

**Wonder, the Person and the Common Good
in Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Higher Education**

Ernest S. Pierucci

Abstract

Only humans wonder. Wonder allows us to see in the visible world the invisible message of God. Wonder is essential to the common good and to Catholic Social Teaching (CST). The cultivation of wonder should be the primary concern of Catholic undergraduate education.

In wonder we experience the inexhaustible light of radical being in each thing, no matter how ordinary or common. We experience the world as astonishingly and unsettling new. We open ourselves to the unfathomable and inviting mystery of gratuitous existence and we ask the abiding “why.”

Without wonder we cannot live lives which are genuinely personal. Wonder is the first step toward the beatific vision. Wonder is proof the created intellect can see God. In the natural, elicited and imperfect desire to see God, wonder moves us beyond physical realities to a natural realization that what we most desire our nature alone cannot give.

The aim of the common good is the flourishing of each and all persons. This requires the recognition of the transcendence of the person. Wonder is essential to transcendence on the natural plane.

In grace wonder discloses creation as a gift, through Christ, from the Trinity’s inner life of love, the model of the common good. In this love we become subjects of charity, from which the entirety of CST is derived. We are called to give ourselves to the common good through the virtue of solidarity and to recognize that love is the principle of all human relationships. Wonder’s importance is seen vividly in CST’s understanding of integral ecology, work, human ecology, the family and the preferential option for the poor.

As the animation of the desire to see God, wonder can lead us to a meeting point where all persons can collaborate for the common good.

Cultivating wonder should be the primary concern of Catholic undergraduate education. A great books education, driven by the students’ own fundamental questions about justice, love, faith, identity, salvation etc., is apt for this. It opens students to the only response finally worthy of their yearning to know themselves - the Person Jesus.