

Paying Citizenship's Price:  
Confronting Obstacles to Solidarity and Civic Engagement

Among 21st Century U.S. Catholics

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operate in recent (1981-present) Vatican and U.S. episcopal social teaching? How are these distinct from, or related to, evolving understandings of solidarity and preference for the poor/vulnerable one also finds in this teaching? To what degree are practices of solidarity and civic engagement presented as desirable or morally required for Catholics and other Christians?

What circumstances (cultural, socio-economic, and political) have shaped understandings and practices of civic engagement among U.S. citizens over the past three

decades concerning the purported decline of the informed citizen and erosion of civic participation in the U.S. amidst and amidst such causes? What are the

attention to claims about civic disengagement and political disempowerment in the face of

ends, and forms of civic participation and solidarity being affected by these changing

circumstances both locally and on larger societal scales?

social teachings about solidarity and civic engagement? To get at this question I will

consider and analyze selected examples of practical leadership and on the ground civic

engagement around two signature Catholic social issues: working families' right to a

family-schedule and the protection of life (from womb to tomb)? What do U.S.

Catholics' action or inaction in these two areas reveal about types of civic

engagement their church's social teaching warrants, motivates, advocates or requires?

How do these findings compare with those of other scholars on the historical and

analytical. Among the relatively affluent Catholic community in the United States

official Catholic social teaching too often remains merely unacknowledged in the pages of

read documents, and too infrequently translated into concrete, persistent action by

Catholic institutions, leaders, pastors, educators and people in the pews have

overlooked Church social teaching in ways that have kept costly practices of solidarity

and civic engagement at arms length. When civic engagement is mentioned at all in local

parishes, it is in connection to supporting and praying for the safety of military personnel.

That civic engagement in the name of solidarity is a duty incumbent on all citizens, and

that this engagement will entail costs--of time, attention, comfort, or resources-- is a

possibility that is ignored or at least severely downplayed. Thus do most U.S. Catholics

fail to see the connection between their social teaching and the need for a more

robust engagement with the world, one that is rooted in the most fundamental

of the Church's social teaching.

This state of affairs is directly contrary to the arc of recent Catholic social

perhaps not explicitly enough) that undertaking the responsibilities of civic engagement

for the common good, recognizing what Jacques Maritain has called 'the suffering due to solidarity.' I intend to address this problem, to probe its causes, and to propose

what may and should be done about it, and by whom. I hope to articulate a constructive

capacious and multifaceted understanding of solidarity practice. My constructive argument

will be informed by practical and theoretical resources in the areas of contemporary

liberationist movements.

III. The Democracy, Culture and Community

immense opportunities to set this study within a rich comparative context. I am eager to

seek out, and to converse with international colleagues concerning resources that will

enable me to compare and contrast the circumstances and reception of Catholic teachings

on civic engagement in the U.S. with the circumstances and reception of these teachings

among Catholic leaders and citizens during this same period in the national settings

(Lithuania, Peru and Indonesia) represented in the DCCIR project. Given the tight

complications of my U.S. social location within the history of international power

relationships, I believe that the DCCIR will

facilitate to challenge, expand, and improve my analysis, interpretation, and

conclusions regarding the relationship between

publication in such venues as *Theological Studies*, *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, *The*

*Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, or *the Journal of Church and State*. I will also

consider expanding this work into a monograph-length piece whose target audience

includes students, scholars, and pastors, as well as the interested Catholic public.

and the interested Catholic public.