



which for Christians is founded on the idea of being created in the image of God, but that applies even for the secular world as source and aim of all political and juridical orders. On this basis the guidelines for the social and political activities are developed.

The first guideline is **the principle of common good**. The common good is the sum of the social and political conditions for a human life to be successful. Be it local affairs politics or the global politics at the United Nations, politics should always orient it-self on the common good, meaning to improve the chances of development of people and indeed of the whole person and all persons. On the one hand politics should fight poverty and erase oppression, and on the other hand secure freedom and ensure justice. This aim is served by two other principles of the Christian social teaching, the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity.

The **principle of solidarity** underlines the central meaning of solidarity for politics rooted in the understanding of human dignity. Solidarity is the consciousness of the conjointness and sense of responsibility, which finds its source in the personalistic image of man. Whether in family or society, in business or economy, in the state or international relations - without solidarity, cohabitation of human beings is unthinkable. Solidarity is on the one hand a virtue, but on the other hand a structural principle of the order of the state. It is the capacity and the readiness of the individual to recognize the dignity and the rights of its fellow men, and to express this understanding in its own lifestyle and actions. As a structural principle it doesn't only influence the social and labour legislations, but the whole legal order that wants to provide solidarity independently of the daily decisions of the citizens.

Solidarity isn't possible without subsidiarity. The **principle of subsidiarity** is a guideline of Christian social teaching organising the relation between state and society. The state should offer society (individual citizens, families, groups and enterprises) support to self-help –no more, no less. The concept of subsidiarity comes from the latin "subsidium ferre" and means granting assistance, offering support or a shelter.

The principle of subsidiarity acts from the assumption that everything an individual citizen (and the organizations he has build him self such as family or enterprises) can undertake, should never be detracted by the state. In this sense it is the central fundament for an order of the state build on freedom and the dignity of the person. It has a dimension triggering action from the state and at the same time a limiting effect. It forces it in assisting the sub-, smaller communities with the aim of enabling them in a better position, so as to help the individual citizens develop a human dignified life, consequently helping them to a personal existence. At the same time it doesn't allow an intervention in the areas of life and duties of these communities if they are in the position to settle, or accomplish them themselves. The principle of subsidiarity rests upon the anthropologic recognition that the success of a human life is first and foremost dependant on the readiness and capacity of the person to seize opportunities, take risks, endure strenuousness and generate achievements.

In order for the above sketched principles of the organising of economy and society, state and international relations to be productive, the Christian social teaching should be collaborating with all social science disciplines, specially economics, sociology, legal and political sciences. They help to analyze the signs of the times and offer norms and maxims. This discussion with the social developments has been reflected in the light of the principals of the Christian social teaching in the papal social encyclicals from "Rerum Novarum" (1891) to "Centesimus Annus" (1991). The fact that the teaching of these principles has not remained a theory but has in the 19th and 20th century also made a huge practical impact is to be reflected in the development of the social security system in the German speaking countries, in the breakdown of communism and the post communism transformation processes, in the strengthened attention to problems of the third world and last but not least in the European integration process.

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Further reading suggestions:

- "Centesimus Annus" [http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0214/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0214/_INDEX.HTM)
- "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church" (Rome 2004)