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| Church and Socio-Economic Issues |

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*“We do not truly see light, we only see slower things lit by it, so that for us light is on the edge-the last thing we know before things become too swift for us.”* — *C. S. Lewis*

**Introduction**

No, I take a clear and principled stand against the view that the Church has no reason or need to voice its concerns about socio-economic issues. On the contrary, the Church has both a moral responsibility and a long-standing tradition of engaging with such matters, as they directly impact human dignity, justice, and the common good.

**Theological Foundations for Social Engagement**

Because God is the only true Just One and the sole Lawgiver, He has revealed Himself to us in many ways. Through the natural world that He created, He allows us to perceive that there must be a Creator behind all things. Otherwise, we could not answer fundamental questions such as: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” or “Why are there man and woman?” He has also written the moral law in our hearts. Without this, how could we explain why a life that supposedly emerged by chance possesses a sense of right and wrong, the ability to love and to sacrifice, or even the longing for eternal life?

Yet these two forms of revelation — natural and moral — can only lead us to recognize that there is a divine being. They do not tell us who the true God is. Therefore, God gave us Sacred Scripture and the Holy Spirit, and all of them point to Jesus Christ.

**Natural Law and Christian Social Thought**

Saint Augustine believed that natural law represents the state of humanity before the Fall, a state that aligned with God’s transcendent standards. After the Fall, although human beings can still sense the existence of natural law, our understanding of it is impaired. Thus, we need God's revealed law to renew and guide us. Later, Saint Thomas Aquinas integrated the tradition of natural law into Christian theology, bridging theory and practice. Since then, this vision has become the mainstream and assumed foundation in societies shaped by Christian belief, especially in Europe.

Humanity is God's creation, and human society is an organic whole made up of created beings. As the Creator, God cannot and will not remain uninvolved with us — His creatures made in His image. He must, and indeed does, enter into the human society in various forms.

From this perspective, God is the author of law and the source of the most perfect model of social order. The Word of God — Jesus Christ — has the ultimate authority to interpret this divine model and is its perfect fulfilment. The Church, as the Mystical Body of Christ, therefore bears an inescapable responsibility to engage with socio-economic issues in every age.

**Jesus Himself Addressed Socio-Economic Realities**

Jesus cared for the poor, the sick, the disabled, and the marginalized. He spoke about the dangers of wealth (*You cannot serve both God and money* — *Matthew 6:24*) and challenged unjust systems. His ministry included feeding the hungry and calling out exploitation. If Christ Himself engaged with socio-economic conditions, the Church as His body on earth must continue this work.

**The Church’s Comprehensive Mission**

The mission of the Church concerns not only the salvation of souls, but also the defence of human dignity and the promotion of social justice. Human beings are not merely spiritual creatures — we also have bodies, families, work, and a variety of social relationships that together form an organic society. The Church's mission to save souls cannot be separated from its concern for the well-being and improvement of human society. The Church is therefore called to engage with real-world social issues such as education, employment, income, housing, healthcare, marginalized groups, and the distribution of wealth. It must not remain silent in the face of such realities.

According to Catholic Social Teaching (CST) — particularly in encyclicals such as Rerum Novarum (1891) and Laudato Si’ (2015) — the Church is called to speak out on issues such as poverty, inequality, and workers’ rights. In Rerum Novarum (1891), Pope Leo XIII wrote *The Church, with Jesus Christ as her Master and Guide, aims higher still. She lays down precepts yet more perfect, and tries to bind class to class in friendliness and good feeling.* And in Laudato Si’ (2015), Pope Francis focused on the ecological crisis and environmental ethics. He introduced the concept of *integral ecology* which closely links environmental protection, concern for the poor, and human responsibility for creation.

**Silence Equals Complicity**

Remaining silent in the face of economic injustice can be interpreted as passive acceptance. For example, if the Church were to ignore issues like exploitation of migrant workers, homelessness, or environmental degradation, how can we truly respond to the Lord’s command: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”* — *Matthew 6:24*?

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, when the Church speaks out and acts for social justice, it is not a departure into politics — it is an act of fidelity to Christ. If our faith remains confined within the walls of the church, limited to personal prayer and devotion, yet ignores the suffering and injustice in the real world, then that faith risks becoming abstract and hollow. As Pope Francis reminds us:

*Nothing in this world is indifferent to us.*

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