

society more just and more accepting of others. When we begin to see in new ways, we also begin to see more. When we see the injustice of such an example, we often see more than we thought. For example, a follow-up question must be asked: Will Americans ever acknowledge and come to terms with that other social sin prevalent in the founding of their country—yet untold crimes against Native Americans? The list may go on and into other circumstances of social sin in our history.

## Social Teaching

### What Is Meant by “Catholic Social Teaching”?

Pope Leo XIII stands out as a giant. He is the one who provided the starting point for what is now more than a century of Catholic social teaching. He was the first to emphasize the radical primacy of human dignity and human solidarity and use these as basic moral criteria for evaluating the validity of political, social, or economic policies and structures. The pope proclaimed a firm “no” to those who attempted to privatize religion and to those who espoused an excessive individualism at the expense of the broader community. This was his “yes” to the gospel message and to the example of Jesus. His *Magna Carta* for justice was his encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*, already mentioned. Over more than one hundred years, subsequent popes up to and including John Paul II have continued to develop and apply the principles of human dignity and human solidarity to criticism of emerging social, political, and economic situations. There has thus developed within the Catholic tradition of the last hundred years a body of literature known collectively as “social teaching.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines social teaching: “The teaching of the Church on the truth of revelation about human

dignity, human solidarity, and the principles of justice and peace; the moral judgments about economic and social matters required by such truth and about the demands of justice and peace” (2419–2422). John Paul II reflected on this further when he described Catholic social teaching:

### CALL TO JUSTICE IN WORLD FAITHS

**Christianity** “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” (Matt 7:12)

**Islam** “None of you shall be true believers unless you wish for your brother the same that you wish for yourself.” (Sunnatt)

**Judaism** “That which you do not wish for yourself you shall not wish for your neighbor. This is the whole law; the rest is only commentary.” (Talmud, Shabbat 31)

**Taoism** “The successes of your neighbor and their losses will be to you as if they were your own.” (T’ai-Shang Kan-Ying P’ien)

**Buddhism** “Do not offend others as you would not want to be offended.” (Udanavarga 5:18)

**Hinduism** “Everything you should do you will find in this: Do nothing to others that would hurt you if it were done to you.” (Mahabharata 5:1517)

**Confucianism** “Is there any rule that one should follow all of one’s life? Yes! The rule of the gentle goodness: That which we do not wish to be done to us, we do not do to others.” (Analectas 15:23)

Nor is it an ideology, but rather the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church’s tradition. Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man [sic] and his vocation, a vocation which