

ENGAGING Faith

Practical lesson ideas and activities for Catholic Educators

Catholic Social Teaching and Monopoly



Last autumn, Ave Maria Press sponsored its annual [Teacher Enrichment Day](#) at the University of Notre Dame. The attendees shared favorite lesson plans with their colleagues. Periodically, we will share these lesson plans here.

Playing Monopoly with the 7 Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

When teaching the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching, specifically *The Principle of the Call to Family, Community, and Participation*, we take notes and discuss the theme, stressing the roles of families and communities, the right to participate in society, the problems of the marginalized, and the concept of the common good; then I tell the students we are going to have some fun after those serious concepts, and that we are going to play Monopoly. (You will need to provide several Monopoly game sets to be able to play games with four people around each set.) I make a mental note of those students who tell me they always win at Monopoly.

I tell the students that in the interest of saving time, we are going to start playing "in the middle of the game." I give each student an envelope that contains money, properties, houses, and hotels. The set-up, of course is that the contents of the envelope vary greatly. One person at each game will have Boardwalk, Park Place, utilities, hotels, and lots of money; another may have only \$300, one cheap property, and a "get out of jail" card. Not surprisingly, the envelopes with the least money and property goes to the students who brag they never lose in Monopoly.

As the students play, I wander through the groups and record what they are saying. I pepper my list with frequent variations on what gets down to the fairness of the game. I record comments like, "Sorry, I just own a lot of properties" and "This is not fair." After the allotted time is up, I ask the students to determine who "won" each game, and they immediately talk about how it was a set-up. I read them the list of comments, and they laugh sheepishly at their own. Then we discuss how it felt to open that envelope and see that they had a great draw or a lousy one. The discussion that ensues is very lively, and the students clearly get the point that not everyone is an equal participant in our society and it will remain that way unless we work toward making changes to established social structures. Every student seems to "get it" in a way I seldom see.

The activity leads very well into the Preferential Option for the Poor theme. At the end of my test on the unit on the seven principles, many students named the Monopoly activity as their most memorable part of the unit.

This lesson was submitted by Mary Mattingly, Assumption High School, Louisville, Kentucky.