

## Catholic Social Teaching & Fair Trade

**"The economy should work for people, and not the other way around."**

—U.S. Bishops in *Economic Justice for All*



As members of the Catholic Church, each of us is called to do our part to make sure that the economy works for everyone, especially our brothers and sisters in greatest need. Fair Trade is an important first step. Through the selling of Fair Trade goods such as coffee, chocolate and hand crafts, disadvantaged producers earn a fair price for their labor, get access to credit and training, and develop mutually beneficial, long-term relationships with organizations dedicated to the main principles of Catholic Social Teaching: Human Dignity, Common Good, Subsidiarity, Solidarity, Option for the Poor and Stewardship.

**"The dignity of the human person, realized in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured."**

— U.S. Bishops in *Economic Justice for All*

This simple phrase above, written 20 years ago by the U.S. Catholic Bishops, conveys succinctly the core insight of Catholic Social Teaching on the economy. Over and over again, during more than 100 years of theological reflection and writing on modern economic issues, the Catholic Church has confirmed that the "constitutive purpose" of the economy is to serve the common good. The market cannot legitimate itself. The economy is legitimate in our Catholic tradition only to the extent that it meets the material needs of every member of our human family and the moral demands of justice and solidarity.

**"[The common good is] the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily."**

—*Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Each of us is called to do our part as consumers to ensure that the economy works for everyone. Our bishops remind us in *A Catholic Framework for Economic Life* that, "Consumers are moral agents in economic life, by our choices...we enhance or diminish economic opportunity, community life, and social justice." Fair Trade creates opportunities for us to respond to this call in a small but significant way every day through the choices we make as consumers. When we make the conscious decision to purchase Fair Trade items, we are putting the values of Catholic Social Teaching into action, and working to realize our vision of economic justice.



**"[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good."**

— U.S. Bishops in *Economic Justice for All*

For more information about Catholic Social Teaching, please visit the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' website: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/>

For more information about the Catholic Church's support of Fair Trade, visit: <http://www.crsfairtrade.org/>

**"As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental 'option for the poor'...those with the greatest needs require the greatest response."**

— U.S. Bishops in *Economic Justice for All*