



Scripture Vigil on the Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

The following vigil offers an extended reflection on the seven themes of Catholic social teaching. The foundation of this vigil is extensive reading from and reflection on Sacred Scripture. This vigil may be used any time a parish or other faith community wishes to reflect more intently on the call to work for justice and peace. For example, a youth group may celebrate this vigil the night before beginning a service project. A peace and justice committee may make this vigil the centerpiece of a day of prayer. A parish may celebrate this vigil during the week before an election. While designed for use at a single event, the reflection may be spread over eight days, concluding with a Eucharistic liturgy on the ninth day to make a novena.

Ideally, the vigil will take place in the church. A priest who leads the vigil will use the presider's chair; a deacon or layperson should sit in another appropriate place. The Scripture should be read from the ambo.

The celebration may begin with an appropriate song. The vigil is divided into sections matching the seven themes of Catholic social teaching. Each part consists of a reading from Scripture, time for silent reflection, a brief reflection on the Word of God (with the bishop's permission, a layperson may give this reflection), some general intercessions (a group may add additional prayers based on local needs), and a closing statement. Each section may conclude with an appropriate song.

LEADER: Let us place ourselves in the presence of the God who calls us to be
"salt and light."

READER: *Read Matthew 5:13-16 (Lectionary, no. 73).*

ALL: The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Scripture Reading

Genesis 1:1, 26-31a (Lectionary, no. 41).

Silent Reflection

Brief Reflection on the Word of God (Optional)

General Intercessions

RESPONSE: Lord, hear our prayer.

For all the peoples of the world, that the Lord will protect the sacred life and dignity of every human person, we pray to the Lord.

For the life and dignity of all God's people, that we may protect life and promote dignity in law and policy, we pray to the Lord.

Closing Statement

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. . . . We believe that . . . the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.*

Song (Optional)

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Scripture Reading

Acts 4:32-35 (Lectionary, no. 44).

Silent Reflection

Brief Reflection on the Word of God (Optional)

General Intercessions

RESPONSE: Lord, hear our prayer.

For our families and our community, that the Lord will strengthen family life and the common good of all, we pray to the Lord.

For our community and nation, that we will learn to embrace the gifts and needs of all, especially the poor and the powerless, we pray to the Lord.

For all citizens, that we will help build a world of justice and peace through our participation in public life, we pray to the Lord.

Closing Statement

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society in economics and politics, in law and policy directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.*

Song (Optional)

Human Rights and Responsibilities

Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 12:12-30 (Lectionary, no. 69).

Silent Reflection

Brief Reflection on the Word of God (Optional)

General Intercessions

RESPONSE: Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who are oppressed, that the Lord will set them free and defend their rights, we pray to the Lord.

For those who suffer injustice, that the Lord will inspire us to champion their rights and to set them free, we pray to the Lord.

Closing Statement

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency.*

Song (Optional)

Option for and with the Poor and Vulnerable

Scripture Reading

Luke 6:17, 20-26 (Lectionary, no. 78).

Silent Reflection

Brief Reflection on the Word of God (Optional)

General Intercessions

RESPONSE: Lord, hear our prayer.

For the poor and the vulnerable, that the Lord will lift them up and answer their need through us, we pray to the Lord.

For the voiceless and the powerless, that the Lord will help them find their voices and their power, we pray to the Lord.

Closing Statement

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition . . . instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.*

Song (Optional)*Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers***Scripture Reading**

Matthew 20:1-16a (Lectionary, no. 133).

Silent Reflection**Brief Reflection on the Word of God (Optional)****General Intercessions**

RESPONSE: Lord, hear our prayer.

For all those who labor, that they will have a voice in their work, enjoy the just fruits of their work, and find sustenance for their lives and families, we pray to the Lord.

For all children, especially those in the bondage of child labor, that the Lord will set them free, we pray to the Lord.

Closing Statement

The economy must serve people. . . . Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected.*

Song (Optional)

Global Solidarity

Scripture Reading

Matthew 25:31-46 (Lectionary, no. 160).

Silent Reflection

Brief Reflection on the Word of God (Optional)

General Intercessions

RESPONSE: Lord, hear our prayer.

For all the nations of the world, that the Lord will help them find the peace and prosperity that flow from authentic solidarity, we pray to the Lord.

For all the peoples of the world, especially those oppressed by poverty, that our nation may walk with them in the journey toward freedom, we pray to the Lord.

Closing Statement

We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. . . . We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.*

Song (Optional)

Care for God's Creation

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 55:10-11 (Lectionary, no. 103).

Silent Reflection

Brief Reflection on the Word of God (Optional)

General Intercessions

RESPONSE: Lord, hear our prayer.

For the beauty of God's creation, that the Lord will give us the wisdom to preserve and protect it, we pray to the Lord.

For the earth and all its creatures, that we will treat our planet with the care of a good steward, we pray to the Lord.

Closing Statement

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. . . . We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.*

Song (Optional)

Conclusion

Scripture Reading

John 13:1-15 (Lectionary, no. 39).

Litany

LEADER: Our tradition calls us to see the world in new ways—to reject the blindness of our age. And so we pray. We are called to see with the eyes of the poor in a world blinded by riches and power.

ALL: Cure our blindness, O God.

LEADER: We are called to see with the eyes of the outcast, the person suffering with leprosy, the person living with HIV/AIDS in a world blinded by fear.

ALL: Cure our blindness, O God.

LEADER: We are called to see with the eyes of all God's creatures in a world blind to the beauty of God's creation.

ALL: Cure our blindness, O God.

LEADER: Jesus has opened our eyes to the needs of God's world.

ALL: We are ready to open our hands to God's work.

LEADER: Jesus has opened our minds to the injustices of the world.

ALL: We are ready to open our mouths to proclaim God's justice.

LEADER: Let us pray as Jesus taught us:

ALL: Our Father . . .

The vigil may conclude with a sign of peace and an appropriate song.

* All closing statements in this vigil are excerpts from *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, Reflections of the U.S. Catholic Bishops* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998).

This Scripture Vigil is based on materials from *In the Footsteps of Jesus: Resource Manual on Catholic Social Teaching* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2004).