Rerum Novarum: *The Condition of Labor* *(Leo XIII, 1891)*

INTRODUCTION

When one considers the background out of which *Rerum Novarum* emerged, it is a wonder that the document was written at all. The nineteenth century began and ended amid hostility toward the Roman Catholic Church. Anticlerical movements fueled the fires of an already heated nationalism, leading to conflict with the church in many countries. In Italy this led to the loss of the Papal States in 1870.

There were also the struggles over the relations between the newly emerging and quite powerful states and the church. Historically, the Roman Catholic Church had been the established church of most of these countries or, after the Protestant Reformation, had had its relations with the rulers clarified by concordats. The issue now confronting the church was to understand the new reality of a secular state, in theory neutral to all religions, though such neutrality was not always practical; one thinks of the German *Kulturkampf,* for example.

In addition, the ideas of Marx and Darwin challenged the church. The thought of Marx had the more immediate and dramatic impact because of the rise of various revolutionary movements, but the impact of the concept of evolution and change was to have profound epistemological significance for both society and church.

Finally, there was the Industrial Revolution, begun in the factories of Britain, then rapidly spreading throughout Western Europe. While this revolution was most significant for the lower classes, no one escaped its effects. The shift from the land to the city caused massive social dislocation compounded by a lack of housing, and left millions unemployed. The shift from the home to the factory led to miserly wages, deplorable working conditions, particularly for children, and severe strains on families. While the social effects of this revolution were particularly keen in England, few cities in Europe or America escaped. The seeds of discontent sown by this movement found fertile ground in radical social movements, most of which regarded the church as allied with the enemy.

The world of 1891 did not seem friendly to Catholicism. With Pius IX having died a "prisoner of the Vatican," surrounded by all manner of political, economic, and social upheavals, few held high hopes for bold initiatives from his successor, Leo XIII. How much more powerful a message, then, *Rerum Novarum* is, seen against this background.

In *Rerum Novarum,* written in 1891, Leo attempted to persuade Catholics to concentrate less on politics and more on the "social question." At times his appeal sounds quite radical, reviving the earlier emphasis on the evangelical mission on behalf of the poor. But the goal was still the restoration of order and authority, and that precluded enthusiasm, class preference, or labor militancy. In his last years Leo felt constrained to issue many warnings to his subjects to show due respect for civil and ecclesiastical powers.

In the Leonine corpus, individual and social considerations blended happily together, but in the world things were quite different. In a remarkably even-handed manner the pope laid anathemas on both liberal capitalism, which released the individual from social and moral constraints, and socialism, which subordinated individual liberty to social well-being without respect for human rights or religious welfare. Economic life, like political life, should reflect the dualistic nature of the person, Leo argued, providing for bodily needs and facilitating the quest for salvation. It was a strong position from which to condemn wage slavery. Leo insisted that wages be determined not by economic considerations alone, but by taking into account the basic needs of the individual. Property, too, was subject to social and moral restraints; while all had a right to possess private property, none had the right to use that property without reference to the needs of the community. Leo insisted that the moral law—based on a rational understanding of human nature supplemented by revelation—had to be part of every economic system and indeed of every economic transaction. The criteria given by that law were justice, demanding equity in exchange and bargaining; balance between various economic sectors; and organization of the constituent economic units. More generally, justice demanded that the common good of the community take precedence over individual gain in determining economic policy, without, however, necessarily infringing on legitimate rights. This in turn suggested a wider concept of economic organization and governance, later developed by Pius XI.

Finally, and most important, Leo initiated modern Catholic discussion of human rights in the economic order. The claim to a right to a living wage opened a bridge across which Catholics might travel to engage, perhaps even befriend, those hostile social movements. But if that journey was to take place, Leo warned, it should be guided by the church and its pastors. Catholics should dream of new things, but be cautious in bringing those dreams to life.

Quadragesimo Anno: After Forty Years (Pius XI, 1931)

INTRODUCTION

When Leo XIII wrote in 1891, liberal capitalism was at the zenith of its power. Opting for reform rather than counterrevolution, Leo tried to nudge European Catholics away from an apparently hopeless alliance with monarchy and preindustrial feudal economic ideals toward a more promising strategy of political participation and social reform. In 1931 Pius XI faced a very different situation. World War I had shattered liberal confidence. Parliamentary democracy seemed almost helpless in the face of the mass movements of fascism and communism. And the economy of the Western world lay in the ruins of a worldwide depression. The church, better organized and more united than ever before, might be able to offer a credible alternative to a failed capitalism and a fearsome socialism.

Drawing on the writings of numerous Central European economists and theologians, Pius XI projected structures of economic self-government, modeled on the medieval guilds, to overcome the chaotic injustice of capitalism and the regimented injustice of socialism. These structures, vocational groups, would bring workers and managers together in joint organizations to determine policy for the industry as a whole, with a council of industry representatives determining overall national economic policy. Based on the law of justice and infused with a sense of social responsibility and Christian charity, taught and sanctioned by the church, such a system would not simply be another method of social organization but, indeed, the "Christian social order." For Pius, the Catholic social doctrine was a package and demanded acceptance in toto in the name of faith.

Pius and the Catholics to whom he spoke believed they saw a way out of the crises before them: the conflicts between political freedom and economic security; between the economic elite and the working class; between economic expansion and moral values; and between the state and the individual. If men and women would turn to God, to Christ, and to the church, if they would return to the faith they had once shared, they would experience unity on the basis of which order and authority could be restored without losing "true" freedom, which had to be grounded in divine truth, in the rightly ordered world created by God.

Backed by religious sanctions and positive law, justice would be restored, rights respected, and harmony created. A new phrase—*social justice*—appeared in *Quadragesimo Anno* to describe the type of justice that demanded due recognition of the common good, a good which included, and did not contradict, the authentic good of each and every person. Thus the church could lift up both human rights and human solidarity as the basis of its response to the extremes of both totalitarianism and capitalism. This provided the foundation for the balancing of political and civil with social and economic rights and the committed but detached advocacy of a way other than Left or Right.

On the whole, however, the project of Christianizing the modern social order had to be judged, at mid-century, a failure. The magnificent effort to construct a body of Catholic social teaching produced thinkers and documents that were insightful and powerful in perceiving and denouncing the evils of liberalism, capitalism, and democracy, but which could never transcend that critique to formulate a positive, attractive, and compelling alternative. Because they distanced the church from the worst features of the age, they could and did generate a pastoral approach that brought the church closer to the suffering poor, but they never succeeded in relating to the hopes and aspirations of the working class. For all its failings, liberalism had excited new hopes and aspirations among masses of ordinary people; the church seemed only to offer a return to a former age, which many knew instinctively had been neither secure nor happy for most people.

Mater et Magistra: Christianity and Social Progress (John XXIII, 1961)

INTRODUCTION

The death of Pius XII and the election of John XXIII marked the end of an era in many ways. The image of the rotund, smiling Pope John contrasted significantly with the ascetic, gaunt Pius. John also seemed to move more easily with people, to be at home with them. But it was John's calling of Vatican Council II that defined his papacy and marked a new era in twentieth-century Catholicism.

While John's encyclicals were characterized by the use of natural law, he brought a new openness and style to that method that liberated it from static assumptions. Also John shared the liberal assumption that new wealth could be created and that the first task of justice was to generate it, not equitably to distribute what was available. He also assumed that a wider distribution of property would narrow the gap between rich and poor. In many ways John's assumptions were the assumptions of his age: an acceptance of the Western economic order, a reformist attitude to the status quo, and a wider role for the state.

Two features of his teaching are significant. First is his emphasis on socialization, an increase of the network of relations by which individuals are connected to each other. Justice takes on even more significance as we move into more complex and numerous interrelations. Second, John argued for state intervention to ensure that property would achieve its social functions. Justice requires that property be used for the common good.

John XXIII's first major encyclical on social issues was *Mater et Magistra,* issued in 1961. Several themes are present in this first major statement of John's pontificate. As noted, he highlighted the social dimension of property and related it to the need for a more effective distribution of goods in society. Then he broadened the criteria of the just wage to take into account the contribution of the individual, the economic state of the enterprise in which individuals work, the requirements of each community, and the common good. He also warned against the dangers of neocolonialism, which continued the political dominance of the poor by the rich. Finally, the pope developed a lengthy section on agriculture, in which he touched on issues such as health and crop insurance, price management, agricultural technology, and the relation between market value and the necessity of a just wage for farmers.

Mater et Magistra drew mixed reactions, ranging from William F. Buckley's celebrated "Mother, yes; teacher, no" to widespread applause from the liberal community. The encyclical did lead, however, to a greater sense of acceptance of full and personal participation in the world community and a new wave of ecumenical cooperation in social issues. It also laid a foundation for new developments in Catholic social teaching.

Pacem in Terris: Peace on Earth (John XXIII, 1963)

Issued in 1963, only a few months before John XXIII's death, *Pacem in Terris* seemed to come at an appropriate time. The Second Vatican Council had begun, and the process of the renewal of the church was underway. John's own personality touched a vital nerve in Western society, and the world seemed eager to hear what he had to say. The encyclical spoke in a language of fraternity, shared concern, and mutual responsibility. More ominously, the world had been to the nuclear brink twice, over Berlin and Cuba. Thus when for the first time in an encyclical, the pope spoke to "all men of good will," many seemed anxious to listen.

Four major themes stand out in *Pacem in Terris:* the rights proper to each individual, the relation between authority and conscience, disarmament, and the development of the common good.

The rights that the pope argues are proper to all individuals are not in themselves unique or constitutive of a major departure from traditional Catholic social thought. What is important is the encyclical's grouping of them together and listing them in such an explicit manner. In addition to traditional rights such as respect for one's person and religious freedom, John also argues for some not accepted as easily: the right to freedom in searching for the truth and in expressing one's opinions, the right to choose freely one's state of life, the right to work, the right to free initiative in economics, the right of freedom of assembly and association, and the right to emigrate and immigrate. Such a listing both sets out a social agenda and provides criteria for evaluation of social practices.

These rights form a general background for the document's teaching on the relation between conscience and authority. John begins with the traditional doctrine that authority is derived from God, but affirms that it also must derive its obligatory force from the moral order. While affirming the traditional doctrine that social positions imply social duties binding on all by natural law, he also provides a more democratic emphasis on participation. Then the pope argues that the state can oblige individuals in conscience only if its authority is intrinsically related to the moral order, that is, God. This provides the basis for individual claims against a government.

The problems of the arms race are of central concern to the encyclical. John argues that the arms race deprives individuals and nations of the economic goods necessary for social progress. It also causes individuals to live in constant fear not only of nuclear war but also of hazards from nuclear testing. The pope argues that justice, reason, and humanity demand that the arms race should cease, that nuclear weapons be banned, and that progressive disarmament begin. And, in a celebrated statement, John argues that because of the destructive force of these weapons and the terrible consequences of their use, "it is contrary to reason to hold that war is now a suitable way to restore rights which have been violated." As the restoration of violated rights was the fundamental basis for a just war, some observers concluded that in the nuclear age, a just war was no longer possible.

Finally, Pope John uses the concept of the common good as a principle of integration. Important in the pope's argument is that each political community also has a common good, which transcends the individual person's good, but which cannot be divorced from the common good of the entire human community. Such a realization of a variety of goods demands international cooperation and planning so that each individual entity—a person or a political community—can realize the goods proper to it. This finds its fulfillment in what Pope John refers to as the universal common good, the common good of the entire family.

With *Pacem in Terris* and the Second Vatican Council, Catholicism was emerging into participation in the full human community. This encyclical was a fitting climax to Pope John's reign, offering a standard of human rights and world peace against which to measure the pastoral effectiveness of the changes initiated by the council. The standard of Catholic life could never again be simply the power and strength of the church, for the church itself would now be judged by the standards of truth, justice, charity, and freedom Pope John set forth.

Gaudium et Spes:
Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
(Second Vatican Council, 1965)

INTRODUCTION

The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,* written in 1965, is an attempt to read the signs of the times so that the church can articulate its best hopes for humanity. The basic characteristic of the document is its feeling of openness to the contemporary situation. The document emphasizes that the church can learn from this world. It also emphasizes that the church must help in the process of evaluating what the world has to offer. What is critical, therefore, is that this critique must also occur from within—that is, from a positive understanding and appreciation of the values under discussion.

Five elements in particular are central to the document: personalism, the social nature of the person, the relation between the church and the world, justice, and development.

A new focus is the category of the person, which represents a major shift of emphasis from the traditional use of natural law categories. The Second Vatican Council centers on a doctrine of individual rights that focuses on the person and validates the claims of the person over and against society. As the center and crown of all things on earth, the person is the meaning and fulfillment of created reality.

Second, individuals, though centers of freedom and individual responsibility, are not solitary beings. In their inmost nature human beings are social and can neither live nor attain their full potential by themselves. Thus the interdependence characteristic of our modern age is rooted in and finds fulfillment in the very nature of the person.

Third, the Council strongly affirmed that the Christian community is "truly and internally linked with humanity and its history." It affirms that human activity which betters the world accords with God's mandate to human beings to subject to themselves the world and all that it contains and to govern the world with justice and holiness. This subjugation of all things to humans, the Council says, is a form of worship. This then is the moral norm for individuals: in accordance with the divine will, they should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race and allow persons as individuals and members of society to pursue their total vocation and to fulfill it.

Fourth, the indirect mission to society, based on its religious mission, is to help examine the values of life, defend human dignity, promote human rights and help build up the human family. Thus the church is deeply committed to the pursuit of justice by seeking more humane and just conditions of life and directing institutions to guaranteeing human dignity. Included in justice is the search for peace by safeguarding personal rights and guaranteeing respect for the person.

Finally, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* begins an initial discussion of the theme of development. Progress should be directed to the complete human fulfillment of all citizens. Wealthier nations must help less developed nations achieve this goal. This requires both the stimulation of economic growth as well as the reform of economic and social structures.

Gaudium et Spes was a powerful document, more powerful perhaps than the encyclicals because it represented the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the world's bishops. It embodied the incarnationalist theology that brought the church into the heart of human life; it spoke in humble and sincere terms to Catholics and non-Catholics alike; it offered a systematic and synthetic ethical framework for dealing with world problems; and it urged pastoral action to make its commitments real in Christian life and work. By giving strong and forceful voice to Pope John's vision of a church in service to real people in the concrete circumstances of human history, *Gaudium et Spes* represented the culmination of the changes begun with *Mater et Magistra* and set new directions for Catholic social thought.

Populorum Progressio: On the Development of Peoples (Paul VI, 1967)

INTRODUCTION

The choice of Giovanni Cardinal Montini of Milan as the successor to John XXIII was almost a foregone conclusion. He had enjoyed many marks of papal favor and played an important role in the first session of the Second Vatican Council. Ascending to the papacy in the wake of the tremendous reforms sweeping the church, Paul VI was to need all the skills of conciliation and compromise acquired in his long diplomatic career. Fully committed to the success of the Council, he was equally determined to maintain the power and dignity of the papal office, a set of loyalties which would cause him much anguish in the years ahead.

Populorum Progressio, written in 1967, placed the social question in its worldwide context. Paul VI offered an economic interpretation of the sources of war and argued for economic justice as the surest road to peace. The pope rejected unequivocally many of the basic precepts for capitalism, including unrestricted private property, the profit motive, and reliance on free trade in a world economy. He emphasized the right in justice of the poorer nations to the aid of the wealthier nations and suggested quite explicitly that, in an extreme situation, the poor retain the right to a violent solution to their problems.

A major theme is Paul's vision of development, which takes place on an individual level and is oriented to a transcendent humanism, growth always open to further maturity. Development is also social because each individual is part of a larger whole. True and integral development includes the acquisition of knowledge, culture, and the necessities of life; the desire for cooperation and peace, with a corresponding recognition of human dignity; the recognition of supreme values and the destiny of the person; and the acceptance of faith, which opens individuals to union with God.

Other agenda of the encyclical included the recognition of the social dimension of property, an equitable distribution of the world's resources, and trade, a new area of attention. Here Paul focused on the problems of neocolonialism.

While many agreed with the pope's description of the problems and even shared his sense of urgency, such people often also felt helpless in trying to address these issues. As with so many other dimensions of post-conciliar Catholicism, new windows had been opened, new demands made, but the exact direction the church and the world should follow was unclear. Poised in delicate balance between the church's role in the developed world and its moral commitment to freedom, justice, and peace, Pope Paul VI attempted to provide leadership for the present with a sense of continuity with the past. It was a most difficult task.

Octogesima Adveniens: A Call to Action on the Eightieth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (Paul VI, 1971)

INTRODUCTION

Timed to coincide with the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* and the tenth anniversary of *Mater et Magistra*, this encyclical, published in 1971, was addressed directly to Catholics, urging them to incorporate more seriously the new sense of Christian responsibility in the world into all phases of their lives. *Octogesima Adveniens* emphasized that action for justice was a personal responsibility of every Christian, that this responsibility rested on Christian organizations and institutions, that it involved both the effort to bear witness to the principles of justice in personal and community life and acting to give those principles life in society.

Pope Paul recognized that Christian communities had to analyze the situation proper to their own country in the light of the gospel and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment, and directives of action both from the gospel and the church's message. Most important, because situations differed from country to country, no universal program could be prescribed and local churches had to develop their own program of social justice.

Urbanization is a new theme in this encyclical. Paul VI sees individuals facing a new loneliness as a result of the anonymity, poverty, indifference, waste, and overconsumption often found in cities. These situations lend themselves easily to new forms of exploitation and domination.

Another new issue is the environment. Given rapid technological advances and the resources needed to keep pace with this development, severe questions about the future capacity of the earth to support the human race came to the fore. Thus the pope calls for a new sense of responsibility for the environment, which must support all of the inhabitants of the earth.

While recognizing and, indeed, voicing a high level of suspicion about the various ideologies that support many political programs, this letter recognizes the urgency of contemporary problems and argues strongly that Christians are called to action and participation in the social and political processes of the countries in which they live. This new call to action recognizes that Christians must become involved in social reforms as part of their mission as Christians. Although such a mission raises difficult political and practical problems, such difficulties do not absolve Christians of their duties. Rather, the urgency of the situation heightens the social responsibility of the Christian.

Justice in the World (Synod of Bishops, 1971)

INTRODUCTION

As a way of implementing the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI announced the regular convening of synods of bishops. The 1971 synod dealt with two major questions: the priesthood, and justice in the world. While much of the media debate focused on questions of internal discipline with respect to the priesthood, the more substantive heritage of this synod was its contributions to the question of justice. The synod produced a strong, positive document sanctioned by papal and episcopal approval, which was available to give powerful support to those in all nations working to bring the church into a more active, vigilant, and pastoral relationship to the problems of world justice and peace.

Beginning by recognizing the structures of injustice in the world, the bishops focused on the necessity of structural change that incorporates the principle of justice into human relations. Additionally, the bishops made it clear that the church must stand with the poor and oppressed if it is to be faithful to this gospel mandate.

The most quoted statement of the document continues to serve as the foundation for the church's social justice mission: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel" (Introduction). Thus concern for justice must be a part of all phases of Christian life; it provides a critical antidote to an exclusively otherworldly Christianity.

The synod addressed several of the critical questions of the day: technology, the arms race, nationalism, racial and class divisions, education, and the concentration of the world's wealth in the hands of a few. It grounded its evaluation of these problems in an incarnational theology which affirms that the relation of individuals with their neighbors is intimately bound up with their relation to God.

Although there is some pessimism in this document, and although the synod speaks in prophetic terms of the injustice present in our world, it concluded with a note of hope. This hope is based on the Christian vision that creation is groaning in the act of giving birth as it waits for the glory of God to be revealed. The bishops are encouraged by the efforts of individuals to lessen injustice, to lead lives of nonviolence, and to share in love and justice the goods of the earth. Such acts of love of neighbor make God present to the world and offer the hope of renewal.

Laborem Exercens: On Human Work (John Paul II, 1981)

INTRODUCTION

Laborem Exercens, published on September 14, 1981, commemorates the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* by setting forth a philosophy and theology of work in the contemporary context.

This analysis is grounded in the book of Genesis and focuses on the themes of subduing the earth, having dominion over the earth, and being responsible for the earth. John Paul distinguishes between objective work—the agricultural means, industrial processes, or microprocessing by which humans subdue the earth—and subjective work—the human capacity to act in a "planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself and with a tendency to self-realization" (no. 6). Work emerges from those who are expressing their nature and provides the grounding for the dignity of work. This analysis gives the pope the basis for concluding that work is for the person, not the person for work.

A second discussion is the distinction between labor and capital, made concrete by discussions of the exploitation of labor—treating workers as a means of production, and setting the lowest possible wage. For John Paul the conflict between labor and capital is not a class struggle, as Marx would have it, but the exploitation of labor. Because the conflict is moral, not exclusively ideological or political, the pope can reject the concept of an inevitable and perhaps violent class struggle. Additionally, since both property and capital are earned through labor, John Paul thinks this will provide a way for cooperation between these two groups.

Reflecting the distinction between objective and subjective work, John Paul proposes the principle of the priority of labor over capital: "Labor is a primary efficient cause, while capital, the whole collection of means of production, remains a mere instrument or instrumental cause" (no. 12). Capital is both work and a collection of things, based as it is on natural resources, money, and technologies. Because it is instrumental, capital must always be subject to labor. This serves as a basis for his argument against economism—the evaluation of labor only in accordance with its economic purpose—and materialism—the primacy and superiority of the material over the personal.

Four traditional rights of labor are then defended by the pope: suitable employment for all those capable of it; just remuneration for the work done; the organization of the labor process to respect the requirements of the person and his or her life; and the right to form unions. These rights are discussed within the context of the direct and indirect employer. The direct employer is the specific individual with whom the worker enters into a contract; the indirect employer sets the context in which the worker contracts with the direct employer. Any issues of wage justice or health care benefits, for example, must be established with respect to public policy, markets, and various structures of interdependence as well as with respect to a specific employer.

Finally, the pope identifies three values labor brings: through work humans transform nature and personally fulfill themselves; work provides a basis for family life and the resources it needs; and through work persons affirm their membership in a nation and participate in attaining the common good. By working, human beings achieve a deeper realization of their personhood through a deeper participation in community and the common good.

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: On Social Concern (John Paul II, 1987)

INTRODUCTION

This encyclical was issued in December 1987 to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*. The encyclical reviews international relations and establishes the theme of solidarity as a central one for the pope. The encyclical has six major parts: an introduction; a celebration of *Populorum Progressio*, focusing particularly on the concept of development; a survey of the contemporary world, which highlights what the pope views as significant failures; a presentation of authentic human development; a theological interpretation of modern problems; and a concluding section, which offers several guidelines.

Much blame for the lack of development is laid at the door of the East-West blocs. The Eastern bloc is characterized as a system of Marxist collectivism and the Western as based on liberal capitalism; both are combined with industrialization. From the pope's perspective, both have caused significant international problems: the stagnation of developing countries, unacceptably exaggerated concerns of security, arms trade, and the arms race.

One remedy for these problems, especially as a means of criticizing the excesses of East-West ideologies, is to focus on authentic human development: the transcendence of the human being; a vocation to work, which is the ultimate grounding of development; and a framework of freedom and solidarity based on the dignity of the human person. The "solidarity which we propose is the path to peace and at the same time to development" (no. 39). Solidarity is a fruit of interdependence, which demands "the abandonment of the politics of blocs, the sacrifice of all forms of economic, military or political imperialism, and the transformation of mutual distrust into collaboration" (no. 39). The positive outcome is the development of a vision of a global common good based on a recognition of moral interdependence.

Several guidelines provide the structure for John Paul's vision. First is the preferential option for the poor, which applies not only to the internal life of the church but also to its social responsibilities. Second is the recognition that private property carries a "social mortgage," which means that "it has an intrinsically social function based upon and justified precisely by the principle of the universal destination of goods" (no. 42). Third is the affirmation of religious and economic freedom, as well as the recognition of human rights through the rule of law. Finally, the pope affirms the necessity of developing nations taking responsibility for their own destiny by setting their own agenda, thus participating in the growing interdependence of the world.

Such a vision will not be easy to implement, especially given the past history of various blocs as well as the power of ideologies. Yet the vision of solidarity leading to interdependence gives a new standard, one that may perhaps lead people and governments to self-examination and to a shift in orientation.

SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS: ON SOCIAL CONCERN

After some initial observations on the significance of *Populorum Progressio,* the pope goes on to make an extended 'Survey of the Contemporary World' (Chapter 3). His teaching is not abstract and deductive in style but is rooted in a penetrating socio-political and historical analysis of the situation. He complains that the gap between the North and the South has persisted and is often widening. He criticizes in a strong and even handed manner the systems of both the West (liberal capitalism) and the East (Marxism), maintaining that each of them has a tendency towards imperialism and neo-colonialism (22). He cries out in protest against the arms trade, the plight of refugees, the horror of terrorism (24) and the damaging effects of the international debt (19). Invoking various indicators of genuine human development, the pope has no hesitation in claiming that there has been a failure or delay in fulfilling the hopes of development which were so high when PP was written (12, 20). The pope condemns the way in which the ideological conflict between the East and the West has widened the gap between the North and the South. He blames both sides for fostering the formation of ideological blocs, for the arms race, for failing to promote genuine inter-dependence and solidarity, and for imposing on other countries two opposed concepts of development, both seriously flawed (20-25). He shows a preference not for North-South but for First, Second, Third, and Fourth World, the bands of great or extreme poverty in countries of medium and high income.

The main purpose of this encyclical was to meet the need for a fuller and more nuanced concept of development in continuity with that of PP (4). His emphasis is on 'being more' rather than on 'having more'(28). In light of this he speaks out not only against the underdevelopment of the poor countries but also against what he calls 'superdevelopment' existing side by side with the miseries of underdevelopment . This he explains as an excessive availability

of every kind of material goods for the benefit of certain social groups linked to a civilization of consumerism and waste. Development includes an economic and social component. He refers to a number of ways in which this can be measured, such as the availability of goods and services, of food and drinking water, good working conditions and life expectancy (14), as well as proper housing (17), the extent of unemployment and under employment (18), and the burden of international debt (19). To limit development simply to its economic aspect leads to the subordination of the human person to the demands of economic planning and selfish profit (33, 28). One must also take account of cultural aspects such as literacy and education, and of political aspects such as respect for human right and human initiative, the extent of discrimination, exploitation and oppression, and also the degree to which people are allowed to be involved in building their own nation or, deprived of initiative and left dependent on a bureaucracy. The pope is careful to insist that different groups have differences of culture and value systems which do not always match the degree of economic development (14). The pope sets out to present a theological basis for his teaching on development (29-31).

John Paul maintains that genuine development must be understood in terms of solidarity (33).

- First, he spells out the fact of interdependence. By this he means that we live within a system which determines how we relate to each other in the economic, cultural, political, and religious spheres (38).
- Second, solidarity is a moral response to the fact of interdependence. There is a moral call to overcome distrust of others and to collaborate with them instead (39).
- Third, such acts of collaboration spring from the virtue of solidarity (39). As a virtue, solidarity is not just a feeling but a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good (38). It is an attitude of commitment to the

$3

good of one's neighbor, coupled with a readiness to sacrifice oneself in the service of the other (38).

- Fourth, the virtue of solidarity transforms the interpersonal relationships of individuals with the people around them. It causes the more powerful people to feel responsible foe those who are weak and makes them ready to share what they have with them. It leads those who are weak or poor to reject destructive or passive attitudes. It enables those in an in-between position to respect the interests of others (39).
- Fifth, the virtue of solidarity is exercised also by whole nations in their relationships with other nations. Nations, like people, are linked in a system which makes them dependent on each other.
- Sixth, by transforming the relationships both between individuals and between nations, the virtue of solidarity brings about a radical change in society as a whole.
- Seventh, there is a sense in which one might speak not merely of human solidarity but even of ecological solidarity.
- Finally, there is the matter of what happens if people refuse the challenge to be in solidarity with others – if they respond with disinterest instead of concern, if their attitude is one of using rather than respecting them. They are ignoring the crucial moral dimension of human development (9).

In SRS, John Paul puts forward a more theological analysis of the virtue of solidarity. It is an enabling power which gives us the capacity to respect others:"Solidarity helps us to see the other – whether a person, people, or nation – not just as some kind of instrument with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our neighbor, a helper, to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited" (39).

54

John Paul finds the basis for this selfless love in the fact that each person is the living image of God (40). He goes on to say that, for the Christian, the ultimate inspiration for solidarity comes from a unity that is even deeper than any unity based on natural and human bonds; this is the communion which is a reflections of the unity of the three Persons in one God (40).

John Paul insists that structures of sin are 'rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them, and make them difficult to remove (36). If the structures of sin are so pervasive and powerful how can we hope to bring about genuine development? At the personal level there must be a conversion in the biblical sense, that is a 'change of behavior or mentality or mode of existence' (38). The social dimension of this conversion is the virtue of solidarity. Solidarity brings about a radical change in society because it gives people the ability to oppose diametrically the all-consuming desire for profit and the thirst for power, and the structures of sin which spring from them (37-38). In this way it provides the foundation of a whole new set of structures, which can be called the civilization of love (33). So, the crucial importance of solidarity in the pope's theology of development is that for him it is the only effective response to the mis-development and corruption of our world.

On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum (John Paul II, 1991)

To celebrate the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum,* Pope John Paul II promulgated *Centesimus Annus* to look back, look around, and look to the future. Using *Rerum Novarum* as a frame of reference, John Paul provides us with a comprehensive overview of the key points of Catholic social teaching as well as an application of them to specific issues.

The encyclical is divided into six major chapters which review the key teachings of *Rerum Novarum*, presents the new issues for discussion, examines the events of the momentous year 1989, provides a contemporary discussion of private property, analyzes issues in the relation between the state and culture, and concludes by presenting his view of Christian anthropology as the ground for the church's social mission.

Highlighted as key themes in *Rerum Novarum* and thematically discussed in the body of *Centesimus Annus* are the themes of the restoration of peace between social classes, the right to private property, just wages, the question of rights, and the relation between the citizen and state. Of particular importance throughout *Centesimus Annus* is the theme of restoring or establishing harmony between various social groups. This has been a dominant theme of John's pontificate and it shows up as a central feature of this encyclical.

Chapter 2 argues that the continuing problems of workers and the poor come from the errors of socialism and an atheistic vision of life. Socialism subordinates the good of the individual to that of society and eliminates the "concept of the person as an autonomous subject of moral decision" (13). Atheism deprives the human of his or her transcendent dignity which allows utilitarian, but ultimately inadequate, solutions to human problems. The chapter concludes by commenting on specific problems of our day, particularly working conditions and the arms race.

Chapter 3 celebrated the breakdown of the Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the weakening of oppressive regimes in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. But while celebrating the collapse of Marxism, the pope also recognizes the presence of accumulated individual, social, and regional injustices over the last several decades and calls for steps to be taken to resolve these peacefully.

Chapter 4 examines the concept of private property. While standing with *Rerum Novarum*'s assertion of the right to private property, John Paul also recognizes that this is not an absolute right and that property has a social function. Additionally he also recognizes, but unfortunately does not develop, a new form of property: "the possession of know-how, technology and skill" (32).

Several other issues are discussed in this critical chapter. First is the problem of underdevelopment in the Third World in which John Paul notes that many of the problems raised by *Rerum Novarum* still are present and need resolution. Second, the problem of the deteriorating ecology is discussed, both on an environmental as well as a cultural level. Finally, issues of economic development are discussed. Recognizing the legitimacy of profit and that "the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs" (35), the pope does not give a carte blanche to capitalism. He argues that many human needs find no place in the market and justice requires their resolution. He also critiques heavily the consumerist society and its impact on the poor.

In chapter 5 John Paul argues against the totalitarian state on the grounds of its denial of transcendent human dignity. The church values, he says, the values of the democratic system, but only insofar as it recognizes and implements appropriate human values. The role of the church with respect to culture is to promote "those aspects of human behavior which favor a true culture of peace" (51).

The pope concludes *Centesimus Annus* with a presentation of Christian anthropology which grounds the church's social vision and mission on the basis of a transcendent human dignity. Additionally "the social message of the Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action" (55). Only through such action for justice will the vision of *Rerum Novarum,* now interpreted contemporarily through *Centesimus Annus,* be implemented.

CARITAS IN VERITATE: CHARITY IN TRUTH

A SOCIAL ENCYCLICAL BY POPE BENEDICT XVI

Summarized from article "The New Social Encyclical" by Donal Dorr in *The Furrow* (September 2009): 463-470

THE RELATIONSHIP OF JUSTICE TO LOVE

Our commitment to justice is rooted in the gratuitous outpouring of God's love. This awareness of being accepted and loved by God is what enables us to reach out to others in respect and love. This love is pure grace; it is both creative and redemptive (#5; #34). This is the background to a central guiding principle of the encyclical: its strong emphasis on the complementarity of justice and love. Love must animate and permeate all our efforts to create a more just world: 'charity demands justice' but at the same time 'charity transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving'. The Pope insists that our relationships with others be ones of gratuitousness, mercy, and communion (#6; #38). We know by bitter experience how easily progress gets blocked when the various groups and individuals in society focus mainly on their own rights. The impasse can only be broken when we, as individuals and in groups, begin to reach out to each other with the kind of generosity which loosens up our demands, which makes us willing to play down the faults and mistakes of others, and which, in this way, creates a real sense of community where all are respected, forgiven, and loved.

THE ROLE OF TRUTH

The Pope points out that charity/love without truth degenerates into sentimentality and emotionalism. He reminds us that the God of the bible is 'charity and truth, love and word'(#3). In the very first paragraph of the encyclical he says that our search for love and truth is purified and liberated by Jesus and that Jesus reveals 'the plan for true life that God has prepared for us'. The truth revealed by Jesus , and the truth that is known by reason, are the two pillars on which authentic human development is grounded (#29, #52, #78). Benedict goes on to spell out the implications of this in more detail(#4). It is not enough to have good intentions and to mean well; we need also to know what is good both for individuals and for society as a whole. 'Deeds without knowledge are blind, and knowledge without love is sterile … love is rich in intelligence and intelligence is full of love' (#30). Benedict devotes a long and dense paragraph to spelling out what he means by the common good (#7).

INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT

Benedict extends the scope of this phrase that was so central to Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* so that it covers both socio-economic issues and issues relating to sexual ethics and bio-ethics. This is all one seamless robe. This means that he has no hesitation in bringing right to life, abortion, euthanasia, as well as the cloning of embryos and other bio-technology issues into this social encyclical (#28, #75). Our duty to respect the environment is part of his integral views of authentic human living (#48 to#51; #67; 69). 'The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriages, the family, social relations: in a word, integral human development' (#51).

Benedict insists that development 'must include not just material growth but also spiritual growth …'(#76). 'Development requires attention to the spiritual life, a serious consideration of the experiences of trust in God, spiritual fellowship in Christ, reliance upon God's providence and mercy, love and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace. All this is essential if hearts of stone are to be transformed into hearts of flesh' Ezek 36:26 (#79).

CURRENT ISSUES

The Pope addresses many new issues which have arisen as a result of 'the explosion of worldwide interdependence, commonly known as globalization' and notes that 'the ferocious pace at which it has evolved could not have been anticipated' (#33). Globalization is not something which happened automatically in a pre-determined way; it is a result of human decisions – and we humans have both the power and the responsibility to control and direct it. As the encyclical says: ' globalization a prior is neither good nor bad. It will be what people make it. We should not be its victims, but rather its protagonists …'(#42). The encyclical addresses a whole variety of practical justice issues which arise as a result of the form which globalization has taken:

- Benedict refers to 'new forms of colonialism' (#33). Later, he warns against 'presumed cultural superiority' by technologically advanced societies (#59). One result of this arrogance is the way officials of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund have imposed harsh conditions on the inhabitants of poor countries, as part of what they call "Structural Adjustment Programs' (#25).
- In two places in the encyclical (#25 and #40) he refers to the 'outsourcing of production' to poor countries where labor is cheap – and is very aware of the problems which are associated with this practice. He notes how the ever-increasing competition results in 'the downsizing of social security systems … with consequent grave danger for the rights of workers' (#25). He points to the serious effects of the 'systemic increase of social inequality … the massive increase in relative poverty'. This, he says, leads to a damaging of 'social cohesion … placing democracy at risk'. Furthermore, it damages 'the economy, through the progressive erosion of 'social capital': the network of relationships of trust, dependability, and respect for rules, all of which are indispensable for any form of civil coexistence; (32).
- The encyclical also notes the problems associated with the hoarding of 'non-renewable energy sources' by wealthy countries (#49), and the problems associated with international tourism (including sex tourism) (#61). Elsewhere he refers to the 'rigid assertion of the right to intellectual property' (#22). Here he is obviously referring to the patenting laws which so disadvantage poorer countries; and he may well be thinking especially of the patenting of life-forms. Later on he refers (#65 and #40) to the abuse of 'sophisticated (financial) instruments' – and in doing so, obviously has in mind the hedge funds and other devices used by bankers and financiers to generate vast amounts of what is called 'virtual money' – which has now turned out very largely to be 'mythical money'!
- The Pope is also very aware of problems related to the environment. He speaks out strongly against an approach which sees it simply as 'raw material to be manipulated at our pleasure'. At the same time he warns against an opposite error

– seeing the environment as more important than the human person (#48). He sees human as stewards of nature (#50). He goes on to point out the need for a 'serious review of life-styles'. Then he reminds us 'how many natural resources are squandered by wars' (#51).

THE CENTRAL ISSUE

The Pope asserts that the whole financial and economic enterprise should be characterized by such fundamental virtues as social and distributive justice, respect, solidarity, trust, participation, transparency, generosity, love, and concern for the common good and for the environment. If people's desire to make money were tempered and balanced by a commitment to these virtues, then the various problems listed above would be avoided. Benedict insists that business activities of all kinds have to be re-inserted into a wider network of social relationships where business manages must take account , not just of how much money they make for their shareholders, but also of how their decisions affect all the other stakeholders. Those who own and manage companies have a serious responsibility for the health and welfare both of the workers in their own companies and for the workers in poor countries to which their production has been outsourced; also for the effects of their products on those who buy them, for the good of the wider society, and for the damage that may be done to the environment.

Looking at the present scene, the Pope concludes that the way the present market economy is working does not measure up to this high ideal; for it gives almost absolute priority to making profits for the shareholders and high salaries for a 'new cosmopolitan class of managers' (#40). But he is equally convinced that it would be no solution to the problem to move towards a socialist system where the State takes an ever-larger share of the economic activity in society; here he is in line particularly with the early social encyclicals which emphasized the dangers of an excessively controlling and bureaucratic State; for him the principle of subsidiarity is vitally important. "Today's international economic scene … requires a profoundly new way of understanding business enterprise' (#40).

A WAY FORWARD

Benedict says that 'Old models are disappearing, but promising new ones are taking shape on the horizon' (#40). The 'new models' he has in mind are types of business enterprise which are located in 'a broad intermediate area' which has emerged 'between profit-based companies and non-profit organizations'. He is pointing to the kind of company 'which does not exclude profit, but instead considers it a means for achieving human and social ends'; this is a company which is willing to 'view profit as a means of achieving the goal of a more human market and society' (#46. #38).

Vatican insiders say that this is a striking example of the extent to which the spirituality of the Focolare movement permeates much of the encyclical. Chiara Lubich has called for "an economy of communion'. The movement has brought together 754 companies world wide that are committed to pursuing higher goals than just profit. Benedict is not at all proposing that these dual-purpose enterprises should replace the regular business enterprise. It is clear, however, that he believes they can not only compete successfully with the profit-oriented companies but can also provide a challenge to them to take more seriously their social obligations. In this way they can play a key

role in 'civilizing the economy' (#38). They do this by showing that 'authentically human social relationships of friendship, solidarity and reciprocity can also be conducted within economic activity and not only outside it or after it'(#36).

IS IT REALISTIC?

Is the Pope just engaged in the kind of moralizing that is so easily dismissed by hardnosed economists and politicians? Not at all; it is happening today! We can already find what might be called actual or potential 'pilot schemes' or instances of the new approach. The Pope refers to 'fair trade' initiatives which ensure that producers of tea, coffee, and other primary products are paid fairly (#66). He notes with approval the development of 'ethical investment' initiatives (#45) while insisting on proper criteria for deciding what counts as ethical. He reminds us of how important it is that local grass roots people be involved in the implementation of development programs and the distribution of international aid (347, #58). He points to the importance of trade unions in the more prosperous countries ensuring that workers in poorer countries are not exploited (#64). He notes the value of consumer cooperatives and of the availability of 'micro-credit', as well as the role that credit unions can play and are playing in genuine human development (#66). He objects to protectionism by technologically advanced countries against poorer countries, especially in regard to agricultural products (#58). He favors a 'more devolved and organic system of social security', which would be 'less bureaucratic' and perhaps, linked to 'fiscal subsidiarity' and 'welfare solidarity from below' (#60). He points out the need for reform of the United Nations and of international financial institutions, so that the poorer nations can have an effective voice in them, and so that they be genuine 'shared decision-making'. He then goes on to say 'there is urgent need of a true world political authority" (#67). But he insists that in this area also the principle of subsidiarity must be respected (#57).

WILL IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

This is a document which is extremely relevant not only to the economic crisis in which we find ourselves but also to the fundamental issue of how society is organized. If we take it seriously and act on it, it could change the world.