

THE COMMON GOOD IS: “...THE SUM TOTAL OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS WHICH ALLOW PEOPLE, EITHER AS GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS, TO REACH THEIR FULFILMENT MORE FULLY AND MORE EASILY”¹



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What does the Church teach us about the principle of the common good?

At the heart of the teaching about the common good is the understanding that human persons are social beings by nature. Hence, human persons can never live for her or his own ‘individual good’. Instead, human persons can only seek the ‘common good’ together with fellow human persons.

In her Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] the Church clearly states:

“The common good concerns the life of all. It call for prudence from each, and even more from those who exercise the office of authority. It consists of *three essential elements*.”²

The three essential elements of the common good

1. Respect for the person: public authorities are bound to respect, in the name of the common good, the ‘fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person’. Respect for the person speaks against the utilitarian slogan which advocates ‘the greatest good for the greatest number’. Instead, Mother Church insists that majorities must share all rights with all persons.³

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1906

² CCC paragraph 1906

³ CCC paragraph 1907

2. Social well-being and development of the group⁴: of the essence of the second element is that '...development is the epitome of all social duties'. This duty enjoins the authority to act as arbitrators between different or various interests. Most importantly, though, is its bounden duty to make available to all person's basic human needs for decent living, namely, food, clothing, shelter, health, education, work and the right to establish a family.
3. Peace⁵ is the third essential element and refers to 'the stability and security of a just order'. In other words, it is the responsibility of the authority to ensure by means that are morally acceptable that its citizens live and thrive in security and therefore, in peace.

Use the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmE5gWBzfao> to watch a short video on the Common Good.

⁴ CCC paragraph 1908

⁵ CCC paragraph 1909