

SUBSIDIARITY

The Catholic Church on Subsidiarity

- The Catholic Church's understanding of subsidiarity is the principle that decisions should be made at the **lowest possible level of social organization**, with higher levels only intervening when a lower-level entity cannot effectively address a need.
- This principle upholds personal dignity and a healthy social order by ensuring that individuals and smaller communities retain autonomy while allowing higher-level institutions, like the government, to provide support and aid when necessary for the common good.

Core Tenets of Subsidiarity

- **Decentralization:** Decisions and functions should be handled by the smallest, most local groups that can handle them effectively.
- **Limited higher-level intervention:** Higher authorities should not interfere with lower ones but should provide support and assistance when the lower level is unable to perform a task or protect the common good.
- **Empowerment, not replacement:** Intervention by higher powers is temporary and should aim to empower the lower-level entity to resume its functions independently.
- **Respect for individual and community autonomy:** The principle protects the autonomy and dignity of smaller social units, such as families and local communities, from being overwhelmed by larger ones.

Practical Application

- In government, this means **local governments should handle local issues**, with the state and federal governments stepping in only when local capacity is insufficient.
- In social life, it means that **the family is the primary unit of society**, and the state should not usurp the roles of parents.
- The principle is often discussed alongside solidarity, which calls for universal fraternity and mutual support, to create a balance between local responsibility and broader, community-wide duties.

