



# What Comes Next

*What social democracy can learn from Catholicism*

**Anthony Annett**

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Annett depicts social democracy as a system “underpinned not only by property rights but also by economic rights.” What does Annett mean by economic rights? How is a rights-based approach different from free-market economics or economic libertarianism?
2. Annett claims that “markets are quite good at creating wealth. The problem is that they are quite poor at distributing it.” What can we learn from the history of Christian democracy in seeking better, fairer ways to both create and distribute wealth?
3. Citing James Chappel’s work on how the Catholic Church came to accept modernity, Annett brings up two movements that began in the 1930s: “paternal” and “fraternal” Catholicism. What were these movements? What were the opportunities and drawbacks of these different forms of Christian democracy?
4. When it comes to labor, the United States “never really embraced sectoral bargaining” for workers, instead focusing on individual employers. Is that reflected in the labor movements in your community? How is the pillar of workplace democracy different from labor power?
5. What distinguishes Christian democracy specifically from social democracy more generally? Can or should a new social democracy benefit from the principles of Catholic social teaching Annett enumerates?
6. Annett suggests two new pillars to support a renewed social democracy: workplace democracy and decarbonization. Do you agree with these additions? Why or why not? Are there other tenets of social democracy that need to be updated for the twenty-first century?
7. What does building a movement around social democracy look like in polarized times? Do you believe, like Annett does, that this daunting task can be met with moral capital? Have you ever worked with friends across the aisle on these types of objectives?

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

“Has Liberalism Failed?: An Exchange,” December 2018: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/has-liberalism-failed>

Jeff Madrick, “Government Is Not the Problem,” October 2008: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/government-not-problem-0>

“How to Abolish Poverty: An interview with Matthew Desmond,” *The Commonwealth Podcast*, September 2023: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/podcast/how-abolish-poverty>

Anthony Annett, “A Conservative’s Case for Social Democracy,” December 2023: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/sohrab-ahmari-social-democracy-anthony-annett-fdr-roosevelt>

John Cavadini, “The Eucharist & the Poor,” November 2023: <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/eucharistic-revival-usccb-justin-martyr-poor-christ-cavadini>