

The Common Good and Catholic Social Teaching

Anna Rowlands is a political theologian at Durham University and a community organizer with Citizens UK. She is interviewed here by Martin Robinson, who highlights her chapter on 'the common good' which she contributed to the book *Together for the Common Good*.^[1] Anna explains that the concept of 'the common good' derives from Catholic Social Teaching which has its origins in the political and economic challenges of the late nineteenth century. Pope Leo XIII proposed two Christian principles which could act as a foundation for a just social order. These are human dignity and the concept of the common good, with an implied option for the poor, and the concept of the stewardship of resources for all. The underpinning anthropology, derived from Thomas Aquinas, affirms that human beings are created by God as social and political beings. We are radically interdependent and come shaped by the institutions and traditions of a context. Anna unpacks these ideas and indicates how the principles of Catholic Social Teaching can help reconcile differing views of the common good. Her example is the current political challenge of mass migration but it is possible to see how these principles apply to local contexts as we seek for the common good with our neighbours.

[1] Nicholas Sagovsky and Peter McGrail (eds.), *Together for the Common Good: Towards a National Conversation* (London: SCM Press, 2015).