

**HERITAGE AND HOPE
OUR STORY AS A DIOCESAN FAMILY
DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES**

V. ANIMATED TO ACTION AND SERVICE

As a *communio* of communities – disciples of Jesus who chose to wash the feet of his friends in the manner of a servant - we commit ourselves to be recognized as his disciples by our active concern that all have their basic needs met. We strive to discover and implement God's reign of justice {right relationships} in our personal lives and in the systems and spheres in which life is lived: political, economic, social, ecological, and religious. This requires a global perspective that moves us beyond the boundaries of our parish and our diocese and helps us to see the interconnectedness of peoples and nations and the systems which impact the lives of all.

Concern for the development of the "whole person" is rooted in a tradition of social teaching which has assumed increasing importance and urgency over the last century. In the Diocese of Las Cruces, we embrace a consistent life ethic. We also agree with the United States Catholic Bishops' statement, *A Century of Social Teaching*, in which they outline six basic principles that are at the heart of this issue:

1. The Life and Dignity of the Human Person: In the Catholic social vision, the human person is central, the clearest reflection of God among us. Each person possesses a basic dignity that comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment, not from race or gender, age or economic status. The test of every institution or policy is whether or not it enhances or threatens human life and human dignity.

2. Human Rights and Responsibilities: Our dignity is protected when human rights are respected - the right to life and to those things which make life truly human: religious liberty, decent work, housing, health care, education, and the right to raise and provide for a family with dignity.

3. The Call to Family and Community: The human person is not only sacred, but social. We realize our dignity and achieve our rights in relationship with others in our families and communities. No community is more central than the family - the basic cell of society. Parishes and small Christian communities provide a communal structure to create a more just society.

4. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers: Work is more than a way to make a living. It is a vocation and participation in creation. Workers have basic rights: to decent work, to just wages, to form and join unions, and to economic initiative, among others. The economy exists for the human person, not the other way around.

5. The Option for the Poor: People who are poor and vulnerable have a special place in Catholic teaching. The scriptures tell us that we will be judged by our response to "the least of these." We need to put the needs of people who are poor first.

6. The Solidarity of the Human Family: As Pope John Paul II reminds us, we are one human family despite differences of nationality or race. The poor are not a burden but, rather, they are our sisters and brothers. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions.

Aided by these principles, we are motivated to forge new and creative structures that are life giving, and where the common good takes precedence over individual rights and privileges. In the Diocese of Las Cruces and all its parishes, these principles provide the foundation for all

we do. Continually we need to examine how our decisions, our structures, our planning and our immersion into our local and global communities demonstrate the basic principles contained in our church's social teaching.

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