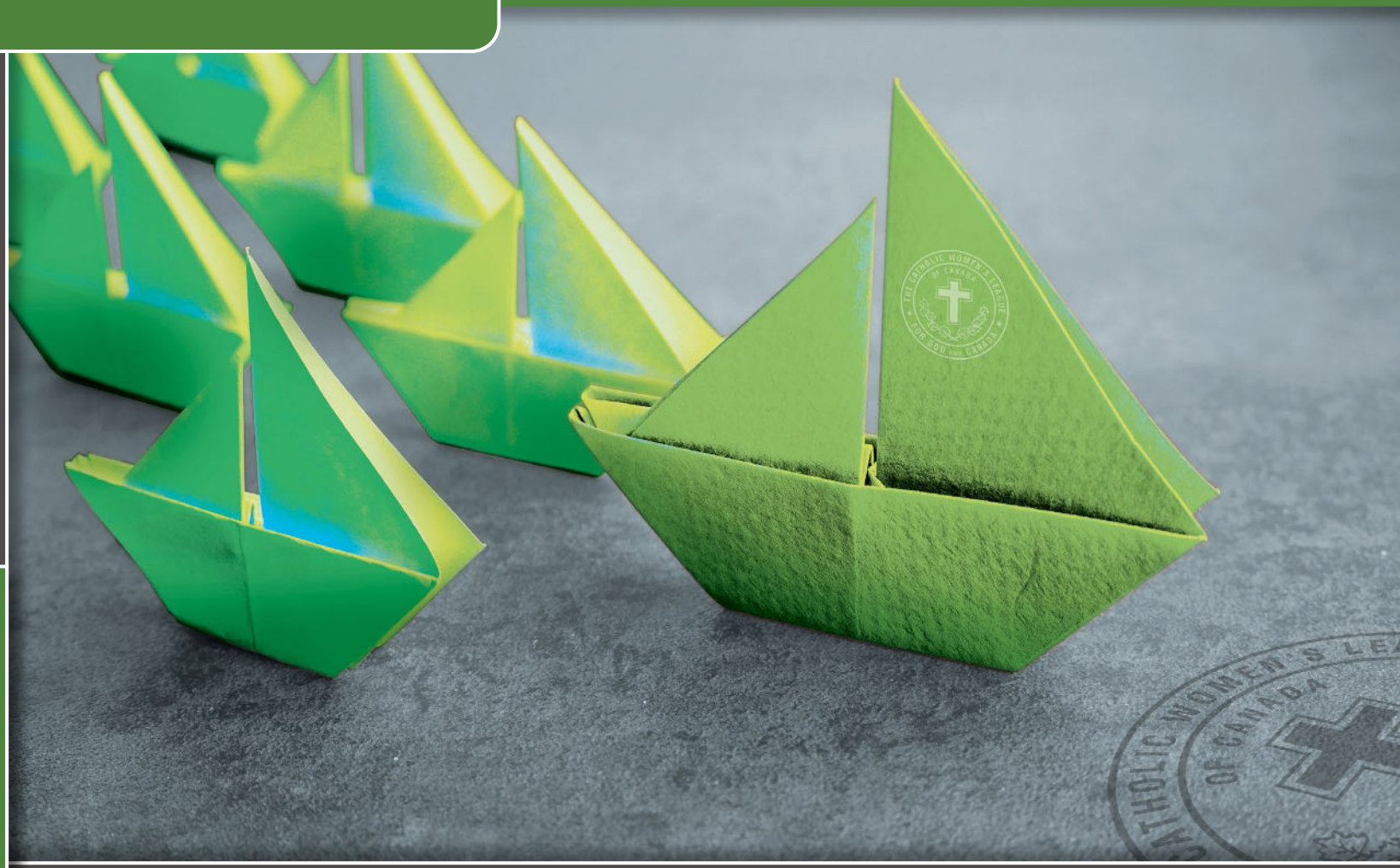
Rights and Responsibilities

Catholic Social Teaching Working Group

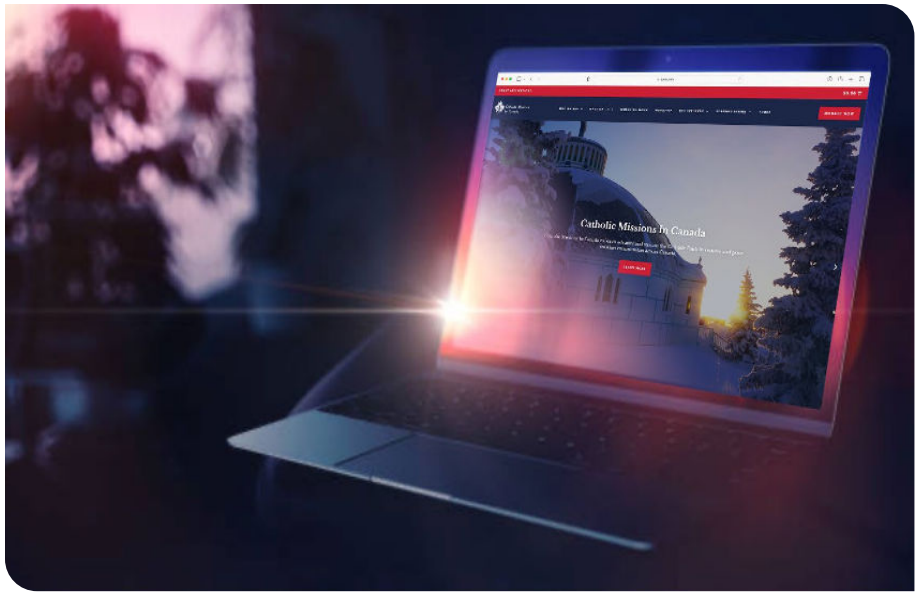


GOAL: The Catholic Women's League of Canada addresses and supports Catholic social teaching through advocacy.

STRATEGY: (G2. A2) Empower members by providing educational opportunities to learn more about Catholic social teaching.

hopeth all things,
Charity never faileth:

Catholic Social Teaching Key Principle:
Rights and Responsibilities



This key principle of Catholic social teaching makes clear the connection between both rights and responsibilities—or duties as it is sometimes called. There is a clear acknowledgement that both are lived within the context of community, never alone or exclusively for the individual.

As Development and Peace—Caritas Canada's website explains, "Rights arise from what we need to live as God intended us to. These are innately linked with our responsibility to ensure the rights of others—that we do not take more than is needed to fulfill our rights at the expense of another's." The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops further explains that "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. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to one another, to our families, and to the larger society."

In his 1963 encyclical, *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), Pope John XXIII asserts that the human person is entitled to civil, political, social and economic rights—"universal" rights, including the right to life, bodily integrity, food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care and an education.

On the next page, is a comprehensive list of rights. All of these are found within only six of the many Catholic social teaching documents referred to in this resource.

Legend to documents referred to in brackets:

- RN *Rerum Novarum*
- PT *Pacem in Terris*
- LE *Laborem Exercens*
- DH *Dignitatis Humanae*
- JM *Justicia in Mundo*
- CA *Centesimus Annus*

The right to:

- life, food and shelter (RN #4, 10)
- private property (RN #5)
- choose one's state in life (RN #9)
- a living wage (RN #34)
- a just wage (LE #19)
- life and a worthy standard of living (PT #11)
- moral and cultural values (PT #12-13)
- worship according to one's conscience (PT #14)
- freely choose one's state of life and establish a family (PT #15-17)
- emigrate and immigrate (PT #25)
- rest (LE #19)
- work that is not harmful to one's conscience or personal dignity (LE #15)
- appropriate subsidies for unemployed workers and their families (LE #18)
- a pension in old age, sickness or injury (LE #19)
- social security connected with maternity (LE #19)
- assemble and form associations (QA #23)
- religious freedom (DH #13)
- development (JM #15)
- freedom of expression and thought (JM #44)
- private initiative and ownership (CA #43)
- the rights of workers to form unions (RN #38)

Education for Justice, Sr. Katherine Feely, SND researchguides.ben.edu/ld.php?content_id=60085305

The resources contained in this document will help members and parish councils on the journey to develop a better understanding of this key principle and lead to action on behalf of any of God's children for whom these rights are only a dream.

Books

Author, Title, Year	Publisher, Link	Synopsis
Kuramitsu, K. *A Booklet of Uncommon Prayer*. 2016.	Evangelicals for Social Action christiansforsocialaction.org/resource/booklet-of-uncommon-prayer-prayers-for-the-black-lives-matter-movement/	The author "... has laid out a liturgical space for lament, pain, suffering, love, and hope for a movement that is shaping our current time. [The author's] work is ecclesial and creates a space for post-civil rights theology rooted in justice and equality. Take this in page by page and allow the work of the spirit to do its process in you" (Daniel White Hodge, PhD).
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *The Right to a Decent Home: A Pastoral Response to the Crisis in Housing*. 1975.	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops usccb.org/resources/right-decent-home-pastoral-response-crisis-housing-november-20-1975	This document looks at the American housing crisis, the national housing goal and the roles of the government and church.

Church Documents and Teaching

Catechism Paragraph	Quotes
1734	"Freedom makes man *responsible* for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and ascesis enhance the mastery of the will over its acts."
1735	"*Imputability* and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments and other psychological or social factors."
1914	"Participation is achieved first of all by taking charge of the areas for which one assumes *personal responsibility*: by the care taken for the education of his family, by conscientious work, and so forth, man participates in the good of others and of society."
2218	"The fourth commandment reminds grown children of their *responsibilities toward their parents*. As much as they can, they must give them material and moral support in old age and in times of illness, loneliness or distress. Jesus recalls this duty of gratitude."
2221	"The fecundity of conjugal love cannot be reduced solely to the procreation of children, but must extend to their moral education and their spiritual formation. 'The *role of parents in education* is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.' The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable."
2225	"Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of *evangelizing their children*. Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the 'first heralds' for their children. They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church. A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remain a support for it throughout one's life."
2229	"As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to *choose a school for them* which corresponds to their own convictions. This right is fundamental. As far as possible parents have the duty of choosing schools that will best help them in their task as Christian educators. Public authorities have the duty of guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring the concrete conditions for its exercise."
2230	"When they become adults, children have the right and duty to *choose their profession and state of life*. They should assume their new responsibilities within a trusting relationship with their parents, willingly asking and receiving their advice and counsel. Parents should be careful not to exert pressure on their children either in the choice of a profession or in that of a spouse. This necessary restraint does not prevent them—quite the contrary—from giving their children judicious advice, particularly when they are planning to start a family."

Catechism Paragraph	Quotes
2237	"*Political authorities* are obliged to respect the fundamental rights of the human person. They will dispense justice humanely by respecting the rights of everyone, especially of families and the disadvantaged. The political rights attached to citizenship can and should be granted according to the requirements of the common good. They cannot be suspended by public authorities without legitimate and proportionate reasons. Political rights are meant to be exercised for the common good of the nation and the human community."
2240	"Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes, to exercise the right to vote, and to defend one's country:"
2241	"The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the *foreigner* in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him. Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens."
2429	"Everyone has the *right of economic initiative*; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all and to harvest the just fruits of his labour. He should seek to observe regulations issued by legitimate authority for the sake of the common good."
2430	"*Economic life* brings into play different interests, often opposed to one another. This explains why the conflicts that characterize it arise. Efforts should be made to reduce these conflicts by negotiation that respects the rights and duties of each social partner: those responsible for business enterprises, representatives of wage-earners—for example, trade unions—and public authorities when appropriate."
2431	"The *responsibility of the state*. 'Economic activity, especially the activity of a market economy, cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical or political vacuum. On the contrary, it presupposes sure guarantees of individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services. Hence the principal task of the state is to guarantee this security, so that those who work and produce can enjoy the fruits of their labours and thus feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly.... Another task of the state is that of overseeing and directing the exercise of human rights in the economic sector. However, primary responsibility in this area belongs not to the state but to individuals and to the various groups and associations which make up society.'"
2432	"Those *responsible for business enterprises* are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of *profits*. Profits are necessary, however. They make possible the investments that ensure the future of a business and they guarantee employment."

Films

Title, Year, Length	Producer, Link	Summary
Hope for Ukraine's displaced, 2022 00:05:27 minutes	Produced by: Catholic News Service youtube.com/watch?v=8sAxE9cQ66c&t=9s	Forced to leave their homes because of the war, Ukrainians find safe places to live elsewhere.
Rights and Responsibilities, 2016 00:03:30 minutes	Produced by: Catholic Relief Services youtube.com/watch?v=OPB6sXj6Fwo&t=3s	This video helps Catholics pray and reflect on what rights and responsibilities are being violated in their community and what they can do about it. A discussion guide on the topic can be found at crs.org/resource-center/CST-101.

Organizations

Name	Website	Description
Canadian Jesuits International	canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/	This organization's website contains various advocacy resources, including prayers, videos and webinars.
Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand	caritas.org.nz/	Having a preferential option for the poor requires Christians to keep in mind those most vulnerable. This organization offers resources on its website to help educate students on this important church priority.
Catholic Charities of St. Paul & Minneapolis	cctwincities.org/	This organization has a wonderful collection available on its website of brief statements from a broad diversity of sources on this key principle. Each quote can easily be used as a discussion starter or as information to learn more.
Catholic Missions In Canada	cmic.info/	Catholic Missions In Canada supports the faith of those in remote and isolated places across the country.
Catholic Relief Services	crs.org/ Email: info@crs.org	Catholic Relief Services' mission is to serve the most vulnerable. It feeds, acts as an instrument of peace, empowers communities and is a voice for the voiceless.

Center for Social Concerns University of Notre Dame	socialconcerns.nd.edu/	With God's love at the core, the Center for Social Concerns strives to touch hearts and minds by enacting Catholic social tradition through community research, teaching and learning for the sake of justice and the common good.
Citizens for Public Justice	cpj.ca/	This Canadian organization was founded 50 years ago. Its mission is to promote public justice in Canada through research, advocacy and public dialogue. It aims to see that government policies and practices reflect God's call for love, justice and creation. Its website offers many Canadian-focused resources for raising awareness and acting.
Development and Peace—Caritas Canada	devp.org/en/	Development and Peace—Caritas Canada educates Canadians about the causes of impoverishment and mobilizes them to act for change.
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul	ssvp.ca/	The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul exists to serve Christ through the ministry of love and respect and to help make society a more just place.

Papal Documents

Title and Link	Author, Year Published	Description
Caritas in Veritate vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html	Pope Benedict XVI, 2009	In this encyclical letter, Pope Benedict XVI writes, "A link has often been noted between claims to a 'right to excess', and even to transgression and vice, within affluent societies, and the lack of food, drinkable water, basic instruction and elementary health care in areas of the underdeveloped world and on the outskirts of large metropolitan centres. The link consists in this: individual rights, when detached from a framework of duties which grants them their full meaning, can run wild, leading to an escalation of demands which is effectively unlimited and indiscriminate."
Christifideles Laici vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html	Pope John Paul II, 1988	In Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation, he writes, "The inviolability of the *person* which is a reflection of the absolute inviolability of God, finds its primary and fundamental expression in the *inviolability of human life*. Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights—for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture—is false and illusory if *the right to life*, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination."
Laudato Si' vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html	Pope Francis, 2015	In Pope Francis' encyclical letter on care for our common home, he cautions, "Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing, and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. For example, changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children. There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. ...Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded." Particularly relevant to this key principle are paragraphs 25 and 157.

Mater et Magistra vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html	Pope John XXIII, 1961	In *Mater et Magistra*, Pope John Paul XXIII's encyclical on Christianity and social progress, he writes of the state's role and duty to protect the rights of all, "... Particularly of its weaker members, the workers, women and children." He further notes, "It can never be right for the State to shirk its obligation of working actively for the betterment of the condition of the workingman."
Pacem in Terris vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html	Pope John XXIII, 1963	The dignity of the human person requires that every man enjoy the right to act freely and responsibly. For this reason, therefore, in social relations, man should exercise his rights, fulfil his obligations, and, in the countless forms of collaboration with others, act chiefly on his own responsibility and initiative. Paragraphs 11 and 30 are particularly relevant to this key principle.

Scripture Quotes

Scripture Source	Scripture Quote
Exodus 22:22	"You shall not abuse any widow or orphan."
Exodus 22:25-27	"If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. If you take your neighbour's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; for it may be your neighbour's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbour cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate."
Leviticus 19:9-10	"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God."
Leviticus 22:11	"... But if a priest acquires anyone by purchase, the person may eat of them; and those that are born in his house may eat of his food."
Leviticus 25:35	"If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens."
Job 36:6	"He does not keep the wicked alive, but gives the afflicted their rights."
1 Corinthians 9:18	"What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel."
Ephesians 6:4	"And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
1 Timothy 5:8	"And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."
Hebrews 12:16	"See to it that no one becomes like Esau, an immoral and godless person, who sold his birthright for a single meal."
Revelation 2:7	"Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God."
Revelation 22:14	"Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates."

Prophets Among Us

St. Josephine Bakhita (1869-1947) — Patron saint of human trafficking

Josephine Bakhita was born in what is now western Sudan and had a happy and carefree life. However, at approximately seven years old, she was abducted by slave traders and sold multiple times before regaining her freedom. She was not treated well during her time as an enslaved person.

At one point, Josephine Bakhita was placed with the Canossian Sisters in Venice, Italy, where she was introduced to God. She was confirmed and made her first holy communion while with the sisters. Asked what she would do if she met her captors, she replied, "I would kneel and kiss their hands." She felt that had she not gone through hardship, she would not have found Christ. It is from her suffering that she found meaning and inspiration.

The patron saint of human trafficking and a beacon of hope for trafficking victims, Josephine Bakhita was inspirational in helping survivors recover from their traumas. She was loved and respected by those who knew her and dedicated her life to serving God. She had a good heart and good nature and did good work. Despite her trauma, she found direction in her life, becoming an example and solace to all who suffer or are exploited.

Faith can be a vital component of recovery for many survivors. Josephine Bakhita used her story to help others going through similar plights.

St. John Bosco (1815-1888) — "Father and Teacher of Youth"

John Bosco dedicated his work to Francis de Sales when he founded the Salesians of Don Bosco. He also helped found the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a congregation of nuns dedicated to the care and education of economically disadvantaged girls.

As an educator, John Bosco worked to ensure everyone had the right to be educated and learn how to better themselves. He went to disadvantaged children and started working with them and likewise opened a hospice for the children where they were taught tenderness and love. He also fed and provided these children with much-needed education, and when they could read and write, he would help them find stable jobs.

John Bosco is one of the pioneers of mutual aid societies that offered financial support to young migrant Catholic workers. He drew up regulations to help apprentices and their companions when they were not working or were ill.

"Remember that education is a matter of the heart, of which God is the sole master, and we will be unable to achieve anything unless God teaches us, and puts the key in our hands. Let us strive to make ourselves loved, and we will see the doors of many hearts open with great ease, and join with us in singing praises and blessing of Him who wished to make himself our model, our way, our example in everything, but especially in the education of the young…" (Saint John Bosco)

Thea Bowman (1937-1990) — Servant of God

Thea Bowman was born in Mississippi and became a Catholic when she was nine years old. At 15, she joined the Franciscan Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration of La Crosse.

Author Christopher Pramuk wrote, "No person in recent memory did more to resist segregation and racism in the Catholic Church than Thea Bowman." She inspired millions of people with her singing and her belief that God loved all races and faiths.

In 1989, American bishops told Thea Bowman that her black expressions of music and worship were un-Catholic. She then told the bishops that the Universal Church has people of all races and cultures, and they needed to find ways to consult them.

Thea Bowman became a highly acclaimed evangelizer, singer, teacher and writer, sharing the joy of the gospel and her rich cultural heritage throughout the nation. In 1978, with the support of her superior and religious community, she accepted an appointment to direct the Office of Intercultural Affairs for the Diocese of Jackson. She was also a founding faculty member of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies at Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

St. Martin de Porres (1579-1639) — Patron saint of mixed-race people

Martin de Porres was not allowed to become a member of a religious order because he was of mixed race. He did not accept this and asked to volunteer for the Dominican Convent of the Rosary. While there, he worked on many different tasks. Finally, at the age of 24, he was allowed to take his holy vows.

While still at the convent, Martin de Porres founded an orphanage and a children's hospital. He cared for those with the bubonic plague, regardless of their race or status, serving those less fortunate and persevering over racial injustice.

St. Martin de Porres is an excellent example of faithful perseverance.

Juan Gerardi (1922-1998) — Bishop and martyr

In the 1970s, Bishop Juan Gerardi was instrumental in getting the Guatemalan government to recognize Indigenous languages as official languages. He also received permission for radio stations to broadcast in Indigenous languages.

In 1988, Bishop Juan Gerardi was appointed to the government's National Reconciliation Commission. His task was to account for abuses during the civil war. He was also responsible for working on the Recovery of Historical Memory Project, sponsored by the church.

In 1996, the United Nations helped end the 36-year Guatemalan civil war. The military insisted on immunity for war crimes, which resulted in the destruction of more than 400 Indigenous villages. Immunity was not granted, and human rights abuses were investigated. Two years later, Bishop Juan Gerardi, then auxiliary bishop of Guatemala City and head of the archdiocesan office of human rights, presented the findings in a 1,400-page work, *Guatemala: Nunca Más! (Guatemala: Never Again!)*. It outlined four decades of assassination, torture and massacres, including the death of hundreds of lay catechists. He concluded that the military caused nearly 90% of the 200,000 non-combatant deaths and disappearances.

Issuing the report, Bishop Gerardi stated, "We are collecting the people's memories because we want to contribute to the construction of a different country. This path was and continues to be full of risks, but the construction of the Kingdom of God entails risks, and only those who have the strength to confront these risks can be its builders." Two days later (April 26, 1998), military assassins ambushed Bishop Juan Gerardi in his home and smashed his skull with a concrete slab.

"Unless we know the truth the wounds of the past will stay open and cannot be healed…
Truth is the primary word, and is what will break this cycle of violence and death and open up the future of hope and light for all."

(Bishop Juan Gerardi)

St. Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680) — Patron saint of ecology

Kateri Tekakwitha was born in a Mohawk village. When her family died of smallpox, she was raised by her uncle. She was known to be patient and diligent and was a skilled worker. When she refused to marry, she was given more work. However, this did not change her mind, and her uncle accepted that she had no desire to be married.

Kateri Tekakwitha converted to Catholicism when she was 19 years old. She took a vow of chastity and pledged to marry only Jesus Christ. Because her decision was unpopular with her family, she moved to a Jesuit community south of Montreal. She was very devout and prayed for the conversion of her fellow Mohawks. She died at the age of 24.

Because of her determination and faith, Kateri Tekakwitha received her first holy communion on Christmas Day, 1677. She led a life of prayer and penitential practices, even though she could not read or write. She often fasted, and when she did eat, she would taint her food so that it would not have a good flavour.

Kateri Tekakwitha taught the young and helped those in the village who were poor or sick. She was referred to as the "Holy Woman." Fr. Peter Cholenic said, "Kateri was so filled with the spirit of God, and tasted such sweetness in its possession, that her entire exterior gave testimony of it; her eyes, her gestures, her words were filled with divine love. If one were with her, it did not take long to be touched by it, and to be warmed with this heavenly fire."

Kateri Tekakwitha's motto became, "Who can tell me what is most pleasing to God that I may do it?" She spent a lot of time praying, and when the winter hunting season took her away from the village, she made her own chapel in the woods. She loved the rosary so much that she carried it with her always.

Kateri Tekakwitha remembered everything she was told about the life of Jesus and His followers, and people often asked her to tell them stories. When asked why they gathered around her in church, people responded that they felt close to God when Kateri prayed because her face changed—as if she were looking at God's face.

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