

LET JUSTICE FLOW LIKE A RIVER

The Historical and Doctrinal Roots
of Catholic Social Teaching

Classical Sources

- Key papal social encyclicals 1891-1991
- Encyclicals with references to CST
- Critical episcopal documents
- Commentaries by theologians and lay experts

Key Social Encyclicals

- *Rerum Novarum* (On the condition of labour), Leo XIII, 1891
- *Quadregesimo Anno* (The reconstruction of the social order), Pius XI, 1931
- *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and social progress), John XXIII, 1961
- *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on earth), John XXIII, 1963
- *Gaudium et Spes* (The pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world), Second Vatican Council/ Paul VI, 1965
- *Popolorum Progressio* (The development of peoples), Paul VI, 1967

- *Octogesima Adveniens* (A call to action), Paul VI, 1971
- *Iustitia in Mundo* (Justice in the World), Synod of bishops/Paul VI 1971
- *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelisation in the modern world), Paul VI, 1975
- *Laborem Exercens* (On human work), John Paul II, 1981
- *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On social concern), John Paul II, 1987
- *Centesimus Annus* (The hundredth year), John Paul II, 1991

Other Relevant Encyclicals

- *Redemptor Hominis* (The redeemer of mankind), John Paul II, 1979
- *Evangelium Vitae* (The gospel of life), John Paul II, 1995
- *Deus Caritas Est* (God is love), Benedict XVI, 2006
- *Spe Salvi* (Hope of salvation), Benedict XVI, 2007

LEADING THEMES

i. social + environmental ethics

- Human dignity, personalism, development
- Freedom, rights, reciprocal responsibility
- Family as foundation of society
- Common good and solidarity
- Social justice and equality
- Preferential option for the poor
- Respect for cultural autonomy + diversity
- Stewardship of creation + sustainability

ii. Principles of political economy

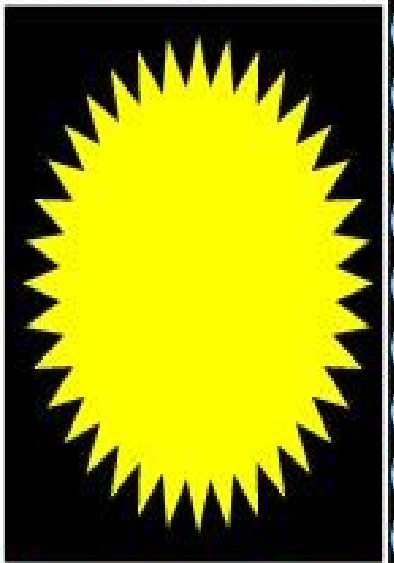
- Economic justice
- Universal destination of goods
- Dignity of work, fair wages, workers rights
- Subsidiarity, supplementation and role of government
- Participation in civil + political processes
- Global development and peace

Doctrinal Bases of these teachings

- Genesis creation accounts
- God's self-revelation in Ex 3.13-15
- Various covenants such as the Noahic, Mosaic and Davidic

The Creation Story

On **day one** ,
God said, "Let
there be **light**."
God called the
light day, and
the darkness
He called
night.



On **day two** , God made the **sky**.



On **day three** , God separated
the **land** from the **waters** and
created **flowers**, **trees**, and
grass .



Genesis Creation Accounts

- All creation's good, a gift of God's love 1.31
- Humans must cultivate and care for the earth 2.16
- Humans have special dignity, formed by his breath and in his image 1.27, 2.7
- **Doctrinal implications:**
 - humans have special value and dignity in God's eyes
 - caring for the earth is humanity's responsibility and fulfillment

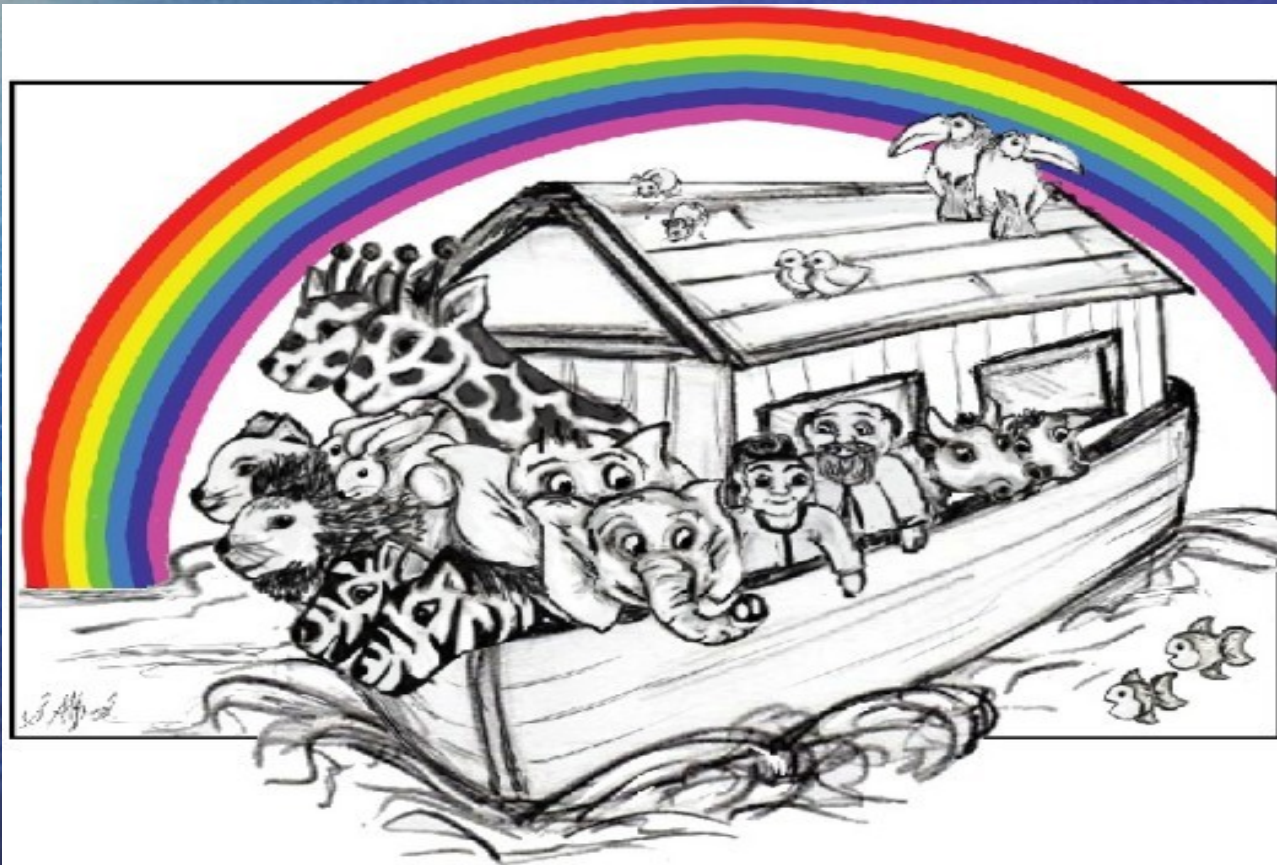


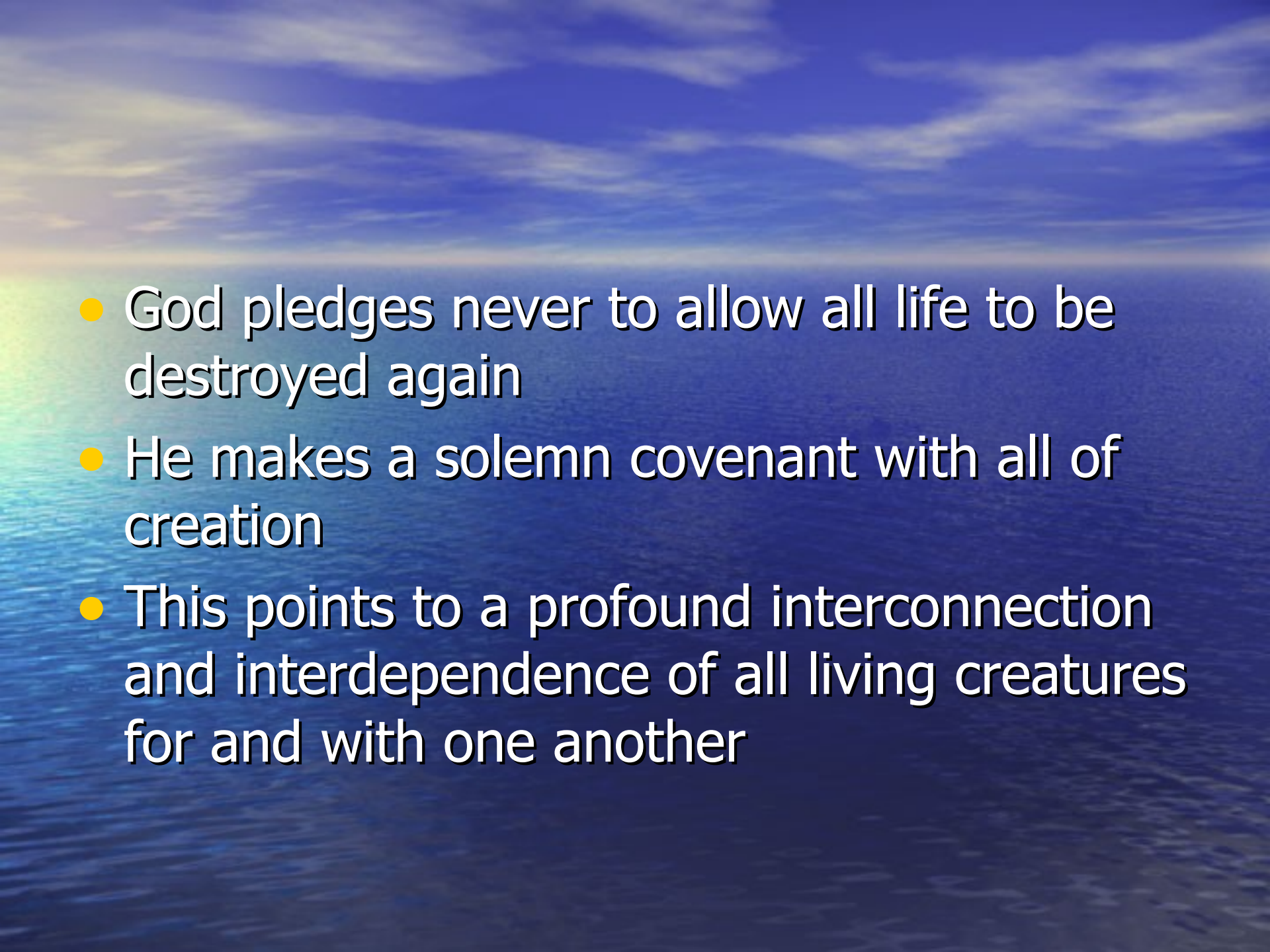
God's Self-Revelation in Ex 3.13-15

- Not so much *I am* (**ontological**) as *I am for you* (**soteriological**)
- God is the one who cares for, saves and redeems his people = the basis of human solidarity and the '*social contract*'

The Covenantal Dimension

- Gen 9.8-17



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- God pledges never to allow all life to be destroyed again
 - He makes a solemn covenant with all of creation
 - This points to a profound interconnection and interdependence of all living creatures for and with one another

Mosaic covenant Ex 19.16-20.21

- 10 commandments are a response to being God's chosen people cf Dt 4.13, 10.4
- Detailed cultic, dietary + social mores of Ex 20.22-31.18 and Leviticus are attempts to create an entire culture and civilization based on this calling
- Goal = sustaining a community and common life utterly contrary to the slavery of Egypt



Davidic covenant 2 Sam 7.1-29

- God's blessing will remain with his chosen people as long as the king continues to be the defender and shepherd of his people according to the covenant and law

Historic Development of the CST Tradition

- Prophets eg Amos (3.13-4.3,5.7-13) and Micah (3.5-12) revile new wealth and idolatry that permit social solidarity to be replaced by bribery, injustice and degradation of the poor
- Sabbatical (Lev 25.1-7) and jubilee years (25.8-19 – even if never observed) are attempts to restore people to the land, relieve destitution, and minimise the impact of slavery

- Jesus (and evangelists) clearly refer to redemption + holiness traditions in story of first sermon at Nazareth Lk 4.16-22
- Matthew portrays Jesus as new Moses in his account of Sermon on the Mount and the 8 beatitudes cf Mt 5.1-7.29



VERITAS

- Early Fathers like Augustine tried to tackle justice issues such as care for the poor, fighting hunger and making peace
- In scholasticism (11-15th cents) Thomas Aquinas, using Aristotle's teaching on natural law, developed teaching on property ownership, church/state relations and the role of government

SANCTVS THOMAS
AQUINAS



VERITAS
MEDITA
TVR QVT
VR MEVM ET
LABIA MEA
DE ESTABVN
TVR IMPV
PROVERBIO

INUITVD
INIS VSVS
QVE INRE
BVS NOMI
NANDIS S
EQVENDV P
HILDSOFFV
CESETOMNE

- This led to scholars such as Francisco de Vitoria (1483-1546) and Grotius to sketch the outlines of a common international law
- At university of Salamanca, series of great teachers such as de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez (1548-1617) debate current issues such as slavery of the Indians, usury, and even inflation



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Antecedents of Modern Encyclicals

- In *Rerum Novarum* Leo drew from elements of current Catholic European socialism
- For instance, Archbishop von Ketteler's ideas on family dislocation from rural settings, child labour, long work hours, unsanitary conditions, workers' need for rest

- Leo also added own ideas on justice and charity, need for a family wage, rights of workers to own property and form labour unions, the role of government and right of the Church to speak out on social issues

Key Themes from 1931 Onwards

- Defence of and key role of the family
- Common good and solidarity
- Social justice and equality
- Respect for cultural autonomy + diversity
- Global impact of 'structures of sin'
- Stewardship of creation and sustainability

Continuing Legacy of *Centesimus Annus* (1991)

- John Paul II describes integral human personalism as the spiritual and Christian anthropology forming the basis of human dignity
- He condemns first world materialism, consumerism and self-absorption as deeply inimical to this vision

