

*Fourteenth International Conference on
Catholic Social Thought in Business Education and
Tenth International Colloquium on Christian
Humanism in Business and Society*

Property Rights and Social Rights in Business and Law

June 29–30, 2027

University of St. Thomas
Minneapolis, MN

Terrence J. Murphy Institute for
Catholic Thought, Law, and Business



CONFERENCE THEME & RATIONALE

Private property is once again at the center of cultural, legal, and economic debate. In a climate of expanding regulation, rising social expectations, sustainability demands, and technological disruption, business leaders and scholars alike are asking: What does it truly mean to own? What are the legitimate limits of ownership? And how can property rights remain secure while addressing genuine social concerns?

This international conference brings together academics, executives, jurists, and policymakers to examine property not as an ideological slogan, but as a foundational institution of business and law. Recent legal scholarship increasingly understands property as socially embedded and normatively structured. At the same time, debates about shareholders, stakeholders, governance, and corporate responsibility reveal that many contemporary business controversies are, at their core, debates about ownership and authority.

For practitioners concerned about growing encroachments on property rights, this conference does not seek to weaken ownership or entrepreneurial freedom. Rather, it aims to strengthen the intellectual and moral foundations of property so that it can be defended responsibly and developed prudently. A clear and balanced account of property—one that avoids both absolutism and reductionism—is essential for stable markets and flourishing societies.

Catholic social thought offers a distinctive and often underappreciated contribution. It affirms the legitimacy of private property while situating it within a broader vision of human dignity, participation, and the common good. This tradition provides a rich framework for engaging contemporary challenges such as inequality, environmental degradation, conflict-driven destruction of livelihoods, intellectual property in the age of AI, and alternative or communal ownership models.

By fostering dialogue between theology, philosophy, law, and business, the conference seeks to deepen understanding rather than polarize debate. We invite contributions that examine private property as a normative institution in economic and legal life from the perspective of Christian Humanism. Scholars and practitioners from other faith traditions and philosophical approaches are warmly welcome.

Join us in Minneapolis for a serious, forward-looking conversation about how property rights can remain secure, just, and oriented toward authentic human flourishing in a rapidly changing world.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

We invite papers that explore the theme of our conference (see subject tracks on the following page). Please send a 500-700 word proposal that includes a thesis or purpose statement and an outline of the paper as well as a one-paragraph biography that includes institutional position and affiliation, recent publications, research interest, and practical experience. Eligible papers and presentations should be in English. Papers must be presented personally by at least one of the authors at the conference.

In addition to the classic formula for presentations (20-30 minutes each per presenter in a session for presentation and discussion), workshops in groups may also be proposed, with brief talks and an immediate discussion of ideas. We will admit arguments that seek to find connections between the other participants and small groups already engaged in a specific topic. Presentations of professional activities and educational experiences are also welcome. Organizers of workshops must present their proposal in cooperation with two to three other presenters. A workshop will only be approved as a panel of three to four presenters who commit to participate.

SUBJECT TRACKS

Interested presenters are invited to submit an abstract and, when doing so, select one of three subject tracks. This categorization will help the conference organizers to assign paper presentations to the appropriate sessions.

The categories are as follows including topics related but not limited to:

Theological & Philosophical Foundations:

- Private Property in Christian Anthropology
- Natural Law, Positive Law, and the Moral Limits of Ownership
- The Universal Destination of Goods and the Common Good: Tensions, complementarities, and unresolved questions
- Private Property, Virtue, and Moral Formation
- Christian Humanism and Modern Property Theory
- Historical Development of Property in Catholic Social Teaching
- Property, Justice, and Social Responsibility
- Comparative Religious Perspectives on Property

Legal Aspects:

- Property as a Normative Legal Institution
- Social Obligations of Property in Constitutional and Private Law
- Private Property, Inequality, and Access to Justice
- Commons, Collective Ownership, and Polycentric Property Regimes

- Formalizing Informal Property Rights and the Protection of the Poor
- Intellectual Property, Data, and Digital Assets in the Age of AI
- Environmental Law and Property
- Indigenous and Alternative Conceptions of Property

Business Aspects:

- Ownership Structures and Corporate Responsibility
- Shareholder Value, Stakeholder Governance, and Property Rights
- Private Property, Profit, and the Purpose of the Firm
- Corporate Control, Participation, and Employee Ownership
- Property, Innovation, and Intellectual Capital
- Sustainability, Environmental Assets, and Business Strategy
- Property, Power, and Inequality in Global Markets
- Business Education and the Teaching of Property

SUBMISSION PROCESS

Submit proposals by February 15, 2027 at link.stthomas.edu/mssp2027submit.

Proposals will be responded to the week of March 15, 2027.

Final abstracts for accepted proposals will be due June 1, 2027.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Registration Opens: February 8, 2027

Registration Closes: June 4, 2027

Registration:

link.stthomas.edu/msp2027conference

Fees

Early Bird Registration (Until April 1):

\$175.00 USD

Standard Registration (April 2-June 4):

\$200.00 USD

A discounted registration rate is available by request for students and clergy. A limited number of travel scholarships are also available and rewarded on a need basis.

Please contact Michelle Rash for details.

PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES

Authors may be invited to submit their conference paper for publication in the following academic journals:

- Business and Professional Ethics Journal
- University of St. Thomas Journal of Law & Public Policy

Details of the publication process will be communicated to authors whose papers are accepted for presentation at the conference.

CONTACT

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Conference held in partnership with:

