

Catholic Charities USA Code of Ethics

Introduction

A key aspect of providing quality care for the many clients of Catholic Charities is grounding the services provided in ethical behavior. A code of ethics is, therefore, essential to guide the actions and decisions of all people serving within Catholic Charities to ensure they adhere to the social and moral teachings of the Catholic Church. Such a code presupposes a commitment to these teachings.

Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) adopted its first code of ethics in 1983. It was updated in 1986 and again in 2007. After ten years another update seemed prudent. Following careful consideration, CCUSA has adopted the Caritas Internationalis code as its own to unite it more closely with the universal Church and recommends that individual Catholic Charities agencies do the same. This current code will be periodically reviewed and revised as necessary.

CCUSA is the association of diocesan Catholic Charities agencies in the United States and its territories. CCUSA is a member of Caritas Internationalis which is a confederation of Catholic relief, development and social service organizations operating in over 200 countries and territories worldwide.

The following Code of Ethics is based upon and summarizes in one normative statement the values and principles which comprise the overarching ethical framework to which all staffⁱ are encouraged to adhere. In all their work Catholic Charities staff aspire to embody these values and principles. In so doing they aim to be active witnesses to Christ's compassion at work in the world.

CCUSA is confident that the majority of Catholic Charities staff act with good conscience and integrity and exemplify the values and principles of this Code of Ethics without needing explicit statements. However, by means of this Code of Ethics, a greater clarity and consistency across the network may be achieved, most notably in identity and ecclesial mission. Member agencies of CCUSA are encouraged either: to 1.) adopt this Code of Ethics and operating principles as written, or 2.) adapt it for their own organizations, ensuring consistency between the two.

Staff should receive a copy of the code and receive formation on its content.

Values and Principles:

“The permanent principles of the Church’s social doctrine constitute the very heart of Catholic social teaching.”ⁱⁱ “Besides the principles that must guide the building of a society. . . the Church’s social doctrine also indicates fundamental values. The relationship between principles and values is undoubtedly one of reciprocity, in that social values are an expression of appreciation to be attributed to those specific aspects of moral good that these principles foster, serving as points of reference for proper structuring and ordered leading of life in society. These values require, therefore, both the practice of the fundamental principles of social life and the personal exercise of virtue, hence of those moral attributes that correspond to these very values. All social values are inherent in the dignity of the human person, whose authentic development they foster.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Values

1. **Human Dignity:** All human life is sacred from conception to natural death.^{iv} Made in the image and likeness of God, all women and men are created with unique dignity since they “stand above all things, and [their] rights and duties are universal and inviolable.”^v Each person is a social being by nature and his/her full potential is developed in relationship with others.^{vi} “All of social life is an expression of its unmistakable protagonist: the human person,”^{vii} who, “far from being the object or passive element of social life is rather, and must always remain, its subject, foundation and goal.”^{viii}

“This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more humane balance.”^{ix}

Human dignity and the social nature of the human person are the foundation and inspiration for a moral vision of society.

2. **Justice:** responding to the call of faith, we strive to build a just moral order and “right relationships” within our own lives and organizations, the communities in which we work and the whole of God’s creation. We accompany, serve and plead the cause of those made poor and pushed to the margins, helping them to transform the societies in which they live and the structures that keep them poor.

“Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority.”^x

3. **The common good:** the enjoyment of human dignity and the ability to grow in community are affected by the way we organize our society: socially, religiously, culturally, economically, ecologically, legally and politically. We work within the universal communion of the Catholic Church. With other religious traditions, governments, wider civil society and all in authority, we labor to protect human dignity, fulfill individual and social rights and responsibilities, and promote the common good.

“A society that wishes and intends to remain at the service of the human being at every level is a society that has the common good – the good of all people and of the whole person – as its primary goal. The human person cannot find fulfilment in the self, that is, apart from the fact that the person exists ‘with’ others and ‘for’ others.”^{xi} The common good is always oriented towards the progress of persons: “The order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons, and not the other way around.”^{xii}

4. **Integral Human Development:** we view development as based on a holistic understanding of the human person, within the context and experience of the family and the wider community, embracing spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical, material and economic elements. Wherever we work we strive for the development of the whole person, the whole family and the whole community. We also strive to transform unjust social systems. In our work we ensure strong and consistent links between the relief, rehabilitation and developmental components.

“To be authentic, [development] must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each person and of the whole person... people are truly human only if they are the master of their own actions and the judge of their worth, only if they are the architect of their own progress. They must act according to God-given nature, freely accepting its potentials and its claims upon them.”^{xiii}

5. **Compassion:** united in one human family we are profoundly moved by the suffering of others and have a moral duty to recognize the humanitarian imperative to respond. This duty is essential both to our identity as a Catholic organization and to our membership of the human family. Thus, as members of the international community, we recognize our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance and the duty of others to ensure unimpeded access for us to do so.

“The Christian’s program – the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus – is a ‘heart that sees.’ This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.”^{xiv} As Jesus told us: “In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it to me.”^{xv}

6. **Preferential Option for and with the Poor and Oppressed:** in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus, we choose to accompany those who are poor, marginalized or oppressed. We are committed to combating the dehumanizing poverty and life threatening policies that rob people of their dignity and humanity. We are guided by Scripture to work for the freedom of the oppressed and an equitable sharing of the gifts of the earth and to help the marginalized be responsible for their own development. We take up as our own the cause of people who are poor, putting ourselves alongside them. To this degree we will stand with them in their need and confront the injustice they face.

“This rather is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.”^{xvi}

“The fight against poverty finds a strong motivation in the option or preferential love of the Church for the poor.”^{xvii} “Let us look at the poor ‘not as a problem, but as people who can become the principle builders of a new and more human future for everyone.’”^{xviii}

7. **Respect:** we respect religious traditions, culture, structures and customs in so far as they enhance and uphold the dignity of the human person.

“A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person.”^{xix}

8. **Solidarity:** we work in solidarity with individuals, families and communities who are poor and marginal, thereby achieving the fruits of peace, justice and human development. Solidarity binds us together in the common vision of establishing a world where all human beings receive what belongs rightly to them as sons and daughters of God.

“Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity.”^{xx}

Principles:

1. **Partnership:** “authentic partnership means a long-term commitment to agreed upon objectives based on shared values, strategies, and information. It is characterized by honest feedback, joint planning, accompaniment, transparency, and accountability on both sides, and a genuine openness and sensitivity to the other’s needs, feelings, expertise, experience, and wisdom. It is based on mutual respect, trust and goodwill. Effective partnership creates solidarity among member organizations, other organizations that share our vision, and the communities and people with whom we work.”^{xxi}

CCUSA “...promotes cooperation among its members, without diminishing their due autonomy, by carrying out tasks of encouragement, coordination, representation and capacity building.”^{xxii}

2. **Subsidiarity:** we ensure that power, decisions and responsibility are devolved to the lowest level at which they can be properly exercised. In so doing we will strive to maximize and build upon local abilities and resources. Central to our identity as Catholic Charities are the national, diocesan and parish members, and we will strive to promote and strengthen these to enable them to assume greater autonomy and responsibility.

“Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.”^{xxiii}

3. **Participation:** we ensure that people we serve are involved in the design, management and implementation of the projects we undertake on their behalf and the associated decisions from assessment through evaluation. Participation is an expression of human dignity and implies shared responsibility for the human community. Catholic Charities is committed to development processes that prioritize active participation as the foundation of a democratic and inclusive society.

“... humanity's personal dignity involves the right to take an active part in public life, and to make their own contribution to the common welfare of their fellow citizens.”^{xxiv}

4. **Empowerment:** we help people develop and realize their full potential and build mutually respectful relations so they can control and improve their quality of life. Through integral human development and empowerment, we will promote active, powerful local communities with members playing a significant role in civil society.

“I hope there will be noise... But I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses, I want the noise to go out, I want the Church to go out onto the streets, I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable... everything that might make us closed in on ourselves. The parishes, the schools, the institutions are made for going out.”^{xxv}

5. **Independence:** CCUSA members determine our operational priorities and programs. We do not allow ourselves to be used as instruments of national or foreign economic or political interests, especially when such are not in conformity with Catholic Church teaching.

“Positive signs in the contemporary world are the growing awareness of the solidarity of the poor among themselves, their efforts to support one another, and their public demonstrations on the social scene which, without recourse to violence, present their own needs and rights in the face of the inefficiency or corruption of the public authorities.”^{xxvi}

6. **Stewardship and Accountability:** we will make every effort to be accountable to those whom we serve, those who support our work and society at large. We also ensure good stewardship of the resources entrusted to us.

“At times it happens that those who receive aid become subordinate to the aid-givers, and the poor serve to perpetuate expensive bureaucracies which consume an excessively high percentage of funds intended for development. Hence it is to be hoped that all international agencies and non-governmental organizations will commit themselves to complete transparency, informing donors and the public of the percentage of their income allocated to programs of cooperation, the actual content of those programs and, finally, the detailed expenditure of the institution itself.”^{xxvii}

7. **Equality, universality, impartiality and openness to all peoples:** all women and men, girls and boys are created equal and make their own unique contributions to our world, collectively realizing that which is fully human. We commit ourselves to equal and active participation of women and men, girls and boys in all our work.

We serve people impartially, particularly those who are poorest and most vulnerable, according to objective assessments of their situations and the needs they express, irrespective of race, age, sex, physical ability, ethnicity, creed or political persuasion, indeed without adverse distinction of any kind.

“We must...recognize, affirm and defend the equal dignity of man and woman: they are both persons, utterly unique among all the living beings found in the world.”^{xxviii}...Giving women opportunities to make their voice heard and to express their talents through initiatives which reinforce their worth, their self-esteem and their uniqueness would enable them to occupy a place in society equal to that of men.”^{xxix}

8. **Protection:** we strive to ensure the safety of those with and for whom we work, especially children in accordance with national and state legislation, the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and evidence-based practice.

“I wished to acknowledge personally the suffering inflicted on the victims and the honest efforts made both to ensure the safety of our children and to deal appropriately and transparently with allegations as they arise...Just as the Church is rightly held to exacting standards in this regard, all other institutions, without exception, should be held to the same standards.”^{xxx}

9. **Local economies:** whenever possible we use local resources and products and support the local economy.

“Subsidiarity, understood in the positive sense, [is] economic, institutional or juridical assistance offered to lesser social entities...Their initiative, freedom, and responsibility must not be supplanted.”^{xxxi}

10. **Care for creation and attention to environmental impact:** we protect people and the planet, promoting right relationship with all of God’s creation, since the planet and all its

resources are entrusted to humankind. Acting as true stewards of all creation, we consider the environment and the heritage of future generations in the planning and implementation of all our work.

Cultivating and caring for creation is an instruction of God that God gave not only at the beginning of history but also to each one of us; it is part of God's plan; it means making the world increase with responsibility, transforming it so that it may be a garden, an habitable place for us all.^{xxxii}

11. **Coordination:** we will coordinate closely with national governments and local authorities, churches, other religious organizations, civil society, other members of the relief and development communities and all other relevant stakeholders.

"Born from an impulse of this Apostolic See, which then supervised and directed its activity, Caritas Internationalis is made up of a Confederation of charitable agencies, usually the national branches of Caritas. This Confederation, far from limiting the autonomy to which these branches are entitled, fosters their collaboration through its activities of animation, coordination and representation."^{xxxiii} CCUSA, likewise, works with its member agencies to support their efforts through coordination of programs and advocacy on social policy issues.

12. **Advocacy:** we will advocate – nationally and internationally – on behalf of and with the poor and marginalized to bear witness to, and address, their plight and the underlying or structural causes of poverty, threats to human life and injustice. We will be agents of change and social transformation to promote respect for human rights.

"I would also like to emphasize that your mission enables you [Caritas] to play an important role on the international level. The experience you have garnered in these years has taught you to be advocates within the international community of a sound anthropological vision, one nourished by Catholic teaching and committed to defending the dignity of all human life... All that you say and do, the witness of your lives and activities, remains important and contributes to the advancement of the integral good of the human person."^{xxxiv} CCUSA works to advocate for just social policies at the national level and collaborates with other Church structures to advocate on international issues as appropriate.

13. **Learning and Staff Development:** we are committed to improving our work, what we do and how we do it, through continual reflection, capacity-building, monitoring, evaluation, knowledge management and strategic planning. We will invest in our staff to ensure that they have the skills, experience and formation they need to reach their full potential and ensure that Caritas/Catholic Charities achieves its potential and makes the greatest difference for those who are poor, marginalized or oppressed.

"The Church's charitable organizations, beginning with those of Caritas (at diocesan, national and international levels), ought to do everything in their power to provide the resources and above all the personnel needed for this work. Individuals who care for those in need must first be professionally competent: they should be properly trained in what to do and how to do it, and committed to continuing care. Yet, while professional competence is a primary, fundamental requirement, it is not of itself sufficient. We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern."^{xxxv}

14. **Staff Care:** we ensure just, dignified and sustainable working conditions for all our staff and fulfil our duty of care to staff, promoting good practice in human resources management and complying with employment law within the relevant jurisdiction.

“The rights of workers, like all other rights, are based on the nature of the human person and on his or her transcendent dignity.”^{xxxvi}

Catholic Charities USA

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ⁱ For the purpose of this Code, “staff” refers to board members, employees, volunteers, consultants and all who act as agents of Catholic Charities USA at all levels.

ⁱⁱ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, #160. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, # 197. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

^{iv} St. John Paul II, World Youth Day, Stapleton International Airport, Denver, CO, 1993; also *Evangelium vitae*, 1995.

^v Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: *Gaudium et Spes* (http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html), #26.

^{vi} *Ibid.* See No. 12.

^{vii} Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, #106, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

^{viii} Pius XII, Radio Message of 24 December 1944, 5: AAS 37 (1945), 12.

^{ix} *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 26.

^x Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1928.

^{xi} Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 165.

^{xii} *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 26/3.

^{xiii} Adapted from Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, On the Development of Peoples, # 14 and 34 (1967), www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html

^{xiv} Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #31(2005), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html

^{xv} Matthew 25:40

^{xvi} Isaiah 58:6-7

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- ^{xvii} CF John Paul II, Address to the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Puebla, Mexico, (28 January 1979), I/8: AAS 71 (1979), 194-5.
- ^{xviii} John Paul II, Message for the World Peace Day 2000, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121999_xxxiii-world-day-for-peace.html.
- ^{xix} Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 132.
- ^{xx} Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace: “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church” (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html, No. 192).
- ^{xxi} Caritas Internationalis, Caritas Partnership Principles: A Caritas Internationalis Handbook for Reflection and Action (Rome, 2003, <http://www.caritas.org/who-we-are/publications-and-resources/>), p. 14.
- ^{xxii} Statutes of Caritas Internationalis, article 1.5.
- ^{xxiii} Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter Quadragesimo Anno, No. 79, http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html.
- ^{xxiv} Pope John XXIII, Pacem In Terris, On Establishing Universal Peace In Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty (1963), No. 26, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jxxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html.
- ^{xxv} Pope Francis, Address to Meeting with Young People from Argentina, Rio de Janeiro, 25 July 2013, (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130725_gmg-argentini-rio_en.html)
- ^{xxvi} Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, Pope John Paul II, For the Twentieth Anniversary of “Populorum Progressio (1987), No. 39. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html.
- ^{xxvii} Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 2009, No. 47, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html
- ^{xxviii} Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with Catholic Movements for the Promotion of Women, St. Anthony’s Parish, Luanda, Angola, 22 March 2009, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2009/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090322_promozione-donna_en.html
- ^{xxix} Pope Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus (2011), #57, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus_en.html
- ^{xxx} Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Bishops of the United States of America on their Ad Limina Visit, 26 November 2011, Vatican City, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2011/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20111126_bishops-usa_en.html
- ^{xxxi} Compendium, op.cit., No. 186.
- ^{xxxii} Pope Francis, General Audience, 5 June 2013 (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130605_udienza-generale_en.html)

^{xxxiii} Pope John Paul II, *During the Last Supper, Letter to Caritas Internationalis for the Acquisition of Public, Juridic, and Canonical Personality*, 16 September 2004, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/2004/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20040916_caritas-internationalis_en.html

^{xxxiv} Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Participants in the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis*, 27 May 2011, *op. cit.*

^{xxxv} *Deus Caritas Est*, No. 31a.

^{xxxvi} *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*

(http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html), No. 301