

Chapter 9

Answer Key for Double-Check Questions

1. *Summarize the Old Law's teaching on material possessions.*

The Old Testament tells us that God gave the Earth and all its resources to the whole human race and that we are called to care for them as well as enjoy them. This does not mean private property is discouraged; on the contrary, everyone needs certain material possessions to survive. The Books of Exodus and Leviticus both recognize a right to personal possessions. And outside of unusual circumstances, we cannot ever take someone else's possessions without permission—to do so is a sin. But the right to private property is not absolute in the Old Testament, which makes this right subordinate to the just distribution of the Earth's resources and the common good. The Old Law teaches that God expects the Earth's resources to be fairly distributed.

2. *Why did Jesus Christ's teachings on poverty and wealth shock the people of his time?*

The people of Jesus' time were probably shocked by his teachings on poverty and wealth because they commonly believed that wealth was a sign of God's favor. In contrast, Jesus was saying that we must detach from material wealth before we can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He explained that poverty is not a sign of God's displeasure, that God has preferential concern for those in poverty, that lust for wealth endangers our spiritual well-being, and that we are to share wealth with others.

3. *Define the concept of social doctrine.*

Social doctrine is the body of Church teaching on economic and social matters that includes moral judgments and demands for action in favor of those being harmed.

4. *Choose two key principles of the social doctrine of the Church and explain their significance.*

(The students may choose and further describe any two of the seven following themes of social doctrine from article 33 in the student book.)

- life and dignity of the human person
- the call to family, community, and participation
- rights and responsibilities
- the option for the poor and vulnerable
- the dignity of work and the rights of workers
- solidarity
- care for God's creation

5. *What responsibilities do employers have in regard to their workers?*

Employers have several responsibilities to their workers. They must ensure that manufacturing processes do not harm their workers. They must provide employees with fair wages and benefits and avoid discrimination in hiring practices. Responsible employers must not ask employees to engage in immoral or illegal activities.



6. *What responsibilities do rich nations have toward poor nations according to the social doctrine of the Church?*

Rich nations have a responsibility not to exploit poor nations. Some ways of exploiting poor nations include arranging high-interest loans, supporting corrupt governments, selling weapons to oppressive governments, or buying goods from companies that treat their workers unjustly. Instead, nations have a responsibility to help one another develop fair economic and social systems.

7. *Why does envy or greed leave us feeling sad and dissatisfied?*

Envy is a type of resentment or sadness over someone else's good fortune. Related to envy is greed: the desire to accumulate earthly goods beyond what we need to live. Both can cause us to stop being satisfied with what we have and instead to focus on what we don't have—or to feel sad when we discover that someone else has something we want.

8. *What are some ways you can combat envy and greed?*

We can strive to replace envy and greed with virtues of goodwill toward others (desiring that their needs are met), by practicing personal humility (realizing that we are not more important than others and that God already loves and blesses us completely), and by trusting in God's providence (instead of fearing that God will not provide us with enough of what we need).

9. *What is poverty of heart, and how is it taught in the Gospels?*

Poverty of heart, sometimes called spiritual poverty, is the recognition of our need for God and the recognition that no amount of material wealth can fill that need. Poverty of heart is necessary for us to be in communion with God. The opposite of poverty of heart is greed and consumerism, the belief that having more things will truly make us happy. There are many places in the Gospel where Jesus teaches the importance of poverty of heart, such as the story of the rich young man, the story of the widow's mite, the Parable of the Rich Fool, and Jesus' sayings such as "store up treasure in heaven" and "no one can serve two masters."

10. *How did Christ provide us with an example of living simply, and how does he call us to do likewise?*

Christ's life and teaching promoted poverty of heart: the recognition of our deep need for God and the commitment to put God above everything else in life, especially above material wealth. Jesus taught us that poverty of heart is necessary for us to be in communion with God. During his active ministry, Jesus never owned anything but the clothes he was wearing, depending entirely on the generosity of others to finance his work. He called his followers to imitate his example by detaching from material wealth, giving away their possessions to follow him. He calls us today to find ways to imitate his simple way of living by reducing our need for material goods and perhaps giving to charity instead.

