



Digest
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The Catholic Church and Human Rights

Since the end of World War II, human rights have become one of the foundations of the international order and a cornerstone for policy-making and advocacy. Drawing on her long tradition of social teaching, the Catholic Church fully supports this new orientation of international relations, and has further developed her own doctrine of human rights. As 2018 marked the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is interesting to look at some examples of Catholic influence in the foundation and practice of human rights. Below are few links which give a nuanced historical overview of the engagement of the Church with human rights, the doctrinal underpinnings, and examples of her practical commitment to them.

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson gives a good overview of the Catholic doctrine of human rights, founded on the human dignity endowed to every human person by being created in the image of God. Sketching a short historical background, the article focuses on the centrality of freedom of religion in the human rights corpus, but also highlights tensions that can arise between the Catholic understanding of human rights and some other interpretations, such as right to same-sex marriage or reproductive rights.

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=10503>

The Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching offers a clear presentation and analysis of human rights doctrine, underscoring the historical development of the social teaching of the Catholic Church.

<https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/548/article/human-rights-catholic-thought>

The following article shows how, although today the Catholic Church is committed to human rights and is actively engaged in promoting them in many different and diverse areas, she initially struggled to endorse them. <https://www.scross.co.za/2013/03/human-rights-and-the-catholic-church/>

A panel of experts examines the challenges facing human rights seventy years later, showing the position of the Catholic Church on this important milestone in international relations.

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2018/12/05/expert-says-human-rights-created-iron-shield-shared-by-catholic-church/>

Pope Francis argues that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitutes a crucial tool to end conflicts in the world, and underscores the ideological misuse that threatens the same rights.

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2018/12-january/news/world/pope-francis-urges-use-of-declaration-of-human-rights-now-in-its-70th-year>

Pope Francis has been at forefront of promoting and protecting human rights. This article lists many areas of violated rights that the Pope has been advocating for, since the beginning of his pontificate.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-12/pope-francis-70-years-universal-declaration-human-rights.html>

The following paper examines the role of Small Christian communities (SCCs) in the promotion and protection of human rights, focusing on the AMECEA countries.

<https://sedosmission.org/old/eng/Tarimo.htm>

This article explores Catholic Social teaching on the rights of workers and the right to work, especially the theological and moral foundations of these rights. <https://spotlight.africa/2018/04/30/part-1-catholic-social-teaching-and-the-rights-of-workers/>

Next, an activist's look at human rights and the Catholic Church in Latin America, underlining the tension that arises between 'conservative' and 'activist' uses of human rights discourse. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/openglobalrights/ariadna-estévez/myth-and-reality-catholic-church-and-human-rights-in-latin-america>

At the 70th anniversary of the Universal declaration of human rights, the Catholic Church in Europe through COMECE (the Commission of European Catholic Episcopal Conferences to the European Union), issued this statement reasserting the universality, inalienability, interdependence and interconnection of human rights, and their foundation on the human dignity of every person. <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/36157>

Although not directly related to the human rights issue, this link leads to important historical documents—two statements and one declaration—of the Catholic Bishops of Southern Africa, using rights discourse to challenge what was happening in South Africa in 1977. http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/inventories/inv_pdfo/AG1977/AG1977-A24-10-1-4-001-jpeg.pdf

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