

PEACE AND JUSTICE



Article – 15

The following is an excerpt from: <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-title>

Solidarity

52. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions and requires us to eradicate racism and address the extreme poverty and disease plaguing so much of the world. **Solidarity** also includes the scriptural call to welcome the stranger among us—including immigrants seeking work—by ensuring that they have opportunities for a safe home, education for their children, and a decent life for their families and by ending the practice of separating families through deportation. In light of the Gospel's invitation to be peacemakers, our commitment to solidarity with our neighbors—at home and abroad—also demands that we promote peace and pursue justice in a world marred by terrible violence and conflict. Decisions on the use of force should be guided by traditional moral criteria and undertaken only as a last resort. As Bl. Paul VI taught, "If you want peace, work for justice" (*World Day of Peace Message*, January 1, 1972). 53. In reference to solidarity, a special emphasis must be given to the Church's **preferential option for the poor**. While the common good embraces all, those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need deserve preferential concern. A basic moral test for any society is how it treats those who are most vulnerable. In a society marred by deepening disparities between rich and poor, Sacred Scripture gives us the story of the Last Judgment (see Mt 25:31-46) and reminds us that we will be judged by our response to the "least among us." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains:

Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a *preferential love* on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere. (no. 2448). 54. Pope Benedict XVI has taught that "love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to [the Church] as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel" (*Deus Caritas Est*, no. 22). This preferential option for the poor and vulnerable includes all who are marginalized in our nation and beyond—unborn children, persons with disabilities, the elderly and terminally ill, victims of injustice and oppression, and immigrants. 55. These four principles and related themes from Catholic social teaching provide a moral framework that does not easily fit ideologies of "right" or "left," "liberal" or "conservative," or the platform of any political party. They are not partisan or sectarian, but reflect fundamental ethical principles that are common to all people. 56. As leaders of the Church in the United States, we bishops have the duty to apply these moral principles to key public policy decisions facing our nation, outlining directions on issues that have important moral and ethical dimensions. More detailed information on policy directions adopted by our bishops' conference can be found in Part II of this document. We hope Catholics and others will seriously consider these policy applications as they make their own decisions in public life.

In Christ,
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