

I. Primary Canon

- Began in 1891 with [*Rerum novarum*](#) by Pope Leo XIII.
- This encyclical has subsequently been “anniversaried” by several Popes, most notably with [*Quadragesimo anno*](#) in 1931 by Pope Pius XI; [*Mater et Magistra*](#) by Pope St. John XXIII in 1961; [*Octogesima adveniens*](#) by Pope Paul VI in 1971; [*Laborem exercens*](#) by Pope St. John Paul II in 1981; [*Centesimus annus*](#) by Pope St. John Paul II in 1991.
- In addition to these anniversary encyclicals, a host of other encyclicals and high-level magisterial documents are included in the Catholic Social Teaching primary canon, including: [*Pacem in Terris*](#) by Pope St. John XXIII in 1963; [*Populorum progressio*](#) by Pope Paul VI in 1967, which (as it were) anniversaries *Pacem in Terris*; [*Sollicitudo rei socialis*](#) by Pope St. John Paul II in 1987 on the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum progressio*; [*Caritas in veritate*](#) by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009, which is generally considered to be in this trajectory following *Populorum progressio*; and [*Laudato si*](#) by Pope Francis in 2015 which is also in this second trajectory.
- Generally speaking, we might say that whereas the first major “path” began from the need to address the problems of an industrialized economy and securing just participation and a proper ordering of society, the second “path” comes about by the need to address another new problem that developed in the mid-20th century, namely **globalization**.
- In addition to this, to the “primary canon” should also be added three of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, not necessarily because their content focuses primarily on social issues but because the guidance they contain is of such great authority and weight and serves as an important touchstone for the interpretation and synthesis of Catholic Social Teaching: the three most significant in this regard are [*Gaudium et spes*](#), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World; [*Dignitatis humanae*](#), a declaration on the civic and social order specifically with regard to the dignity of the human person and respect for religious freedom; and [*Lumen Gentium*](#), the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, which along with [*Dei Verbum*](#) (the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation) is concerned primarily with doctrinal matters.
- Finally, deserving special note, are two documents which do not in themselves teach or advance new magisterium but usefully compile, order, and emphasize magisterium, including social magisterium: namely: of course, the [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#) promulgated by Pope St. John Paul II in 1992; and the [*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*](#) delivered by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace under Cardinal Renato Martino with the blessing of Pope St. John Paul II in 2004.

II. Secondary Canon and Tertiary/Background Elements

- *But that isn't all!* In addition to this which might be called the “primary canon” there is what could be called the “secondary canon” of texts within the Catholic Social Teaching tradition, and then of course the whole body of Catholic teaching which serves to background and inform this unique field which can hardly be called a “third canon” because it is simply the heritage of Revelation as it comes down to us from Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. In this latter group, for example, would be all the sundry questions in the [Summa Theologica](#) of St. Thomas Aquinas that deal with the social order, or the writings of Saint Robert Bellarmine that deal with the nature of authority held by civic rulers, or for that matter any of the writings of *any* doctor of the Church that deal with civil or political questions, as well as the decrees and canons of any ecumenical council, the contents of certain Papal bulls or edicts, and - lest we forget - a little speech of some social importance called “The Sermon on the Mount.” But as this body can hardly be enumerated in all its relevant dicta on questions of social importance or economics, we will for now only taxonomize some of the contents of that “secondary canon” in modern magisterium that importantly works in tandem with the primary canon of Catholic Social Teaching documents:
 - This secondary category is much more numerous than the first, and the question of what gets included is much more debatable. Many would include some pre-Leonine writings, for example the [Syllabus of Errors](#) and [Qui Pluribus](#) by Pope Bl. Pius IX, which dealt some of the errors of scientism and modernism developing in the 19th century.
 - Of course, Pope Leo XIII himself, leading one of the longest pontificates in history, did quite a bit of writing besides [Rerum novarum](#), and so some would include his 1888 encyclical [Libertas Praestantissimum](#) (On the Nature of Human Liberty); or his [Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae](#) in 1899 whereby he condemned certain errors of “Americanism” such as that “the Church should shape her teachings more in accord with the spirit of the age and relax some of her ancient severity and make some concessions to new opinions.”
 - Similarly, it seems worth mentioning Pope St. Pius X's 1907 encyclical [Pascendi Dominici gregis](#), condemning the errors of modernism; and also his 1910 promulgation of the [Oath Against Modernism](#).
 - From Pope Pius XI, there is [Divini Redemptoris](#) from 1937, condemning atheistic communism.
 - **Now we need to pause here:** So far, a trend is noteworthy in this secondary canon: the aforementioned texts all deal with and respond to certain prevalent errors. This is one of the reasons I consider these “secondary canon” - because these texts don't as much build up a positive body of teaching as distinguish the limitations of orthodox belief. There **are** some secondary canon teachings that are more “positive” or constructive, but for now I'm going to continue in this “negative” vein and flesh out the rest of those before adding the second subset and elucidating its contents....

- So, to finish up the list of “negative” valence secondary canon of Catholic Social Teaching, we must mention [Humanae Vitae](#) by Pope Paul VI in 1968, condemning artificial contraception.
- Another document **not** frequently noted by Catholic Social Teaching scholars but certainly worth noting is Pope Paul VI’s 1975 document “On Evangelization,” [Evangelii Nuntiandi](#). This isn’t an encyclical but a post-Synodal exhortation, delivering the reflections of a recent Synod on the Church’s mission of evangelization in the modern world. What’s significant about this document is that the Synod’s General Reporter who participated very heavily in the drafting of the exhortation was the Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow: Karol Wojtyla. One of the interesting ways that the Saintry future Pope’s fingerprints show in the document is a middle section where one word crops up again and again: **liberation**. The exhortation notes that “evangelization involves an explicit message, adapted to the different situations constantly being realized, about the rights and duties of every human being, about family life without which personal growth and development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development- a message especially energetic today about liberation.” But it goes on to emphasize that “not every notion of liberation is necessarily consistent and compatible with an evangelical vision of man.” In other words, this document, promulgated under the authority of Pope Paul VI, is in many ways the first salvo by the *future* Pope St. John Paul II across the bow of the Marxist-tinged theological movement gaining steam at the time especially in Latin America, “liberation theology.”
- Speaking of Pope St. John Paul II, his 1993 encyclical, [Veritatis Splendor](#) also fits into this “negative” valence of the secondary canon of Catholic Social Teaching, although admittedly it *hardly* fits: it is an elephant in the room, having comparatively gigantic proportions next to almost everything else we’ve listed in this category. *Veritatis Splendor* actually lays out a vision of complete renewal for the whole field of moral theology, arguably influencing that particular area of theology more significantly than any single work in 150 years previous. So, it does much more than simply condemn an error; nevertheless, the occasion and reason for the encyclical was the recent promotion of a heretical opinion known as “proportionalism” by thinkers like the Jesuit theologian Fr. Josef Fuchs. In any event, insofar as Catholic Social Teaching is, in very many ways, a sub-branch of moral theology, the importance of *Veritatis Splendor* truly cannot be overstated.
- Finally, it is worth noting the sundry non-papal documents touching on moral issues that impact on the social order, very many of which came out under Pope St. John Paul II’s direction and were written by his theological rottweiler and future Pope Benedict XVI, Josef Cardinal Ratzinger. Among these would be, for example, the 1984 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [Instruction on Certain Aspects of the “Theology of Liberation](#)”, the 1987 CDF document [Donum Vitae](#) dealing with artificial procreative technologies, or the 2003 CDF document considering [Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons](#) which lays out the Church’s stance against same-sex marriage or marriage approximating non-conjugal civil unions.

III. General Overview Redux

- Within CST, there are **two major trajectories that run parallel and in tandem**; the first begins with *Rerum novarum* and continues through its anniversaries; here we find the spelling out of major concepts such as **solidarity** and **subsidiarity**, or **distributive justice** and **social justice**, warnings against the errors of communism and of individualism (or, as Pope Pius XI terms it, the “twin rocks of shipwreck” of collectivism and individualism); the second trajectory comes about in response to the calamities of the 20th century (esp. wars) and the new problems associated with **globalization**, and begins to connect “development” with peace.
- Broadly, it could be said that concepts like wealth inequality as a problem, or ecology as a paradigm associated with justice, situate within this latter school, which some critics or scholars find more “left”-leaning than the other.
- Arguably, Pope St. John Paul II uniquely - given his long reign and startling output - bridges seeming or apparent gaps between these two schools; though, ironically, some read John Paul II selectively and maintain that he actually “revises” CST in general. We will address that later...

IV. Central Principles, General Concepts & Different Paradigms

- Central Principles:
 - **Dignity of the Human Person**
 - Human persons are created *imago Dei*.
 - **Principle of the Common Good**
 - **Universal Destination of Goods**
 - **Preferential Option for the Poor**
 - The best test of a social order is how it cares for the least of its members.
 - **Solidarity**
 - **Subsidiarity**
 - **Participation**
- Central Values:
 - **Truth**
 - **Freedom**
 - **Justice**
 - **Peace**
 - **Charity**
- General Concepts
 - **Human Work**
 - **Environment**
 - “Intergenerational solidarity.”
 - **Authority**