



An Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching:
If I Were King or Queen for a Day

SESSION FOCUS

Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God. Since God is our King, this means that He wants His kingdom – His world – to be “ordered” in a certain way. Catholic Social Teaching teaches us God wills His kingdom to be ordered.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this session, young people will be able to

- Explain the meaning of the Kingdom of God.
- Identify four principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

MATERIALS

- Handout “If I Were King or Queen for a Day”
- Handout “Living Lives for Others”
- Handout “Looking Beyond Myself”
- Bible
- Writing supplies

SESSION OUTLINE

1. Use the handout “If I Were King or Queen for a Day” to invite young people to brainstorm what they would do with the authority to make their kingdom/nation an ideal place to live.
2. Allow young people five minutes to complete the handout, and then invite them to share their thoughts.
3. Record their ideas on the board or on newsprint.
4. As a class, decide which are the most “noble” ideas and suggestions.
5. Say ***“Throughout history, it was the responsibility of a king or a queen to ensure that the kingdom he or she ruled over was well-ordered so that people could live together in peace and prosper in their lives. It was the responsibility of the king or queen to :***
 - a. Bring about and maintain order.***
 - b. Unify the people.***
 - c. Provide for the people.***
 - d. Resolve conflicts and mend relationships.***
 - e. Protect the people from danger.***
 - f. Provide order and justice.***
 - g. Inspire people to live their full potential.”***

6. Continue: ***“Jesus proclaimed the Good News that the Kingdom of God was and is in our midst and he set out to ‘paint a picture’ or give us a vision of what that kingdom should look like in his Sermon on the Mount. This sermon, especially the Beatitudes, is like Jesus’ keynote address at a political convention.”***
7. Read aloud, in a loud voice, the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) as if giving a speech, and raise your hand at the end of each verse to signal applause. Direct the young people to cheer loudly each time you give the signal.
8. Say: ***“God has a vision for His kingdom and, as disciples of Jesus, it is up to us to make this vision a reality. To help us do this, the Church has given us some principles to follow; they are called the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.”***
9. Write *Catholic Social Teaching* on the board or on newsprint and explain that many of the ideas the young people came up with in the “If I Were King or Queen for a Day” activity were actually good examples of living according to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.
10. Distribute the handout “Living Lives for Others.” And invite volunteers to take turns reading it aloud.
11. Using the four principles outlined in the handout, invite the young people to revisit the list of ideas they came up with in the “If I Were King or Queen for a Day” activity and to identify which of the principles each idea exemplifies.
12. Next, arrange young people in small groups, and invite them to brainstorm more ideas (more “edicts” they would pronounce if they were king or queen for a day) that would make the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching a reality in their kingdom.
13. Allow young people five minutes to brainstorm, and then invite them to share ideas with the whole group. Record these on the board or on newsprint.
14. Say ***“As followers of Jesus, we have pledged – through our Baptism – to live as members of the Kingdom of God. Every time we say the words ‘thy will be done’ in the Lord’s Prayer, we are promising God that we will be His loyal subjects who will live according to His vision for the kingdom in which He reigns – the Kingdom of God. The principles of Catholic Social Teaching guide us to living lives and building a society that truly reflects God’s Kingdom.”***
15. Conclude the session by distributing the handout “Looking Beyond Myself” and praying the Litany to Heal Injustice found on that sheet.

If I Were King or Queen for a Day

I, King/Queen _____

Do hereby decree that, for the one day I rule the world,

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

~

Living Lives for Others: The Basics of Catholic Social Teaching

“That’s not fair!” You can hear that cry on any playgroup. Kids have an innate sense of justice. Even though they may not always live up to this innate sense, this inner guide, they know that it’s wrong to treat others badly, to exclude others, and to rig the rules of the games so that one side always loses. Over time the arena of the playground gives way to other arenas of society – home, work, neighborhood, civic life, and so on. Yet the same basic truths of this inner guide apply, forming the core of what is called Catholic Social Teaching. This body of teaching by the pope, bishops, and other church leaders addresses the most fundamental questions of human coexistence: Who are we? What do we owe one another? How should we live together? How can we establish peace and freedom for all?

The Church has developed great wisdom to help society address the most pressing situations facing an increasingly shrinking – and often turbulent – global community. We as Catholics are a worldwide community of faith, and the more we can embrace and internalize this growing wisdom and enact it in our own lives, the more we will serve the Kingdom of God and help bring it into fullness.

These are some principles of Catholic Social Teaching:

THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

The created world is full of diversity – many sizes, shapes, colors and styles of everything. And, so with people. All are of God’s essence. God has a place for everyone. Our life’s journey is to come to know and experience the diversity and to help put the puzzle of life together including all its parts.

SUBSIDIARITY

Smaller groups encourage creativity and innovation. Larger groups help protect human dignity, meet human needs and advance the common good when smaller more local groups are unable. Both are needed for a community and all its members to prosper.

THE COMMON GOOD

The common good is comprised of “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. The common good includes caring for the environment, as we all share God’s creations.

SOLIDARITY

Because God is our Father, we are all brothers and sisters with the responsibility to care for one another. This spirit of solidarity unites all people whether they are rich or poor, weak or strong. It also helps to create a society that recognizes that we live in an interdependent world.

Looking Beyond Myself

The world is in the need of more love, peace, and justice. Catholic Social Teachings call us to look at our own lives and our behavior as well as to recognize the injustices that exist all around us. These teachings call us to reach out in compassionate love, which is the basis for justice.

For Christians, our inner spiritual life goes hand in hand with our active life in the world. Whenever we nurture our love for God in prayer, we are better able to meet the needs of others and to reach out with love and compassion. In contrast, by acting in solidarity to bring love, make peace and heal injustice, we can actually enrich our prayer life.

Through action, we encounter God in our present lives. In this way, our prayer can give us the strength and desire to live in ways that transform the world into a better place for all of God's children.

LITANY TO HEAL INJUSTICE

READER 1: Think of a person or group of people who is suffering the effects of injustice such as poor living conditions, random acts of violence, false accusations of crime, or discrimination.

READER 2: In your imagination surround this person or group with care and compassion. Pray a silent prayer for them. (Pause)

READER 3: Now let us pray together a litany for those who suffer from injustice. If you would like, pray aloud the intention for which you just prayed silently. After praying aloud is done, we will pray together, "Be merciful, O Lord."

CLOSING PRAYER

ALL: *God of mercy,
touch with compassion the lives of those
who suffer unjustly.
Help us to be your instruments
of care and healing for others.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
Your Son and our brother. Amen*

Looking Beyond Myself and the Litany to Heal Injustice are from Finding God, Grade 8