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**Catholic Social Teaching and the American Experiment**

**Description:** The question of whether Roman Catholicism is compatible with the American project in liberal democracy remains contentious. Some contemporary Catholic intellectuals answer in the negative. In this lecture Professor John Pinheiro assesses the merits of the American project by focusing on the founding period in light of the principles of Catholic social teaching.

**Categorization: H2 Christian Social Teaching; L1 American History**

I. America: "A Nation with the Soul of a Church"?

II. Religious Liberty in Colonial America

III. Can Catholics Support the Declaration of Independence?

IV. Is Religious Liberty Religious Indifferentism?

V. Subsidiarity, the Human Person, and the U.S. Constitution

VI. The "Most Cherished of American" Freedoms"

VII. Can We "Redeem the Time"?

Catholic Social Teaching

Three Root Assumptions of Catholic Social Teaching: 1) The human person has transcendent value. 2) Because of this the good of the person cannot be subordinated to other goods. 3) It follows that social structures, governmental or otherwise, must either be ordered to this good or at least not interfere with it. Source: Dr. Stephan Davis, Professor of Theology, Aquinas College (GR)

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, issued by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, gives four "permanent principles" of the Church's social doctrine: the dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. Source: Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004), chap. 4, http://www.vatican.va/roman\_curia/pontifical\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\_pc\_justpeace\_doc\_20060526\_compendio-dott-soc\_en.html.

The Catholic bishops of the United States identify seven themes: Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity; and Care for God’s Creation. Source: United States Bishops, “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching,” <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching.cfm>

Book-Length Treatment

John C. Pinheiro, *The American Experiment in Ordered Liberty* (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, 2019).