

## Catholics Called to the Common Good Bulletin Insert

*Reading the founding documents of the United States, one has to be impressed by the concept of freedom they enshrine: a freedom designed to enable people to fulfill their duties and responsibilities toward the family and toward the common good of the community."*

[Pope John Paul II,](#)

[Address to Ambassador Claiborne Boggs, December 16, 1997](#)

# What is the Common Good?

Are we in this together or should we look out only for ourselves? In a country where everything seems less secure—our jobs, health care, pensions, national defense, the environment, our kids' tuitions, and even our marriages—it is easy to lose sight of the **common good** and the call to care for our neighbors as ourselves. A **culture the common good** is one in which people look out for each other and concern for one another is reflected in the corporations, communities, entertainment, and government we produce.

A **culture of the common good** provides for the health, welfare, and advancement of all people, regardless of race, gender, religion economic class. This central goal of Catholic Social Teaching expresses our faith's understanding that society functions best when decisions are made with an eye toward what benefits everyone, and not just the few. In the words of Pope John Paul II, the common good refers to the "good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all."



Concern for the **common good** is deeply enshrined in the values of our nation as well. The first three words of our Constitution's Preamble, "We the people," remind us that the United States is first and foremost a community of human relationships. Unlike many nations, that bond comes not from a common ethnicity or religion but from our common humanity and our shared belief in the freedom and dignity of all people.

This balance between self- and shared-interest should not be understood only as a summons to perform works of charity. While we should work to help the least fortunate, the **common good** is best served when all are able to make their own contributions to social and economic life. In this respect, our Christian and American understanding of the **common good** impels us to seek a world where all have the opportunity to realize their full human potential, engage in productive work, and lead fulfilled lives.

The erosion of community life that accompanies this era of greed, materialism, and excessive individualism ranks among the most imminent threats to our national well-being. In fact, one Zogby poll found that "greed and materialism" topped a list as the most urgent moral crisis in the US. Lost retirement savings due to recent corporate accounting scandals, dissolution of family life under the weight of overworked and underpaid parents, and growing fears about the long-term effects of global climate change are reminders that individual decisions can have painful and far-reaching consequences. In answering this **call to the common good**, we express our understanding that rising tides should lift all boats—we are better off individually when all are better off as a whole.

**For more information on how you can be part of a growing network of Catholics who are committed to the common good, see [www.thecatholicalliance.org](http://www.thecatholicalliance.org) or [www.paxchristiusa.org](http://www.paxchristiusa.org) or call your local contact:**

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## Catholics Called to the Common Good

A PROJECT OF CATHOLICS IN ALLIANCE FOR THE COMMON GOOD AND PAX CHRISTI USA

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