

Examples of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church

Rerum Novarum (1891) of Leo XIII is the first of the modern social teachings of the Church.

Pope Paul VI continued this reflection when he wrote **Populo Progressio**.

Pope John Paul II wrote several encyclical letters developing the social teaching of the Church.

Most recently Pope Benedict XVI has added to this developing teaching with his encyclical **Caritas in Veritate**.

The **Labor Day Statement** of the Catholic Bishops of the United States for the year 2010 gives a wonderful summary of **Rerum Novarum** and **Caritas in Veritate**.

Last paragraph of the Introduction of Benedict's XVI's Caritas in Veritate.

(# 9)

The Church does not have technical solutions to offer[10] and does not claim "to interfere in any way in the politics of States." [11] She does, however, have a mission of truth to accomplish, in every time and circumstance, for a society that is attuned to man, to his dignity, to his vocation. Without truth, it is easy to fall into an empiricist and skeptical view of life, incapable of rising to the level of praxis because of a lack of interest in grasping the values — sometimes even the meanings — with which to judge and direct it. Fidelity to man requires fidelity to the truth, which alone is the guarantee of freedom (cf. Jn 8:32) and of the possibility of integral human development. For this reason the Church searches for truth, proclaims it tirelessly and recognizes it wherever it is manifested. This mission of truth is something that the Church can never renounce. Her social doctrine is a particular dimension of this proclamation: it is a service to the truth which sets us free. Open to the truth, from whichever branch of knowledge it comes, the Church's social doctrine receives it, assembles into a unity the fragments in which it is often found, and mediates it within the constantly changing life-patterns of the society of peoples and nations[12].

Reflecting on the role of religion in the public realm of society...

56. The Christian religion and other religions can offer their contribution to development only if God has a place in the public realm, specifically in regard to its cultural, social, economic, and particularly its political dimensions. The Church's social doctrine came into being in order to claim "citizenship status" for the Christian religion[135]. Denying the right to profess one's religion in public and the right to bring the truths of faith to bear upon public life has negative consequences for true development. The exclusion of religion from the public square — and, at the other extreme, religious fundamentalism — hinders an encounter between persons and their collaboration for the progress of humanity. Public life is sapped of its motivation and politics takes on a domineering and aggressive character. Human rights risk being ignored either because they are robbed of their transcendent foundation or because personal freedom is not acknowledged. Secularism and fundamentalism exclude the

possibility of fruitful dialogue and effective cooperation between reason and religious faith. Reason always stands in need of being purified by faith: this also holds true for political reason, which must not consider itself omnipotent. For its part, religion always needs to be purified by reason in order to show its authentically human face. Any breach in this dialogue comes only at an enormous price to human development.

Caritas in Veritate... The logic of gift...

Pope Benedict also writes about the "logic of gift" where he challenges economic theories. The Pope in his encyclical explains that the "logic of gift" requires the recognition of the giver, namely God, and that the world is a gift of God.

Further, God entered this world with all of its ups and downs so that we may know how important the word "gift" is in our lives. This principle of freely giving calls for unbounded generosity. It provides a foundation for restoring the most essential bonds of connectedness that makes persons more human. This principle is the basis of global solidarity.

No matter what we do, we are unable to pay back what we have received here on earth. Christmas is the celebration of this fact of God giving freely the whole of creation and of God giving us the Son who showed us how to give generously.

Caritas in Veritate... The Logic of Gift Applied to the Economy

CHAPTER THREE: FRATERNITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

34. Charity in truth places man before the astonishing experience of gift.

Gratuitousness is present in our lives in many different forms, which often go unrecognized because of a purely consumerist and utilitarian view of life. The human being is made for gift, which expresses and makes present his transcendent dimension. Sometimes modern man is wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life and society. This is a presumption that follows from being selfishly closed in upon himself, and it is a consequence — to express it in faith terms — of original sin. The Church's wisdom has always pointed to the presence of original sin in social conditions and in the structure of society: "Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals"[85]. In the list of areas where the pernicious effects of sin are evident, the economy has been included for some time now. We have a clear proof of this at the present time. The conviction that man is self-sufficient and can successfully eliminate the evil present in history by his own action alone has led him to confuse happiness and salvation with immanent forms of material prosperity and social action. Then, the conviction that the economy must be autonomous, that it must be shielded from "influences" of a moral character, has led man to abuse the economic process in a thoroughly destructive way. In the long term, these convictions have led to economic, social and political systems that trample upon personal and social freedom, and are therefore unable to deliver the justice that they promise. As I said in my Encyclical Letter ***Spe Salvi***, history is thereby deprived of Christian hope[86], deprived of a powerful social resource at the service of integral human development, sought

in freedom and in justice. Hope encourages reason and gives it the strength to direct the will[87]. It is already present in faith, indeed it is called forth by faith. Charity in truth feeds on hope and, at the same time, manifests it. As the absolutely gratuitous gift of God, hope bursts into our lives as something not due to us, something that transcends every law of justice. Gift by its nature goes beyond merit, its rule is that of superabundance. It takes first place in our souls as a sign of God's presence in us, a sign of what he expects from us. Truth — which is itself gift, in the same way as charity — is greater than we are, as Saint Augustine teaches[88]. Likewise the truth of ourselves, of our personal conscience, is first of all given to us. In every cognitive process, truth is not something that we produce, it is always found, or better, received. Truth, like love, "is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings"[89].

Because it is a gift received by everyone, charity in truth is a force that builds community, it brings all people together without imposing barriers or limits. The human community that we build by ourselves can never, purely by its own strength, be a fully fraternal community, nor can it overcome every division and become a truly universal community. The unity of the human race, a fraternal communion transcending every barrier, is called into being by the word of God-who-is-Love. In addressing this key question, we must make it clear, on the one hand, that the logic of gift does not exclude justice, nor does it merely sit alongside it as a second element added from without; on the other hand, economic, social and political development, if it is to be authentically human, needs to make room for the principle of gratuitousness as an expression of fraternity.

Conclusions of the Eighteenth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences... Spring 2012

On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the Encyclical **Pacem in Terris** we have chosen to devote a session of our Academy to the study of the contribution of this major document to the social doctrine of the Church. Published between the first and second sessions of the Second Vatican Council, the encyclical of Blessed John XXIII falls within the framework of the renewal of the Church's social thinking which that Council aimed at promoting, in particular in its constitution **Gaudium et Spes**, on the Church and the world...

The encyclical reaffirms very strongly the central thesis of the entire social doctrine of the Church, which is that "each individual man is truly a person. His is a nature that is endowed with intelligence and free will" (**Pacem in Terris**, #9). This is the basis on which the whole social doctrine of the Church is built. The human being mirrors his Creator. Human nature is nothing but the humanity of man, created in the image of God, capable of knowing and loving... The Catholic Church, for her part, is aware that through the revelation of Christ she knows the truth about man and is therefore duty bound to stand up for the values that are valid for human beings as such, transversally of the various cultures. She makes a distinction between the specificity of her faith and the

truths of reason that often derive from faith and which are also accessible to the person as a person regardless of this faith. As **Pacem in Terris** recognized, a fundamental defense of all the universal human values became positive rules in the declarations on human rights after the Second World War, because, after the errors and horrors of the two World Wars, enlightened people of different areas and cultures recognized their universal validity that is based on their anthropological truths and expressed them in effective rights. Today, the fundamental values of the human being, in which human dignity as such is questioned, are once again being debated. Here, over and above her faith, the Church considers it her duty to defend in our society as a whole the truths and values in which the very dignity of man is at stake.

Most who write about our Social Doctrine see it as espousing seven principles:

1. Respect for the Human Person
2. Promote the Family
3. Protect Property Rights
4. Work for the Common good
5. Observe the Principle of Subsidiarity
6. Respect Work and the Worker
7. Pursue Peace and Care for the Poor

Definitions:

Human Dignity is the intrinsic values of a person created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by Christ.

Common Good is the totality of social conditions allowing persons to achieve their communal and individual fulfillment.

Solidarity refers to the virtue enabling the human family to share fully the treasure of material and spiritual goods.

Subsidiary is the coordination of society's activities in a way that supports the internal life of the local communities.