

PART THREE, SECTION ONE, CHAPTER TWO, ARTICLE 3, PARAGRAPH 1928

FAITH: Catholicism | TEXT: Catechism of the Catholic Church | VOLUME: 1997 Volume | AUTHOR: John Paul II

OVERVIEW

Paragraph 1928 serves as a summary statement ('In Brief') for the Catholic doctrine of Social Justice. It anchors the concept not merely in sentiment or equality of outcome, but in the classical definition of justice: 'suum cuique' (to each his own/due). The text asserts that social justice is not an abstract ideal but a practical requirement of 'society' to establish specific conditions. These conditions must enable both individuals and associations to fulfill their specific 'vocation' and 'nature.' By linking justice to the 'common good' and the 'exercise of authority,' the Catechism establishes a framework where the political and social structures are morally obligated to facilitate human flourishing according to Natural Law. For the Catholic believer, this elevates social engagement from a personal preference to a moral imperative rooted in the nature of humanity as created by God.

KEY FIGURES

John Paul II, Thomas Aquinas

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. SOCIAL JUSTICE AS STRUCTURAL CONDITION

Assertion: Social justice is achieved when society provides conditions for people to obtain what is their due.

"Society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due"

Evangelical Comparison: The Catechism defines social justice primarily through the lens of 'conditions' provided by 'society.' This reflects the Catholic emphasis on the 'Common Good' and structural subsidiarity. In contrast, Evangelical theology, while valuing justice (Micah 6:8), tends to emphasize 'Sola Scriptura' and individual regeneration. Evangelicals often view societal change as a downstream effect of the Gospel changing individual hearts, rather than a top-down structural requirement mandated by a magisterial authority. Furthermore, the concept of 'what is their due' in Catholicism is derived from Natural Law theology, whereas Evangelicals define human rights and duties strictly by biblical revelation.

2. HUMAN VOCATION AND NATURE

Assertion: Justice is determined by what is due to a person according to their nature and vocation.

"obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation"

Evangelical Comparison: The text relies on the philosophical categories of 'nature' and 'vocation' to determine what is 'due' to a person. This presumes a Natural Law epistemology where human rights are inherent to being. Evangelicalism agrees that humans have value as Image Bearers (Imago Dei), but generally rejects the extra-biblical philosophical frameworks often used in Catholic Social Teaching to define specific societal 'dues.' For the Evangelical, the primary 'vocation' is the call to salvation and holiness in Christ, rather than a sociopolitical role that society must structurally support.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Partial

Theological Gap: While both traditions value justice, the theological gap lies in the source and scope. The Catholic text presents a horizontal, structural requirement ('society ensures') based on the philosophical concept of 'due' (suum cuique). This implies that justice is a state of affairs to be engineered by authority. Evangelicalism, adhering to Sola Scriptura, views justice as a vertical command from God to the individual to act righteously (Micah 6:8) and protect the vulnerable (James 1:27). The gap widens regarding the 'nature' of man; Catholicism views human nature as wounded but retaining a capacity for cooperation with the good, whereas strict Evangelicalism (Augustinian/Reformed) views human nature as totally depraved and incapable of true justice without regeneration.

Shared Values:

Concern for justice.; Belief in human dignity.; Recognition of the 'common good'.; Acknowledgment of human vocation.

Friction Points:

1. [Minor] Sola Scriptura – The text defines justice using philosophical categories (nature, due) rather than biblical exposition.
2. [Minor] Theology Proper (Sovereignty) – Places the onus of human flourishing on 'society' and 'authority' rather than God's providence and individual obedience.

Semantic Warnings:

"Social Justice"

In Text: Structural conditions ensuring individuals receive their due according to nature/vocation.

Evangelical: Often used in modern evangelicalism to refer to biblical justice (mishpat/tzedakah)–protecting the vulnerable and judging righteously–but wary of secular or Marxist connotations of 'equity' or 'redistribution.'

Example: *In this text, 'social justice' is a mandate for the state/society to engineer conditions. In Evangelicalism, justice is primarily the believer's duty to love their neighbor (Luke 10:25-37).*

"Vocation"

In Text: A person's calling or role within the structure of the common good.

Evangelical: Primarily the call to salvation and discipleship, and secondarily one's station in life.

Example: *The text implies society must support one's vocation. Evangelicals emphasize fulfilling one's calling regardless of societal support (Colossians 3:23).*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Not explicitly defined in this text, but implies a holistic view of human flourishing.

How Attained: N/A (Text is ethical, not soteriological).

Basis of Assurance: N/A

Comparison to Sola Fide: While this text addresses ethics, the Catholic system integrates these works of justice into the merit required for final justification, contrasting with the Evangelical view that works of justice are the fruit, not the cause, of justification (Ephesians 2:8-10).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Society must provide conditions for individuals to obtain what is their due.

Implicit Obligations:

1. Authorities must exercise power to promote the common good.
2. Believers must work to create just societal structures.
3. Individuals must identify and pursue their vocation.

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. The text mentions giving everyone 'what is their due.' How do we determine what a person is truly owed?
2. If society fails to provide these conditions, does that limit a Christian's ability to live a holy life?
3. Do you believe human nature is capable of creating a truly just society without the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. Obtaining what is due – The text focuses on human justice (getting what we deserve). The Gospel focuses on Divine Mercy (getting what we don't deserve). We can pivot from 'social due' to 'spiritual due.' [Romans 6:23 - 'For the wages [due] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.']

2. Conditions for Vocation – Society often fails to provide these conditions. Christ provides the ultimate condition (freedom from sin) to fulfill our highest vocation (glorifying God). [Ephesians 4:1 - 'I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling [vocation] to which you have been called.']

Spiritual Weight:

1. Utopian Burden [Moderate] – The text implies that 'society' (and thus the individuals comprising it) is responsible for creating a world where everyone gets their due. This creates an impossible burden to fix systemic evils that Scripture says will persist until Christ returns.
2. Performance/Works [Mild] – By linking social justice to the 'common good' and 'authority,' the believer may feel that their spiritual faithfulness is contingent on their political activism or success in changing social structures.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Reason/Natural Law and Magisterial Authority.

Verification Method: Alignment with Catholic Social Teaching and the consensus of the Magisterium.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the illumination of the Holy Spirit through the written Word of God (Psalm 119:105, 2 Timothy 3:16). The CCC relies here on deductive reasoning regarding human 'nature' and 'society.'

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 1997 (Latin Typical Edition)

Authorship: Promulgated by John Paul II; drafted by a commission of bishops and theologians.

Textual Issues: No significant variants; this is a modern dogmatic text.