to country: prices which are “freely” set in the market can produce unfair results.

Populorum Progressio (“On the Development of Peoples”), Pope Paul VI, 1967 #58.

Competition, to be sure, is not to be excluded from commerce, but it must be kept within those limits which make it just and fair and therefore worthy of man.

Populorum Progressio (“On the Development of Peoples”), Pope Paul VI, 1967 #61.

Unlimited competition utilizing the modern means of publicity incessantly launches new products and tries to attract the consumer... While very large areas of the population are unable to satisfy their primary needs, superfluous needs are ingeniously created. It can thus rightly be asked, if in spite of all his conquests, man is not turning back against nature, is he not now becoming the slave of the objects which he makes.

Octogesima Adveniens (“A Call to Action”), Pope Paul VI, 1971 #9.

Bureaucratic socialism, technocratic capitalism and authoritarian democracy are showing how difficult it is to solve the great human problem of living together in justice and equality. How in fact could they escape the materialism, egoism or constraint which inevitably go with them? This is the source of a protest which is springing up more or less everywhere, as a sign of a deep-seated sickness, ...

Octogesima Adveniens (“A Call to Action”), Pope Paul VI, 1971 #37.

Man is treated as an instrument of production, whereas he—alone, independent of the work he does—ought to be treated as the effective subject of work and its true maker and creator. Precisely this reversal of order, whatever the program or name under which it occurs, should rightly be called “capitalism”...Everybody knows that capitalism has a definite historical meaning as a system, an economic and social system, opposed to “socialism” or “communism.” But in light of the analysis of the fundamental reality of the whole economic process—first and foremost of the production structure that work is—it should be recognized that the error of early capitalism can be repeated wherever people are treated on the same level as the whole complex of the material means of production, as an instrument and not in accordance with the true dignity of their work.

Laborem Exercens (“On Human Work”), Pope John Paul II, 1981 #30.

[Church teaching on the right to private property], as it was then stated and as it is still taught by the church, diverges radically from the program of collectivism as proclaimed by Marxism and put into practice in various countries in the decades following the time of Leo XIII’s encyclical. At the same time it differs from the program of capitalism practiced by liberalism and by the political systems inspired by it...Christian tradition has never upheld this right as absolute and untouchable. On the contrary, it has always understood this right within the broader context of the right common to all to use the goods of the whole of creation: The right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone.

Laborem Exercens (“On Human Work”), Pope John Paul II, 1981 #64.

The Church’s teaching opposes collectivist and statist economic approaches. But it also rejects the notion that a free market automatically produces justice.

Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986 #115.

Completing the unfinished business of the American experiment will call for new forms of cooperation and partnership among those whose daily work is the source of the prosperity and justice of the nation. The United States prides itself on both its competitive sense of initiative and its spirit of teamwork. Today a greater spirit of partnership and teamwork is needed; competition alone will not do the job. It has too many negative consequences for family life, the economically vulnerable, and the environment. Only a renewed commitment by all to the common good can deal creatively with the realities of international interdependence and economic dislocations in the domestic economy. The virtues of good citizenship require a lively sense of participation in the commonwealth and of having obligations as well as rights within it. The nation’s economic health depends on strengthening these virtues among all its people, and on the development of institutional arrangements supportive of these virtues.

Economic Justice for All, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1986 #296.

After the failure of communism, should capitalism be the goal for Eastern Europe and the Third World? The answer is complex. If capitalism means a “market” or “free” economy that recognizes the role of business, the market, and private property, as well as free human creativity, then the answer is “yes.” If it means a system in

which economic, religious, and ethical freedom are denied, then the answer is “no.” Marxism failed, but marginalization and exploitation remain, especially in the Third World, just as alienation does in the more advanced countries.

Centesimus Annus (“The Hundredth Year,” Donders translation), Pope John Paul II, 1991 #42.

[Governments] must then make efforts to ensure “greater opportunities and a fairer distribution of wealth so that everyone can share equitably in the goods of creation. Solutions must be sought on the global level by establishing a true economy of communion and sharing of goods, in both the national and international order.” This is the only way to respect the dignity of persons and families, as well as the authentic cultural patrimony of peoples.

Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life), Pope John Paul II, 1995 #91.

Some in our own community welcome the tradition’s teaching on private property, the limits of the state, the advantages of free markets and the condemnation of communism, but resist the focus on the poor, the defense of labor unions, the recognition of the moral limits of markets and the responsibilities of government. Others welcome the teaching on the “option for the poor,” the duties of government to protect the weak, the warnings against unbridled capitalism, but seem to ignore the centrality of family, the emphasis on economic initiative, and the warnings against the bureaucratic excesses of a “social assistance” state. Our social tradition is a moral framework... It challenges both right and left, labor and management to focus on the dignity of the human person and the common good rather than their own political or economic interests.

A Decade after Economic Justice for All Continuing Principles, Changing Contest, New Challenges, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1996 A Look Back.

The Catholic doctrine of the common good is incompatible with unlimited free-market, or laissez-faire, capitalism, which insists that the distribution of wealth must occur entirely according to the dictates of market forces. This theory presupposes that the common good will take care of itself... This does sometimes happen; but to say that it invariably must happen, as if by a God-given natural law, is a view which can amount to idolatry or a form of economic superstition.

The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, 1996 #76.

The Church recognises that market forces, when properly regulated in the name of the common good, can be an efficient mechanism for matching resources to needs in a developed society. No other system has so far shown itself superior in encouraging wealth creation and hence in advancing the prosperity of the community, and enabling poverty and hardship to be more generously relieved... In a market economy the existence of a wide variety of consumer choice means that individual decisions can be made according to individual wants and needs, thus respecting certain aspects of human freedom and following the principle of subsidiarity.

The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, 1996 #78.

The search for profit must not be allowed to override all other moral considerations. For instance the creation and stimulation of markets by advertising is in danger of producing a society where the satisfaction of real or artificial needs takes priority over all else. It leads to an ideology of consumerism. The individual is reduced to the status of an isolated economic agent, whose life has meaning only as a consumer...It gravely disadvantages those who do not have wealth to spend. Unlimited free markets tend to produce what is in effect an “option against the poor”.

The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching, Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, 1996 #84-85.

The private sector must be not only an engine of growth and productivity, but also a reflection of our values and priorities, a contributor to the common good. Examples of greed and misconduct must be replaced with models of corporate responsibility. Both employers and the labor movement must help the poorest workers to have a voice and a place at the table where wages and working conditions are set.

A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and Respect the Dignity of All God’s Children, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2002 Section VI.

It is true that the pursuit of justice must be a fundamental norm of the State and that the aim of a just social order is to guarantee to each person, according to the principle of subsidiarity, his share of the community’s goods. This has always been emphasized by Christian teaching on the State and by the Church’s social doctrine.

Deus Caritas Est (“God is Love”), Pope Benedict XVI, 2005 #26.

[T]oday we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape.

Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis, 2013 #53.

Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a “throw away” culture which is now spreading...In this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the

facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting.

Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis, 2013 #53-54.

We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption.

Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis, 2013 #55.

As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world’s problems or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills.

Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis, 2013 #202.

The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and “the first principle of the whole ethical and social order”. The Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property.

Laudato Si’ (“Praise Be”), Pope Francis, 2015 #93.

The economy accepts every advance in technology with a view to profit, without concern for its potentially negative impact on human beings. Finance overwhelms the real economy...Some circles maintain that current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems, and argue, in popular and non-technical terms, that the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved simply by market growth. They are less concerned with certain economic theories which today scarcely anybody dares defend, than with their actual operation in the functioning of the economy. They may not affirm such theories with words, but nonetheless support them with their deeds by showing no interest in more balanced levels of production, a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations.

Laudato Si’ (“Praise Be”), Pope Francis, 2015 #109.

The culture of relativism...is also the mindset of those who say: Let us allow the invisible forces of the market to regulate the economy, and consider their impact on society and nature as collateral damage...This same “use and throw away” logic generates so much waste, because of the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary.

Laudato Si' ("Praise Be"), Pope Francis, 2015 #123.