



Call to Family, Community, and Participation

Principle II

We continue our summer series on Catholic Social Teaching with the second principle: Call to Family, Community, and Participation. If the first principle teaches that we are sacred (i.e., created by God and have dignity), this principle reminds us that we are social.

The opening pages of Genesis teach us, “*Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness.*” (Gn 1:26) Notice that the first person plural “us.” Let *us* make human beings in our image and likeness. If God is not a solitary being, but rather a Communion of Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – then we will only find our fulfillment in relationships. In this light, we have a right and a duty to participate in society, i.e., in social institutions like marriage and family, local communities, the Church, government, etc.

The most basic and fundamental social institution is marriage and family. Marriage and family is the place where faith is born and nourished. It is where moral values such as patience, kindness, generosity, forgiveness, hard work, and respect are taught. In short, marriage and family life is where we realize our God-given potential and dignity as men and women.

St. John Paul II referred to the family as a little “domestic Church” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 21). Our Tradition teaches us that marriage is a sacrament. That is, it is a sign of and a means for making the love between Jesus Christ and His Bride, the Church, present in the world today. Through the give and take present in relationships, including the opportunities for generosity and self-sacrifice, we learn to love.

We are called to help promote and support marriage and family life, which is the basic building block for creating a healthy society. Just as our physical body is made up of cells, so societies are made up of millions of families. If families are healthy and strong, societies will be as well. Unfortunately, the reverse is also true. Societies suffer greatly when marriage and family life become strained or experience brokenness.

As we know all too well, marriage is experiencing many challenges today. There is much brokenness caused by communication problems, abuse, infidelity, addiction, etc. Children, for their part, often experience great pain growing up in broken families. In this light, we are called to help rebuild the vital institution of marriage and family via healing and our prayers and support. May we remember those famous words by St. John Paul II, "The future of the world and of the Church passes through the family." (*Familiaris Conortio*, 75)

This principle also challenges us to participate in higher levels of society such as state/national governments and the Church. These institutions are only as strong and healthy as people of faith and goodwill contribute to them. At their best, these larger institutions are the service of individuals/families and particularly, the poor and the vulnerable.

Finally, it's helpful to remember the principle of subsidiary, which holds that human affairs are best handled at the lowest possible level, those affected by decisions. In other words, state and national government should allow families to work things out whenever possible, only stepping in when necessary. The goal of subsidiary is to build a multi-layered civil society where institutions at all levels (individual, local, state, and national) work together for the common good and the well being of all.

In short, created in the image of God, we are social beings who need to participate in community, the Church, and civil society to achieve our full potential as human beings. The more you can contribute to a well-ordered society, the greater opportunity you will have of reaching your full potential as a human being and God-willing, become a joyful saint for the glory of God. ~St. Therese, pray for us!



Society of Flourishing Golden Puppies