

INTRODUCTION

A four-year-old said to his dad, “Daddy, when we go to church, you are no longer my daddy; you are my brother.”

When her brother was struck and injured by a car, a little girl was asked to give blood. After the transfusion, she asked the doctor, “When do I die?”

“You’re not going to die,” the surprised doctor replied.

“I thought if you gave your blood away, you die,” the brave little voice explained. So why did she let them take her blood? “Well, he’s my brother,” she said.

These two small children, although they probably can’t articulate it, have a beginning—and very deep—understanding of the principles behind the Gospel values and social teachings of the Catholic Church.

As they grow, their families, the Church, and their faith formation programs will continue to help develop and nurture that life of service, call to justice, and the understanding of the human community (and all of creation) as united and interdependent.

In our parishes and catechetical programs, we are doing a wonderful job of calling children, youth, and adults to service and outreach opportunities. At times, though, something

2 Creative Connections for Catechists

might be lacking. We always need to make connections. We need to connect our actions to the foundations. We need to connect our actions to the reasons we are doing them.

All of social action and outreach is rooted in Scripture and in the ministry of Jesus. Those stories and passages need to be alive for all of us.

Through the years, especially the last 120 years, the Church has developed a rich and comprehensive treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amid the challenges of modern society. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us:

The Church's social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of the whole of what has been revealed by Jesus Christ. (#2422)

The principles and actions to which we are called in Catholic social teaching are not "just nice things to do" when we have time; they are not at the periphery of our lives. They are who we are called to be.

It is the very essence of who we are, because:

- We are responding to the mandate to serve, to justice as Jesus lived.
- We develop a relationship with people whose life experience is different from ours (yet, we are all the same), thus living the reality of the communion of saints.
- We are living our baptism, which anointed us priest, prophet, and king—people living a life of discipleship, a life working for the coming of the reign of God.

Several years ago the U.S. bishops highlighted some of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition:

- the life and dignity of the human person
- the call to family, community, and participation
- the rights and responsibilities of the human person
- the option for the poor and vulnerable
- the dignity of work and the rights of workers
- solidarity
- care for God's creation

Listed here are some ideas, processes, and projects—from A to Z—which can be easily incorporated into:

- catechetical/faith formation sessions and
- ideas for catechists to send home for use in the family

and, hopefully, all these will trigger even more creative ideas (for children, youth, spouses, and families).