



Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church  
**Standards of Professional Conduct**  
*September 19, 2018*

**Introduction: Our Mission Statement**

Since theological ethics is so diffuse today, since practitioners and scholars are caught up in our own specific cultures, and since our interlocutors tend to be in other disciplines, there is the need for an international exchange of ideas in Catholic theological ethics.

Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church (CTEWC) recognizes the need: to appreciate the challenge of pluralism; to dialogue from and beyond local culture; and, to interconnect within a world church not dominated solely by a northern paradigm.

In this light, CTEWC is undertaking four areas of activity: fostering new scholars in theological ethics, sponsoring regional conferencing, supporting the exchange of ideas via our web site (catholicethics.com), and publishing a book series.

In pursuit of this mission statement the colleagues who participate in the activities of the CTEWC have particular professional commitments and responsibilities.

**Section 1. Professional Commitments and Responsibilities<sup>1</sup>**

**As scholars in the field of ethics** we hold ourselves to a standard of free, rigorous, and intellectually honest inquiry aiming to advance **scholarship** and moral understanding, especially in regard to theologically informed perspectives. Our examination of moral issues shall respect the dignity of persons whose practices and positions we study. Likewise, our engagement with other disciplines and ethical and religious traditions shall be conducted with the aim of mutual learning and understanding. We seek to promote critical and constructive understandings of justice, the well-being of society and the good of the wider creation.

**As participants in institutions** we will foster just relationships with their members and constituencies—especially students, graduate assistants, colleagues, staff, clients, and patients—as well as with the communities these institutions affect.

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<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to the Society of Christian Ethics for articulating its Standards of Professional Conduct that we have adapted for Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church.

**As educators** we will strive to improve the methods and intellectual depth of our teaching. We will exercise our authority justly with concern for the development of our students, respecting their dignity and the boundaries appropriate to professional interaction.

**As participants in the CTEWC network** we will conduct inquiry, debate and other interactions with colleagues openly, fairly, and respectfully. We will execute our duties competently and justly without prejudice toward those with different values and viewpoints. We will welcome and take action to ensure the full participation of new and junior participants and those who bring new voices to our conversations.

Certain conduct so clearly affronts the dignity of persons that it contravenes the minimal conditions for participation in our profession. Accordingly, in activities that occur under the auspices of CTEWC we will neither practice nor tolerate any form of harassment or unjust discrimination, in deed or word, based on race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, caste, religious community, sexual orientation, age, or disability. Neither will we practice or tolerate, in deed or word, behavior that displays disrespect for the personal integrity of others as they carry out their responsibilities within CTEWC. Nor will we practice nor tolerate plagiarism, copyright infringement, and unacknowledged use of the research of others. Persons who engage in such conduct within the CTEWC activities shall be subject to a grievance procedure that will be set in place by the CTEWC Planning Committee.

## **Section 2. Statement of Professional Conduct**

The primary purpose of this section is to promote the commitments outlined in the paragraphs above by adopting standards for the professional conduct of all the participants in the CTEWC network. If needed, a grievance procedure will be set in place for their reinforcement. The expectation is that participants in the CTEWC network will review and abide by these standards. These standards, organized under three headings (respect for difference, respect for personal integrity, and respect for intellectual integrity), aim to protect the work of CTEWC, to protect participants from being treated in such a way that they cannot enjoy the interactions within and activities in CTEWC, and to educate all participants in the CTEWC network about the standards of behavior that participation in our scholarly community requires.

It is our responsibility, as a community of professionals, to develop and sustain our own standards of conduct. We therefore publicize these commitments and standards, and commit to renewing them by regular examination and, if appropriate, revision. Questions and concerns, and especially reports and complaints of violations of professional conduct, will be listened to, taken seriously, and responded to fairly and constructively.

These standards apply to all participants in the CTEWC network when they are involved in meetings and activities directly connected with the work of CTEWC. These standards also will be shared with invited speakers and others who register for CTEWC activities. The CTEWC Planning Committee is responsible for providing copies of these standards to invited speakers

and other participants who join CTEWC meetings, and to provide copies of these standards to all participants in the CTEWC network.

Further, to exercise prudent risk management, if needed, the CTEWC will prepare a “Whistleblower Policy” in addition these Standards of Professional Conduct. The Whistleblower Policy could be intended to encourage and enable CTEWC participants and others to report in good faith suspected or actual occurrences of illegal, unethical, or inappropriate behaviors and/or practices and to protect them from retaliation or retribution.

### **A. Respect for difference**

We commit ourselves to sustaining a secure and open environment for discussion in the public spaces of all CTEWC activities. We expect, from ourselves individually and each other, thoughtful and constructive analysis and reflection—discourse which serves to invite, rather than diminish or exclude, the participation of those to whom and about whom we are speaking. We respect each other through the civil language that we employ in panels, presentations, conversation, and writing. We recognize that vigorous expression of disagreement about ethical matters does not itself count as disrespect for difference; we commit ourselves to expressing even vigorous disagreement in a civil way.

*Disrespect for difference* occurs when participants engage in insensitive and demeaning conduct, unjust discrimination based on race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, religious community, sexual orientation, age, or disability—in short, and any behavior which impedes particular individuals or groups from fully participating in and enjoying the activities of CTEWC. Any words or actions of this sort violate this standard when they contribute to an atmosphere of intimidation, marginalization, or contempt.

### **B. Respect for personal integrity**

We commit ourselves to honoring the physical, moral, and sexual integrity of all CTEWC participants. In all of our professional interactions connected with CTEWC, we will treat fellow participants and guests with the equal regard due to them as fellow human beings and fellow professionals, according to the norms of justice, honesty, fairness, dignity, and care. We recognize that each of us has a right to claim our own physical safety and security, as well as to make our own decisions and keep our own commitments in matters concerning romantic and sexual relationships. Participation in the roles, activities, and events of CTEWC should depend solely upon professional interest and competence. No one’s claim to participation should be conditioned upon a threat, implicit or explicit, to her/his personal integrity.

*Disrespect for personal integrity* can take several different forms in the context of CTEWC activities, particularly in the context of the gatherings, meetings, and conferences. The use of bedrooms for professional purposes can create the appearance of a threat to personal integrity. Consequently, such private rooms should not be used for functions appropriate to public spaces, such as interviews, meetings or official CTEWC social gatherings. In public spaces, disrespect is expressed through: remarks, jokes or behavior which belittle, bully, harass, or exploit other participants; the display

or use of degrading or pornographic images for purposes unconnected to a professional presentation; the expression of lewd remarks or conduct; and the surreptitious administration of alcohol or drugs to reduce sexual inhibitions. As teachers and scholars of ethics, we are particularly sensitive to the way in which differentials of power and position, such as those between students and teachers or junior colleagues and senior colleagues, can create or exacerbate threats to personal integrity. Unwelcome sexual advances, including unwanted touching, violate the integrity of both parties. Likewise, persistent and unwelcome social invitations threaten to violate personal integrity, particularly when the intent is to extract sexual favors in exchange for professional advantage.

### **C. Respect for intellectual integrity**

No scholarly progress can be made without freedom of thought, speech, and publication. CTEWC encourages all those who participate in its activities to formulate and present their ideas, arguments, and research with freely exercised imagination and responsibility, in accordance with respect for persons and standards of professional judgment. Good scholarly work requires a high degree of discretion exercised by participants in determining the appropriate context and presentation of academic material. This norm applies to both oral and written form. Respect for intellectual integrity also requires us to accurately present the work of other scholars with whom we are in conversation, particularly if we disagree with them. Finally, we must appropriately acknowledge our debt to the scholarly endeavors of others, by citing them fully and fairly in accordance with prevailing scholarly standards. Respect for intellectual integrity consists in protecting the conditions for and honoring the fruits of the vocation to scholarship, in order to facilitate a creative, honest, and rigorous scholarly conversation.

*Disrespect for intellectual integrity* can be expressed in several ways. Three of the more egregious kinds of violations include incidents where: 1) a participant or participants intimidate, ridicule or otherwise inhibit without cause others from a full and genuine expression of their ideas especially in contexts where there are power differentials between scholars; 2) a participant presents the ideas or positions of another scholar or source in a willfully or negligently incomplete or biased way; and 3) a participant misrepresents the ideas from a source as his or her own by willfully or negligently failing to acknowledge the source in accordance with prevailing scholarly standards.