**Political Justice**

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***(Foundatiion and Purpose of the Political Community)***

**1. What are the basic political rights of individuals?**

"The rights of the person require that individuals have an effective role in shaping their own destinies. They have a right to participate in the political process freely and responsibly. They have a right to free access to information, freedom of speech and press, as well as freedom of dissent. They have a right to be educated and to determine the education of their children. Individuals and groups must be secure from arrest, torture and imprisonment for political or ideological reasons, and all in society, including migrant workers, must be guaranteed juridical protection of their personal, social, cultural and political rights." *Pope Paul VI, Message Issued in Union with the Synod of Bishops (1974).*

**Reflections on the basic political rights of individuals.**

1. What are some ways in which one can participate in the political process?
2. Why is free access to information an important right?
3. Why is freedom of speech an important right?
4. Why is freedom of dissent an important right?
5. Why the right to be educated is listed among political rights?
6. Do you agree that individuals should not be arrested for political reasons?
7. Do you agree that migrant workers have personal, social, cultural, and political rights which should be protected? Why?

**2. What rights and duties do political communities have?**

"Political communities have the right to existence, to self-development, and to the means necessary for this. They have the right to play the leading part in the process of their own development and the right to their good name and due honors. From which it follows at one and the same time that they have also the corresponding duty of respecting these rights in others and of avoiding acts which violate them." *Pope John XXIII, Peace on Earth (1963) 92.*

**Reflections on the rights and duties of political communities (states).**

1. Explain what each of the following statements means:

* Every nation has the right to exist
* Every nation has the right to self-development
* Every nation has the right to the means for self-development
* Every nation has the right to play the leading part in the process of its own development
* Every nation has the right to a good name
* Every nation has the duty to respect these rights in other nations

1. Describe circumstances under which one or more of these rights is violated

**3. How do civil authority and its laws relate to the rights of its citizens?**

"In recent years there has been a growing realization throughout the world that protecting and promoting the inviolable rights of persons are essential duties of civil authority, and that the maintenance and protection of human rights are primary purposes of law." *U.S. Bishops, Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities (1975) 26.*

**Reflections on civil authority and the rights of citizens.**

1. Some might say that the primary purpose of law is the maintenance of order in society .The bishops say that the primary purposes of law are the maintenance and protection of human rights. Which side do you agree with? Why?
2. Give an example of law maintaining and protecting human rights.

***(The Political Community at the Service of Civil Society)***

**4.** **What is the moral function of government?**

"The teachings of the church insist that government has a moral function: protecting human rights and securing basic justice for all members of the commonwealth. Society as a whole and in all its diversity is responsible for building up the common good. But it is government's role to guarantee the minimum conditions that make this rich social activity possible, namely, human rights and justice." *U.S. Bishops. Economic Justice for All (1986) 122*

**Reflections on the moral function of government.**

a) The bishops refer to human rights and justice as "minimum conditions." What do they mean by that?

b) By referring to the "moral" function of government, the bishops imply that it is "immoral" for government not to protect human rights and secure basic justice for all. Do you agree with them? Why?

**5.** **What is the proper role of government?**

"Government should not replace or destroy smaller communities and individual initiative. Rather it should help them to contribute more effectively to social well-being and supplement their activity when the demands of justice exceed their capacities. This does not mean, however, that the government that governs least governs best. Rather it defines good government intervention as that which truly 'helps' other social groups contribute to the common good by directing, urging, restraining, and regulating economic activity." *U.S. Bishops. Economic Justice for All (1986) 124.*

**Reflections on the proper role of government.**

1. Give an example of what you think is government replacing or destroying individual initiative.
2. Why is it not true to say that the government that governs least governs best?
3. What are some things government can do to direct, urge, restrain, and regulate economic activity?

**6. Is government the answer to all of society's problems?**

"The Church opposes all statist and totalitarian approaches to socioeconomic questions. Social life is richer than governmental power can encompass. All groups that compose society have responsibilities to respond to the demands of justice." *U.S. Bishops. Economic Justice for All (1986) 121.*

**Reflections on government and the problems of society.**

1. Compare totalitarian approaches with other approaches to socioeconomic problems.
2. Give some examples of groups other than government which must respond to the demands of justice.
3. State in your own words why government is not the answer to all of society's problems.

**7.** **What is the essential sense of the State?**

"The essential sense of the State, as a political community, consists in that the society and people composing it are master and sovereign of their own destiny." *Pope John Paul II, Redeemer of Man (1979) 17.*

**Reflections on the essential sense of the State.**

1. Why is it important that people be master of their own destiny?
2. To what extent are people in a dictatorship master of their own destiny? To what extent are people in a democracy master of their own destiny?

**8. When is that sense unrealized?**

"This sense remains unrealized if, instead of the exercise of power with the moral participation of the society or people, what we see is the imposition of power by a certain group upon all the other members of the society." *Pope John Paul II, Redeemer of Man (1979) 17*.

**Reflections on the sense of the State unrealized.**

1. What did the pope mean when he spoke of the moral participation of the people in the exercise of power?
2. When the members of Congress pass a law and the President signs it, is that an example of a certain group imposing power on the other members of society? Why?

**9. What is** **the principle of the "free society"?**

"The usages of society are to be the usages of freedom in their full range. These require that the freedom of man be respected as far as possible, and curtailed only when and in so far as necessary." *Vatican II, Declaration on Religious Freedom (1965 ) 7*.

**Reflections on the principle of the free society.**

a) Why is freedom essential to society?

b) Give an example of legitimate curtailment of freedom.

c) State in your own words the principle of the free society.

**10. What two factors must be kept in balance if states are to order their affairs?**

"As relationships multiply between men, binding them more closely together, commonwealths will more readily and appropriately order their affairs to the extent these two factors are kept in balance: 1) the freedom of individual citizens and groups of citizens to act autonomously, while cooperating one with the other; 2) the activity of the State whereby the undertakings of private individuals and groups are suitably regulated and fostered." *Pope John XXIII, On Christianity and Social Progress (1961) 66.*

**Reflections on the two factors to be kept in balance by states.**

1. Why is it important that individual citizens be free to act autonomously?
2. Why is it important that the state to regulate the undertakings of private individuals?
3. Why is it necessary for the state to keep these two factors in balance?
4. Give an example of a state not keeping these two factors in balance.

**11. Why are all citizens equal and what should be the result of that equality?**

"The members of mankind share the same basic rights and duties, as well as the same supernatural destiny. Within a country which belongs to each one, all should be equal before the law, find equal admittance to economic, cultural, civic, and social life, and benefit from a fair sharing of the nation's riches." *Pope Paul VI, A Call to Action (1971) 16.*

**Reflections on the equality of all citizens.**

1. Explain what each of these statements means:

* We all share the same basic rights.
* We all share the same basic duties.
* We should all be equal before the law.
* We should all find equal admittance to economic life.
* We should all find equal admittance to cultural life.
* We should all find equal admittance to civic life.
* We should all find equal admittance to social life.
* We should all benefit from a fair sharing of the nation's riches.

1. Explain your sense of the situation in the Philippines (United States): Does *every* Filipino experience (recent “hate crimes”) equality as defined here?

**12. In what way can equality before the law be misused?**

"If, beyond legal rules, there is really no deeper feeling of respect for and service to others, then even equality before the law can serve as an alibi for flagrant discrimination, continued exploitation, and actual contempt. Without a renewed education in solidarity, an overemphasis on equality can give rise to an individualism in which each one claims his own rights without wishing to be answerable for the common good." *Pope Paul VI, A Call to Action (1971) 23*.

**Reflections on the misuse of equality before the law.**

1. What does Pope Paul mean by "overemphasis on equality"? What is wrong with it?
2. How can equality be used as an alibi for discrimination?
3. What is individualism? What is wrong with it?
4. Explain the relationship between claiming one's own rights and being answerable for the common good.

***(The State and Religious Communities)***

**13.** **What is all law based on?**

"All law is ultimately based on Divine Law, and a just system of law cannot be in conflict with the law of God." *U.S. Bishops, Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities (1975) 26*

**Reflections on the basis for law.**

1. What do you understand by the Divine Law?
2. Why must a just system of law conform to the Divine Law?
3. Give an example of a law which does, and an example of a law which does not, conform to the law of God.

**14. What is the relationship between law and morality?**

"As a human mechanism, law may not be able fully to articulate the moral imperative, but neither can legal philosophy ignore the moral order." *U.S. Bishops, Pastoral Plan for Pro-life Activities (1975) 27.*

**Reflections on the relationship between law and morality.**

1. Why can't lawfully articulate morality?
2. Why can't morality be ignored in the formulation of laws?
3. State in your own words the relationship between law and morality.

**15. Are laws binding if they are contrary to the moral order? Why?**

"Since the right to command is required by the moral order and has its source in God, it follows that, if civil authorities legislate for or allow anything that is contrary to that order and therefore contrary to the will of God, neither the laws made nor the authorizations granted can be binding on the consciences of the citizens, since we must obey God rather than men." *Pope John XXIII, Peace on Earth (1963)51.*

**Reflections on laws contrary to the moral order.**

1. What does it mean to say that the right to command has its source in God?
2. Give an example of a law that you think would be contrary to the will of God. What is wrong with it? Why would it be wrong to obey that law?
3. Isn't this a dangerous principle to apply? After all, who is to say what the will of God is? Suppose a murderer believes that laws against murder are immoral, isn't he correct in disobeying them?
4. Does this principle mean that individual citizens are free to obey the laws they think are right and to disobey the laws they think are wrong?

**16. Why does the Church relate positively to the political order?**

"As part of its mission, the Church, the People of God, is required by the Gospel and its long tradition to promote and defend human rights and dignity. This view of the Church's ministry and mission requires it to relate positively to the political order, since social injustice and the denial of human rights can often be remedied only through governmental action." *U.S. Bishops, Political Responsibility (May 1976) 3.*

**Reflections on the Church and the political order.**

1. The bishops say that the Gospel requires the Church to defend human rights and dignity .Give an example from the life and teachings of Jesus relating to human rights and dignity.
2. Do you agree that social injustice and the denial of human rights can often be remedied only through governmental action? If you agree, give an example. If you disagree, tell why.
3. The bishops say that the Church must relate positively to the political order. That is easy to understand when the political order is a democracy. But what if the Church finds itself in a communist or military dictatorship: Must it still relate positively to the political order? Why?

**17. Is the Church bound to any political system? Why is the Church not bound to any political system?**

"The role and competence of the Church being what it is, she must in no way be confused with the political community, nor bound to any political system." *Vatican II, Church in the Modern World (1965) 76.*

**Reflections on the Church and particular political systems.**

1. Why must the Church not be bound to any political system?
2. What do you think would be the consequence if the Church ever did become bound to a particular political system?

**18. What is the Church's role in the political order?**

"The Church's role in the political order includes the following: a) education regarding the teachings of the church and the responsibilities of the faithful; b) analysis of issues for their social and mora1 dimensions; c) measuring public policy against Gospel values; d) participating with other concerned parties in debate over public policy; e) speaking out with courage, skill, and concern on public issues involving human rights, social justice, and the life of the Church in society." *U.S. Bishops, Political Responsibility (Feb 1976) 11.*

**Reflections on the Church's role in the political order.**

**a) Explain what each of the following means:**

- The Church educates the faithful regarding their responsibilities.

* The Church analyzes issues for their social and moral dimensions.
* The Church measures public policy against Gospel values-
* The Church participates in the debate over public policy.
* The Church speaks out on public issues involving human rights, social justice, and the life of the Church in society.

b) Do you agree that these are appropriate actions for the Church to take part in? Why?

c) Should the Church endorse specific candidates for public office? Why?

**19. What are some wrong uses of power?**

"Power may never be used to attack the dignity of persons, to subjugate them, to prevent them from seeking and realizing the goods to which their humanity gives them a claim." *U.S. Bishops. To Live in Christ Jesus (1976) 90.*

**Reflections on the wrong uses of power.**

1. Give an example of power being used to attack the dignity of persons.
2. Give an example of power being used to subjugate people.
3. Give an example of power being used to prevent people from realizing the goods to which they have a claim.
4. Why are these uses of power wrong?
5. Do you think power itself is good and necessary , or is it evil and unnecessary? Explain.

**20. What duty do the powerful have?**

"The powerful have a duty to work positively for the empowerment of the weak and powerless: to help others gain control over their own lives, so that as free and responsible persons they can participate in a self-determining manner in the goods proper to human beings. The powerful must therefore work for the liberation of the oppressed and powerless." *U.S. Bishops. To Live in Christ Jesus (1976) 90-91.*

**Reflections on the duty of the powerful.**

1. What does it mean to work for the empowerment of the weak and powerless?
2. Why do you think the bishops said that the powerful have the duty to do that?
3. Do you agree or disagree with them? Why?
4. The bishops speak first of empowerment, and then they speak of liberation. What is the relationship between the two concepts of empowerment and liberation?

**21. What is the fundamental duty of power?**

"The fundamental duty of power is solicitude for the common good of society; this is what gives power its fundamental rights. Precisely in the name of these premises of the objective ethical order, the rights of power can only be understood on the basis of respect for the objective and inviolable rights of man." *Pope John Paul II, Redeemer of Man (1979) 17*.

**Reflections on the fundamental duty of power.**

1. The pope makes a connection between the rights of power and the fundamental rights of people. Explain that connection.
2. The rich have economic power. Do you think rich people in general are solicitous for the common good? How might a rich person go about being solicitous for the common good?
3. Government officials have political power. Do you think that government officials in general are solicitous for the common good? How might a government official go about being solicitous for the common good?

**22. Why are there many unchristian institutions in traditionally Christian nations?**

"Today, in traditionally Christian nations, secular institutions, although demonstrating a high degree of scientific and technical perfection and efficiency in achieving their respective ends, not infrequently are but slightly affected by Christian motivation or inspiration How does one explain this? It is Our opinion that the explanation is to be found in an inconsistency in their minds between religious belief and their action in the temporal sphere." *Pope John XXIII, Peace on Earth (1963) 151-52.*

**Reflections on unchristian institutions in Christian nations.**

1. Can you think of a secular institution in our country which does not seem to be influenced much by Christianity?
2. What is the pope speaking of when he refers to an inconsistency between religious belief and action in the temporal sphere?
3. Why is such an inconsistency a problem?

**23. Are some political communities superior to others?**

"There are no political communities which are superior by nature, and none which are inferior by nature. All political communities are of equal natural dignity, since they are bodies whose membership is made up of these same human beings." *Pope John XXIII, Peace on Earth (1963) 89.*

**Reflections on the equality or political communities.**

1. What is the reason given for the equality of political communities?
2. Suppose one political community has a million citizens, and its neighbor has a thousand citizens. In what sense is the first political community superior, and in what sense is it not superior?
3. One political community is a democracy, and the other is a dictatorship. In what sense is the first one superior, and in what sense is it not?
4. Is this principle always acknowledged on the international scene? Give examples.

**24. How does justice require us to treat other countries?**

"The most important duty in the realm of justice is to allow each country to promote its own development, within the framework of a cooperation free from any spirit of domination, whether economic or political." *Pope Paul VI, A Call to Action (1971) 43*.

**Reflections on the just treatment or other countries.**

1. Why is it so important to allow each country to promote its own development?
2. Suppose a country in our part of the world wants to promote its own development in a way we do not approve of, say, through communism. Should we allow it to do so? Why?

