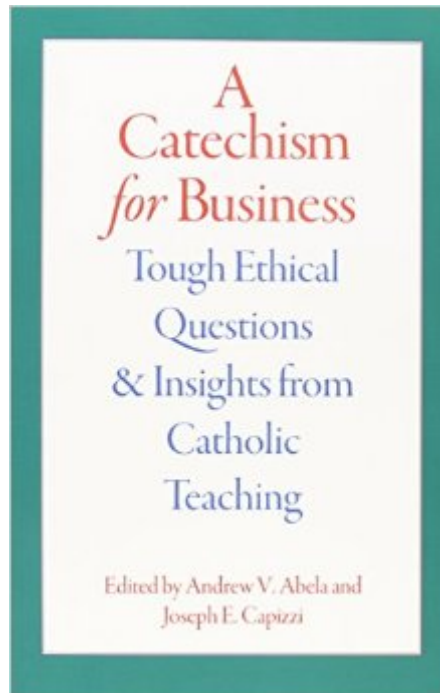


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# A Catechism For Business: Tough Ethical Questions And Insights From Catholic Teaching



## Synopsis

Many managers who believe themselves to be religious are all too willing to "check their religion at the door" of their workplaces. They may simply be ignorant of the implications of their faith for their business practices. Catholic teaching on business and economics has been described (with intentional irony) as the Church's "best kept secret." The Catholic Church has over the years developed extensive and detailed guidance for many areas of business. But this guidance is often buried within lengthy teaching documents that may not be easily accessible to the busy executive. Answers to specific moral questions may be tough to find. A Catechism for Business presents the teachings of the Catholic Church as they relate to more than one hundred specific and challenging moral questions that have been asked by business leaders. Andrew V. Abela and Joseph E. Capizzi have assembled the relevant quotations from recent Catholic social teaching as responses to these questions. Questions and answers are grouped under major topics such as marketing, finance, and investment. Business ethics questions can be too subtle for definitive yes/no answers, so the book offers no more and no less than church teaching on each particular question. Where the church has offered definitive answers, the book provides them. When the church has not, the book presents guidelines for reflection and insights into what one should consider in given situations. The book's easy-to-use question and answer approach invites quick reference for tough questions and serves as a basis for reflection and deeper study in the rich Catholic tradition of social doctrine.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Have read this very thoroughly researched book and have nothing but praise for it. It is aimed at a

Catholic audience but the replies to some rather tricky questions are so startlingly clear and logical that this book should be read by any one, of any faith or even of no faith at all, but who has sound moral principles and wishes to conduct one business life in an upright and successful manner. The two strictly Catholic directives relate to contraceptives and abortion. These are the guidelines for Catholics, though giving them some thought by non Catholics, would not come amiss! An eye opener of a book and highly recommended reading for all.

I teach social justice (39yrs) and business ethics (12yrs) at a Catholic high school. This compendium is a fantastic aid in communicating Catholic teaching in an easily retrievable source. The integration of various Catholic documents and sources allows one to encounter key themes and insights without having to go through the multiple sources in their entirety (but identifies the sources for you if you wish to consult the full text).

This is an eye-opening book. It is a book for those who seek to pursue their professional vocation nobly, with a view to the good of those it serves. And it invites all Christians to engage in important reflection on the rich themes of Catholic Social Doctrine.

Anyone writing about the Catholic Church and business ethics needs to consult the voluminous social teaching of the popes and Vatican curial staffs. This book is a much needed shortcut to one's research. However, after reading it, you will be convinced the Magisterium has next to nothing to say about the topic! Nearly all the statements are about macroeconomics and systems, not microeconomics and individuals. (An exception is persons employed by the media.) This is the primary strength of the book, it does its job well--research, that is. If there is nothing to be said, there is nothing to be said! Now, for the weaknesses of the book. 1). The above point is also the biggest disappointment. It means the primary purchasers will be the theologian (by necessity) and the student (by force), not the businessman. 2). The reader can tell the authors desperately want to provide commentary but refrain. Their periodic notes become irritating after a while. It would have been better if they had added all the explanations they wanted in the introduction or in an appendix. 3). Why was Abela's contribution described at the end of the Introduction, but not Capizzi's? I would have appreciated at least a mention of his contribution since everyone else involved in the book's origin received recognition. In sum, "catechism" is a good title for marketing purposes but not for the book's content. If businessmen are seeking guidance, they should turn to the Catechism of the Catholic Church and its the section on morality. This instruction,

though not specifically for business ethics, would be much more helpful at providing tough ethical questions and insights from Catholic Teaching.

Update: I am getting much value out of following back the various citations in the book. They have done good research just to find these things. One item in particular could function as its own catechism for investors, and this is the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "Vocation of the Business Leader," a 32 page PDF available online. The authors could have quoted from this resource more extensively.

Another update: comments for the authors if they read this.

(1) Page XVI of the Introduction, it says, "We welcome feedback from readers." Too bad there is no mechanism described anywhere for providing this feedback. An e-mail address or website would have been nice. comments will have to suffice.

(2) Page XVII of the Introduction. Where it says "When you face a moral dilemma in business, we suggest" I would include in the list an item for seeking outside counsel, like a priest or Legatus, the Catholic businessmen's organization.

(3) For quotations from the Catechism, you don't need to put the page number in parentheses after the paragraph number. It is redundant and not helpful to those who have print editions of different page dimensions / font size where the pages are numbered differently.

(4) Write a follow-on book, "Guide to a Catechism for Business," in which you create a logical sequence for explaining Church teaching. In the current book you were bound to the questions that provided the structure of the book. It was difficult for the reader to extract a coherent voice. In the proposed second book, you should place all the commentary you so desperately wanted to provide for the current book.

(5) For question #33 and #34, the quotations from Rerum Novarum are not from paragraph #36. Rather, they come from paragraph #22.

(6) The title to chapter seven sounds odd. "Particularly Morally Sensitive Industries." Change it to something else, less grating, like, "Particularly Sensitive Industries", or "Industries that are Especially Sensitive."

This book should be in on the bookshelf - and within arms reach - of every Catholic executive trying to make his or her way in today's world of commerce. And I would strongly suggest to my many non-catholic friends that they should dive into this short but robust book if they are in search of guidance or vision on how to best run a business and work in an increasingly ethically challenged world. Abella and Capizzi do not give prescriptive answers to the tough questions ranging from fair wage to operating businesses in China. But what they do do is provide the wisdom and vision of Church teachings, historical texts, etc. that provide very rich food for thought and hopefully guidance for each of us to find the right - and just - answer to the challenges we each face in the

workplace. I'm giving this book as a Christmas gift to many of my colleagues and clients this Christmas. I hope it helps them even a fraction of how it has helped me - and will continue to help me for many years to come.

The book helped me to understand the Church's teachings on economic matters. The Catholic Church has always taught "BOTH, AND" instead of "EITHER OR". Now I understand more clearly the Church's emphasis on our responsibilities to the poor and a government's responsibility to the poor. It can be a harmonious relationship. Chaos occurs only when one of these parties exceed their boundaries.

A must for all Catholic business people. Also invaluable for all as a reference source on day to day ethical questions.

Superb supplement to teaching library. Content will enhance challenging discussion topics and critical thinking in business discipline.

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