

Find out more

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www.stmarys.ac.uk/postgraduate-courseslondon/catholic-social-teaching

Testimonials



His Eminence Cardinal Peter Turkson Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Rome

"I wish to encourage the praiseworthy initiative of St Mary's University, Twickenham, to set up the first Masters degree in Catholic Social Teaching in the British Isles. Education and formation of the young generations in the principles and values of the Social Doctrine of the Church is of utmost importance for pursuing the integral human development of each person, and of the whole person as well, for achieving the common good of each and every citizen of the world. Christians, indeed, are called to go beyond a privatised and individualistic spirituality and to open themselves to the social dimension of faith in accordance with the demands of charity."



The Most Reverend John Wilson Archbishop of Southwark

"I wholeheartedly endorse the MA in Catholic Social Teaching at St Mary's University. It offers a unique opportunity to understand in depth how the Catholic tradition understands both the implication and application of the Gospel in service of human dignity, the common good and justice and peace."

Lecturers on the programme

Dr André Azevedo Alves, St Mary's University and Catholic University of Portugal

Dr Andrew Bailey, Governor of the Bank of England

The Revd Dr Ashley Beck, St Mary's University
Professor Philip Booth, St Mary's University and Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales

Dr Jack Bull, St Mary's University

Dr Nicolette Burbach, London Jesuit Centre

Professor Francis Davis, University of Birmingham

Raymond Friel OBE, Chief Executive, Caritas Social Action Network

Nikki Dhillon Keane, Archdiocese of Westminster

Dr Maria Exall, formerly President of the TUC

Julian Filochowski,
Co-chair of the Archbishop Oscar Romero Trust

Edward Hadas, Blackfriars Hall, Oxford

Professor Ruth Kelly,
Vatican Council for the Economy

Professor Ian Linden, former Director of *Progressio*
Stephanie MacGillivray, *Caritas Internationalis*, Rome

Dr Pia Matthews, St Mary's University

Fr Martin Newell CP, Passionist community, Birmingham

Dr Maria Power, Blackfriars Hall, Oxford

Dr Pavlo Smytsnyuk, Catholic University of Ukraine

Russell Sparkes, St Mary's University

Professor Peter Tyler, St Mary's University

Ruth-Ann Walbank, University of Warwick

Deacon Raymond Williamson,
Archdiocese of Southwark



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September 2025/January 2026 Entry

Information accurate at the time of writing, June 2025. For up-to-date information please see our website.

MA, PgDip, PgCert in Catholic Social Teaching

175 Years of
Inspiring
Excellence



Leo PP. XIV

MA, Postgraduate Diploma,
Postgraduate Certificate

St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London



Pope Leo XIV

"The Church's social doctrine, with its specific anthropological approach, seeks to encourage genuine engagement with social issues. It does not claim to possess a monopoly on truth, either in its analysis of problems or its proposal of concrete solutions. Where social questions are concerned, knowing how best to approach them is more important than providing immediate responses to why things happen or how to deal with them.

The aim is to learn how to confront problems, for these are always different, since every generation is new, and faces new challenges, dreams and questions."

MA, PgDIP, PgCert in Catholic Social Teaching

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St Mary's University
Twickenham London

The branch of moral theology known as Catholic Social Teaching has become increasingly important – and not just in the Catholic Church. This programme invites you to engage critically with the most pressing social and political concerns facing contemporary society.

Overview

What has Catholic moral teaching to say about the wars in Ukraine and Gaza? What does this teaching have to say about economic policy, the allocation of resources in healthcare, the dignity of the human person, international co-operation and civil liberties in this worldwide crisis? Looking at these questions is what we call Catholic Social Teaching.

This is what the late Pope Francis was talking about when he reminded us that 'each of us shares a calling to work for the common good'. Catholic Social Teaching is sometimes called 'The Church's best kept secret' or 'The Church's best buried secret.'

But what exactly is Catholic Social Teaching? St Mary's masters degree in Catholic Social Teaching, originally launched in 2017, explores this intellectual tradition and tries to answer these and similar questions by exploring the social encyclicals of the Catholic Church, their key themes, such as justice, human dignity, common good and poverty, investigating key sources that inform the tradition against the background of lived experience, and looking at some of the ways in which the teaching has been applied. Catholic Social Teaching is a branch of Christian moral theology that witnesses to human dignity and the ways in which God intends people to live in communion, teaching them the demands of justice and peace in conformity with the wisdom of God. Social teaching is both profoundly rooted in theological reflection and also deeply practical and 'applied'.



Course lecturer
Stephanie
MacGillivray
meeting the late
Pope Francis

What you will study

The modules on offer will cover every aspect of the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, maintaining a balance between theoretical and practical examination of the subjects, and drawing on the experience both of academics in the field and experienced practitioners. Depending on the number of credits gained after studying particular modules, it will be possible to gain three qualifications: a Postgraduate Certificate in Catholic Social Teaching, a Postgraduate Diploma in Catholic Social Teaching, and the full MA degree.

► Phase 1

All students study three modules. These are taught at St Mary's University, online and as part of two study weekends at a conference centre in Hertfordshire.

Principles and History of Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching covers the basic principles and history of Catholic Social Teaching, drawing on the sources of the tradition in the Bible, the early Church Fathers, later theologians and papal encyclicals, placing the tradition in the overall context of Catholic moral theology and its philosophical tradition.

Pastoral Theology and Scripture

In this module you will explore the basis in the Bible for Pastoral Theology and practice, including the application of the Scriptures to Catholic Social Teaching.

Catholic Social Teaching Applied

Examines in detail the many ways in which the Church has applied social teaching to particular issues, such as unemployment, migration, healthcare resource allocation, racism, homelessness, domestic abuse, war and Europe.

► Phase 2

All students study three further modules. These are taught on St Mary's campus and/or online.

Theologies of Liberation & Political Theology

Covers together the Theologies of Liberation from Latin America and the rest of the world, looking also at radical movements such as the Catholic Worker communities; and the European and North American tradition of Political Theology.

Systematic Theology and Contemporary Themes

In this module you look in detail at ways in which the tradition of systematic theology in Christian theology can be applied to a variety of themes in contemporary life.

Global Development, the Environment and the Market

Looks at global development and care for the created order, drawing on the work of agencies such as CAFOD and the late Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*; looking also at the Market, different economic models and business ethics in the light of social teaching and the rest of the Christian theological tradition.

► Phase 3

Students have a choice between two modules

Dissertation

The final phase of the full degree programme focuses on the completion of a 15,000-word dissertation on a topic chosen by the student in consultation with those teaching on the programme.

Service-based Learning Research

This module provides students with an opportunity to volunteer or undertake paid work which is of service to the community via a UK registered charity. In the process, they will develop skills, knowledge and understanding about the relationship between theory and practice in an external setting. Students will use their experience with their charity to conduct service-learning based research towards completing their MA.

Teaching and assessment

Each of the modules includes lectures and seminars led by specialist lecturers and followed by discussion. For each module, students are assessed by means of a substantial essay and a shorter piece of work. There will also be opportunities for one-to-one tutorials.

Who this degree is for

This programme is aimed at those who would like to study Catholic Social Teaching in depth, including graduates in Theology and Religious Studies and other relevant disciplines, such as Philosophy, History, Economics, Sociology and International Studies – although it is open to graduates in any subject. Permanent deacons in the Catholic Church, who are expected to have specialist knowledge of this field, and other clergy of all denominations, are likely to be particularly interested in this programme. It is also suited to interns working with charities, NGOs and other agencies. The degree is particularly appropriate for teachers and prison chaplains. Students have included people supported by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales in its *Faith in Politics* programme, and those in formation for the permanent diaconate in most of the dioceses of southern England and Wales, including interns.

What makes this programme unique

In addition to the lectures in each module the programme also organises regular high profile conferences. Topics have included Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the Church and international diplomacy, the peace settlement in Northern Ireland and the current conflict in the Holy Land.

Catholic Social Teaching is a challenging topic, not always appreciated as an academic area of study. This is the only full degree programme dedicated specifically to Catholic Social Teaching in the UK or Ireland.

St Mary's University, founded in 1850, has always had focus on educational work with people from poor backgrounds and a consistent witness to Christian teaching about social justice'.

This is now a 'blended learning' programme and all the modules may be studied either in face to face sessions or online. The core modules are taught on Saturdays and the others in a varied pattern on weekdays and Saturdays.