Principles of Catholic Teaching - a Useful Reference List

Human Dignity
Every person is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and is therefore invaluable and worthy of respect.

Respect for Human Life
All people, through every stage of life, have inherent dignity and a right to life. Human life at every stage is precious and therefore worthy of protection and respect.

Human Equality
Equality of all people comes from their inherent human dignity. Differences in talents are part of God's plan, but social, cultural and economic discrimination is not.

The Principle of Solidarity
We are one human family. We are called to work globally for justice.

The Principle of the Common Good
The common good is the social conditions - economic, cultural, political - that allow people to reach their full potential and to realise their human dignity. Individual rights are experienced within the context of promotion of the common good.

Preferential Protection for the Poor and Vulnerable
Catholic teaching and the good of society require that we put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. Public policy decisions must be assessed in terms of how they affect the poor.

The Universal Destination of Goods
The earth and all it produces is intended for every person. Private ownership is acceptable, but there is a responsibility to ensure that all have enough to live in dignity, and that we share any surplus so that others do not go without.

The Principle of Participation
People have the right and duty to participate in society, for the well being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. They must not be shut out from work and political participation.

The Principle of Association
The way we organise society affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to develop. The family must be protected.

The Principle of Subsidiarity
No higher level of organisation (such as government) should perform any function that can best be handled at a lower level by those who are closer to the issues or problems.

The Principle of Stewardship
We have a responsibility to care for the gifts God has given us. This includes the environment, our personal talents, our health and other resources.