

ABSOLUTELY ADVENT!

A TEEN'S JOURNEY
TO CHRISTMAS
2018 ★

For Teens



Here's the big question

WHAT DOES CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING HAVE TO DO WITH ADVENT?

During Advent we prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus into this world—at the first Christmas, today, and at the end of time. His coming into the world, the Incarnation, means Jesus coming as a human being. Jesus is both God and human. Therefore, all of the principles of Catholic social teaching once affected Jesus just as they affect us. He was created in the image and likeness of God; he was born into the family of Joseph and Mary; he lived among the poor and vulnerable, he worked (probably as a carpenter!); he saw himself in solidarity with everyone on Earth; and he cared for creation better than anyone.

As we prepare over these next four weeks for the birth of Jesus in our world, we have a great opportunity to examine at how we are preparing ourselves, each other, and our planet for Jesus. How are we caring for one another, especially the poor and vulnerable. And how are we caring for God's creation?

As Advent begins, there is much work to do so we can welcome Jesus into a world marked by the principles of Catholic social teaching. **Absolutely Advent** will help do just that!

★ **Centesimus Annus.** This Latin title means “hundredth year.” Pope John Paul II wrote this encyclical letter in 1991 to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, the first social encyclical.

★ **The Challenge of Peace.** The U.S. Catholic bishops wrote this pastoral letter on war and peace in 1983, in the midst of the nuclear arms race.

★ **Gaudium et Spes.** This document's title means *Joy and Hope*, with the subtitle *The Church in the Modern World*. The Vatican II Council Fathers wrote this document in 1965, at the end of Vatican II.

★ **Economic Justice for All.** The U.S. Catholic bishops wrote this pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching and the U.S. economy in 1986.

★ **On Social Concern.** Pope John Paul II wrote this encyclical in 1987 to express his concerns about the condition of the human person in modern society.

EACH DAY YOU WILL

- Read a Scripture passage taken from the readings of the day.
- Reflect on the Scripture with journal questions that relate to your own experiences.
- Engage in activities that make the Scripture come alive for you.
- Reflect on how to put Catholic social teaching into action in your family, school, parish, and community.

The season of Advent includes four Sundays. Beginning today, you are invited to spend the next four weeks reflecting on your faith in God and the Church. But you will also be challenged to put that faith into action by engaging in activities that, in small, simple ways, will help to create a better world. It's time to live out your faith with **Absolutely Advent!**



Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice. Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment. Only such an awareness can give the courage needed to face the risk and the change involved in every authentic attempt to come to the aid of another. It is not merely a matter of “giving from one’s surplus,” but of helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies.

■ Centesimus Annus, #58



DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Human persons are willed by God; they are imprinted with God's image. Beyond the rights they acquire by their work, certain rights flow from their essential dignity as persons.

✦ Based on *Centesimus Annus*, #11

The human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world; all of the Church's work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God's creative work and the meaning of Christ's redemptive ministry.

✦ *The Challenge of Peace*, #15

Quick!

Name five characteristics that make someone a human being. **START NOW!**

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Did you mention being a bipedal primate mammal? How about the ability to reason? The ability to love? To desire world peace?

SOME DAYS YOU MIGHT NOT FEEL VERY HUMAN. If you have little brothers or sisters, you might not think they are human at all! Yet, the fact is that each person is created in the image and likeness of God. What does this mean? If we believe that God is pure goodness, pure love, pure being, then, as the saying goes, "We are chips off of the old block!" We are good, we are loving, and we are called to be the best people we can be. And so is everyone else! When we see each person as created in the image and likeness of God, then we will treat others with respect for their dignity. This idea is captured in Matthew 25:44.

"LORD, WHEN WAS IT THAT WE SAW YOU HUNGRY OR THIRSTY OR A STRANGER OR NAKED OR SICK OR IN PRISON, AND DID NOT TAKE CARE OF YOU?" THEN HE WILL ANSWER THEM, "TRULY I TELL YOU, JUST AS YOU DID NOT DO IT TO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE, YOU DID NOT DO IT TO ME."

When we recognize that each person truly is Jesus on Earth, then we are following the way that Jesus has laid out for us. We are following the first principle of Catholic social teaching.

As you celebrate Advent and prepare for Christmas, how are you celebrating the life and dignity of each person you encounter?

Five ways to Celebrate the Life and Dignity of Each Person

1 Sit next to someone who is sitting alone in the lunchroom or school commons.

2 Serve a meal at a local soup kitchen or work at a food pantry. Invite your family or friends to come along.

3 Look for a person in your neighborhood who does not seem to have a connection to friends or family. Go out of your way to start a conversation with this person.

4 Visit a local nursing home and listen to the stories of a resident or two.

5 Offer to tutor a person at school who struggles with his or her homework.



Our Role Model in Faith

SAINT TERESA OF CALCUTTA

Gonxha Agnes Bojaxhiu was born in Skopje, Macedonia, on August 26, 1910. At the age of eighteen, Gonxha entered a convent with a desire to become a missionary. Her dream was realized in January of 1929, when, as Sister Mary Teresa, she was sent to Calcutta, India. She spent most of her early years in religious life teaching in a girls' school. However, in 1946, she felt the call of God to spend her life in service to the poor, and founded a new order, the Missionary of Charity Sisters. She and her sisters set out to serve the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta. Mother Teresa, as she was now known, said that by caring for the "unwanted, the unloved, and the uncared for," she was serving Jesus. She celebrated the life and dignity of each person she met. Mother Teresa died on September 5, 1997. On October 19, 2003, Pope John Paul II beatified Teresa, now known as Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

Let us pray

Compassionate God, you have created us in your image and likeness. Because of this we are called and challenged to see each person we meet as a brother and sister in Christ. Give us the courage to truly treat each person with love. Help us especially to see the face of Christ in the poor and vulnerable in our midst. We ask this through Jesus, the Christ, who modeled true love and compassion. Amen.



First Sunday of Advent
DECEMBER 2

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. « JEREMIAH 33:14-15 »

Are you familiar with the phrase the gold standard?

The term is used to mean a model of excellence against which something is measured or judged.

Jesus came to carry out justice in the land. The Church offers the gold standard of **justice** in our Catholic social teachings. The principles of Catholic social teaching are the gold standard for measuring the **justice** of any action. Review the descriptions of these principles given on page 2.



In your opinion, which one of the **seven principles** most needs to be practiced today? Why?

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