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## A Pilgrim's Word of Cloisters and Hearths

*I have been away from this desk and this office for seven months. I have visited seven countries if I include the one where I started and finished my pilgrimage, this Republic of the Philippines. But I have not spent one month in each. I have gone around the world, spending a few days in some places, a month or more in others and nearly five whole months in my native land, the United States of America. I sallied forth armed only with God's help, a low cost (and highly restricted) ticket and a meager allowance which could never have sufficed without some bolstering along the way. The goal of my pilgrimage was twofold: to see my widespread family, unvisited by me for seven years; and to ransack the archives, files and stacks of certain renowned libraries in search of traces of the Anglican prelate, missionary and ecumenist, Charles Henry Brent. My journey showed me many contrasts but my halting and resting places belonged only to two categories: religious houses and private homes or, if you will, "cloisters and hearths."*

*From all the contrasting places and situations I encountered certain salient features remain in my memory. In the cloisters especially I felt a serious sense of frustration over varied but not really constant themes. In Europe and many parts of America lack of vocations is a main concern. In certain veritable oases of religious life where numbers are "up" and the recruiting process both viable*

and spiritually profitable, there is a concern, nonetheless, about the image the community or larger unit (such as a Province) projects and about the quality of continuity. Everywhere liturgy poses a problem of one sort or another but the sorts vary considerably from place to place. Are Mass and the Divine Office to be said or sung? Just what is the "vernacular" in a multilingual situs? Can there be a happy medium between the mumbled murmurings of aging religious and the ultra-amplified electronic blare beloved of the young? Most of all can a sane pluralism make for a rich community life? Or are religious houses rundown clubs for disgruntled but relatively listless men and women?

I could not begin to answer such questions posed as they were in very concrete situations. But I was able to see hope beyond incipient cynicism and light behind clouds everywhere I went. More than that I found my brothers and sisters not merely hospitable but real sharers in hope and true children of light. Despite all discouragements and difficulties it is good to know that there is among religious a basic optimism in the Lord, a desire to move ahead in the Spirit and an unshattered reliance on the Father in cloisters all around the world.

Hearths have their own problems wherever I went. Most of the families I was with were my own relatives or very close friends. Some had three generation households or close contacts between grandparents and grandchildren. Some of these hearths had been invaded by the spirit of the world (in the sense of unredeemed and, like as not, unredeemable negativity posing as a norm). All, even those most alienated from institutional religion, have put up a steady defense against this debilitating intrusion. But what defense has anyone against old age or chronic and incurable illness? What can we do when our children are autistic or retarded? How in a "free" society do we convince people not only to believe in the Spirit but to live in Him?

I am still not sure how to give a definitive answer to these questions from the hearths. I refuse to "coo" to people with pleasant nothings coated in a saccharine and false piety. But time and again I have had to say something. About all I could say was what Christ means to me in a few, sincere words. And I could show people, I think, how glad I am to be a Catholic Christian, to exercise ministerial priesthood and to belong to the Order of Preachers with all its rich heritage, its extraordinary privileges in the spiritual realm and its

*grave responsibilities to the sick and the poor, indeed, to all who suffer, sin and doubt. Yes, even the challenge of the hearth's fairly negative problematic gave me pause.*

*However, the positive side of the balance encouraged me beyond telling. More than anything, I was truly edified by the way people care for one another, by the real love at the center of every lay household I visited. And I was complimented (almost flattered) by the way people wanted to hear from me as a priest and religious: how they wanted me to share their comforts and the joy of togetherness at meals and on outings. Often enough I felt not (as I feared beforehand) like an intruder from far, far away, some sort of freak out of a medieval museum, but like what I hope I am: someone who knows the Lord well enough to bring His Good News to every rincón.*

*Wherever I went there were Filipinos. Some were sad and almost "exiles" in the foreign lands of their work. But the majority had about them that unique air of joyous coping with whatever may occur which nowadays is sadly more typical of the Provinces than of Manila. All of the Filipinos I met had an intense loyalty to the Church, a real desire for more and better instruction in the faith and a willingness to be identified with their cultural and religious heritage. Having met them, coming back to Manila was not much of a shock for I had found a little bit of these Islands nearly everywhere I went and a great deal in way of hospitality and support in places as far away from each other and from here as Madrid and San Francisco.*

*A pilgrimage around the world! It did not seem like idle and expensive tourism. Visits to cloisters and to hearths! Such places did not seem like zoos or art galleries. A series of human encounters! Looking back, I can only say, "Thank you, Lord," and hope that what great things I have received and what little I have given can be useful in aeternum, yes, to the far reaches of Eternal Life.*

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.



## **PRESS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCES RELEASE OF *CENTISIMUS ANNUS*\***

### **An Encyclical that is an 'overprint'**

The announcement of a new Encyclical, made at the beginning of January by the Pope himself, aroused curiosity, interest and expectation — everyone had his own little idea about the baby to be born. Today the Encyclical's birth certificate removes all doubt about what Pope John Paul II wanted: an Encyclical which "over-prints" that of Pope Leo XIII, an Encyclical meant to commemorate the publication one hundred years ago of *Rerum Novarum*.

The Pope says at the beginning: "It may be said that *Rerum Novarum*'s path through history has been marked by other documents which paid tribute to it and applied it to the circumstances of the day. In doing likewise for the hundredth anniversary. . . I wish first and foremost to satisfy the debt of gratitude which the whole Church owes to this great Pope and his "immortal document" (Pius XI). I also mean to show that the vital energies rising from that root

\*Thursday, 2 May 1991 marked the promulgation of John Paul II's third social Encyclical, *Centisimus Annus*, written to mark the centenary of *Rerum Novarum* and to address the social question in today's perspective. The Encyclical was presented to the Press by Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, who made the following statement (excerpt). *L'Osservatore Romano*, 8 May 1991.

have not been spent with the passing of the years, but rather have increased even more" (No. 1).

### The third Social Encyclical of Pope John Paul II

After *Laborem Exercens* in 1981 (on the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*) and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* in 1987, this third Encyclical bears witness to Pope John Paul II's lively interest in social issues. However, it must not make us forget the teaching of the other two Encyclicals.

#### *Centisimus Annus: an Encyclical with three viewpoints*

- a *retrospective* viewpoint, through a re-reading of *Rerum Novarum*;
- a *contemporary* viewpoint of the "new things" which surround us today;
- a *forward-looking* viewpoint, "at a time when we can already glimpse the third Millennium of the Christian era, so filled with uncertainties but also with promises."

These three viewpoints constantly intersect throughout the Encyclical.

- Chapter I:* When Pope John Paul II re-reads *Rerum Novarum*.  
*Chapter II:* When Pope John Paul II reads today's "new things" through the eyes of *Rerum Novarum*.  
*Chapter III:* An exceptional date: the year 1989.  
*Chapter IV:* Private Property: a right which varies geometrically.  
*Chapter V:* Timely reflections for a "sound theory of the State."  
*Chapter VI:* Man is the way of the Church.

The Encyclical *Centisimus Annus* restores fresh youth to the hundred-year-old Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. It also enables us to discover, despite our jaded eyes, the "new things" which mark our entry into the third Millennium. It is not European; it embraces all people because it embraces the whole person. It does not allow for a "diagonal" reading; we must learn to read it line by line. It does not lend itself to selective quotations; it has to be taken as a whole, like a living body. It comes from a Pope whose clear-sightedness has the profundity of the Gospel.

† ROGER CARD. ETCHEGARAY

## CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME\*

*The Church looks to the past to find  
new vigor and confidence,  
says the Pope in speaking of  
the centenary of 'Rerum Novarum'*

1. The hundredth anniversary of the publication of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* occurs during the month of May this year. As you know I have decided to dedicate a new encyclical for the celebration of this anniversary to indicate, while always drawing on the Tradition and life of the Church, some directions and perspectives which correspond to the increasingly serious social questions which occur in our time. The Church does not look to the past in order to escape the challenges of the present, but to acquire new vigour and new confidence for the activity which must continue among people today, on the basis of firm values and meditation on what the Holy Spirit has done and continues to do in her. The Church confronts the challenges of our time, so different from that of Leo XIII, but does so in the same spirit: she does so according to *the Spirit of God*, whom my Predecessor obeyed by responding to the hopes and expectations of *his* time. I am seeking to do the same in regard to the hopes and expectations of the present.

2. One event seems to dominate the difficult period in which we are living: the conclusion of a cycle in the history of Europe and the world.

\*At the general audience of 1 May 1991, instead of his usual catechesis, the Holy Father gave a talk introducing his new Encyclical Letter *Centisimus Annus*. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 6 May 1991.

The Marxist system has failed, and precisely for the very reasons which *Rerum Novarum* had already acutely and almost prophetically indicated. In this failure of an ideological and economic power which seemed destined to prevail over and even to root out the religious sense in human consciences, the Church sees -- beyond all sociological and political factors -- the intervention of God's Providence, which also guides and governs history.

The liberation of so many peoples, of distinguished Churches and of individual persons, should not, however, be transformed into an inappropriate sense of satisfaction or unjustified triumphalism.

That system has, at least in part, been overcome; but in various areas of the world the most extreme poverty continues to prevail, entire populations are deprived of the most elementary rights and lack the necessary means to satisfy basic human needs; in the wealthiest countries one frequently observes a sort of existential confusion, an inability to live and to experience properly the meaning of life, even though surrounded by an abundance of material possessions. A sense of alienation and loss of their own humanity has made people feel reduced to the role of cogs in the machinery of production and consumption and they find no way to affirm their own dignity as persons made in the image and likeness of God.

Yes, a system is finished; but the problems and situations of injustice and human suffering on which it fed have not, unfortunately, been overcome. It has failed to provide a satisfactory answer, but the question to which that answer had been given continues to remain current and urgent.

With the new encyclical the Church not only presents this question to the whole of humanity, but she also proposes adequate solutions. This means a renewed question about social justice, about solidarity among working people, about the dignity of the human person; it means not to be resigned to exploitation and poverty, never to abandon the transcendent dimension of the person, who wants to and who must place his own work at the heart of building society.

3. The social doctrine of the Church has always recognized the individual's right to private ownership of the means of production and has seen in this right a defense of freedom against every possible oppression. Furthermore, the division of property into the hands of many entails that each person must count on the cooperation of

others to satisfy his needs, while the indispensable social exchange must be regulated by contracts in which the free will of one encounters that of another. In contrast to the overbureaucratic and centralized command economy, the free and socially inspired economy presupposes truly free subjects who assume precise responsibilities upon themselves, loyally respect their duties to their co-workers and constantly take the common good into account.

It is right, therefore, to recognize the ethical value of the free market and of entrepreneurial activity within it, of the ability to "arrange the meeting" between consumer needs and the adequate resources to meet them by free bargaining. On this point Leo XIII, in opposition to collectivist theories, vindicated the rights of individual initiative in the context of service required to be given to the community.

4. The Catholic Church, however, has always refused and today continues to refuse to make the market the supreme rule and almost the model, or the summation, of social life. There is *something that is due to the human person because he is a person*, by reason of his dignity and his likeness to God, independently of his presence or not in the market, of what he possesses and therefore can sell, and of the means to buy what he needs. This something must never be disregarded, but rather demands *respect and solidarity*, the social expression of love which is the only attitude appropriate to the human person. There are human needs that are not accessible to the market, due to natural and social impediments, but which must be equally satisfied.

It is, in fact, the duty of the national and international community to answer these needs, either by giving direct assistance when, for example, an obstacle is insuperable, or by opening the way to proper access to the market, to the world of production and consumption, when that is possible.

Economic freedom is an aspect of *human freedom* which cannot be separated from its other aspects and which must contribute to the full realization of people in order to construct an authentic human community.

5. Without a doubt, along with individual ownership, one must affirm *the universal purpose of the world's resources*. The owner of these resources must always remember their purpose and the fact that, while they guarantee his liberty, they also serve to defend and

develop the freedom of others. When, on the other hand, he removes them from this complementary and co-essential function, he consequently removes them from the common good, betraying the purpose for which they were entrusted to him. No free economy can function for long and respond to the conditions of a life more worthy of the human person, unless it is framed in solid legal and political structures, and above all, unless it is supported and "enlivened" by a strong ethical and religious conscience.

This outline, ideal and real at the same time, is rooted in *human nature itself*. Man, in fact, is a being who "can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 24). He is a unique and unrepeatable subject who can never be absorbed into an undifferentiated human mass, and who truly fulfills his destiny when he is able to transcend his limited individual interests and to join himself to other human beings with many ties. This is the way the family is born; this is the way society is born.

Work, too, by its essential nature, promotes the autonomy of the person and the necessity of being joined with the work of others. Man works together with others, and through his work he enters into relationship with them: a relationship which can be one of opposition, competition or oppression, but also one of co-operation and membership in a community of solidarity.

Moreover, the human person does not work only for himself, but also for others, beginning with his own family and including the local community, the nation, and all of humanity. This is the reality which work must serve: the free and fruitful gift of self is expressed even through work. By confirming the close connection between private property and universal purpose of the earth's resources, the social doctrine of the Church is merely putting economic activity in the loftiest and broadest context of the general vocation of the human person.

6. History has always known new attempts to construct a better and more just society, one marked by unity, understanding and solidarity. Many of these attempts have failed, while others were directed against the human person himself.

Human nature, which is ordered toward social existence, also seems to reveal signs of division, dishonesty and hatred. But this is why God, the Father of all, has sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, into

the world, in order to overcome these constantly threatening dangers and to change the heart and mind of man by the gift of his grace.

Dear brothers and sisters!

A great commitment on the political, economic, social and cultural level is necessary to build a society that is more just and worthy of the human person. But this is not enough! A decisive commitment must be made to the very heart of man, to the intimacy of his conscience, where he makes his personal decisions. Only on this level can the human person effect a true, deep, and positive change in himself, and that is the undeniable premise of contributing to change and the improvement of all society.

Let us pray to the Mother of God and our Mother in this month dedicated to her, that she will support our personal efforts and our joint commitment and will thus help us to build more just and fraternal structures in the world for a new civilization — a civilization of solidarity and love.

† JOHN PAUL II

## ENCYCLICAL LETTER 'CENTISIMUS ANNUS'

*Addressed by the Supreme Pontiff  
JOHN PAUL II  
to His Venerable Brothers  
in the Episcopate  
the Priests and Deacons  
Families of Men and Women Religious  
All the Christian Faithful  
and to All Men and Women  
of Good Will  
on the Hundredth Anniversary of  
RERUM NOVARUM*

Venerable Brothers,  
Beloved Sons and Daughters,  
Health and the Apostolic Blessing!

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Centenary of the promulgation of the Encyclical which begins with the words "*Rerum Novarum*,"<sup>1</sup> by my predecessor of venerable memory Pope Leo XIII, is an occasion of great importance for the present history of the Church and for my own Pontificate. It is an Encyclical that has the distinction of having been commemorated by solemn Papal document from its fortieth anniversary to its ninetieth. It may be said that its path through history has been

<sup>1</sup>Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* (15 May 1891): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, XI, Romae, 1892, 97-144.



marked by other documents which paid tribute to it and applied it to the circumstances of the day.<sup>2</sup>

In doing likewise for the hundredth anniversary, in response to requests from many Bishops, Church institutions, and study centers, as well as business leaders and workers, both individually and as members of associations, I wish first and foremost to satisfy the debt of gratitude which the whole Church owes to this great Pope and his "immortal document."<sup>3</sup> I also mean to show that the vital energies rising from that root have not been spent with the passing of the years, but rather have increased even more. This is evident from the various initiatives which have preceded, and which are to accompany and follow the celebration, initiatives promoted by Episcopal Conferences, by international agencies, universities and academic institutes, by professional associations and by other institutions and individuals in many parts of the world.

2. The present Encyclical is part of these celebrations, which are meant to thank God — the origin of "every good endowment and every perfect gift" (*Jas 1:17*) — for having used a document published a century ago by the See of Peter to achieve so much good and to radiate so much light in the Church and in the world. Although the commemoration at hand is meant to honor *Rerum Novarum*, it also honors those Encyclicals and other documents of my predecessors which have helped make Pope Leo's Encyclical present and alive in history, thus constituting what would come to be called the Church's "social doctrine," "social teaching" or even "social magisterium."

The validity of this teaching has already been pointed out in two Encyclicals published during my Pontificate: *Laborem Exercens* on human work, and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* on current problems regarding the development of individuals and peoples.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* (15 May 1931): AAS 23 (1931), 177-228; Pius XII, Radio Message of 1 June 1941: AAS, 33 (1941), 195-205; John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961): AAS 53 (1961), 401-464; Paul VI, Apostolic Epistle *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971): AAS 63 (1971), 401-441.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, III, *loc. cit.*, 228.

<sup>4</sup>Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981): AAS 73 (1981), 577-647; Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987): AAS 80 (1988), 513-586.

3. I now wish to propose a "re-reading" of Pope Leo's Encyclical by issuing an invitation to "look back" at the text itself in order to discover anew the richness of the fundamental principles which it formulated for dealing with the question of the condition of workers. But this is also an invitation to "look around" at the "new things" which characterized the final decade of the last century. Finally, it is an invitation to "look to the future" at a time when we can already glimpse the third Millennium of the Christian era, so filled with uncertainties but also with promises — uncertainties and promises which appeal to our imagination and creativity, and which reawaken our responsibility, as disciples of the "one teacher" (cf. *Jn* 14:6).

A re-reading of this kind will not only confirm the permanent value of such teaching, but will also manifest the true meaning of the Church's Tradition which, being ever living and vital, builds upon the foundation laid by our fathers in the faith, and particularly upon what "the Apostles passed down to the Church"<sup>6</sup> in the name of Jesus Christ, who is her irreplaceable foundation (cf. *I Cor* 3:11).

It was out of an awareness of his mission as the Successor of Peter that Pope Leo XIII proposed to speak out, and Peter's Successor today is moved by that same awareness. Like Pope Leo and Popes before and after him, I take my inspiration from the Gospel image of "the scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven," whom the Lord compares to "a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (*Mt* 13:52). The treasure is the great outpouring of the Church's tradition, which contains "what is old" — received and passed on from the very beginning — and which enables us to interpret the "new things" in the midst of which the life of the Church and the world unfolds.

Among the things which become "old" as a result of being incorporated into Tradition, and which offer opportunities and material for enriching both Tradition and life of faith, there is the fruitful activity of many millions of people, who, spurred on by the social Magisterium, have sought to make that teaching the inspiration for their involvement in the world. Acting either as individuals or joined together in various groups, associations and organizations, these

<sup>6</sup>Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereres*, I, 10, 1; III, 4, 1: *PG* 7, 549 f.; *S. Ch.* 264, 154 f.; 211, 44-46.

people represent a great movement for the defense of the human person and the safeguarding of human dignity. Amid changing historical circumstances, this movement has contributed to the building of a more just society or at least to the curbing of injustice.

The present Encyclical seeks to show the fruitfulness of the principles enunciated by Leo XIII, which belong to the Church's doctrinal patrimony and, as such, involve the exercise of her teaching authority. But pastoral solicitude also prompts me to propose an analysis of some events of recent history. It goes without saying that part of the responsibility of Pastors is to discern the new requirements of evangelization. However, such an analysis is not meant to pass definitive judgments since this does not fall *per se* within the Magisterium's specific domain.

## I. Characteristics of *Rerum Novarum*

4. Towards the end of the last century the Church found herself facing an historical process which had already been taking place for some time, but which was by then reaching a critical point. The determining factor in this process was a combination of radical changes which had taken place in the political, economic and social fields, and in the areas of science and technology, to say nothing of the wide influence of the prevailing ideologies. In the sphere of politics, the result of these changes was a new conception of society and of the State, and consequently of authority itself. A traditional society was passing away and another was beginning to be formed — one which brought the hope of new freedoms but also the threat of new forms of injustice and servitude.

In the sphere of economics, in which scientific discoveries and their practical application come together, new structures for the production of consumer goods had progressively taken shape. A new form of property had appeared — capital; and a new form of labor — labor for wages, characterized by high rates of production which lacked due regard for sex, age or family situation, and were determined solely by efficiency, with a view to increasing profits.

In this way labor became a commodity to be freely bought and sold on the market, its price determined by the law of supply and demand, without taking into account the bare minimum required for

the support of the individual and his family. Moreover, the worker was not even sure of being able to sell "his own commodity," continually threatened as he was by unemployment, which, in the absence of any kind of social security, meant the specter of death by starvation.

The result of this transformation was a society "divided into two classes, separated by a deep chasm."<sup>6</sup> This situation was linked to the marked change taking place in the political order already mentioned. Thus the prevailing political theory of the time sought to promote total economic freedom by appropriate laws, or, conversely, by a deliberate lack of any intervention. At the same time, another conception of property and economic life was beginning to appear in an organized and often violent form, one which implied a new political and social structure.

At the height of this clash, when people finally began to realize fully the very grave injustice of social realities in many places and the danger of a revolution fanned by ideals which were then called "socialist," Pope Leo XIII intervened with a document which dealt in a systematic way with the "condition of the workers." The Encyclical had been preceded by others devoted to teachings of a political character; still others would appear later.<sup>7</sup> Here, particular mention must be made of the Encyclical *Libertas Praestantissimum*, which called attention to the essential bond between human freedom and truth, so that freedom which refused to be bound to the truth would fall into arbitrariness and end up submitting itself to the vilest of passions, to the point of self-destruction. Indeed, what is the origin of all the evils to which *Rerum Novarum* wished to respond, if not a kind of freedom which, in the area of economic and social activity, cuts itself off from the truth about man?

The Pope also drew inspiration from the teaching of his Predecessors, as well as from the many documents issued by Bishops, from scientific studies promoted by members of the laity, from the work of

<sup>6</sup>Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: loc. cit., 132.

<sup>7</sup>Cf., e.g., Leo XIII, Encyclical Epistle *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae* (10 February 1880): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, II, Romae 1882, 10-40; Encyclical Epistle *Diuturnum Illud* (29 June 1881): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, II, Romae 1882, 269-287; Encyclical Letter *Libertas Praestantissimum* (20 June 1888): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, VIII, Romae 1889, 212-246; Encyclical Epistle *Graves de communi* (18 January 1901): *Leonis P.M. Acta*, XXI, Romae 1902, 3-20.

"Catholic movements and associations, and from the Church's practical achievements in the social field during the second half of the nineteenth century.

5. The "new things" to which the Pope devoted his attention were anything but positive. The first paragraph of the Encyclical describes in strong terms the "new things" (*rerum novarum*) which gave it its name: "That *the Spirit of revolutionary change* which has long been disturbing the nations of the world should have passed beyond the sphere of politics and made its influence felt in the related sphere of practical economics is not surprising. Progress in industry, the development of new trades, the changing relationship between employers and workers, the enormous wealth of a few as opposed to the poverty of the many, the increasing self-reliance of the workers and their closer association with each other, as well as a notable decline in morality: all these elements have led to the conflict now taking place."<sup>8</sup>

The Pope and the Church with him were confronted, as was the civil community, by a society which was torn by a conflict all the more harsh and inhumane because it knew no rule or regulation. It was the conflict between capital and labor, or — as the Encyclical puts it — the worker question. It is precisely about this conflict, in the very pointed terms in which it then appeared, that the Pope did not hesitate to speak.

Here we find the first reflection for our times as suggested by the Encyclical. In the face of a conflict which set man against man, almost as if they were "wolves," a conflict between the extremes of mere physical survival on the one side and opulence on the other, the Pope did not hesitate to intervene by virtue of his "apostolic office,"<sup>9</sup> that is, on the basis of the mission received from Jesus Christ himself to "feed his lambs and tend his sheep" (cf. *Jn* 21:15-17), and to "bind and loose" on earth for the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. *Mt* 16:19). The Pope's intention was certainly to restore peace, and the present-day reader cannot fail to note his severe condemnation, in no uncertain terms, of the class struggle.<sup>10</sup> However, the Pope was very much aware that

<sup>8</sup>Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: loc. cit., 97.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*: loc. cit., 98

<sup>10</sup>Cf. *ibid.*: loc. cit., 109 f.

*peace is built on the foundation of justice: what was essential to the Encyclical was precisely its proclamation of the fundamental conditions for justice in the economic and social situation of the time.*<sup>11</sup>

In this way, Pope Leo XIII, in the footsteps of his Predecessors, created a lasting paradigm for the Church. The Church, in fact, has something to say about specific human situations, both individual and communal, national and international. She formulates a genuine doctrine for these situations, a *corpus* which enables her to analyze social realities, to make judgments about them and to indicate directions to be taken for the just resolution of the problems involved.

In Pope Leo XIII's time such a concept of the Church's right and duty was far from being commonly admitted. Indeed, a two-fold approach prevailed: one directed to this world and this life, to which faith ought to remain extraneous; the other directed towards a purely other-worldly salvation, which neither enlightens nor directs existence on earth. The Pope's approach in publishing *Rerum Novarum* gave the Church "citizenship status" as it were, amid the changing realities of public life, and this standing would be more fully confirmed later on. In effect, to teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Savior. This doctrine is likewise a source of unity and peace in dealing with the conflicts which inevitably arise in social and economic life. Thus it is possible to meet these new situations without degrading the human person's transcendent dignity, either in oneself or in one's adversaries, and to direct those situations towards just solutions.

Today, at a distance of a hundred years, the validity of this approach affords me the opportunity to contribute to the development of Christian social doctrine. The "new evangelization," which the modern world urgently needs and which I have emphasized many times, must include among its essential elements a proclamation of the Church's social doctrine. As in the days of Pope Leo XIII, this

<sup>11</sup>Cf. *ibid.*: description of working conditions; anti-Christian workers' associations: *loc. cit.*, 110 f.; 136 f.

doctrine is still suitable for indicating the right way to respond to the great challenges of today, when ideologies are being increasingly discredited. Now, as then, we need to repeat that there can be *no genuine solution of the "social question" apart from the Gospel*, and that the "new things" can find in the Gospel the context for their correct understanding and the proper moral perspective for judgment on them.

6. With the intention of shedding light on the *conflict* which had arisen between capital and labor, Pope Leo XIII affirmed the fundamental rights of workers. Indeed, the key to reading the Encyclical is the *dignity of the worker* as such, and, for the same reason, the *dignity of work*, which is defined as follows: "to exert oneself for the sake of procuring what is necessary for the various purposes of life, and first of all for self-preservation."<sup>12</sup> The Pope describes work as "personal, inasmuch as the energy expended is bound up with the personality and is the exclusive property of him who acts, and, furthermore, was given to him for his advantage."<sup>13</sup> Work thus belongs to the vocation of every person; indeed, man expresses and fulfills himself by working. At the same time, work has a "social" dimension through its intimate relationship not only to the family, but also to the common good, since "it may truly be said that it is only by the labor of working-men that States grow rich."<sup>14</sup> These are themes that I have taken up and developed in my Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*.<sup>15</sup>

Another important principle is undoubtedly that of the *right to "private property"*.<sup>16</sup> The amount of space devoted to this subject in the Encyclical shows the importance attached to it. The Pope is well aware that private property is not an absolute value, nor does he fail to proclaim the necessary complementary principles, such as the *universal destination of the earth's goods*.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*: loc. cit., 130; cf. also 114 f.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*: loc. cit., 130.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*: loc. cit., 123.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 1, 2, 6: loc. cit., 578-583; 589-592.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: loc. cit., 99-107.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. *ibid.*: loc. cit., 102 f.

On the other hand, it is certainly true that the type of private property which Leo XIII mainly considers is land ownership.<sup>18</sup> But this does not mean that the reasons adduced to safeguard private property or to affirm the right to possess the things necessary for one's personal development and the development of one's family, whatever the concrete form which that right may assume, are not still valid today. This is something which must be affirmed once more in the face of the changes we are witnessing in systems formerly dominated by collective ownership of the means of production, as well as in the face of the increasing instances of poverty or, more precisely, of hindrances to private ownership in many parts of the world, including those where systems predominate which are based on an affirmation of the right to private property. As a result of these changes and of the persistence of poverty, a deeper analysis of the problem is called for, an analysis which will be developed later in this document.

7. In close connection with the right to private property, Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical also affirms *other rights* as inalienable and proper to the human person. Prominent among these, because of the space which the Pope devotes to it and the importance which he attaches to it, is the "natural human right" to form private associations. This means above all *the right to establish professional associations* of employers and workers, or of workers alone.<sup>19</sup> Here we find the reason for the Church's defense and approval of the establishment of what are commonly called trade unions: certainly not because of ideological prejudices or in order to surrender to a class mentality, but because the right of association is a natural right of the human being, which therefore precedes his or her incorporation into political society. Indeed, the formation of unions "cannot . . . be prohibited by the State," because "the State is bound to protect natural rights, not to destroy them; and if it forbids its citizens to form associations, it contradicts the very principle of its own existence."<sup>20</sup>

Together with this right, which — it must be stressed — the Pope explicitly acknowledges as belonging to workers, or, using his

<sup>18</sup>Cf. *ibid.*: *loc. cit.*, 101-104.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. *ibid.*: *loc. cit.*, 134 f., 137 f.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*: *loc. cit.*, 135.



own language, to "the working class," the Encyclical affirms just as clearly the right to the "limitation of working hours," the right to legitimate rest and the right of children and women<sup>21</sup> to be treated differently with regard to the type and duration of work.

If we keep in mind what history tells us about the practices permitted or at least not excluded by law regarding the way in which workers were employed, without any guarantees as to working hours or the hygienic conditions of the work-place, or even regarding the age and sex of apprentices, we can appreciate the Pope's severe statement: "It is neither just nor human so to grind men down with excessive labor as to stupefy their minds and wear out their bodies." And referring to the "contract" aimed at putting into effect "labor relations" of this sort, he affirms with greater precision, that "in all agreements between employers and workers there is always the condition expressed or understood" that proper rest be allowed, proportionate to "the wear and tear of one's strength." He then concludes: "To agree in any other sense would be against what is right and just."<sup>22</sup>

8. The Pope immediately adds *another right* which the worker has as a person. This is the right to a "just wage," which cannot be left to the "free consent of the parties, so that the employer, having paid what was agreed upon, has done his part and seemingly is not called upon to do anything beyond."<sup>23</sup> It was said at the time that the State does not have the power to intervene in the terms of these contracts, except to ensure the fulfillment of what had been explicitly agreed upon. this concept of relations between employers and employees, purely pragmatic and inspired by a thorough-going individualism, is severely censured in the Encyclical as contrary to the twofold nature of work as a personal and necessary reality. For it work *as something necessary* it is governed by the grave obligation of every individual to ensure the "preservation of life." "It necessarily follows," the Pope concludes, "that every individual has a natural right to procure what is required to live; and the poor can procure that in no other way than by what they can earn through their work."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Cf. *ibid.*: loc. cit., 128-129.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*: loc. cit., 129.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*: loc. cit., 129.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*: loc. cit., 130 f.

A workman's wages should be sufficient to enable him to support himself, his wife and his children. "If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice."<sup>25</sup>

Would that these words, written at a time when what has been called "unbridled capitalism" was pressing forward, should not have to be repeated today with the same severity. Unfortunately, even today one finds instances of contracts between employers and employees which lack reference to the most elementary justice regarding the employment of children or women, working hours, the hygienic condition of the work-place and fair pay; and this is the case despite the *International Declarations and Conventions* on the subject<sup>26</sup> and the *internal laws* of States. The Pope attributed to the "public authority" the "strict duty" of providing properly for the welfare of the workers, because a failure to do so violates justice; indeed, he did not hesitate to speak of "distributive justice."<sup>27</sup>

9. To these rights Pope Leo XIII adds another right regarding the condition of the working class, one which I wish to mention because of its importance: Namely, the right to discharge freely one's religious duties. The Pope wished to proclaim this right within the context of the other rights and duties of workers, notwithstanding the general opinion, even in his day, that such questions pertained exclusively to an individual's private life. He affirms the need for Sunday rest so that people may turn their thoughts to heavenly things and to worship which they owe to Almighty God.<sup>28</sup> No one can take away this human right, which is based on a commandment; in the words of the Pope: "no man may with impunity violate that human dignity which God himself treats with great reverence," and consequently, the State must guarantee to the worker the exercise of this freedom.<sup>29</sup>

It would not be mistaken to see in this clear statement a springboard for the principle of the right to religious freedom, which

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*: loc. cit., 131.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: loc. cit., 121-123.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. *ibid.*: loc. cit., 127.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*: loc. cit., 126 f.

was to become the subject of many solemn *International Declarations and Conventions*,<sup>30</sup> as well as of the Second Vatican Council's well-known *Declaration and of my own repeated teaching*.<sup>31</sup> In this regard, one may ask whether existing laws and the practice of industrialized societies effectively ensure in our own day the exercise of this basic right to Sunday rest.

10. Another important aspect, which has many applications to our own day, is the concept of the relationship between the State and its citizens. *Rerum Novarum* criticizes two social and economic systems: socialism and liberalism. The opening section, in which the right to private property is reaffirmed, is devoted to socialism. Liberalism is not the subject of a special section, but it is worth noting that criticisms of it are raised in the treatment of the duties of the State.<sup>32</sup> The State cannot limit itself to "favoring one portion of the citizens," namely the rich and prosperous, nor can it "neglect the other," which clearly represents the majority of society. Otherwise, there would be a violation of that law of justice which ordains that every person should receive his due. "When there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the defenseless and the poor have a claim to special consideration. The richer class has many ways of shielding itself, and stands less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back on, and must chiefly depend on the assistance of the State. It is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong to the latter class, should be especially cared for and protected by the Government."<sup>33</sup>

These passages are relevant today, especially in the face of the new forms of poverty in the world, and also because they are affirmations which do not depend on a specific notion of the State or on a particular political theory. Leo XIII is repeating an elementary

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Declaration on the elimination of every form of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or convictions.

<sup>31</sup>Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*; John Paul II, Letter to Heads of State (1 September 1980): AAS 72 (1980), 1252-1260; Message for the 1988 World Day of Peace (1 January 1988): AAS 80 (1988), 278-286.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: 42: *loc. cit.*, 99-105; 130 f.; 135.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*: *loc. cit.*, 125.

principle of sound political organization, namely, the more that individuals are defenseless within a given society, the more they require the care and concern of others, and in particular the intervention of governmental authority.

In this way what we nowadays call the principle of solidarity, the validity of which both in the internal order of each nation and in the international order I have discussed in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,<sup>34</sup> is clearly seen to be one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization. This principle is frequently stated by Pope Leo XIII, who uses the term "friendship," a concept already found in Greek philosophy. Pope Pius XI refers to it with the equally meaningful term "social charity." Pope Paul VI, expanding the concept to cover the many modern aspects of the social question, speaks of a "civilization of love."<sup>35</sup>

11. Re-reading the Encyclical in the light of contemporary realities enables us to appreciate *the Church's constant concern for and dedication to* categories of people who are especially beloved to the Lord Jesus. The content of the text is an excellent testimony to the continuity within the Church of the so-called "preferential option for the poor," an option which I defined as a "special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity."<sup>36</sup> Pope Leo's Encyclical on the "condition of the workers" is thus an Encyclical on the poor and on the terrible conditions to which the new and often violent process of industrialization had reduced great multitudes of people. Today, in many parts of the world, similar processes of economic, social and political transformation are creating the same evils.

If Pope Leo XIII calls upon the State to remedy the condition of the poor in accordance with justice, he has the duty of watching over the common good and of ensuring that every sector of social life, not excluding the economic one, contributes to achieving that good, while

<sup>34</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38-40: *loc. cit.*, 564-569; cf. also John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*, *loc. cit.*, 407.

<sup>35</sup>Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: *loc. cit.*, 114-116; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, III, *loc. cit.*, 208; Paul VI, Homily for the Closing of the Holy Year (25 December 1975): AAS 68 (1976), 145; Message for the 1977 World Day of Peace (1 January 1977): AAS 68 (1976), 709.

<sup>36</sup>Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42: *loc. cit.*, 572.

respecting the rightful autonomy of each sector. This should not however lead us to think that Pope Leo expected the State to solve every social problem. On the contrary, he frequently insists on necessary limits to the State's intervention and on its instrumental character, inasmuch as the individual, the family and society are prior to the State, and inasmuch as the State exists in order to protect their rights and not stifle them.<sup>37</sup>

The relevance of these reflections for our own day is inescapable. It will be useful to return later to this important subject of the limits inherent in the nature of the State. For now, the points which have been emphasized (certainly not the only ones in the Encyclical) are situated in continuity with the church's social teaching, and in the light of a sound view of private property, work, the economic process, the reality of the State and, above all, of man himself. Other themes will be mentioned later when we examine certain aspects of the contemporary situation. From this point forward it will be necessary to keep in mind that the main thread and, in a certain sense, the guiding principle of Pope Leo's encyclical, and of all of the Church's social doctrine, is a *correct view of the human person* and of his unique value, inasmuch as "man... is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself."<sup>38</sup> God has imprinted his own image and likeness on man (cf. *Gen* 1:26), conferring upon him an incomparable dignity, as the Encyclical frequently insists. In effect, beyond the rights which man acquires by his own work, there exist rights which do not correspond to any work he performs, but which flow from his essential dignity as a person.

## II. Towards the 'new things' of today

12. The commemoration of *Rerum Novarum* would be incomplete unless reference were also made to the situation of the world today. The document lends itself to such a reference, because the historical picture and the prognosis which it suggests have proved to be surprisingly accurate in the light of what has happened since then.

This is especially confirmed by the events which took place near the end of 1989 and at the beginning which followed, can only be

<sup>37</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: *loc. cit.*, 101 f.; 104 f.; 130 f.; 136.

<sup>38</sup>Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.

explained by the preceding situations which, to a certain extent, crystallized or institutionalized Leo XIII's predictions and increasingly disturbing signs noted by his Successors. Pope Leo foresaw the negative consequences — political, social, economic — of the social order proposed by "socialism," which at that time was still only a social philosophy and not yet a fully structured movement. It may seem surprising that "socialism" appeared at the beginning of the Pope's critique of solutions to the "question of the working class" at a time when "socialism" was not yet in the form of a strong and powerful State, with all the resources which that implies, as was later to happen. However, he correctly judged the danger posed to the masses by the attractive presentation of this simple and radical solution to the "question of the working class" of the time — all the more so when one considers the terrible situation of injustice in which the working classes of the recently industrialized nations found themselves.

Two things must be emphasized here: first, the great clarity in perceiving, in all its harshness, the actual condition of the working class -- men, women and children; secondly, equal clarity in recognizing the evil of a solution which, by appearing to reverse the positions of the poor and the rich, was in reality detrimental to the very people whom it was meant to help. The remedy would prove worse than the sickness. By defining the nature of socialism of his day as the suppression of private property, Leo XIII arrived at the crux of the problem.

His words deserve to be re-read attentively: "To remedy these wrongs (the unjust distribution of wealth and the poverty of the workers), the Socialists encourage the poor man's envy of the rich and strive to do away with private property, contending that individual possessions should become the common property of all. . . ; but their contentions are so clearly powerless to end the controversy that, were they carried into effect, the working man himself would be among the first to suffer. They are moreover emphatically unjust, for they would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community."<sup>39</sup> The evils caused by the setting up of this type of socialism as a State system — what would later be called "Real Socialism" — could not be better expressed.

<sup>39</sup>Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: *loc cit.*, 99.

13. Continuing our reflections, and referring also to what has been said in the Encyclicals *Laborem Exercens* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, we have to add that the fundamental error of socialism is anthropological in nature. Socialism considers the individual person simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socio-economic mechanism. Socialism likewise maintains that the good of the individual can be realized without reference to his free choice, to the unique and exclusive responsibility which he exercises in the face of good or evil. Man is thus reduced to a series of social relationships, and the concept of the person as the autonomous subject of moral decision disappears, the very subject whose decisions build the social order. From this mistaken conception of the person there arise both a distortion of law, which defines the sphere of the exercise of freedom, and an opposition to private property. A person who is deprived of something he can call "his own," and of the possibility of earning a living through his own initiative, comes to depend on the social machine and on those who control it. This makes it much more difficult for him to recognize his dignity as a person, and hinders progress towards the building up of an authentic human community.

In contrast, from the Christian vision of the human person there necessarily follows a correct picture of society. According to *Rerum Novarum* and the whole social doctrine of the Church, the social nature of man is not completely fulfilled in the State, but is realized in various intermediary groups, beginning with the family and including economic, social, political and cultural groups which stem from human nature itself and have their own autonomy, always with a view to the common good. This is what I have called the "subjectivity" of society which, together with the subjectivity of the individual, was canceled out by "Real Socialism."<sup>40</sup>

If we then inquire as to the source of this mistaken concept of the nature of the person and the "subjectivity" of society, we must reply that its first cause is atheism. It is by responding to the call of God contained in the being of things that man becomes aware of his transcendent dignity. Every individual must give this response, which constitutes the apex of his humanity, and no social mechanism

<sup>40</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 15, 28: *loc. cit.*, 530; 548 ff.

or collective subject can substitute for it. The denial of God deprives the person of his foundation, and consequently leads to a reorganization of the social order without reference to the person's dignity and responsibility.

The atheism of which we are speaking is also closely connected with the rationalism of the Enlightenment, which views human and social reality in a mechanistic way. Thus there is a denial of the supreme insight concerning man's true greatness, his transcendence in respect to earthly realities, the contradiction in his heart between the desire for the fullness of what is good and his own inability to attain it and, above all, the need for salvation which results from this situation.

14. From the same atheistic source, socialism also derives its choice of the means of action condemned in *Rerum Novarum*, namely, class struggle. The Pope does not, of course, intend to condemn every possible form of social conflict. The Church is well aware that in the course of history conflicts of interest between different social groups inevitably arise, and that in the face of such conflicts Christians must often take a position, honestly and decisively. The Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* moreover clearly recognized the positive role of conflict when it takes the form of a "struggle for social justice,"<sup>41</sup> *Quadragesimo Anno* had already stated that "if the class struggle abstains from enmities and mutual hatred, it gradually changes into an honest discussion of differences founded on a desire for justice."<sup>42</sup>

However, what is condemned in class struggle is the idea that conflict is not restrained by ethical or juridical considerations, or by respect for the dignity of others (and consequently of oneself); a reasonable compromise is thus excluded, and what is pursued is not the general good of society, but a partisan interest which replaces the common good and sets out to destroy whatever stands in its way. In a word, it is a question of transferring to the sphere of internal conflict between social groups the doctrine of "total war," which the militarism and imperialism of that time brought to bear on international relations. As a result of this doctrine, the search for a proper balance between interests of the various nations was replaced by attempts to impose the absolute domination of one's own side through the

<sup>41</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 11-15; *loc. cit.*, 602-618.

<sup>42</sup>Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, III, 113: *loc. cit.*, 213.



destruction of the other side's capacity to resist, using every possible means, not excluding the use of lies, terror tactics against citizens, and weapons of utter destruction (which precisely in those years were beginning to be designed). Therefore class struggle in the Marxist sense and militarism have the same root, namely, atheism and contempt for the human person, which place the principle of force above that of reason and law.

15. *Rerum Novarum* is opposed to State control of the means of production, which would reduce every citizen to being a "cog" in the State machine. It is no less forceful in criticizing a concept of the State which completely excludes the economic sector from the State's range of interest and action. There is certainly a legitimate sphere of autonomy in economic life which the State should not enter. The State, however, has the task of determining the juridical framework within which economic affairs are to be conducted, and thus of safeguarding the prerequisites of a free economy, which presumes a certain equality between the parties, such that one party would not be so powerful as practically to reduce the other to subservience.<sup>43</sup>

In this regard, *Rerum Novarum* points the way to just reforms which can restore dignity to work as the free activity of man. These reforms imply that society and the State will both assume responsibility, especially for protecting the worker from the nightmare of unemployment. Historically, this has happened in two converging ways: either through economic policies aimed at ensuring balanced growth and full employment, or through unemployment insurance and retraining programmes capable of ensuring a smooth transfer of workers from crisis sectors to those in expansion.

Furthermore, society and the State must ensure wage levels adequate for the maintenance of the worker and his family, including a certain amount of savings. This requires a continuous effort to improve workers' training and capability so that their work will be more skilled and productive, as well as careful controls and adequate legislative measures to block shameful forms of exploitation, especially to the disadvantage of the most vulnerable workers, of immigrants and of those on the margins of society. The role of trade unions in negotiating minimum salaries and working conditions is decisive in this area.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: *loc. cit.*, 121-125.

Finally, "humane" working hours and adequate free-time need to be guaranteed, as well as the right to express one's own personality at the work-place without suffering any affront to one's conscience or personal dignity. This is the place to mention once more the role of trade unions, not only in negotiating contracts, but also as "places" where workers can express themselves. They serve the development of an authentic culture of work and help workers to share in a fully human way in the life of their place of employment.<sup>44</sup>

The State must contribute to the achievement of these goals both directly and indirectly. Indirectly and according to the *principle of subsidiarity*, by creating favorable conditions for the free exercise of economic activity, which will lead to abundant opportunities for employment and sources of wealth. Directly and according to the *principle of solidarity*, by defending the weakest, by placing certain limits on the autonomy of the parties who determine working conditions, and by ensuring in every case the necessary minimum support for the unemployed worker.<sup>45</sup>

The Encyclical and the related social teaching of the Church had far-reaching influence in the years bridging the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This influence is evident in the numerous reforms which were introduced in the areas of social security, pensions, health insurance and compensation in the case of accidents, within the framework of greater respect for the rights of workers.<sup>46</sup>

16. These reforms were carried out in part by States, but in the struggle to achieve them *the role of the workers' movement* was an important one. This movement, which began as a response of moral conscience to unjust and harmful situations, conducted a widespread campaign for reform, far removed from vague ideology and closer to the daily needs of workers. In this context its efforts were often joined to those of Christians in order to improve workers' living conditions.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 20: *loc. cit.* 629-632; Discourse to the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva (15 June 1982): *Insegnamenti* V/2 (1982), 2250-2266; Paul VI, Discourse to the same Organization (10 June 1969); AAS 61 (1969), 491-502.

<sup>45</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 8: *loc. cit.*, 594-598.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, 14: *loc. cit.*, 178-181.

Later on, this movement was dominated to a certain extent by the Marxist ideology against which *Rerum Novarum* had spoken.

These same reforms were also partly the result of *an open process by which society organized itself* through the establishment of effective instruments of solidarity, which were capable of sustaining an economic growth more respectful of the values of the person. Here we should remember the numerous efforts to which Christians made a notable contribution in establishing producers', consumers' and credit cooperatives, in promoting general education and professional training, in experimenting with various forms of participation in the life of the work-place and in the life of society in general.

Thus, as we look at the past, there is good reason to thank God that the great Encyclical was not without an echo in human hearts and indeed led to a generous response on the practical level. Still, we must acknowledge that its prophetic message was not fully accepted by people at the time. Precisely for this reason there ensued some very serious tragedies.

17. Reading the Encyclical within the context of Pope Leo's whole magisterium,<sup>47</sup> we see how it points essentially to the socio-economic consequences of an error which has even greater implications. As has been mentioned, this error consists in an understanding of human freedom which detaches it from obedience to the truth, and consequently from the duty to respect the rights of others. The essence of freedom then becomes self-love carried to the point of contempt for God and neighbor, a self-love which leads to an unbridled affirmation of self-interest and which refuses to be limited by any demand of justice.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Cf. Encyclical Epistle *Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae* (10 February 1880): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, II, Romae 1882, 10-40; Encyclical Epistle *Diuturnum Illud* (29 June 1881): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, II, Romae, 1882, 269-287; Encyclical Epistle *Immortale Dei* (1 November 1885): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, V, Romae 1886, 118-150; Encyclical Letter *Sapientiae Christianae* (10 January 1890): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, X, Romae 1891, 10-41; Encyclical Epistle *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (28 December 1878): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, I, Romae 1881, 170-183; Encyclical Letter *Libertas Praestantissimum* (20 June 1888): *Leonis XIII P.M. Acta*, VIII, Romae 1889, 212-246.

<sup>48</sup>Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Libertas Praestantissimum*, 10: *loc. cit.*, 224-226.

This very error had extreme consequences in the tragic series of wars which ravaged Europe and the world between 1914 and 1945. Some of these resulted from militarism and exaggerated nationalism, and from related forms of totalitarianism; some derived from the class struggle; still others were civil wars or wars of an ideological nature. Without the terrible burden of hatred and resentment which had built up as a result of so many injustices both on the international level and within individual States, such cruel wars would not have been possible, in which great nations invested their energies and in which there was no hesitation to violate the most sacred human rights, with the extermination of entire peoples and social groups being planned and carried out. Here we recall the Jewish people in particular, whose terrible fate has become a symbol of the aberration of which man is capable when he turns against God.

However, it is only when hatred and injustice are sanctioned and organized by the ideologies based on them, rather than on the truth about man, that they take possession of entire nation and drive them to act.<sup>49</sup> *Rerum Novarum* opposed ideologies of hatred and showed how violence and resentment could be overcome by justice. May the memory of those terrible events guide the actions of everyone, particularly the leaders of nations in our own time, when other forms of injustice are fueling new hatreds and when new ideologies which exalt violence are appearing on the horizon.

18. While it is true that since 1945 weapons have been silent on the European continent, it must be remembered that true peace is never simply the result of military victory, but rather implies both the removal of the causes of war and genuine reconciliation between peoples. For many years there has been in Europe and the world a situation of non-war rather than genuine peace. Half of the continent fell under the domination of a Communist dictatorship, while the other half organized itself in defence against threat. Many peoples lost the ability to control their own destiny and were enclosed within the suffocating boundaries of an empire in which efforts were made to destroy their historical memory and the centuries-old roots of their culture. As a result of this violent division of Europe, enormous masses of people were compelled to leave their homeland or were forcibly deported.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. Message for the 1980 World Day of Peace: AAS 71 (1979), 1572-1580.

An insane arms race swallowed up the resources needed for the development of national economies and for the assistance to the less developed nations. Scientific and technological progress, which should have contributed to man's well-being, was transformed into an instrument of war: science and technology were directed to the production of ever more efficient and destructive weapons. Meanwhile, an ideology, a perversion of authentic philosophy, was called upon to provide doctrinal justification for the new war. And this war was not simply expected and prepared for, but was actually fought with enormous bloodshed in various parts of the world. The logic of power blocs or empires, denounced in various Church documents and recently in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,<sup>50</sup> led to a situation in which controversies and disagreements among Third World countries were systematically aggravated and exploited in order to create difficulties for the adversary.

Extremist groups, seeking to resolve such controversies through the use of arms, found ready political and military support and were equipped and trained for war; those who tried to find peaceful and humane solutions, with respect for the legitimate interests of all parties, remained isolated and often fell victim to their opponents. In addition, the precariousness of the peace which followed the Second World War was one of the principal causes of the militarization of many Third World countries and the fratricidal conflicts which afflicted them, as well as of the spread of terrorism and of increasingly barbaric means of political and military conflict. Moreover, the whole world was oppressed by the threat of an atomic war capable of leading the extinction of humanity. Science used for military purposes had placed this decisive instrument at the disposal of hatred, strengthened by ideology. But if war can end without winners or losers in a suicide of humanity, then we must repudiate the logic which leads to it: the idea that the effort to destroy the enemy confrontation and war itself are factors of progress and historical advancement.<sup>51</sup> When the need for this repudiation is understood, the concepts of "total war" and "class struggle" must necessarily be called into question.

19. At the end of the Second World War, however, such a development was still being formed in people's consciences. What

<sup>50</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 20: *loc. cit.*, 536 f.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963), III: AAS 55 (1963), 286-289.

received attention was the spread of Communist totalitarianism over more than half of Europe and over other parts of the world. The war, which should have re-established freedom and restored the right of nations, ended without having attained these goals. Indeed, in a way, for many peoples, especially those which had suffered most during the war, it openly contradicted these goals. It may be said that the situation which arose has evoked different responses.

Following the destruction caused by the war, we see in some countries and under certain aspects a positive effort to rebuild a democratic society inspired by social justice, so as to deprive Communism of the revolutionary potential represented by masses of people subjected to exploitation and oppression. In general such attempts endeavor to preserve free market mechanisms, ensuring, by means of a stable currency and the harmony of social relations, the conditions for steady and healthy economic growth in which people through their own work can build a better future for themselves and their families. At the same time, these attempts try to avoid making market mechanisms the only point of reference for social life, and they tend to subject them to public control which upholds the principle of the common destitution of material goods. In this context, an abundance of work opportunities, a solid system of social security and professional training, the freedom to join trade unions and the effective action of unions, the assistance provided in cases of unemployment, the opportunities for democratic participation in the life of society — all these are meant to deliver work from the mere condition of a "commodity," and to guarantee its dignity.

Then there are the other social forces and ideological movements which oppose Marxism by setting up systems of "national security," aimed at controlling the whole of society in a systematic way, in order to make Marxist infiltration impossible. By emphasizing and increasing the power of the State, they wish to protect their people from Communism, but in doing so they run the grave risk of destroying the freedom and values of the person, the very things for whose sake it is necessary to oppose Communism.

Another kind of response, practical in nature, is represented by the affluent society or the consumer society. It seeks to defeat Marxism on the level of pure materialism by showing how a free-market society can achieve a greater satisfaction of material human needs than Communism, while equally excluding spiritual values. In

reality, while on the one hand it is true that this social model shows the failure of Marxism to contribute to a humane and better society, on the other hand, insofar as it denies an autonomous existence and value to morality, law, culture and religion, it agrees with Marxism, in the sense that it totally reduces man to the sphere of economics and the satisfaction of material needs.

20. During the same period a widespread process of "decolonization" occurred, by which many countries gained or regained their independence and the right freely to determine their own destiny. With the formal re-acquisition of State sovereignty, however, these countries often find themselves merely at the beginning of the journey towards the construction of genuine independence. Decisive sectors of the economy still remain *de facto* in the hands of large foreign companies which are unwilling to commit themselves to the long-term development of the host country. Political life itself is controlled by foreign powers, while within the national boundaries there tribal groups not yet amalgamated into a genuine national community. Also lacking is a class of competent professional people capable of running the State apparatus in an honest and just way, nor are there qualified personnel for managing the economy in an efficient and responsible manner.

Given this situation, many think that Marxism can offer a sort of short-cut for building up the nation and the State; thus many variants of socialism emerge with specific national characteristics. Legitimate demands for national recovery, forms of nationalism and also of militarism, principles drawn from ancient popular traditions (which are sometimes in harmony with Christian social doctrine) and Marxist-Lennist concepts and ideas — all these mingle in the many ideologies which take shape in ways that differ from case to case.

21. Lastly, it should be remembered that after the Second World War, and in reaction to its horrors, there arose a more lively sense of human rights, which found recognition in a number of *International Documents*<sup>52</sup> and, one might say, in the drawing up of a new "right of nations," to which the Holy See has constantly contributed. The focal point of this evolution has been the United Nations Organization.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, issued in 1948; John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, IV: *loc. cit.*, 291-296; "Final Act" of the Conference on Cooperation and Security in Europe, Helsinki, 1975.

Not only has there been a development in awareness of the rights of individuals, but also awareness of the rights of nations, as well as a clearer realization of the need to act in order to remedy the grave imbalances that exist between the various geographical areas of the world. In a certain sense, these imbalances have shifted the centre of the social question from the national to the international level.<sup>53</sup>

While noting this process with satisfaction, nevertheless one cannot ignore the fact that the overall balance of the various policies of aid for development has not always been positive. The United Nations, moreover, has not yet succeeded in establishing, as alternatives to war, effective means for the resolution of international conflicts. This seems to be the most urgent problem which the international community has yet to resolve.

### III. The Year 1989

22. It is on the basis of the world situation just described, and already elaborated in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, that the unexpected and promising significance of the events of recent years can be understood. Although they certainly reached their climax in 1989 in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, they embrace a longer period of time and a wider geographical area. In the course of the 80's, certain dictatorial and oppressive regimes fell one by one in some countries of Latin America and also of Africa and Asia. In other cases there began a difficult but productive transition towards more participatory and more just political structures. An important, even decisive, contribution was made by *the Church's commitment to defend and promote human rights*. In situations strongly influenced by ideology, in which polarization obscured the awareness of a human dignity common to all, the Church affirmed clearly and forcefully that every individual — whatever his or her personal convictions — bears the image of God and therefore deserves respect. Often, the vast majority of people identified themselves with this kind of affirmation, and this led to a search for forms of protest and for political solutions more respectful of the dignity of the person.

From this historical process new forms of democracy have emerged which offer a hope for change in fragile political and social

<sup>53</sup>Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), 61-65: AAS 59 (1967), 287-289.



structures weighed down by a painful series of injustices and resentments, as well as by a heavily damaged economy and serious social conflicts. Together with the whole Church, I thank God for the often heroic witness borne in such difficult circumstances by many Pastors, entire Christian communities, individual members of the faithful, and other people of good will; at the same time I pray that he will sustain the efforts being made by everyone to build a better future. This is, in fact, a responsibility which falls not only to the citizens of the countries in question, but to all Christians and people of good will. It is a question of showing that the complex problems faced by those peoples can be resolved through dialogue and solidarity, rather than by a struggle to destroy the enemy through war.

23. Among the many factors involved in the fall of oppressive regimes, some deserve special mention. Certainly, the decisive factor which gave rise to the changes was the violation of the rights of workers. It cannot be forgotten that the fundamental crisis of systems claiming to express the rule and indeed the dictatorship of the working class began with the great upheavals which took place in Poland in the name of solidarity. It was the throngs of working people which forswore the ideology which presumed to speak in their name. On the basis of a hard, lived experience of work and of oppression, it was they who recovered and, in a sense, rediscovered the content and principles of the Church's social doctrine.

Also worthy of emphasis is the fact that the fall of this kind of "bloc" or empire was accomplished almost everywhere by means of peaceful protest, using only the weapons of truth and justice. While Marxism held that only by exacerbating social conflicts was it possible to resolve them through violent confrontation, the protests which led to the collapse of Marxism tenaciously insisted on trying every avenue of negotiation, dialogue, and witness to the truth, appealing to the conscience of the adversary and seeking to reawaken in him a sense of shared human dignity.

It seemed that the European order resulting from the Second World War and sanctioned by the *Yalta Agreements* could only be overturned by another war. Instead, it has been overcome by the non-violent commitment of people who, while always refusing to yield to the force of power, succeeded time after time in finding effective ways of bearing witness to the truth. This disarmed the adversary, since violence always needs to justify itself through deceit, and to appear,

however falsely, to be defending a right or responding to a threat posed by others.<sup>64</sup> Once again I thank God for having sustained people's hearts amid difficult trials, and I pray that this example will prevail in other places and other circumstances. May people learn to fight for justice without violence, renouncing class struggle in their internal disputes, and war in international ones.

24. The second factor in the crisis was certainly the inefficiency of the economic system, which is not to be considered simply as a technical problem, but rather a consequence of the violation of the human rights to private initiative, to ownership of property and to freedom in the economic sector. To this must be added the cultural and national dimension: it is not possible to understand man on the basis of economics alone, nor to define him simply on the basis of class membership. Man is understood in a more complete way when he is situated within the sphere of culture through his language, history, and the position he takes towards the fundamental events of life, such as birth, love, work and death. At the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God. Different cultures are basically different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence. When this question is eliminated, the culture and moral life of nations are corrupted. For this reason the struggle to defend work was spontaneously linked to the struggle for culture and for national rights.

But the true cause of the new developments was the spiritual void brought about by atheism, which deprived the younger generations of a sense of direction and in many cases led them, in the irrepressible search for personal identity and for the meaning of life, to rediscover the religious roots of their national cultures, and to rediscover the person of Christ himself as the existentially adequate response to the desire in every human heart for goodness, truth and life. This search was supported by the witness of those who, in difficult circumstances and under persecution, remained faithful to God. Marxism had promised to uproot the need for God from the human heart, but the results have shown that it is not possible to succeed in this without throwing the heart into turmoil.

25. The events of 1989 are an example of the success of willingness to negotiate and of the Gospel spirit in the face of an

<sup>64</sup>Cf. Message for the 1980 World Day of Peace: *loc. cit.*, 1572-1580.

adversary determined not to be bound by moral principles. These events are a warning to those who, in the name of political realism, wish to banish law and morality from the political arena. Undoubtedly, the struggle which led to the changes of 1989 called for clarity, moderation, suffering and sacrifice. In a certain sense, it was a struggle born of prayer, and it would have been unthinkable without immense trust in God, the Lord of history, who carries the human heart in his hands. It is by uniting his own sufferings for the sake of truth and freedom to the sufferings of Christ on the Cross that man is able to accomplish the miracle of peace and is in a position to discern the often narrow path between the cowardice which gives in to evil and the violence which, under the illusion of fighting evil, only makes it worse.

Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that the manner in which the individual exercises his freedom is conditioned in innumerable ways. While these certainly have an influence on freedom, they do not determine it; they make the exercise of freedom more difficult or less difficult, but they cannot destroy it. Not only is it wrong from the ethical point of view to disregard human nature, which is made for freedom, but in practice it is impossible to do so. Where society is so organized as to reduce arbitrarily or even suppress the sphere in which freedom is legitimately exercised, the result is that the life of society becomes progressively disorganized and goes into decline.

Moreover, man, who was created for freedom, bears within himself the wound of original sin, which constantly draws him towards evil and puts him in need of redemption. Not only is *this doctrine an integral part of Christian revelation*; it also has great hermeneutical value insofar as it helps one to understand human reality. Man tends towards good, but he is also capable of evil. He can transcend his immediate interest and still remain bound to it. The social order will be all the more stable, the more it takes this fact into account and does not place in opposition personal interest and the interests of society as a whole, but rather seeks ways to bring them into fruitful harmony. In fact where self-interest is violently suppressed, it is replaced by a burdensome system of bureaucratic control which dries up the wellsprings of initiative and creativity. When people think they possess the secret of a perfect social organization which makes evil impossible, they also think that they can use any means, including violence and deceit, in order to bring that

organization into being. Politics then becomes a "secular religion" which operates under the illusion of creating paradise in this world. But no political society — which possess its own autonomy and laws<sup>55</sup> — can ever be confused with the Kingdom of God. The Gospel parable of the weeds among the wheat (cf. *Mt* 13:24-30; 36-43) teaches that it is for God alone to separate the subjects of the Kingdom from the subjects of the Evil One, and that his judgment will take place at the end of time. By presuming to anticipate judgment here and now, man puts himself in the place of God and sets himself against the patience of God.

Through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, the victory of the Kingdom of God has been achieved once and for all. Nevertheless, the Christian life involves a struggle against temptation and the forces of evil. Only at the end of history will the Lord return in glory for the final judgment (cf. *Mt* 25:31) with the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth (cf. *2Pt* 3:13; *Rev* 21:1); but as long as time lasts the struggle between good and evil continues even in the human heart itself.

What Sacred Scripture teaches us about the prospects of the Kingdom of God is not without consequences for the life of temporal societies, which, as the adjective indicates, belong to the realm of time, with all that this implies of imperfection and impermanence. The Kingdom of God, being *in* the world without being *of* the world, throws light on the order of human society, while the power of grace penetrates that order and gives it life. In this way the requirements of a society worthy of man are better perceived, deviations are corrected, the courage of work for what is good is reinforced. In union with all people of good will, Christians, especially the laity, are called to this task of imbuing human realities with the Gospel.<sup>56</sup>

26. The events of 1989 took place principally in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. However, they have worldwide importance because they have positive and negative consequences which concern the whole human family. These consequences are not mechanistic or fatalistic in character, but rather are opportunities

<sup>55</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 36; 39.

<sup>56</sup>Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 32-44; AAS 81 (1989), 431-481.

for human freedom to cooperate with the merciful plan of God who acts within history.

The first consequence was *an encounter* in some countries *between the Church and the workers' movement*, which came about as a result of an ethical and explicitly Christian reaction against a widespread situation of injustice. For about a century the workers' movement had fallen in part under the dominance of Marxism, in the conviction that the working class, in order to struggle effectively against oppression, had to appropriate its economic and materialistic theories.

In the crisis of Marxism, the natural dictates of the consciences of workers have re-emerged in a demand for justice and a recognition of the dignity of work, in conformity with the social doctrine of the Church.<sup>57</sup> The worker movement is part of a more general movement among workers and other people of good will for the liberation of the human person and for the affirmation of human rights. It is a movement which today has spread to many countries, and which, far from opposing the Catholic Church, looks to her with interest.

The crisis of Marxism does not rid the world of the situations of injustice and oppression which Marxism itself exploited and on which it fed. To those who are searching today for a new and authentic theory and praxis of liberation, the Church offers not only her social doctrine and, in general, her teaching about the human person redeemed in Christ, but also her concrete commitment and material assistance in the struggle against marginalization and suffering.

In the recent past, the sincere desire to be on the side of the oppressed and not to be cut off from the course of history has led many believers to seek in various ways an impossible compromise between Marxism and Christianity. Moving beyond all that was short-lived in these attempts, present circumstances are leading to a reaffirmation of the positive value of an authentic theology of integral human liberation.<sup>58</sup> Considered from this point of view, the events of 1989 are proving to be important also for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

<sup>57</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 20: *loc. cit.*, 629-632.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation *Libertatis Conscientia* (22 March 1986): AAS 79 (1987), 554-599.

27. The second consequence concerns the peoples of Europe themselves. Many individual, social, regional and national injustices were committed during and prior to the years in which Communism dominated; much hatred and ill-will have accumulated. There is a real danger that these will re-explode after the collapse of dictatorship, provoking serious conflicts and casualties, should there be a lessening of the moral commitment and conscious striving to bear witness to the truth which were the inspiration for past efforts. It is to be hoped that hatred and violence will not triumph in people's hearts, especially among those who are struggling for justice, and that all people will grow in the spirit of peace and forgiveness.

What is needed are concrete steps to create or consolidate international structures capable of intervening through appropriate arbitration in the conflicts which arise between nations, so that each nation can uphold its own rights and reach a just agreement and peaceful settlement *vis-a-vis* the rights of others. This is especially needed for the nations of Europe, which are closely united in a bond of common culture and an age-old history. A great effort is needed to rebuild morally and economically the countries which have abandoned Communism. For a long time the most elementary economic relationships were distorted, and basic virtues of economic life, such as truthfulness, trustworthiness and hard work were denigrated. A patient material and moral reconstruction is needed, even as people, exhausted by longstanding privation, are asking their governments for tangible and immediate results in the form of material benefits and an adequate fulfillment of their legitimate aspirations.

The fall of Marxism has naturally had a great impact on the division of the planet into worlds which are closed to one another and in jealous competition. It has further highlighted the reality of interdependence among peoples, as well as the fact that human work, by its nature, is meant to unite peoples, not divide them. Peace and prosperity, in fact, are goods which belong to the whole human race: it is not possible to enjoy them in a proper and lasting way if they are achieved and maintained at the cost of other peoples and nations, by violating their rights or excluding them from the sources of well-being.

28. In a sense, for some countries of Europe the real post-war period is just beginning. the radical reordering of economic systems, hitherto collectivized, entails problems and sacrifices comparable to

those which the countries of Western Europe had to face in order to rebuild after the Second World War. It is right that in the present difficulties the formerly Communist countries should be aided by the united effort of other nations. Obviously they themselves must be the primary agents of their own development, but they must also be given a reasonable opportunity to accomplish this goal, something that cannot happen without the help of other countries. Moreover, their present condition, marked by difficulties and shortages, is a result of an historical process in which the formerly Communist countries were often objects and not subjects. Thus they find themselves in the present situation not as a result of free choice or mistakes which were made, but as a consequence of tragic historical events which were violently imposed on them, and which prevented them from following the path of economic and social development.

Assistance from other countries, especially the countries of Europe which were part of that history and which bear responsibility for it, represents a debt in justice. But it also corresponds to the interest and welfare of Europe as a whole, since Europe cannot live in peace if the various conflicts which have arisen as a result of the past are to become more acute because of a situation of economic disorder, spiritual dissatisfaction and desperation.

This need, however, must not lead to a slackening of efforts to sustain and assist the countries of the Third World, which often suffer even more serious conditions of poverty and want.<sup>59</sup> What is called for is a special effort to mobilize resources, which are not lacking in the world as a whole, for the purpose of economic growth and common development, redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values on the basis of which economic and political choices are made. Enormous resources can be made available by disarming the huge military machines which were constructed for the conflict between East and West. These resources could become even more abundant if, in place of war, reliable procedures for the resolution of the principle of arms control and arms reduction, also in the countries of the Third World, through the adoption of appropriate measures against the arms trade.<sup>60</sup> But it will be necessary above all to abandon a mentality in

<sup>59</sup>Cf. Discourse at the Headquarters of the E.C.W.A. on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the "Appeal for the Sahel" (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 29 January 1990): AAS 82 (1990), 816-821.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, III: *loc. cit.*, 286-288.

which the poor — as individuals and as peoples — are considered a burden, as irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced. The poor ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity for work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all. The advancement of the poor constitutes a great opportunity for the moral, cultural and even economic growth of all humanity.

29. Finally, development must not be understood solely in economic terms, but in a way that is fully human.<sup>61</sup> It is not only a question of raising all peoples to the level currently enjoyed by the richest countries, but rather of building up a more decent life through united labor, of concretely enhancing every individual's dignity and creativity, as well as his capacity to respond to his personal vocation, and thus to God's call. The apex of development is the exercise of the right and duty to seek God, to know him and to live in accordance with that knowledge.<sup>62</sup> In the totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, the principle that force predominates over reason was carried to the extreme. Man was compelled to submit to a conception of reality imposed on him by coercion, and not reached by virtue of his own reason and the exercise of his own freedom. This principle must be overturned and total recognition must be given to *the rights of the human conscience*, which is bound only to the truth, both natural and revealed. The recognition of these rights represents the primary foundation of every authentically free political order.<sup>63</sup> It is important to reaffirm this latter principle for several reasons:

a) because the old forms of totalitarianism and authoritarianism are not yet completely vanquished; indeed there is a risk that they will regain their strength. This demands renewed efforts of cooperation and solidarity between all countries;

b) because in the developed countries there is sometimes an excessive promotion of purely utilitarian values, with an appeal to the appetites and inclinations towards immediate gratification, making

<sup>61</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 27-28: *loc. cit.*, 547-550; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 43-44: *loc. cit.*, 278 f.

<sup>62</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 29-31: *loc. cit.*, 550-556.

<sup>63</sup>Cf. Helsinki Final Act and Vienna Accord; Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Libertas Praestantissimum*, 5: *loc. cit.*, 215-217.



it difficult to recognize and respect the hierarchy of the true values of human existence;

c) because in some countries new forms of religious fundamentalism are emerging which covertly, or even openly, deny to citizens of faiths other than that of the majority the full exercise of their civil and religious rights, preventing them from taking part in the cultural process, and restricting both the Church's right to preach the Gospel and the rights of those who hear this preaching to accept it and to be converted to Christ. No authentic progress is possible without respect for the natural and fundamental right to know the truth and live according to truth. The exercise and development of this right includes the right to discover and freely to accept Jesus Christ, who is man's true good.<sup>64</sup>

#### **IV. Private Property and the Universal Destination of Material Goods**

30. In *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII strongly affirmed the natural character of the right to private property, using various arguments against the socialism of his time.<sup>65</sup> This right which is fundamental for the autonomy and development of the person, has always been defended by the Church up to our own day. At the same time, the Church teaches that the possession of material goods is not an absolute right, and that its limits are inscribed in its very nature as a human right.

While the Pope proclaimed the right to private ownership, he affirmed with equal clarity that the "use" of goods, while marked by freedom, is subordinated to their original common destination as created goods, as well as to the will of Jesus Christ as expressed in the Gospel. Pope Leo wrote: "those whom fortune favors are admonished... that they should tremble at the warnings of Jesus Christ... and that a most strict account must be given to the Supreme Judge for the use of all they possess"; and quoting Saint Thomas Aquinas, he added: "But if the question be asked, how must one's possession

<sup>64</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 7: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 January 1991.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: *loc. cit.*, 99-107; 131-133.

be used? the Church replies without hesitation that man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but as common to all..." because "above the laws and judgments of men stands the law, the judgment of Christ."<sup>66</sup>

The Successors of Leo XIII have repeated this twofold affirmation: the necessity and therefore the legitimacy of private ownership, as well as the limits which are imposed on it.<sup>67</sup> The Second Vatican Council likewise clearly restated the traditional doctrine in words which bear repeating: "In making use of the exterior things we fully possess, we ought to regard them not just as our own but also as common, in the sense that they can profit not only the owners but others too;" and a little later we read: "Private property or some ownership of external goods affords each person the scope needed for personal and family autonomy, and should be regarded as an extension of human freedom... Of its nature private property also has a social function which is based on the law of the *common purpose of goods*."<sup>68</sup> I have returned to this same doctrine, first in my address to the Third Conference of the Latin American Bishops at Puebla, and later in the Encyclicals *Laborem Exercens* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.<sup>69</sup>

31. Re-reading this teaching on the right to property and the common destination of material wealth as it applies to the present time, the question can be raised concerning the origin of the material goods which sustain human life, satisfy people's needs and are an object of their rights.

The original sources of all that is good is the very act of God, who created both the earth and man, and who gave the earth to man so that he might have dominion over it by his work and enjoy its fruits

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 111-113f.

<sup>67</sup>C. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, II: *loc. cit.*, 191; Pius XII, Radio Message on 1 June 1941: *loc. cit.*, 199; John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*: *loc. cit.*, 428-429; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 22-24: *loc. cit.*, 268 f.

<sup>68</sup>Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 69; 71.

<sup>69</sup>Cf. Discourse to Latin American Bishops at Puebla (28 January 1979), III, 4: AAS 71 (1979), 199-201; Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 14: *loc. cit.*, 612-616; Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42: *loc. cit.*, 572-574.

(Gen 1:28). God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone. This is *the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's goods*. The earth, by reason of its fruitfulness and its capacity to satisfy human needs, is God's first gift for the sustenance of human life. But the earth does not yield its fruits without a particular human response to God's gift, that is to say, without work. It is through work that man, using his intelligence and exercising his freedom succeeds in dominating the earth and making it a fitting home. In this way, he makes part of the earth his own, precisely the part which he has acquired through work; this is *the origin of individual property*. Obviously, he also has the responsibility not to hinder others from having their own part of God's gift; indeed, he must cooperate with others so that together all can dominate the earth.

In history, these two factors —*work* and *the land*— are to be found at the beginning of every human society. However, they do not always stand in the same relationship to each other. At one time *the natural fruitfulness of the earth* appeared to be, and was in fact, the primary factor of wealth, while work was, as it were, the help and support for this fruitfulness. In our time, *the role of human work* is becoming increasingly important as the productive factor both of non-material and of material wealth. Moreover, it is becoming clearer how a person's work is naturally interrelated with the work of others. More than ever, work is *work with others* and *work for others*: it is a matter of doing something for someone else. Work becomes ever more fruitful and productive to the extent that people become more knowledgeable of the productive potentialities of the earth and more profoundly cognizant of the needs of those for whom their work is done.

32. In our time, in particular, there exists another form of ownership which is becoming no less important than land: *the possession of know-how, technology and skill*. The wealth of the industrialized nations is based much more on this kind of ownership than on natural resources.

Mention has just been made of the fact that *people work with each other*, sharing in a "community of work" which embraces ever widening circles. A person who produces something other than for his own use generally does so in order that others may use it after they have paid a just price, mutually agreed upon through free bargain-

ing. It is precisely the ability to foresee both the needs of others and the combinations of productive factors most adapted to satisfying those needs that constitutes another important source of wealth in modern society. Besides, many goods cannot be adequately produced through the work of an isolated individual; they require the cooperation of many people in working towards a common goal. Organizing such a productive effort, planning its duration in time, making sure that it corresponds in a positive way to the demands which it must satisfy, and taking the necessary risks — all this too is a source of wealth in today's society. In this way, the *role* of disciplined and creative *human work* and, as an essential part of that work, *initiative and entrepreneurial ability* becomes increasingly evident and decisive.<sup>70</sup>

This process, which throws practical light on a truth about the person which Christianity has constantly affirmed, should be viewed carefully and favorably. Indeed, besides the earth, man's principal resource is *man himself*. His intelligence enables him to discover the earth's productive potential and the many different ways in which human needs can be satisfied. It is his disciplined work in close collaboration with others that makes possible the creation of ever more extensive *working communities* which can be relied upon to transform man's natural and human environments. Important virtues are involved in this process, such as diligence, industriousness, prudence in undertaking reasonable risks, reliability and fidelity in interpersonal relationships, as well as courage in carrying out decisions which are difficult and painful but necessary, both for the overall working of a business and in meeting possible set-backs.

The modern *business economy* has positive aspects. Its basis is human freedom exercised in the economic field, just as it is exercised in many other fields. Economic activity is indeed but one sector in a great variety of human activities, and like every other sector, it includes the right to freedom, as well as the duty of making responsible use of freedom. But it is important to note that there are specific differences between the trends of modern society and those of the past, even the recent past. Whereas at one time the decisive factor of production was *the land*, and later capital — understood as a total complex of the instruments of production — today the decisive factor is increasingly *man himself*, that is, his knowledge, especially his

<sup>70</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 15: *loc. cit.*, 528-531.

scientific knowledge, his capacity for interrelated and compact organization, as well as his ability to perceive the needs of others and to satisfy them.

33. However, the risks and problems connected with this kind of process should be pointed out. The fact is that many people, perhaps the majority today, do not have the means which would enable them to take their place in an effective and humanly dignified way within a productive system in which work is truly central. They have no possibility of acquiring the basic knowledge which would enable them to express their creativity and develop their potential. They have no way of entering the network of knowledge and intercommunication which would enable them to see their qualities appreciated and utilized. Thus, if not actually exploited, they are to a great extent marginalized; economic development takes place over their heads, so to speak, when it does not actually reduce the already narrow scope of their old subsistence economies. They are unable to compete against the goods which are produced in ways which are new and which properly respond to needs, needs which they had previously been accustomed to meeting through traditional forms of organization. Allured by the dazzle of an opulence which is beyond their reach, and at the same time driven by necessity, these people crowd the cities of the Third World where they are often without cultural roots, and where they are exposed to situations of violent uncertainty, without possibility of becoming integrated. Their dignity is not acknowledged in any real way, and sometimes there are even attempts to eliminate them from history through coercive forms of demographic control which are contrary to human dignity.

Many other people, while not completely marginalized, live in situations in which the struggle for a bare minimum is uppermost. These are situations in which the rules of the earliest period of capitalism still flourish in conditions of "ruthlessness" in no way inferior to the darkest moments of the first phase of industrialization. In other cases the land is still the central element in the economic process, but those who cultivate it are excluded from ownership and are reduced to a state of quasi-servitude.<sup>71</sup> In these cases, it is still possible today, as in the days of *Rerum Novarum*, to speak of

<sup>71</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 21: *loc. cit.*, 632-634.

inhuman exploitation. In spite of the great changes which have taken place in the more advanced societies, the human inadequacies of capitalism and the resulting domination of things over people are far from disappearing. In fact, for the poor, to the lack of material goods has been added a lack of knowledge and training which prevents them from escaping their state of humiliating subjection.

Unfortunately, the great majority of people in the Third World still live in such conditions. It would be a mistake, however, to understand this "*world*" in purely geographic terms. In some regions and in some social sectors of that world, development programs have been set up which are centered on the use not so much of the material resources available but of the "human resources."

Even in recent years it was thought that the poorest countries would develop by isolating themselves from the world market and by depending only on their own resources. Recent experience has shown that countries which did this have suffered stagnation and recession, while the countries which experienced development were those which succeeded in taking part in the general interrelated economic activities at the international level. It seems therefore that the chief problem is that of gaining access to the international market, based not on the unilateral principle of exploitation of the natural resources of these countries but on the proper use of human resources.<sup>72</sup>

However, aspects typical of the Third World also appear in developed countries, where the constant transformation of the methods of production and consumption devalues certain acquired skills and professional expertise, and thus requires a continual effort of re-training and updating. Those who fail to keep up with the times can easily be marginalized, as can the elderly, the young people who are incapable of finding their place in the life of society and, in general, those who are weakest or part of the so-called Fourth World. The situation of women too is far from easy in these conditions.

34. It would appear that, on the level of individual nations and of international relations, *the free market* is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs. But this is true only for those needs which are "solvent,"

<sup>72</sup>Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 33-42: *loc. cit.*, 273-278.

insofar as they are endowed with purchasing power, and for those resources which are "marketable," insofar as they are capable of obtaining a satisfactory price. But there are many human needs which find no place on the market. It is a strict duty of justice and truth not to allow fundamental human needs to remain unsatisfied, and not to allow those burdened by such needs to perish. It is also necessary to help these needy people to acquire expertise, to enter the circle of exchange, and to develop their skills in order to make the best use of their capacities and resources. Even prior to the logic of a fair exchange of goods and the forms of justice appropriate to it, there exists *something which is due to man because he is a man*, by reason of his lofty dignity. Inseparable from that required "something" is the possibility to survive and, at the same time, to make an active contribution to the common good of humanity.

In the Third World contexts, certain objectives stated by *Rerum Novarum* remain valid, and, in some cases, still constitute a goal yet to be reached, if man's work and his very being are not to be reduced to the level of a mere commodity. These objectives include a sufficient wage for the support of the family, social insurance for old age and unemployment, and adequate protection for the conditions of employment.

35. Here we find a wide range of *opportunities for commitment and effort* in the name of justice on the part of trade unions and other workers' organizations. These defend workers' rights and protect their interests as persons, while fulfilling a vital cultural role, so as to enable workers to participate more fully and honorably in the life of their nation and to assist them along the path of development.

In this sense, it is right to speak of a struggle against an economic system, if the latter is understood as a method of upholding the absolute predominance of capital, the possession of the means of production and of the land, in contrast to the free and personal nature of human work.<sup>73</sup> In the struggle against such a system, what is being proposed as an alternative is not the socialist system, which in fact turns out to be State capitalism, but rather *a society of free work, of enterprise and of participation*. Such a society is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled

<sup>73</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 7: *loc. cit.*, 592-594.

by the forces of society and by the State, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole society are satisfied.

The Church acknowledges the legitimate *role of profit* as an indication that a business is functioning well. When a firm makes a profit, this means that productive factors have been properly employed and corresponding human needs have been duly satisfied. But profitability is not the only indicator of a firm's condition. It is possible for the financial accounts to be in order, and yet for the people — who make up the firm's most valuable asset — to be humiliated and their dignity offended. Besides being morally inadmissible, this will eventually have negative repercussion on the firm's economic efficiency. In fact, the purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a *community of persons* who in various ways are endeavoring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society. Profit is a regulator of the life of a business, but it is not the only one; *other human and moral factors* must also be considered which, in the long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business.

We have seen that it is unacceptable to say that the defeat of so-called "Real Socialism" leaves capitalism as the only model of economic organization. It is necessary to break down the barriers and monopolies which leave so many countries on the margins of development, and to provide all individuals and nations with the basic conditions which will enable them to share in development. This goal calls for programmed and responsible efforts on the part of the entire international community. Stronger nations must offer weaker ones opportunities for taking their place in international life, and the latter must learn how to use these opportunities by making the necessary efforts and sacrifices and by ensuring political and economic stability, the certainty of better prospects for the future, the improvement of workers' skill, and the training of competent business leaders who are conscious of their responsibilities.<sup>74</sup>

At present, the positive efforts which have been made along these lines are being affected by the still largely unsolved problem of the foreign debt of the poorer countries. The principle that debts must be paid is certainly just. However, it is not right to demand or expect

<sup>74</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 8: *loc. cit.*, 594-598.



payment when the effect would be the imposition of political choices leading to hunger and despair for entire peoples. It cannot be expected that the debts which have been contracted should be paid at the price of unbearable sacrifices. In such cases it is necessary to find — as in fact is partly happening — ways to lighten, defer or ever cancel the debt, compatible with the fundamental right of peoples to subsistence and progress.

36. It would be helpful to direct our attention to the specific problems and threats emerging within the more advanced economies and which are related to their particular characteristics. In earlier stages of development, man always lived under the weight of necessity. His needs were few and were determined, to a degree, by the objective structures of his physical make-up. Economic activity was directed towards satisfying these needs. It is clear that today the problem is not only one of supplying people with a sufficient quantity of goods, but also of responding to a *demand for quality*: the quality of the goods to be produced and consumed, the quality of the services to be enjoyed, the quality of the environment and of life in general.

To call for an existence which is qualitatively more satisfying is of itself legitimate, but one cannot fail to draw attention to the new responsibilities and dangers connected with this phase of history. The manner in which new needs arise and are defined is always marked by a more or less appropriate concept of man and of his true good. A given culture reveals its overall understanding of life through the choices it makes in production and consumption. It is here that *the phenomenon of consumerism* arises. In singling out new needs and new means to meet them, one must be guided by a comprehensive picture of man which respects all the dimensions of his being and which subordinates his material and instinctive dimensions to his interior and spiritual ones. If, on the contrary, a direct appeal is made to his instincts — while ignoring in various ways the reality of the person as intelligent and free — then *consumer attitudes and lifestyles* can be created which are objectively improper and often damaging to his physical and spiritual health. Of itself, an economic system does not possess criteria for correctly distinguishing new and higher forms of satisfying human needs from artificial new needs which hinder the formation of a mature personality. *Thus a great deal of educational and cultural work* is urgently needed, including the education of consumers in the responsible use of their power of

choice, the formation of a strong sense of responsibility among producers and among people in the mass media in particular, as well as the necessary intervention by public authorities.

A striking example of artificial consumption contrary to the health and dignity of the human person, and certainly not easy to control, is the use of drugs. Widespread drug use is a sign of a serious malfunction in the social system; it also implies a materialistic and, in a certain sense, destructive "reading" of human needs. In this way the innovative capacity of a free economy is brought to a one-sided and inadequate conclusion. Drugs, as well as pornography and other forms of consumerism which exploit the frailty of the weak, tend to fill the resulting spiritual void.

It is not wrong to want to live better, what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards "having" rather than "being," and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself.<sup>75</sup> It is therefore necessary to create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments. In this regard, it is not a matter of the duty of charity alone, that is, the duty to give from one's "abundance," and sometimes even out of one's needs, in order to provide what is essential for the life of a poor person. I am referring to the fact that even the decision to invest in one place rather than another, in one productive sector rather than another, is always a *moral and cultural choice*. Given the utter necessity of certain economic conditions and of political stability, the decision to invest, that is, to offer people an opportunity to make good use of their own labor, is also determined by an attitude of human sympathy and trust in Providence, which reveal the human quality of the person making such decisions.

37. Equally worrying is the *ecological question* which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an

<sup>75</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 35; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 19: *loc. cit.*, 266 f.

excessive and disordered way. At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day. Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a cooperator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in the place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him.<sup>76</sup>

In all this, one notes first the poverty or narrowness of man's outlook, motivated as he is by a desire to possess things rather than to relate them to the truth, and lacking that disinterested, unselfish and aesthetic attitude that is born of wonder in the presence of being and of the beauty which enables one to see in visible things the message of the invisible God who created them. In this regard, humanity today must be conscious of its duties and obligations towards future generations.

38. In addition to the irrational destruction of the natural environment, we must also mention the more serious destruction of the *human environment*, something which is by no means receiving the attention it deserves. Although people are rightly worried — though much less than they should be — about preserving the natural habitats of the various animal species threatened with extinction, because they realize that each of these species makes its particular contribution to the balance of nature in general, too little effort is made to *safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic "human ecology."* Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given to him, but man too is God's gift to man. He must therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed. In this context, mention should be made of the serious problems of modern urbanization, of the need for urban planning which is

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 34: *loc. cit.*, 559 f.: Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace: AAS 82 (1990), 147-156.

concerned with how people are to live, and of the attention which should be given to a "social ecology" of work.

Man receives from God his essential dignity and with it the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness. But he is also conditioned by the social structure in which he lives, by the education he has received and by his environment. These elements can either help or hinder his living in accordance with the truth. The decisions which create a human environment can give rise to specific structures of sin which impede the full realization of those who are in any way oppressed by them. To destroy such structures and replace them with more authentic forms of living in community is a task which demands courage and patience.<sup>77</sup>

39. The first and fundamental structure for "human ecology" is *the family*, in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person. Here we mean the *family founded on marriage*, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny. But it often happens that people are discouraged from creating the proper conditions for human reproduction and are led to consider themselves and their lives as a series of sensations to be experienced rather than as a work to be accomplished. the result is a lack of freedom, which causes a person to reject a commitment to enter into a stable relationship with another person and to bring children into the world, or which leads people to consider children as one of the man "things" which an individual can have or not have, according to taste, and which compete with other possibilities.

It is necessary to go back to seeing the family as the *sanctuary of life*. The family is indeed sacred: it is the place in which life — the gift of God — can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth. In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life.

<sup>77</sup>Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Poenitentia* (2 December 1984), 16: AAS 77 (1985), 213-217; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, III: *loc. cit.*, 219.

Human ingenuity seems to be directed more towards limiting, suppressing or destroying the sources of life — including recourse to abortion, which unfortunately is so widespread in the world — than towards defending and opening up the possibilities of life. The Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* denounced systematic anti-child-bearing campaigns which, on the basis of a distorted view of the demographic problem and in a climate of “absolute lack of respect for the freedom of choice of the parties involved,” often subject them “to intolerable pressures. . . in order to force them to submit to this new form of oppression.”<sup>78</sup> These policies are extending their field of action by the use of new techniques, to the point of poisoning the lives of millions of defenseless human beings, as if in a form of “chemical warfare.”

These criticisms are directed not so much against an economic system as against an ethical and cultural system. The economy in fact is only one aspect and one dimension of the whole of human activity. If economic life is absolutized, if the production and consumption of goods become the center of social life and society's only value, the reason is to be found not so much in the economic system itself as in the fact that the entire socio-cultural system, by ignoring the ethical and religious dimension, has been weakened, and ends by limiting itself to the production of goods and services alone.<sup>79</sup>

All of this can be summed up by repeating once more that economic freedom is only one element of human freedom. When it becomes autonomous, when man is seen more as a producer or consumer of goods than as a subject who produces and consumes in order to live, then economic freedom loses its necessary relationship to the human person and ends up by alienating and oppressing him.<sup>80</sup>

40. It is the task of the State to provide for the defense and preservation of common goods such as the natural and human environments, which cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces. Just as in the time of primitive capitalism, the State and all of society

<sup>78</sup>Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 25: *loc. cit.*, 544.

<sup>79</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 34: *loc. cit.*, 559 f.

<sup>80</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 286-289.

have the duty of *defending those collective goods* which, among others, constitute the essential framework for the legitimate pursuit of personal goals on the part of each individual.

Here we find a new limit on the market: there are collective and qualitative needs which cannot be satisfied by market mechanisms. There are important human needs which escape its logic. There are goods which by their very nature cannot and must not be bought or sold. Certainly the mechanisms of the market offer secure advantages: they help to utilize resources better; they promote the exchange of products ; above all they give central place to the person's desires and preferences of another person. Nevertheless, these mechanisms carry the risk of an "idolatry" of the market, an idolatry which ignores the existence of goods which by their nature are not and cannot be mere commodities.

41. Marxism criticized capitalist bourgeois societies, blaming them for the commercialization and alienation of human existence. This rebuke is of course based on a mistaken and inadequate idea of alienation, derived solely from the sphere of relationships of production and ownership, that is, giving them a materialistic foundation and moreover denying the legitimacy and positive value of market relationships even in their own sphere. Marxism thus ends up by affirming that only in a collective society can alienation be eliminated. However, the historical experience of socialist countries has sadly demonstrated that collectivism does not do away with alienation but rather increases it, adding to it a lack of basic necessities and economic inefficiency.

The historical experience of the West, for its part, shows that even if the Marxist analysis and its foundation of alienation are false, nevertheless alienation — and the loss of the authentic meaning of life — is a reality in Western societies too. This happens in consumerism, when people are ensnared in a web of false and superficial gratifications rather than being helped to experience their personhood in an authentic and concrete way. Alienation is found also in work, when it is organized so as to ensure maximum returns and profits with no concern whether the worker, through his own labor, grows or diminishes as a person, either through increased sharing in a genuinely supportive community or through increased isolation in a maze of relationships marked by destructive competitiveness and estrangement, in which he is considered only a means and not an end.

The concept of alienation needs to be led back to the Christian vision of reality, by recognizing in alienation a reversal of means and ends. When man does not recognize in himself and in others the value and grandeur of the human person, he effectively deprives himself of the possibility of benefiting from his humanity and of entering into that relationship of solidarity and communion with others for which God created him. Indeed, it is through the free gift of self that man truly finds himself.<sup>81</sup> This gift is made possible by the human person's essential "capacity for transcendence." Man cannot give himself to a purely human plan for reality, to an abstract ideal or to a false utopia. As a person, he can give himself to another person or to other persons, and ultimately to God, who is the author of his being and who alone can fully accept his gift.<sup>82</sup> A man is alienated if he refuses to transcend himself and live the experience of self-giving and of the formation of an authentic human community oriented towards his final destiny, which is God. A society is alienated if its forms of social organization, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer this gift of self and to establish this solidarity between people.

Exploitation, at least in the forms analyzed and described by Karl Marx, has been overcome in Western society. Alienation, however, has not been overcome as it exists in various forms of exploitation, when people use one another, and when they seek an ever more refined satisfaction of their individual and secondary needs, which ignoring the principal and authentic needs which ought to regulate the manner of satisfying the other ones too.<sup>83</sup> A person who is concerned solely or primarily with possessing and enjoying, who is no longer able to control his instincts and passions, or to subordinate them by obedience to the truth, cannot be free: *obedience to the truth* about God and man is the first condition of freedom, making it possible for a person to order his needs and desires and to choose the means of satisfying them according to a correct scale of values, so that the ownership of things may become an occasion of growth for him. This growth can be hindered as a result of manipulation by the means of mass communication, which impose fashions and trends of opinion through carefully orchestrated repetition,

<sup>81</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.

<sup>82</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 41.

<sup>83</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 26.

without it being possible to subject to critical scrutiny the premises on which these fashions and trends are based.

42. Returning now to the initial question: can it perhaps be said that, after the failure of Communism, capitalism is the victorious social system, and that capitalism should be the goal of the countries now making efforts to rebuild their economy and society? Is this the model which ought to be proposed to the countries of the Third World which are searching for the path to true economic and civil progress?

The answer is obviously complex. If by "capitalism" is meant an economic system which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector, then the answer is certainly in the affirmative, even though it would perhaps be more appropriate to speak of a "business economy," "market economy" or simply "free economy." But if by "capitalism" is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality, and which sees it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious, then the reply is certainly negative.

The Marxist solution has failed, but the realities of marginalization and exploitation remain in the world, especially the Third World, as does the reality of human alienation, especially in the more advanced countries. Against these phenomena the Church strongly raises her voice. Vast multitudes are still living in conditions of great material and moral poverty. The collapse of the Communist system in so many countries certainly removes an obstacle to facing these problems in an appropriate and realistic way, but it is not enough to bring about their solution. Indeed, there is a risk that a radical capitalistic ideology could spread which refuses even to consider these problems, in the *a priori* belief that any attempt to solve them is doomed to failure, and which blindly entrusts their solution to the free development of market forces.

43. The Church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations, through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political and



cultural aspects, as these interact with one another.<sup>84</sup> For such a task the Church offers her social teaching as an *indispensable and ideal orientation*, a teaching which, as already mentioned, recognizes the positive value of the market and of enterprise, but which at the same time points out that these need to be oriented towards the common good. This teaching also recognizes the legitimacy of workers' efforts to obtain full respect for their dignity and to gain broader areas of participation in the life of industrial enterprises so that, while cooperating with others and under the direction of others, they can in a certain sense "work for themselves"<sup>85</sup> through the exercise of their intelligence and freedom.

The integral development of the human person through work does not impede but rather promotes the greater productivity and efficiency of work itself, even though it may weaken consolidated power structures. A business cannot be considered only as a "society of capital goods"; it is also a "society of persons" in which people participate in different ways and with specific responsibilities, whether they supply the necessary capital for the company's activities or take part in such activities through their labor. To achieve these goals there is still need for a broad associated workers' movement, directed towards the liberation and promotion of the whole person.

In the light of today's "new things," we have re-read *the relationship between individual or private property and the universal destination of material wealth*. Man fulfills himself by using his intelligence and freedom. In so doing he utilizes the things of this world as objects and instruments and makes them his own. The foundation of the right to private initiative and ownership is to be found in this activity. By means of his work man commits himself, not only for his own sake but also *for others and with others*. Each person collaborates in the work of others and for their good. Man works in order to provide for the needs of his family, his community, his nation, and ultimately all humanity.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, he collaborates in the work of his fellow employees, as well as in the work of suppliers and in the

<sup>84</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 36; Paul VI, Apostolic Epistle *Octogesima Adveniens*, 2-5: *loc. cit.*, 402-405.

<sup>85</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 15: *loc. cit.*, 616-618.

<sup>86</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 10: *loc. cit.*, 600-602.

customers' use of goods, in a progressively expanding chain of solidarity. Ownership of the means of production, whether in industry or agriculture, is just and legitimate if it serves useful work. It becomes illegitimate, however, when it is not utilized or when it serves to impede the work of others, in an effort to gain a profit which is not the result of the overall expansion of work and the wealth of society, but rather is the result of curbing them or of illicit exploitation, speculation or the breaking of solidarity among working people.<sup>87</sup> Ownership of this kind has no justification, and represents an abuse in the sight of God and man.

The obligation to earn one's bread by the sweat of one's brow also presumes the right to do so. A society in which this right is systematically denied, in which economic policies do not allow workers to reach satisfactory levels of employment, cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can that society attain social peace.<sup>88</sup> Just as the person fully realizes himself in the free gift of self, so too ownership morally justifies itself in the creation, at the proper time and in the proper way, of opportunities for work and human growth for all.

## V. State and Culture

44. Pope Leo XIII was aware of the need for a sound *theory of the State* in order to ensure the normal development of man's spiritual and temporal activities, both of which are indispensable.<sup>89</sup> For this reason, in one passage of *Rerum Novarum* he presents the organization of society according to the three powers — legislative, executive and judicial — something which at the time represented a novelty in Church teaching.<sup>90</sup> Such an ordering reflects a realistic vision of man's social nature, which calls for legislation capable of protecting the freedom of all. To that end, it is preferable that each power be balanced by other powers and by other spheres of responsibility which keep it within proper bounds. This is the principle of the "rule of law," in which the law is sovereign, and not the arbitrary will of individuals.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, 14: *loc. cit.*, 612-616.

<sup>88</sup>*Cf. ibid.*, 18: *loc. cit.*, 622-625.

<sup>89</sup>*Cf. Encyclical Letter Rerum Novarum: loc. cit.*, 126-128.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 121 f.

In modern times, this concept has been opposed by totalitarianism, which, in its Marxist-Leninist form, maintains that some people, by virtue of a deeper knowledge of the laws of the development of society, or through membership of a particular class or through contact with the deeper sources of the collective consciousness, are exempt from error and can therefore arrogate to themselves the exercise of absolute power. It must be added that totalitarianism arises out of a denial of truth in the objective sense. If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people. Their self-interest as a class, group or nation would inevitably set them in opposition to one another. If one does not acknowledge transcendent truth, then the force of power takes over, and each person tends to make full use of the means at his disposal in order to impose his own interest or his own opinion, with no regard for the rights of others. People are then respected only to the extent that they can be exploited for selfish ends. Thus, the root of modern totalitarianism is to be found in the denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person who, as the visible image of the invisible God, is therefore by his very nature the subject of rights which no one may violate — no individual, group, class, nation or State. Not even the majority of a social body may violate these rights, by going against the minority, by isolating, oppressing, or exploiting it, or by attempting to annihilate it.<sup>91</sup>

45. The culture and praxis of totalitarianism also involve a rejection of the Church. The State or the party which claims to be able to lead history towards perfect goodness, and which sets itself above all values, cannot tolerate the affirmation of an *objective criterion of good and evil* beyond the will of those in power, since such a criterion, in given circumstances, could be used to judge their actions. This explains why totalitarianism attempts to destroy the Church, or at least to reduce her to submission, making her an instrument of its own ideological apparatus.<sup>92</sup>

Furthermore, the totalitarian State tends to absorb within itself the nation, society, the family, religious groups and individuals themselves. In defending her own freedom, the Church is also

<sup>91</sup>Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Libertas Praestantissimum*: *loc. cit.*, 224-226.

<sup>92</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 76.

defending the human person, who must obey God rather than men (cf. *Acts* 5:29), as well as defending the family, the various social organizations and nations — all of which enjoy their own spheres of autonomy and sovereignty.

46. The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate.<sup>93</sup> Thus she cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for individual interests or for ideological ends.

Authentic democracy is possible only in a State ruled by law, and on the basis of a correct conception of the human person. It requires that the necessary conditions be present for the advancement both of the individual through education and formation in true ideals, and of the "subjectivity" of society through the creation of structures of participation and shared responsibility. Nowadays there is a tendency to claim that agnosticism and skeptical relativism are the philosophy and the basic attitude which correspond to democratic forms of political life. Those who are convinced that they know the truth and firmly adhere to it are considered unreliable from a democratic point of view, since they do not accept that truth is determined by the majority, or that it is subject to variation according to different political trends. It must be observed in this regard that if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political activity, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism.

Nor does the Church close her eyes to the danger of fanaticism or fundamentalism among those who, in the name of an ideology which purports to be scientific or religious, claim the right to impose on others their own concept of what is true and good. *Christian truth* is not of this kind. Since it is not an ideology, the Christian faith does not presume to imprison changing socio-political realities in a rigid schema, and it recognizes that human life is realized in history in conditions that are diverse and imperfect. Furthermore, in con-

<sup>93</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 29; Pius XII, Christmas Radio Message on 24 December 1944: AAS 37 (1945), 10-20.

stantly reaffirming the transcendent dignity of the person, the Church's method is always that of respect for freedom.<sup>94</sup>

But freedom attains its full development only by accepting the truth. In a world without truth, freedom loses its foundation and man is exposed to the violence of passion and to manipulation, both open and hidden. The Christian upholds freedom and serves it, constantly offering to others the truth which he has known (cf. *Jn* 8:31-32), in accordance with the missionary nature of his vocation. While paying heed to every fragment of truth which he encounters in the life experience and in the culture of individuals and of nations he will not fail to affirm in dialogue with others all that his faith and the correct use of reason have enabled him to understand.<sup>95</sup>

47. Following the collapse of Communist totalitarianism and of many other totalitarian and "national security" regimes, today we are witnessing a predominance, not without signs of opposition, of the democratic ideal, together with lively attention to and concern for human rights. But for this very reason it is necessary for peoples in the process of reforming their systems to give democracy an authentic and solid foundation through the explicit recognition of those rights.<sup>96</sup> Among the most important of these rights, mention must be made of the right to life, an integral part of which is the right of the child to develop in the mother's womb from the moment of conception; the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality; the right to develop one's intelligence and freedom in seeking and knowing the truth; the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth's material resources, and to derive from that work the means to support oneself and one's dependents; and the right freely to establish a family, to have and to rear children through the responsible exercise of one's sexuality. In a certain sense, the source and synthesis of these rights is religious freedom, understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup>Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*.

<sup>95</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 11: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 January 1991.

<sup>96</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 17: *loc. cit.*, 270-272.

<sup>97</sup>Cf. Message for the 1988 World Day of Peace: *loc. cit.*, 1572-1580; Message for the 1991 World Day of Peace: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 19 December 1990; Second

Even in countries with democratic forms of government, these rights are not always fully respected. Here we are referring not only to the scandal of abortion, but also to different aspects of a crisis within democracies themselves, which seem at times to have lost the ability to make decisions aimed at the common good. Certain demands which arise within society are sometimes not examined in accordance with criteria of justice and morality, but rather on the basis of the electoral or financial power of the groups promoting them. With time, such distortions of political conduct create distrust and apathy, with a subsequent decline in the political participation and civic spirit of the general population, which feels abused and disillusioned. As a result, there is a growing inability to situate particular interests within the framework of a coherent vision of the common good. The latter is not simply the sum total of particular interests; rather it involves an assessment and integration of those interests on the basis of a balanced hierarchy of values; ultimately, it demands a correct understanding of the dignity and the rights of the person.<sup>98</sup>

The Church respects *the legitimate autonomy of the democratic order* and is not entitled to express preferences for this or that institutional or constitutional solution. Her contribution to the political order is precisely her vision of the dignity of the person revealed in all its fullness in the mystery of the Incarnate Word.<sup>99</sup>

48. These general observations also apply to the *role of the State in the economic sector*. Economic activity, especially the activity of a market economy, cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical or political vacuum. On the contrary, it presupposes sure guarantees of individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services. Hence the principle task of the State is to guarantee this security, so that those who work and produce can enjoy the fruits of their labours and thus feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly. The absence of stability, together with the corruption of public officials and the spread of improper sources of growing rich and of easy profits deriving from illegal or

Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1-2.

<sup>98</sup>Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

<sup>99</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 22.

purely speculative activities, constitutes one of the chief obstacles to development and to the economic order.

Another task of the State is that of overseeing and directing the exercise of human rights in the economic sector. However, primary responsibility in this area belongs not to the State but to individuals and to the various groups and associations which make up society. The State could not directly ensure the right to work for all its citizens unless it controlled every aspect of economic life and restricted the free initiative of individuals. This does not mean, however, that the State has no competence in this domain, as was claimed by those who argued against any rules in the economic sphere. Rather, the State has a duty to sustain business activities by creating conditions which will ensure job opportunities, by stimulating those activities where they are lacking or by supporting them in moments of crisis.

The State has the further right to intervene when particular monopolies create delays or obstacles to development. In addition to the tasks of harmonizing and guiding development, in exceptional circumstances the State can also exercise a *substitute function*, when social sectors or business systems are too weak or are just getting under way, and are not equal to the task at hand. Such supplementary interventions, which are justified by urgent reasons touching the common good, must be as brief as possible, so as to avoid removing permanently from society and business systems the functions which are properly theirs, and so as to avoid enlarging excessively the sphere of State intervention to the detriment of both economic and civil freedom.

In recent years the range of such intervention has vastly expanded, to the point of creating a new type of State, the so-called "Welfare State." This has happened in some countries in order to respond better to many needs and demands, by remedying forms of poverty and deprivation unworthy of the human person. However, excesses and abuses, especially in recent years, have provoked very harsh criticisms of the Welfare State, dubbed the "Social Assistance State." Malfunctions and defects in the Social Assistance State are the result of an inadequate understanding of the tasks proper to the State. Here again *the principle of subsidiarity* must be respected: a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its

activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.<sup>100</sup>

By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending. In fact, it would appear that needs are best understood and satisfied by people who are closest to them and who act as neighbors to those in need. It should be added that certain kinds of demands often call for a response which is not simply material but which is capable of perceiving the deeper human need. One thinks of the condition of refugees, immigrants, the elderly, the sick, and all those in circumstances which call for assistance, such as drug abusers: all these people can be helped effectively only by those who offer them genuine fraternal support, in addition to the necessary care.

49. Faithful to the mission received from Christ her Founder, the Church has always been present and active among the needy, offering them material assistance in ways that neither humiliate nor reduce them to mere objects of assistance, but which help them to escape their precarious situation by promoting their dignity as persons. With heartfelt gratitude to God it must be pointed out that active charity has never ceased to be practised in the Church; indeed, today it is showing a manifold and gratifying increase. In this regard, special mention must be made of *volunteer work*, which the Church favours and promotes by urging everyone to cooperate in supporting and encouraging its undertakings.

In order to overcome today's widespread individualistic mentality, what is required is a *concrete commitment to solidarity and charity*, beginning in the family with the mutual support of husband and wife and the care which the different generations give to one another. In this sense the family too can be called a community of work and solidarity. It can happen, however, that when a family does decide to live up fully to its vocation, it finds itself without the necessary support from the State and without sufficient resources. It is urgent therefore to promote not only family policies, but also those social policies which have the family as their principle object, policies

<sup>100</sup>Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1: *loc. cit.*, 184-186.



which assist the family by providing adequate resources and efficient means of support, both for bringing up children and for looking after the elderly, so as to avoid distancing the latter from the family unit and in order to strengthen relations between generations.<sup>101</sup>

Apart from the family, other intermediate communities exercise primary functions and give life to specific networks of solidarity. These develop as real communities of persons and strengthen the social fabric preventing society from becoming an anonymous and impersonal mass, as unfortunately often happens today. It is in interrelationships on many levels that a person lives, and that society becomes more "personalized." The individual today is often suffocated between two poles represented by the State and the marketplace. At times it seems as though he exists only as a producer and consumer of goods, or as an object of State administration. People lose sight of the fact that life in society has neither the market nor the State as its final purpose, since life itself has a unique value which the State and the market must serve. Man remains above all a being who seeks the truth and strives to live in that truth, deepening his understanding of it through a dialogue which involves past and future generations.<sup>102</sup>

50. From this open search for truth, which is renewed in every generation, *the culture of a nation* derives its character. Indeed, the heritage of values which has been received and handled down is always challenged by the young. To challenge does not necessarily mean to destroy or reject *a priori*, but above all to put these values to the test in one's own life, and through this existential verification to make them more real, relevant and personal, distinguishing the valid elements in the tradition from false and erroneous ones, or from obsolete forms which can be usefully replaced by others more suited to the times.

In this context, it is appropriate to recall that evangelization too plays a role in the culture of the various nations, sustaining culture in its progress towards the truth, and assisting in the work of its purification and enrichment.<sup>103</sup> However, when a culture becomes

<sup>101</sup>Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 45: AAS 74 (1982), 136 f.

<sup>102</sup>Cf. Discourse to UNESCO (2 June 1980): AAS 72 (1980), 735-752.

<sup>103</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, 39; 52 *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 January 1991.

inward looking, and tries to perpetuate obsolete ways of living by rejecting any exchange or debate with regard to the truth about man, then it becomes sterile and is heading for decadence.

51. All human activity takes place within a culture and interacts with culture. For an adequate formation of a culture, the involvement of the whole man is required, whereby he exercises his creativity, intelligence, and knowledge of the world and of people. Furthermore, he displays his capacity for self-control, personal sacrifice, solidarity and readiness to promote the common good. Thus the first and most important task is accomplished within man's heart. The way in which he is involved in building his own future depends on the understanding he has of himself and of his own destiny. It is on this level that *the Church's specific and decisive contribution to true culture* is to be found. The Church promotes those aspects of human behaviour which favour a true culture of peace, as opposed to models in which the individual is lost in the crowd, in which the role of his initiative and freedom is neglected, and in which his greatness is posited in the arts of conflict and war. The Church renders this service to human society *by preaching the truth about the creation of the world*, which God has placed in human hands so that people may make it fruitful and more perfect through their work; and *by preaching the truth about the Redemption*, whereby the Son of God has saved mankind and at the same time has united all people, making and at the same time has united all people, making them responsible for one another. Sacred Scripture continually speaks to us of an active commitment to our neighbour and demands of us shared responsibility for all of humanity.

This duty is not limited to one's own family, nation or State, but extends progressively to all mankind, since no one can consider himself extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family. No one can say that he is not responsible for the well-being of his brother or sister (cf. *Gen 4:9; Lk 10:29-37; Mt 25:31-46*). Attentive and pressing concern for one's neighbour in a moment of need — made easier today because of the new means of communication which have brought people close together — is especially important with regard to in the search for ways to resolve international conflicts other than by war. It is not hard to see that the terrifying power of the means of destruction — to which even medium and small-sized countries have access — and the ever closer links between

the peoples of the whole world make it very difficult or practically impossible to limit the consequences of a conflict.

52. Pope Benedict XV and his Successors clearly understood this danger.<sup>104</sup> I myself, on the occasion of the recent tragic war in the Persian Gulf, repeated the cry: "Never again war!". No, never again war, which destroys the lives of innocent people, teaches how to kill, throws into upheaval even the lives of those who do the killing and leaves behind a trail of resentment and hatred, thus making it all the more difficult to find a just solution of the very problems which provoked the war. Just as the time has finally come when in individual State a system of private vendetta and reprisal has given way to the rule of law, so too a similar step forward is now urgently needed in the international community. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that at the root of war there are usually real and serious grievances: injustices suffered, legitimate aspirations frustrated, poverty, and the exploitation of multitudes of desperate people who see no real possibility of improving their lot by peaceful means.

For this reason, another name for peace is *development*.<sup>105</sup> Just as there is a collective responsibility for avoiding war, so too there is a collective responsibility for promoting development. Just as within individual societies it is possible and right to organize a solid economy which will direct the functioning of the market to the common good, so too there is a similar need for adequate interventions on the international level. For this to happen, *a great effort must be made to enhance mutual understanding and knowledge, and to increase the sensitivity of consciences*. This is the culture which is hoped for, one which fosters trust in the human potential of the poor, and consequently in their ability to improve their condition through work or to make a positive contribution to economic prosperity. But to accomplish this, the poor — be they individuals or nations — need to be provided with realistic opportunities. Creating such conditions calls for a *concerted worldwide effort to promote development*, an effort

<sup>104</sup>Cf. Benedict XV, Exhortation *Ubi Primum* (8 September 1914): AAS 6 (1914), 501 f.; Pius XI, Radio Message to the Catholic Faithful and to the Entire World (29 September 1938): AAS 30 (1938), 309 f.; Pius XII, Radio Message to the Entire World (24 August 1939): AAS 31 (1939), 333-335; John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, III: *loc. cit.*, 285-289; Paul VI, Discourse at the United Nations (4 October 1965): AAS 57 (1965), 877-885.

<sup>105</sup>Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 76-77: *loc. cit.*, 294 F.

which also involves sacrificing the positions of income and of power enjoyed by the more developed economies.<sup>106</sup>

This may mean making important changes in established lifestyles, in order to limit the waste of environmental and human resources, thus enabling every individual and all the peoples of the earth to have a sufficient share of those resources. In addition, the new material and spiritual resources must be utilized which are the result of the work and culture of peoples who today are on the margins of the international community, so as to obtain an overall human enrichment of the family of nations.

## VI. Man is the Way of the Church

53. Faced with the poverty of the working class, Pope Leo XIII wrote: "We approach this subject with confidence, and in the exercise of the rights which manifestly pertain on us. . . By keeping silence we would seem to neglect the duty incumbent on us."<sup>107</sup> During the last hundred years the Church has repeatedly expressed her thinking, while closely following the continuing development of the social question. She has certainly not done this in order to recover former privileges or to impose her own vision. Her sole purpose has been *care and responsibility* for man, who has been entrusted to her by Christ himself: for *this man*, whom, as the Second Vatican Council recalls, is the only creature on earth which God willed for its own sake, and for which God has his plan, that is, a share in eternal salvation. We are not dealing here with man in "abstract," but with the real, "concrete," "historical" man. WE are dealing with *each individual*, since each one is included in the mystery of Redemption, and through this mystery Christ has united himself with each one for ever.<sup>108</sup> It follows that the Church cannot abandon man, and that "*this man* is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling his mission. . . the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption."<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup>Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 48: *loc. cit.*, 139f.

<sup>107</sup>Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: *loc. cit.*, 107.

<sup>108</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 13: *loc. cit.*, 283.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, 14: *loc. cit.*, 284 f.

This, and this alone, is the principle which inspires the Church's social doctrine. The Church has gradually developed that doctrine in a systematic way, above all in the century that has followed the date we are commemorating, precisely because the horizon of the Church's whole wealth of doctrine is man in this concrete reality as sinful and righteous.

54. Today, the Church's social doctrine focuses especially *on man* as he is involved in a complex network of relationships within modern societies. The human sciences and philosophy are helpful for interpreting *man's central place within society* and for enabling him to understand himself better as a "social being." However, man's true identity is only fully revealed to him through faith, and it is precisely from faith that the Church's social teaching begins. While drawing upon all the contributions made by the sciences and philosophy, her social teaching is aimed at helping man on the path of salvation.

The Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* can be read as a valid contribution to socio-economic analysis at the end of the nineteenth century, but its specific value derives from the fact that it is a document of the Magisterium and is fully a part of the Church's evangelizing mission, together with many other documents of this nature. Thus the Church's *social teaching* is itself a valid *instrument of evangelization*. As such, it proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself. In this light, and only in this light, does it concern itself with everything else: the human rights of the individual, and in particular of the "working class," the family and education, the duties of the State, the ordering of national and international society, economic life, culture, war and peace, and respect for life from the moment of conception until death.

55. The Church receives "the meaning of man" from Divine Revelation. "In order to know man, authentic man, man in his fullness, one must know God," said Pope Paul VI, and he went on to quote Saint Catherine of Siena, who, in prayer, expressed the same idea: "In your nature, O eternal Godhead, I shall know my own nature."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Paul VI, Homily at the Final Public Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (7 December 1965): AAS 58 (1966), 58.

Christian anthropology therefore is really a chapter of theology, and for this reason, the Church's social doctrine, by its concern for man and by its interest in him and in the way he conducts himself in the world, "belongs to the field... of theology and particularly of moral theology."<sup>111</sup> The theological dimension is needed both for interpreting and solving present-day problems in human society. It is worth noting that this is true in contrast both to the "atheistic" solution, which deprives man of one of his basic dimensions, namely the spiritual one, and to permissive and consumerist solutions, which under various pretexts seek to convince man that he is free from every law and from God himself, thus imprisoning him within a selfishness which ultimately harms both him and others.

When the Church proclaims God's salvation *to man*, when she offers and communicates the life of God through the sacraments, when she gives direction to human life through the commandments of love of God and neighbor, she contributes to the enrichment of human dignity. But just as the Church can never abandon her religious and transcendent mission on behalf of man, so too she is aware that today her activity meets with particular difficulties and obstacles. That is why she devotes herself with ever new energies and methods to an evangelization which promotes the whole human being. Even on the eve of the third Millennium she continues to be "a sign and safeguard of the transcendence of the human person,"<sup>112</sup> as indeed she has always sought to be from the beginning of her existence, walking together with man through history. The Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* itself is a significant sign of this.

56. On the hundredth anniversary of that Encyclical I wish to thank all those who have devoted themselves to studying, expounding and making better known Christian social teaching. To this end, the cooperation of the local Churches is indispensable, and I would hope that the present anniversary will be a source of fresh enthusiasm for studying, spreading and applying that teaching in various contexts.

<sup>111</sup>Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41: *loc. cit.*, 571.

<sup>112</sup>Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 76; cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 13: *loc. cit.*, 283.

In particular, I wish this teaching to be made known and applied in the countries which, following collapse of "Real Socialism," are experiencing a serious lack of direction in the work of rebuilding. The Western countries, in turn, run the risk of seeing this collapse as a one-sided victory of their own economic system, and thereby failing to make necessary corrections in that system. Meanwhile, the countries of the Third World are experiencing more than ever the tragedy of underdevelopment, which is becoming more serious with each passing day.

After formulating principles and guidelines for the solution of the worker question, Pope Leo XIII made this incisive statement: "Everyone should put his hand to the work which falls to his share, and that at once and straightway, lest the evil which is already so great become through delay absolutely beyond remedy," and he added, "in regard to the Church, her cooperation will never be found lacking."<sup>113</sup>

57. As far as the Church is concerned, the social message of the Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action. Inspired by this message, some of the first Christians distributed their goods to the poor, bearing witness to the fact that, despite different social origins, it was possible for people to live together in peace and harmony. Through the power of the Gospel, down the centuries monks tilled the land, men and women Religious founded hospitals and shelters for the poor, Confraternities as well as individual men and women of all states of life devoted themselves to the needy and those on the margins of society, convinced as they were that Christ's words "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (*Mt* 25:40) were not intended to remain a pious wish, but were meant to become a concrete life commitment.

Today, more than ever, the Church is aware that her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the *witness of actions* than as a result of its internal logic and consistency. This awareness is also a source of her preferential option for the poor, which is never exclusive or discriminatory towards other groups. This option is not limited to material poverty, since it is well known

<sup>113</sup>Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: *loc. cit.*, 143.

that there are many other forms of poverty, especially in modern society — not only economic but cultural and spiritual poverty as well. The Church's love for the poor, which is essential for her and a part of her constant tradition, impels her to give attention to a world in which poverty is threatening to assume massive proportions in spite of technological and economic progress. In the countries of the West, different forms of poverty are being experienced by groups which live on the margins of society, by the elderly and the sick, by the victims of consumerism, and even more immediately by so many refugees and migrants. In the developing countries, tragic crises loom on the horizon unless internationally coordinated measures are taken before it is too late.

58. Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the *promotion of justice*. Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment. Only such an awareness can give the courage needed to face the risk and the change involved in every authentic attempt to come to the aid of another. It is not merely a matter of "giving from one's surplus," but of helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus good which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies. Nor is it a matter of eliminating instruments of social organization which have proved useful, but rather of orienting them according to an adequate notion of common good in relation to the whole human family. Today we are facing the so-called "globalization" of the economy, a phenomenon which is not to be dismissed, since it can create unusual opportunities for greater prosperity. There is a growing feeling, however, that this increasing internationalization of the economy ought to be accompanied by effective international agencies which will oversee and direct the economy to the common good, something that an individual State, even if it were the most powerful on earth, would not be in a position to do. In order to achieve this result, it is necessary that there be increased coordination among the more powerful countries, and that in international agencies the interests of the whole human family be



equally represented. It is also necessary that in evaluating the consequences of their decisions, these agencies always give sufficient consideration to peoples and countries which have little weight in the international market, but which are burdened by the most acute and desperate needs, and are thus more dependent on support for their development. Much remains to be done in this area.

59. Therefore, in order that the demands of justice may be met, and attempts to achieve this goal may succeed, what is needed is *the gift of grace*, a gift which comes from God. Grace, in cooperation with human freedom constitutes that mysterious presence of God in history which is Providence.

The newness which is experienced in following Christ demands to be communicated to other people in their concrete difficulties, struggles, problems and challenges, so that these can then be illuminated and made more human in the light of faith. Faith not only helps people to find solutions; it makes even situations of suffering humanly bearable, so that in these situations people will not become lost or forget their dignity and vocation.

In addition, the Church's social teaching has an important interdisciplinary dimension. In order better to incarnate the one truth about man in different and constantly changing social, economic and political contexts, this teaching enters into dialogue with the various disciplines concerned with man. It assimilates what these disciplines have to contribute, and helps them to open themselves to a broader horizon, aimed at serving the individual person who is acknowledged and loved in the fullness of his or her vocation.

Parallel with the interdisciplinary aspect, mention should also be made of the practical and as it were experiential dimension of this teaching, which is to be found at the crossroads where Christian life and conscience come into contact with the real world. This teaching is seen in the efforts of individuals, families, people involved in cultural and social life, as well as politicians and statesmen to give it a concrete form and application in history.

60. In proclaiming the principles for a solution of the worker question, Pope Leo XIII wrote: "This most serious question demands the attention and the efforts of others."<sup>114</sup> He was convinced that the

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.

grave problems caused by industrial society could be solved only by cooperation between all forces. This affirmation has become a permanent element of the Church's social teaching, and also explains why Pope John XXIII addressed his Encyclical on peace to "all people of good will."

Pope Leo, however, acknowledged with sorrow that the ideologies of his time, especially Liberalism and Marxism, rejected such cooperation. Since then, many things have changed, especially in recent years. The world today is ever more aware that solving serious national and international problems is not just a matter of economic production or of juridical or social organization, but also calls for specific ethical and religious values, as well as changes of mentality, behavior and structures. The Church feels a particular responsibility to offer this contribution and, as I have written in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, there is a reasonable hope that the many people who profess no religion will also contribute to providing the social question with the necessary ethical foundation.<sup>115</sup>

In that same Encyclical I also addressed an appeal to the Christian Churches and to all the great world religion, inviting them to offer the unanimous witness of our common convictions regarding the dignity of man, created by God.<sup>116</sup> In fact I am convinced that the various religions, now and in the future, will have a preeminent role in preserving peace and in building a society worthy of man.

61. At the beginning of the Industrialized society, it was "a yoke little better than that of slavery itself" which led my Predecessor to speak out *in defence of man*. Over the past hundred years the Church has remained faithful to his duty. Indeed, she intervened in the turbulent period of class struggle after the First World War in order to defend man from economic exploitation and from the tyranny of the totalitarian systems. After the Second World War, she put the dignity of the person at the centre of her social messages, insisting that material goods were meant for all, and that the social order ought to be free of oppression and based on a spirit of cooperation and solidarity. The Church has constantly repeated that the person and

<sup>115</sup>Cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38: *loc. cit.*, 564-566.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, 47: *loc. cit.*, 582.

society need not only material goods but spiritual and religious values as well. Furthermore, as she has become more aware of the fact that too many people live, not in the prosperity of the Western world, but in the poverty of the developing countries amid conditions which are still "a yoke little better than that of slavery itself," she has felt and continues to feel obliged to denounce this fact with absolute clarity and frankness, although she knows that her call will not always win favor with everyone.

One hundred years after the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, the Church finds herself still facing "new things" and new challenges. The centenary celebration should therefore confirm the commitment of all people of good will and of believers in particular.

62. The present Encyclical has looked at the past, but above all it is directed to the future. Like *Rerum Novarum*, it comes almost at the threshold of the new century, and its intention, with God's help, is to prepare for that moment.

In every age the true and "perennial newness of things" comes from the infinite power of God, who says: "Behold, I make all things new" (*Rev* 21:5). These words refer to the fulfilment of history, when Christ "delivers the Kingdom to God the Father. . . that God may be everything to everyone" (*1 Cor* 15:24,28). But the Christian well knows that the newness at the Lord's second coming has been present since the creation of the world, and in a special way since the time when God became man in Jesus Christ and brought about a "new creation" with him and through him (*2 Cor* 5:17; *Gal* 6:15).

In concluding this Encyclical I again give thanks to Almighty God, who has granted his Church the light and strength to accompany humanity on its earthly journey towards its eternal destiny. In the third Millennium too, the Church will be faithful in making man's way her own, knowing that she does not walk alone, but with Christ her Lord. It is Christ who made man's way his own, and who guides him, even when he is unaware of it.

Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer, constantly remained beside Christ in his journey towards the human family and in its midst, and she goes before the Church on the pilgrimage of faith. May her maternal intercession accompany humanity towards the next Mil-

lennium, in fidelity to him who "is the same yesterday and today and forever" (cf. *Heb* 13:8), Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name I cordially impart my blessing to all.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 1 May the memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker, in the year 1991, the thirteenth of my Pontificate.

Joannes Paulus II

# I APPEAL TO THE WHOLE CHURCH TO HELP SOLVE THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS THAT REMAIN

*Pope addresses dignitaries at commemoration  
of 'Rerum Novarum'*

Your Eminences,  
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. During these days, thousands of pilgrims from the various continents are coming to Rome to celebrate with gratitude the centenary of the publication of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. All over the world numerous initiatives have been taken to commemorate this historic date. The Holy See, quite conscious of its debt to Pope Leo XIII in this regard, does so through this solemn celebration which you are honoring with your presence and at which I have the pleasure of presiding. It takes place immediately after the seminar on the very timely topic of "*the universal purpose of goods*," whose participants are here today, and whom I especially want to greet. For these very timely initiatives, I would like to thank the entire Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in the person of its President, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, and its Vice President, Bishop Jorge Mejia. Such studies, open to specialists from various fields, continues an ancient

\*On 15 May, the centenary of the promulgation of *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII, dignitaries gathered in the Vatican's Synod Hall for a solemn commemoration of that Encyclical. During the course of the ceremonies the Pope delivered the following discourse in French. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 20 May 1991.

tradition which Pope Leo XIII also benefited from in preparing his Encyclical.

### **The universal purpose of the earth's resources**

Now, within the context of the centenary of *Rerum Novarum* and in connection with *Centesimus Annus*, I would like to propose some reflections on the Church's social thought on the universal purpose of goods.

2. At the beginning of his Encyclical Pope Leo XIII underlined the fact that, as a consequence of modern technology, the production of goods was rapidly increasing, and that humanity was faced with wealth which it had never known in the past. He did not reject that *res nova* in itself; on the contrary, in it he saw a new fulfillment of God's desire to perfect the work of his creation through human work and for the good of humanity. However, the Pope was troubled to see that this new wealth, far from being available to the entire human race, was in reality being concentrated in the hands of a small group of persons, so much so that the majority of the working class was excluded from its enjoyment, and was becoming poorer and poorer.

Such a result was in direct contradiction to the will of God who gave the earth to *the entire* human race to use and dispose of. That is why the Pope deliberately sought, especially through his Encyclical, to show the ways and means of fulfilling God's will in the industrial society too. Certainly he would neither posit nor realistically want to see the abolition of private property; that is why the Pope demanded that people receive a just wage, the effective possibility for workers to own property, as well as the State's intervention and a judicious organization of work.

At that time the Pope did not have — nor should we be surprised that he did not — the possibility of knowing or predicting all the means and methods we have today, such as professional training, sharing in production capital, assistance from the State, various forms of the redistribution of profit, and still others. However, in his Encyclical, Leo XIII began by establishing the basis and the guidelines on which subsequent Encyclicals rested by denouncing unjust situations or opening new ways for practically achieving a just distribution of goods.

For my part, in the Encyclical *Centisimus Annus*, I especially insisted on three current problems. The first concerns the unjust distribution of resources between the industrialized countries and developing ones. The Church is well aware that it is not easy to fill that "gap" in a single stroke. When people wish for and demand a *development policy* it does not need to be utopian; however, in the face of the poverty of the one side and the economic opportunities and current technology of the other, the Church feels it is necessary always to insist and to repeat that, even gradually, there is an urgent need for more radical and more effective initiatives to be taken on behalf of the poor countries, and with their collaboration.

3. The second problem concerns the unjust distribution of resources within each country; this problem concerns developing countries as well as the industrialized ones. During my pastoral visits to Third World countries I have often repeated that the unjust distribution of the earth's resources, the exploitation of work and the affluent life-style of *some people* are scandalous violations of the universal purpose of goods.

However, we must repeat that problems of this same order can be found in the industrialized countries. A sizable part of western Europe's population lives in conditions of poverty which cause great suffering. In the countries of central and eastern Europe, the phenomenon is even more widespread. This new poverty does not affect a certain class today, but it is widespread and touches different groups which are often, if not always, neglected in affluent societies.

I would like to mention yet another fact which is connected with the universal purpose of goods. We know that production capital, in the full sense of the word, quickly increases, especially in the industrialized nations. However, that increase does not always come about for the benefit of *a large number of people*, the capital remaining in the hands of *a few*. The Church's social doctrine has always defended the participation of *a large number* in production capital because property is one of the important means of protecting the freedom and responsibility of the person and, as a consequence, of society.

4. The third problem of current interest on the topic of the purpose of resources concerns the responsibility we have for creation and the future generations. Some people place all their hope in new

technologies, thinking that they could considerably reduce all the threats to ecological balance. To tell the truth, for the Church it is not merely a problem of technology, but also and above all, a moral one. It is not enough to mention the great amount of damage caused to the natural environment; we must also, and perhaps even more, call attention to the daily suffering inflicted on people by the different kinds of pollution, altered, altered or harmful foods, the inordinate vehicular traffic which makes the air unfit to breathe. "In addition to the irrational destruction of the natural environment, we must also mention the more serious destruction of the *human environment*, something which is by no means receiving the attention it deserves" (*Centisimus Annus*, n. 38).

### The "universal purpose" of the service of authority

5. In his document, Leo XIII expressed a second concern, as people know quite well: he clearly observed that the new manner of production, springing from capitalism, was causing economic and social power to be concentrated in the hands of those who owned capital, so that the workers, not having any personal property, could easily be exploited and oppressed by the very weight of capital itself. However, this was not the only danger. The Pope also foresaw another one: the danger that capital would "take possession," that is, conquer and usurp the authority of the State itself, thus re-enforcing its economic and social monopoly.

In the face of this critical situation, the Pope decisively declared: by nature, the right of the unpropertied people to citizenship is equal to that of the wealthy owners of the means of production, for they through their families are among the true and living parts which go to form the body of the State... Since it would be utterly absurd to care for one section of citizens and neglect another, it is evident that *public authority* ought to take proper care to safeguard the lives and well-being of the unpropertied class. To fail in this would be to violate justice which bids us give every person his due... Where the protection of private rights is concerned, special regard must be had for the poor and weak (especially) the wage-earners (who) are numbered among the multitude of the poor" (nn. 27, 29; cf. *Centisimus Annus*, nn. 8, 10). On this topic, we could build an analogy: just as the earth's resources are destined for everyone, so too is *public authority destined for the good of all*, and not only for the good of a



particular group. In insisting on this principle, the Pope was in no way defending the collectivist or totalitarian State. Indeed, he was reiterating that *the rights of the family* take precedence over those of the State, and that there is a natural right for people to form *free associations* and organize themselves and resolve their own social problems. In fact, it is necessary to maintain that man's social nature does not lose its strength in the State, but that the "subjectivity" of society, with its autonomy and its own responsibilities, must always be respected (cf. *Centisimus Annus*, n. 13).

Once this essential clarification has been made, Pope Leo XIII's insistence on the "purpose" of public authority to the good of all is an important contribution not only in regard to the support of workers, but also for overcoming the class struggle.

In this regard, it is not surprising that the Pope did not know then all that he was implying with his affirmation of the "purpose" of public authority to the good of all. Here again, however, *Rerum Novarum* enunciated a basic principle on which later social Encyclicals could develop a better understanding of the State's role in promoting the common good in the economic field, as well as in the social and cultural domain, always insisting on its necessary involvement, as well as on the principle of subsidiarity.

6. Today the extension of the field of public power's action is still part of the most serious problems concerning the social order in industrialized countries as well as in developing ones. Even if the ideology of class struggle has hardly any defenders after the collapse of "Real Socialism," the modern States faces with two dangers.

*The first* is in the tendency to become a welfare State for all citizens, without taking into special consideration the people who are most in need of aid. In these conditions, the needs of certain groups are ignored or placed into general categories. Here we need only think, for example, of the specific needs of large families, of the handicapped, the elderly, of refugees and immigrants.

When Leo XIII was speaking of the responsibility of public authority in regard to all, he certainly was not defending a mistaken idea of egalitarianism; on the contrary, he was drawing the attention of the States to their special responsibility on behalf of those who are deprived of the means to take care of themselves and their needs.

*The second danger* is in the risk that the weight of the assistance guaranteed by the State could reduce and weaken what I have often called the "subjectivity" of society. Today we are faced with a very difficult situation: the tendency towards individualism and the growing breakup of society. As a consequence, we see the development of a tendency for the State to make up for what is lacking in social solidarity by coercive structures and bureaucratic machinations. In these conditions it is important for the modern State to succeed in making society responsible and in motivating it in economic, social and cultural activity. In order to achieve the common good in a manner that is truly worthy of mankind, there must be a just balance between the shared responsibility of the members of the society and the State's involvement, as I myself mentioned in *Centesimus Annus* (n. 48).

The importance of this orientation greatly surpasses the horizon of a single nation; it also affects the construction of European unity and similar efforts being made on other continents. A united Europe cannot absorb the specific economic, social and cultural initiatives of each of the countries in uniform structures, but can be a great help for everyone if the continental organizations band together and collaborate with the regions while respecting their autonomy.

### **The "universal purpose" of the Gospel Proclamation**

7. Leo XIII was convinced that the purpose of resources for everyone and the "purpose" of public authority for everyone were two of the basic principles in the first days of the industrialized society. However, it is quite impressive when we read in *Rerum Novarum* that "the benefits of nature and gifts of divine grace belong in common to the whole human race, without distinction..." (n. 21), and to see that the whole of the document is imbued with the conviction that economic and political reforms of themselves do not suffice to solve the social problem. Structural reforms must also be accompanied, or even preceded by, a *moral reform*, inspired by the Gospels and sustained by grace. Whence comes the Pope's constant appeal to the consciences of management and workers, his insistence on the fact that religion must be seen as fundamental in associations of workers and directors alike. In the same sense we must understand his appeal to the State to protect the workers' right to practice their religion.

Leo XIII was convinced that the Church, at the same time that she has the specific mission of *proclaiming the Gospel*, has the duty of insisting on the *social consequences* deriving from it. His great concern was that we would witness the beginning of a kind of alienation process separating the Gospel from industrial society and, as a consequence, causing the Gospel to lose all its influence in solving social problems. He said: "By constantly recalling both parties to the duties they owe each other, and especially to their obligations in justice, the teaching of religion, of which the Church is the interpreter and guardian, is immensely well qualified to bring together the wealthy owners of the means of production and the people without property" (n. 16). And he does not hesitate to add this essential theme: "We cannot understand and value the goods of this mortal life unless we have a clear vision of that other life of immortality. If we lose sight of that, we lose also and at once the true sense of virtue. Everything to do with our material world becomes lost in a mystery which no human mind can fathom" (n. 18). And again: "It will be the bond of brotherly love rather than of friendship which will unite them. They will then feel and understand the obvious truth that all people have the same Father" (n. 21).

It is now 100 years of history, the Church's social doctrine has always affirmed that the reform of structures must be accompanied by a *moral reform*, because the deepest roots of social evil are moral in nature, that is, "on the one hand, the *all consuming desire for profit*, and on the other, a *thirst for power*" (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 37). Since the root of social ills belongs to that order, it follows that they can be overcome only on the moral plane, that is, by "conversion," by a change from behavior to a culture of authentic solidarity.

This statement retains its full meaning for today's society, and for tomorrow's as well. In the face of the serious contemporary national and international problems, it is necessary to keep alive the hope that even those who do not explicitly profess any religious faith will be convinced that social ills "are not only economic but rest on more profound attitudes which human beings can make into absolute values" (*ibid.*, n. 38). I have appealed to all the Churches and Christian communities, as well as the world's other religions, to work together so that all people may share the conviction that his moral and religious foundation is necessary for the solution of the many economic, social and political problems that still remain.

8. Dear brothers and sisters, the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* invites us to "look back," to "look around" at today's "new things," and also to "look to the future" (cf. *Centisimus Annus*, n. 3). The "look back" invites us to thank God who has given the Church a "rich heritage" in the historic message of Pope Leo XIII. Our recognition also goes to those who, throughout these 100 years, have sought to develop this message and put it into practice. Our "look around us" invites us to see and attentively evaluate the profound economic, social and political changes which have taken place in recent years, in order to contribute to the solution of the problems which they create. Our look "to the future" invites us more than ever today to renew the commitment which Leo XIII expressed in this way: "everyone must gird himself for his part of the work and act with the utmost dispatch to prevent delay from making utterly irremediable what is already so great an evil." He then added: "As for the Church, whatever the time and circumstances her aid will never be looked for in vain" (*Rerum Novarum*, n. 45).

Now that the beginning of the third Christian millennium is at hand, I think that the most worthy and most successful celebration of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* consists in renewing this commitment, in realizing that its generous fulfillment is a duty. We dare hope that the new millennium will be one of justice and peace for the whole world.

May God's Blessing help us always to be people who "hunger and thirst for justice" and "peacemakers" (*Mt* 5:6, 9).

† JOHN PAUL II

## AN APPROACH TO THE LAYMEN'S ROLE IN THE RE-STRUCTURING OF SOCIETY\*

Dear Friends:

First of all, I would like to say how pleased I am to be here this evening. I have been looking forward to being able to meet you, members of the Rotary Club of Roxas City, in this your regular meeting.

Wole Soyinka, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, stated: "It is ceaseless striving rather than actual achievement which marks the hero."

In these words the Nigerian writer succeeds in stressing, very cogently and clearly, that it is not our achievement *per se* but the efforts we exert towards achieving something that really matter.

The Church has exerted — and is still exerting — considerable efforts to what it is today: the conscience of society.

We can glean that the Church's role in a modern and politically complex world has deep historical roots. The Middle Ages' image of the Church was the *imperium Romanum* where she had total control not just of the religious area of life but even of the social, economic and political spheres. The history of the Church and society since then

\*Address delivered to the members of the Rotary Club at Roxas City.

has been a series of revolutions and liberations, many of them moving the Church in the long term to painfully re-assess her role. I will just highlight some of these: the emergence of the nation state, a new economic order, discovery of the New World, Reformation, the Enlightenment in philosophy, the scientific revolution, the democratic revolution, the industrial revolution. Their cumulative effect has been a gnawing sense of bewilderment as to where the Church has a role if at all.

Between the extremes of a Church-dominated society and the Church as merely another interest group, allow me to re-state that the Church is the conscience of society. In other words, the precise specialization of the Church is to raise the conscience level of society. She is not a "ghetto" nor an "elite" within society, but is giving positive response to the gracious call of God, she — as a Eucharist community — becomes the conscience of society still in need of God's love, redemption and mercy.

And the Church does this, always conscious of her transcendent identity and supernatural mission. As theologian Christopher Dawson puts it: "The Church differs from all other societies in that she transcends the limitations of time and the barriers of race and secular culture. She unites the past in living communion with the present, so that we still draw our life from the underlying spiritual activity of the faithful of every age. Moreover, she enters into every human culture without identifying herself with it. She inherits all the riches of the Gentiles, the Jews, Greek philosophy, Roman law, Oriental mysticism and Western humanism and incorporates them in her own tradition while preserving her spiritual identity and the transcendent authority of her supernatural mission."

Concretely, how can the Church — meaning the whole Church, the entire People of God — be the conscience of society? Whose function is the "conscientizing" of society, more specifically of its socio-political dimensions?

Let us look at the general principles laid down by the consistent teaching of the Second Vatican Council's *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Gaudium et Spes*, for example:

"The laity, by their very vocation, seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the

plan of God. They live in the world. . . (and) they are called there by God so that by exercising their proper function and being led by the spirit of the Gospel they can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of heaven. The layman is closely involved in temporal affairs of every sort. It is therefore his special task to illumine and organize these affairs in such a way that they may always start out, develop and continue, according to Christ's mind."

From this Vatican II teaching we can infer that the concrete activity of Christians in society, in its socio-political spheres, is normally and ordinarily reserved to you, the members of the laity. It is imperative for you to work together to build up and to pursue political power so that you can bring such power to bear on the solution of socio-economic problems in society. It is you who should form political groups and parties and should develop your own ideologies, your own concrete programs and strategies for social, political and economic changes and reforms. However, in all these endeavors you can have one inspiration and guide: the Gospel.

Pope John Paul II, in his address to the laity in Jaro, Iloilo City, some ten years ago, observed: "A consistent collective Christian commitment by the Philippine lay people is felt not only in the ecclesial community. It is also an immense force bringing the power of the Gospel to bear on culture, transforming and regenerating it. Working in accordance with their ecclesial nature, your associations and movements are especially effective means for proclaiming the Church's commitment to the dignity of the human person and to the advancement of the freedom and rights of all Filipinos. The People of God, who have been given God's peace, must always be collectively intent on promoting that human justice which is a requirement of social peace."

Justice! Peace! These are the concerns that press us for action. These are the concerns of our society that we are all tasked to grapple with. These are the concerns of our country that you, as Catholic laymen, as members of the Rotary Club, are called upon to realize in our midst. But, what kind of justice? What kind of peace?

Let me quote Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi, O.P., President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines: "As Jesus revealed it to us, peace is not only a task but is mainly a gift and particularly a hope: a reciprocal gift of God to man and of man

between themselves. Thus, this gift is made to render service. It calls for the radical conversion of the instincts of power and domination into a spirit of humility, service, exchange and communion. It is the transition from dread and fear into freedom, the transfiguration of pain, struggle and failure into beatitude. The peace from God through Jesus liberates us from evil. It forgives and reconciles us with our enemies."

Let us make justice work! That means we must — in the words of the late Pope Paul VI — "work for a type of salvation exceeding [whatever] limits and achieved in a communion with the only Absolute, that of God." Again, as Archbishop Legaspi has said: "Justice is of a divine nature. It is based on the Kingdom of God developing throughout history. In that Kingdom all laws boil down to God's commandment of love: 'Thou shalt love thy God;' 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' This law of justice became 'Jesus' commandment' and he kept it till the end, until he died on the cross. In fine, this is the Gospel vision of justice: it is a hand-to-hand combat with the mystery of evil, of mistake, of fault, of lie, of the rejection of truth. It is a conflict, yes. But it is also a victory of love over hatred, of life over death."

My friends, I think you will agree with me when I say that, as the conscience of society, we all need to pray for justice and peace. Furthermore, we — never spellbound by the fascination of our achievements — must ceaselessly strive to build justice and peace ourselves. After all, we are all called to heroism. We are all called to saintliness.

Thank you very much.

† ONESIMO C. GORDONCILLO, D.D.  
Archbishop of Capiz



## CASES AND INQUIRIES

### 1. Donors' Will

*I have been hesitant for some time to consult you about our problem. But I want to clear my conscience, because our community is the one which suffers the consequence of my attitude. Our spacious chapel is used by the parish priest of the locality. His parish has no church. We thought that this situation would only last for a short period of time, but it seems that there are no plans to build a church for the parish, separate from our chapel.*

*Our problem is as follows: Our religious house had in the past some regular benefactors. Some of them continue helping us, as before. Others, however, say that they give periodically some money to the parish priest, a secular priest, for the maintenance of the chapel and its ornamentation.*

*The community has always taken care of the chapel. When the pews, windows, lights and other things need to be repaired, it is the community, not the parish, which shoulders the expenses. My questions are:*

*1. If the donors give money to the parish priest for the maintenance of the chapel, should not such money be used according to the donors' will?*

2. *Can the parish priest use it for other purposes?*

3. *What would you advise us to do?*

*A Religious Superior*

To comply with our consultant's desire, we will center our attention exclusively on the three questions raised by him.

1. Should not the offerings of the faithful, made for the maintenance and ornamentation of the chapel, be used exclusively according to the donor's will?

Yes. The Church has always considered the donor's will as sacred. Offerings given for a fixed and determined purpose cannot be used for some different end or project without the donor's consent. Once an offering is accepted, the person accepting it assumes the obligation of using the amount involved only for the end or project specified by the donor. An implicit contract, *do ut facias*, takes place between the donor and receiver. Only when the donor does not specify any concrete purpose or end for which the offering should be used or when the donor himself leaves the accepting person free to use the offering for any good project as he may see fit, can the person who accepted the offering use it as he deems proper.

This principle is clearly reflected in the Church legislation. Canon 1267, § 3 states: "Offerings made by the faithful for a determined purpose are to be used only for such a purpose." And canon 1300 reads: "The will of the faithful who offer or leave their goods or property for pious works either *inter vivos*, or *mortis causa*, once the offering is accepted, should be fulfilled with utmost diligence; this applies also to the administration or investment of the amount involved." This norm is a reproduction of canon 1514 of the 1917 Codex. "The donor's will should be fulfilled with utmost diligence."

Our consultant explains that "other (donors) say that they give periodically some money to the parish priest, a secular priest, for the maintenance of the chapel and its ornamentation." Taking this statement as it sounds, we should say that the money given by these donors to the parish priest should be used for the maintenance and ornamentation of the chapel exclusively. The parish priest concerned cannot use it for the parish, which has no church yet. He cannot even use it for the construction of a new church. The consultant says that

"there are no plans to build a church for the parish, separate from our chapel."

Canon 1267, §1 prescribes that "unless the opposite is obvious the offerings given to the superiors or administrators of any ecclesiastical juridical person, even to a private one, are presumed to be given to the juridical person." The parish priest of our case may reason out that his parish is a juridical person (can. 515, § 3) and he (parish priest) is its administrator (cans. 532, 1279), hence he may conclude that the offerings given to him are presumed to be given for his parish. This way of reasoning is not correct. Canon 1267 begins with this clause: "Unless the opposite is obvious." In the present case, it is obvious that the offerings are given "for the maintenance of the chapel and its ornamentation." Besides, the presumption stated in the same canon 1267 is that "offerings given to the administrators are presumed to be given for the juridical person" under their care. This is a presumption *iuristantum*, which admits proof in contrary. In our case "the opposite is obvious" and "the contrary can be proven." The donors say that "they give periodically some money to the parish priest, a secular priest, for the maintenance of the chapel and its ornamentation." The parish priest, therefore, cannot use the money given to him for his parish. Much less, can he keep it for himself.

The answer, therefore, to the first question of our consultant is: the money given by those donors to the parish priest for the maintenance and ornamentation of the chapel should be used for the purpose specified by them, namely, for the maintenance and ornamentation of the chapel only.

2. The answer to the second question is a logical consequence of the first answer. If the donors' will is to be followed, the parish priest, who accepted the donations for the maintenance and ornamentation of the chapel, cannot use those offerings for another purpose without the donors' consent. To do otherwise would be tantamount to a transgression of the obligation he assumed when he accepted the money. There was an implicit contract between the donors and himself, the so called *do ut facias* contract, which binds him in conscience. If the money involved has not been used for the purpose determined by the donors, the parish priest is bound to return it to the donors or to turn it over to the religious community, so that the donors' will can be carried out.

3. Finally, the answer to the third question of our consultant is as follows: Since the two previous answers are the dictates of our Christian religion, the undersigned would advise the Religious Superior to discuss with the parish priest the problem of the maintenance and ornamentation of the chapel. His approach should be with prudence and tact, so that he will not offend the parish priest or hurt his feelings. He can explain how the community formerly had some donors who used to help in repairing and maintaining the chapel in good shape, but lately they do not contribute to carrying out such projects. He can even request him to use his influence as pastor with these donors and ask them to be generous. This may perhaps awaken the parish priest's conscience and help put things in order. But, as we have said before, this should be done with prudence and tact, without any confrontation.

## 2. Dismissal from the Clerical State

*In the Codex it is established that some infractions of the Church law may be punished with dismissal from the clerical state. Whenever I come across with these laws or hear that a cleric has been dismissed from the clerical state and reduced to the lay state I cannot understand what this means. In theology we learned that a valid ordination is valid forever. A cleric is a person validly ordained. How can he be dismissed from the clerical state and reduced to the lay state? Are not these statements contradictory?*

*A Priest*

In order to answer the question of our consultant, we would like to start by explaining the theological principle he mentions.

The power of Order conferred by Divine Law imprints an indelible character on the person who is validly ordained. It cannot be lost nor can it be taken away nor restricted by any human ecclesiastical power. A valid ordination is valid forever. As far as its use is concerned, it will always be valid, if in its exercise all other conditions required by Divine Law are fulfilled.

As a consequence of the foregoing theological principle a person who has validly received his ordination with its indelible character cannot be deprived of such valid ordination by any human authority,

not even by the supreme Church authority. Hence a cleric, validly ordained, cannot on his own initiative waive the ordination he has received, nor through dispensation of the Church or as a legal punishment for his sinful life, be *really* expelled from the clerical state and be *truly* reduced to the lay state. This is something that cannot be overlooked when discussing the so-called dismissal of a cleric from the clerical state.

The foregoing theological principle so understood, we can now explain how Church law establishes that a cleric at times *may lose the clerical state or can be dismissed from the clerical state or be reduced to the lay state*. Obviously such expressions should not be understood in a theological sense but in the juridical sense only. As we have said before, an order validly received is valid forever, it can never be annulled or lost. What happens, then, when a clergyman is dismissed from the clergy ranks and reduced to the lay state or degraded to such state? Let us analyze the three possible situations contemplated in canon 290 of the new *Codex*.

1. "A (supposed) cleric *loses (amittit)* the clerical state by judgment of a court or an administrative decree, *declaring the ordination invalid*" (can. 290, 1o). It is clear that in this case *there is no valid ordination*. The person invalidly ordained loses the clerical state to which he was formerly erroneously ascribed. Since he was not really a cleric, he now has to leave the clerical state and be ascribed again to the lay state, to which he really belongs. Hence, all clerical obligations, celibacy included, binding him before the judicial sentence or the administrative decree on the ordination nullity was given, will not bind him anymore. Likewise, the rights and privileges adherent to the clerical state, enjoyed by him before, cease to exist for him now. He, therefore, is said *to lose the clerical state and return to the lay state*.

2. "A cleric *loses (amittit)* the clerical state by the penalty of dismissal lawfully imposed" (can 290, 2o). This kind of loss of the clerical state could be better termed *degradation*, *privation* of ecclesiastical prerogatives, as well as exoneration from clerical obligations, except celibacy, and reduction to the lay state. This expiatory penalty is inflicted for serious offenses stated in the Church law. It is only laid down by universal law, not by particular law (can. 1317). The following offenses can be penalized with this clerical degradation:

- a. apostasy, heresy and schism (can. 1364, § 2);
- b. desecration of the sacramental Species (can. 1367);
- c. violence used against the Roman Pontiff (can. 1370, § 1);
- d. solicitation in the confessional (can. 1387);
- e. attempted marriage (can. 1394, § 1);
- f. offense against the sixth commandment (can. 1395, § 2).

In this case of dismissal, the validity of ordination is not questioned. It was valid and remains valid forever. The validly ordained person is penalized with *degradation* for his seriously unbecoming conduct. The cleric penalized with degradation continues to be an ordained person. His penalty consists in being deprived of the rights and privileges, attached to the clerical state, and he is exonerated from the clerical obligations, except celibacy (cans. 291-292).

3. "A cleric *loses (amittit)* clerical state by a rescript granted by the Holy See; this rescript, however, is granted to deacons only for grave reasons and to priests only for the gravest of reasons" (can. 290, 3o).

Notwithstanding a validly received Sacred Order, which is indelible, a cleric may ask the Holy See for a rescript leaving him free from the obligations attached to the Sacred Order he has validly received. Even freedom from the law of celibacy may be granted if the dispensation of the Roman Pontiff makes explicit mention of this favor in the rescript. As the law states, serious reasons are required in order to grant a rescript of this kind.

It can be inferred from the foregoing three instances of dismissal from the clerical state mentioned in canon 290 the following:

a) When the *ordination nullity is declared* by judicial sentence or administrative decree, the person concerned, *not being real cleric, returns to the lay state*, to which he really belongs;

b) When the person concerned is a real cleric for having been validly ordained, *he is degraded and deposed* for his bad conduct, losing all rights and privileges and being free from all obligations proper to the clerical state, except the obligation to observe celibacy, but he does not lose his valid ordination;

c) When a cleric is granted a rescript by the Holy See, allowing him to leave the ranks of the clergy, he has to follow to the letter what is contained in the rescript. Sometimes, freedom from observance of celibacy is explicitly granted; sometimes, however, nothing is said on the matter, in which case the cleric degraded is free from the obligations binding the clergy, except celibacy. His valid ordination is never lost.

A person who, having been validly ordained has been dismissed from the clerical state, may be readmitted to the ranks of the clergy *only by a rescript of the Holy See* (can. 293). He will not be ordained again, since the ordination validly received previously remains valid forever.

*EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.*

## **FESTAL HOMILIES FOR SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 1991**

**Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 1, 1991**

*(Dt 4:1-2, 6-8; Jm 1:17-18, 21-27; Mk 7:1-8, 14-23)*

*Human Situation.* Lawlessness in our contemporary society is an ordinary observation bolstered by the perennial rise and fall of criminal cases — theft, murder, rape, etc. Very recently, in fact, Filipino Christian sensibility was shocked by the death of a fratman from hazing caused by students and alumni of supposedly prestigious Catholic institution of learning. What is wrong with Philippine society? Why are these things happening in the only Christian country in the Far East? Where have we failed? These are some questions on everybody's lips and the look of anguish and seeming helplessness in countless eyes express eloquently the state of disorder and utter confusion in our present social set-up.

Lawlessness occurs when the rule of law is either ignored or abused. In a state of anarchy, the rule of law is totally absent and unrecognized. In a dictatorship or totalitarian regime, the rule of law, even if extant, is abused to suit the scheme of the ruler. But in the so-called decent societies, lawlessness occurs when the rule of law is forgotten, or its values are placed way below their proper place. This is true when authority is timid, when justice can be bought, and when mob mentality prevails.



Rizal claimed that tyranny prevails only when there are people willing to be slaves, when people just shrug their shoulders, when they allow their rights to be trampled upon, and when guns and goons rule the day.

If we observe with sadness and almost helpless resignation the decay in the moral fiber of Philippine social life today, we can blame the prevalence of a lawless mode of life which has relegated the rule of law aside as inconsequential. This is because of the failure to apply immediate and effective sanctions, the hesitance of law enforcers to affirm the rule of law, the painful slowness in the dispensation of justice, not to mention the existence of corruption in the judicial system.

Thus, we have slaves to our own indifference, to our disregard for justice, and to our eager desire for easy profit at the expense of justice and truth.

*Exegetical Views.* Moses in the book of Deuteronomy (first reading) enjoins the Israelites to keep God's commandments always as a guarantee and assurance of God's nearness. He enjoins them "to hear the statutes and decrees," to observe them that they "may live and may enter in and take possession of the land which the Lord... is giving" them. God's faithfulness and aid is, therefore, assured to the Israelites if they keep God's laws faithfully. Moses further adds that a nation which listens to and holds God's commands faithfully is a nation of "truly a wise and intelligent people."

Only people who are just live in the presence of the Lord. The observance of the law makes a people just and justice assures the absence of lawlessness. The rule of law is possessed and expressed by people who walk blamelessly... who think only of truth in their hearts... who lend not their money at usury... who do not accept bribes against the innocent. . . (*Responsorial Psalm*).

St. James (second reading) therefore, tells us to welcome humbly the word of God which is law, so that it may take root in us and be powerful to save us. He warns, however, that it is not enough to listen only to God's words, but we must act on them also, otherwise, we are only deceiving ourselves.

St. Mark in the Gospel reading is more emphatic. He tells us how to act properly in justice and how to use effectively and faithfully

the rule of law. Giving us the example of the Pharisees who were very keen only in keeping the words of the law but disregarded wantonly its spirit, he warns us against too much legalism. He cautions us to avoid behaving like hypocrites, like people who pay "lip service but in their hearts are far" from the Lord. These people disregard the true commandments of the Lord but cling to what are merely human traditions and, thus, their reverence is empty "because they teach as dogmas mere human precepts."

What constitute impurity or lawlessness and corruption are those things which come out of us, i.e., those which are a result of human malice and evil, like "acts of fornication, theft, murder, adulterous conduct, greed, maliciousness, deceit, sensuality, envy, blasphemy, arrogance..." All these vices which come from within render a person impure and thus, lawless.

*Christian Response.* If we want justice and peace to descend upon us and once more hold sway over our way of life, the rule of law must prevail and lawlessness should be banished. Law is the explicit expression of justice which of itself is the concrete manifestation of genuine charity. The rule of law can reign only if people are willing to renew in themselves that love which the Spirit has placed in our souls at baptism and which is expressed daily in the observance of justice and in faithfulness to law. So let us open our hearts to the Lord and listen to the words of His Son (*Alleluia*).

But most of all, let us pray to the Lord of power and might, to put into our hearts the desire to please God always, to fill our minds with insights on love, so that our every thought may grow in wisdom and our efforts be filled with justice, because we know that all that is of value comes from His hands and nothing is good which is against His will (*Alternative Opening Prayer*).

JOSE MA. B. TINOKO, O.P.

**Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**September 8, 1991**  
(*Is 35:4-7; Jm 2:1-5; Mk 7:31-37*)

*Christless World.* Man lives in a world of noise. Noise in the physical sense produced by machinery and vehicles, electronic de-

vises of communication, etc., and the spiritual noise produced by so many prophets announcing false messiahs; noise produced by false apostles proclaiming new creeds and vain promises. This noise has created a deaf world, in the physical as well as in the spiritual sense. Man is reaching the point of saturation. The physical noise is threatening his sense of hearing, while the noise produced by the false prophets is creating spiritual deafness. Thus man has become insensitive to the plea of the poor, to the clamor of the oppressed, to the injustices of the world.

Man has become too mute to praise God for the wonders of creation, to thank him for the gift of life, to adore him as the Lord and Master of the World. Man has become mute in the face of corruption and injustice. The silence of man has become the stone which oppresses the poor.

*Healing Power of Christ.* Isaiah saw the messianic times as a time of healing, of making man whole. It is God himself who came into the world to save it and to redeem mankind. God's healing mission is described with these images of restoring sight to the blind, opening the ears of the deaf, loosening the tongue of the mute. The Gospel describes the realization of this messianic vision when Jesus cured a deaf-mute man with that wonderful word: *ephphata*, that is, "be opened."

Christ, today as yesterday, is in our midst to continue his healing mission. He has the power to heal both the body and the spirit. In the Gospel, Jesus waits for the people to bring those who are deaf-mute to him, and ask him to impose his healing hands in order to open their ears to listen to his message of justice and peace.

*Be Opened.* At Baptism the priest in the name of Jesus touches our ears and tongue and repeats the command of Jesus to the deaf-mute: *ephphata*, i.e., be opened (in some parishes this rite is omitted). Yes, man is born deaf to the Gospel, to the good news. The first grace that man receives from God is the gift of faith. But faith is for accepting the truths revealed by God to man. Thus man must be capable of listening to the Gospel of Christ, for as Paul says: *faith is received by hearing*. But faith must be accepted and professed. A gift may be offered, but to be completely a gift the recipient must accept it. God offers man his salvation through faith, but man must accept

it, must receive it. Thus, his tongue must be loosened so that he can profess and confess that he accepts the gift given to him by Christ. Thus, Christ through his minister touches the ear and the tongue of the neophyte so that he may be able to listen to the message of salvation and proclaim the greatness of God.

*Touch of Christ.* Yes, Christ has opened our ears and has loosened our tongue in the initial stage of our Christian life. Through the years we have reverted to being deaf and mute. We need the healing hand of Christ to touch us again to restore our sensitivity to the word of God. Day after day Christ is proclaiming his message of salvation; Sunday after Sunday we listen to the word of God in the Liturgy of the Word. Yes, we answer: "Thanks be to God," when the minister of the word ends his proclamation. But in reality, do we listen to the readings as coming from God? Is our spirit open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Are we really conscious that the readings of the Mass are taken from the Bible which is the word of God? Do we accept them as directed to us first as Christian community and second as a Christian individual? Or have we become spiritually deaf, and, although we hear the sound, we do not perceive its meaning? If so, we need the healing power of Jesus to cure our deafness.

And we also need his healing power to loosen our tongue so that we may sing the praises of the Lord. Otherwise our Christian communities become mute communities, passive, non-participant. We must participate in the Liturgy according to our gift, but we cannot afford to be passive members. If we really believe, our faith must be transformed into actions of worship and charity, but we cannot afford to be passive members of Christ's community.

MAXIMILIANO REBOLLO, O.P.

## **Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**September 15, 1991**

*(Is 50:5-9; Jm 2:14-18; Mk 8:27-35)*

A mother who knows how to take care of her baby does not rashly introduce her child to all kinds of food; rather, she introduces her son or daughter to new tastes of food stuff very gradually.

A teacher who knows how to teach does not rashly acquaint a pupil to reading sentences; rather, he starts by teaching the alphabet. Gradually the pupil remembers the letters, identifies the syllables, and reads words. Only then does the teacher initiate the pupil into reading sentences.

The pedagogy which Jesus applied to his disciples seemed not to be too different. He allowed himself to be discovered by his followers progressively.

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The Evangelist Mark, in the portion of the gospel that precedes chapter 8:27-37, describes the intense activities Jesus was engaged in: he revealed himself as a wonder worker, full of mercy and compassion. Jesus, no doubt, established his reputation as a prophet. He made himself known as a teacher with great authority. He did not hesitate to explain his position with respect to the mosaic law and the traditions of the elders (*Mk* 2:23; 7:1-23).

Yes, it is clear that he was a wonder worker, a prophet, and a teacher. But that was not all what he was. So that the question came: "who" then was Jesus to them? And it was at Caesarea Philippi that the question of Jesus' personality surfaced in its complexity. "You are the Christ," confessed Peter.

The evangelist shows that from the beginning of his mission, i.e., from his Baptism, Jesus acted and spoke with unique self-awareness and self-consciousness. He could speak of God as his Father. And in the text he distinguishes God as his Father from the relationship of his disciples with God as their Father.

The confession of Peter in Caesarea Philippi showed at least that the disciples were beginning to understand the mystery of his person.

In the gospel, it was Jesus who took the initiative and inquired from his disciples about their perception of his character: "Who do men say that I am?" The reply was given by his disciples, and their language showed a perception in traditional functional terms. The people venerated him as a prophet, perhaps even as Elijah.

The text tells that other people could confuse him with Elijah. But in the end his disciples knew better: and Jesus asked what they thought. On their behalf Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ,

the Messiah. This confession was accepted by Jesus, but he commanded them not to discuss it with anyone.

It was time for the disciples to be fed with a more significant information about his person, yet they were to keep it as part of the messianic secret to be told to others only at the appropriate time.

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In the world of constant fast movements, we are tempted often to rush to tell people of our knowledge of Jesus: he is our savior, he does wonderful things in our life, we are very sure that we are saved, and the like. Of course these are all confessions of faith. However, we wonder what belongs to real knowledge of Jesus and how much simply belongs to presumption.

We need to remember all the time the ordinary divine pedagogy. God reveals himself to men gradually. God feeds us with divine food slowly. The way I know Jesus now, is not the same way I knew him ten years ago. So many events have taken place in the course of ten years. All the events have helped me know better the ways and person of Jesus. God, like a good mother or teacher, introduces all believers to divine realities in ways and at time only he would know.

VICENTE G. CAJILIG, O.P.

### **Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 22, 1991**

*(Ws 2:17-20; Jm 3:16 - 4:3; Mk 9:30-37)*

Without real reflection on them it might seem to the casual hearer that the readings we have just heard are two grim predictions of torture and death and a pious little admonition on the beauty of peace. They, of course, like nearly all passages of scripture, go deeper to the heart of reality than a mere cursory reading could even suggest.

The author of Wisdom, an Alexandrian Jew writing sometime between one hundred and one hundred fifty years before Christ, is attempting a long essay on immortality and fidelity and succeeds in colorfully breaking ground untouched elsewhere in the Old Testament. The "wicked" of Wisdom 1:16 - 2:24 part of whose speech is recorded in our first reading are apostate Jews. They are ironic,

blasphemous and sophistic in their haughty condemnation of God's Servant, and their deadliness extends beyond mere physical death to "death in the Spirit" where they set themselves at jeopardy. The passage thus becomes a witty curse based on a knowledge and twisting of the third chapter of Genesis and the fifty-second of Isaiah. The "wicked" and all enemies of God, hence, "play God" in their cruel and judgmental limitation of outlook. But in the midst of their stupidity the sacred writer turns them into "prophets" in the popular sense of prognostic "predictors" of the future.

In the Gospel our Lord Jesus Christ also talks about the future. In his all-goodness and exquisite omniscience, he is able to tell of *himself* what the "wicked" of the Book of Wisdom thought they could say of God's Servant. And the disciples, as so often in Mark's Gospel, simply cannot understand him. They, like we, want the Lord to say "nice things" that will encourage them as they plod along through life. Jesus is not plodding along. He is resolutely going forward to face his passion, death and resurrection. But, because the goodness and the glory of his triumph are so obscure before the event of his rising from the dead takes place, his teaching falls on deaf ears. The disciples can only argue about their own precedence and be told to stop being childish and become truly childlike.

The passage from James which constitutes the second reading comes from a section on the practical qualities of Wisdom. Compared with the noisy and lofty pathos of the first reading and the tragic sense of impending annihilation of the Gospel, this reading, like most of James, at first appears trite and pedestrian if not pompously "moralistic." A close look in a wider context shows it to be penetrating application in the world of day to day pettiness of principles both wise and "good news." For what James is getting at is that the whole man must purify his intentions to attain a "one-pointed" Christianity the point of which is godlike holiness.

How can we apply these readings to our lives? Firstly, by rejecting the mockery of the scornful; secondly, by "setting our faces towards Jerusalem" and following Christ with whatever trials that may involve; third and finally, by seeing that no situation is too big or too small for the adoption and application of truly Christian attitudes. By the grace of God we can reject the sneering subtlety of evil and refuse to align ourselves with the "wicked." By an even

greater grace we can see resurrection and life in all death and all life thanks to what Christ did and underwent for us. Best of all we can become the "peacemakers" so commended by James and with wills adherent to the will of God make high ideals the blessed realities of our lives and those of our neighbors. In our prayer of the Mass let us give our "Amen," our deep interior assent, to all this for it will bring us, however weak and humble we may be, to conformity with the very plan of God!

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.

**Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 29, 1991**

(Nb 11:25-29; Jm 5:1-16; Mk 9:37-42, 44-47)

The Gospel of today's liturgy warns us against scandal: against falling down in the face of scandal, and against ourselves scandalizing others, especially the weak of faith. In the world, Christ said, "Scandals will have to happen in the world but woe to those who give scandal."

Scandals do happen. And they are widely broadcast in our mass media, often making sensational headlines. In the area of politics, we read or hear about the corrupt practices of high public officials, of misuse of public funds, of electoral frauds and of vote-buying. In the world of business, it is not uncommon to hear with shock about businessmen, reputed as honorable and honest, who are discovered to have amassed enormous wealth through extortion, exploitation and injustice, often at the direct expense of the poor. In the field of entertainment, brilliant neon-lights displayed in our modern cities advertize burlesque shows, indecent movies, provocative dress or nudity. Pornographic materials are distributed or sold at popular prices in the form of comics and betamax films.

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In whatever form scandals happen or are published, they all coincide in one common denominator: they constitute a constant spiritual danger to the minds and hearts of viewers, listeners or readers. They can cause people to fall.

Simple-minded people are easily impressed. They are carried away by bad example and often hapless to brake the inclinations and



passions of their weak human natures. Temptation comes in the form of such simple questions as: "Why sacrifice myself so much when other people live happily with their backs turned against God?" "Why practice self-control when the self-indulgent, the vicious and the impious are glorified by the mass media and public opinion?"

This sort of question, of course, should not be the correct reaction to the influence of scandal. We know better from the teaching of Christ. Blessed are those who live the spirit of beatitudes, for they are the happiest people on earth. Woe to those who give scandal. They will answer not only for their actions but also for the fall and ruin of the scandalized.

Unfortunately the inducements to sin by scandal abound in our midst. Pornographic literature is displayed in public places to entice the curiosity of passers-by. Drug pushers are roaming around hunting for victims, especially young people, to whom they sell poison for their souls and bodies. Even more pathetically, adults who are child molesters recruit little children for the destruction of their innocence and simplicity. They are aided in this by cynical and malicious money-makers who goad them to sin as seen in the pedophilia linked with a certain type of tourism.

Money, wealth and riches can be a source of scandal too. St. James the Apostle, in the second reading of today's Mass, denounces the unjust rich whose luxury and extravagance are motive of scandal to many souls. The apostle has in mind the exploitation of the helpless mass of the poor by the unscrupulous rich of the ancient world. But he might have written his letter for our times. Wealth is a blessing only when it is used for the upliftment of human values. But the extravagant display of wealth and the squandering of money in the face of an impoverish humanity, of people deprived of the most basic means of subsistence, constitute scandals of the first magnitude.

But let us not deceive ourselves into believing that the warning of Christ applies only to *others*. A look in our own spiritual mirror may reveal our little or big scandals. Even we priests, may make people doubt the authenticity of our ministry. Parents who throw their marriage vows overboard by acts of infidelity and internal dissensions give scandal to their children with this has grave consequence for them. Teachers who teach erroneous and dangerous

doctrines or behave improperly put their pupils' souls before a precipice. And all of us, Christians and Catholics who do not reflect the image of Christ in our lives, are a motive for unbelief to non-Christians.

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Brothers and sisters, do not be easily shocked at the scandal you see. On the contrary, when God is mocked, when his laws and human laws are flouted, when impious people disregard religion or spread immorality, we must stand up in defense of our Christian principles and convictions.

In some cases, it may be necessary to follow Christ's advise: if your eye or hand or foot cause scandal to you, cut them off. Not literally. Christ is referring to the renunciation of bad habits which have become part of our being: the habits of excessive drinking, of using drugs, of illicit sex relations, of bad companionships. The saints knew better than to attack some evils frontally, evils too attractive for a direct attack. For them the remedy was to escape from them.

And the most effective way of overcoming the influence of evil is to assert the influence of good. Good example is the opposite of scandal. Good example edifies and induces others to follow and imitate itself. The apostolate of good example is the best proclamation of the Gospel. We must be "light of the world and salt of the earth," the light that dissipates the darkness of error, vice and scandal; the salt that keeps the freshness of virtue and good living in a Christian environment.

FIDEL VILLARROEL, O.P.

## **Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**October 6, 1991**

*(Gn 2:18-24; Heb 2:9-11; Mk 10:2-16)*

It appears that the main theme of today's readings is marriage and divorce. The subject is in itself important and of far-reaching consequences. It merits, therefore, attention and a well-planned catechesis.

Marriage today as at the time when Pope Pius XI wrote his encyclical on *Christian Marriage (Casti Connubii)*, has often been

torn from its relationship with Christ and dragged down to something earthly and natural, and thus deprived of its supernatural dignity and grace. "It appears all the more regrettable that particularly in our day we would witness this divine institution often scorned and on every side degraded. For now, not secretly, nor under cover, but openly, with all sense of shame put aside, now by word, again by writings, by theatrical productions of every kind, by romantic fiction, by amorous and frivolous novels, by cinematographs portraying in vivid scene, in addresses broadcast by radio telephone, in short by all the inventions of modern science the sanctity of marriage is trampled upon and derided."

Vatican II singled out some of the most serious and pressing problems affecting the life and health of marriage today: "For polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love, the worship of pleasure, and illicit practices against human generation" (*The Church Today*, 47).

Today's Gospel offers us in a nut-shell the Christian doctrine on the nature of marriage and its sanctity. God, the Creator, has established the conjugal partnership as the beginning and the basis of human society. "From the beginning of creation God made them male and female. That is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body... So, then, what God has united, man must not divide" (*Mk* 10:7-9). But Christ by his passion and resurrection took this natural institution and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament: "A great mystery of Christ and the Church." The deep reflection of St. Paul on this divine revelation helped him to discover the greatness of this sacrament. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up for her, that he might sanctify her... Even thus ought husbands also to love their wives as their own bodies... This is a great mystery — I mean in reference to Christ and to the Church" (*Ep* 5:23-32).

Our reflection should be focused today on the four pillars which sustain Christian matrimony: the oneness of the marriage bond, the indissolubility of this bond, the holiness of the sacrament and the ennoblement of parenthood.

a. *The oneness of marriage bond.* This insures that husband and wife will be totally dedicated to one another. Not only polygamous unions but also acts of adultery and divorce are at variance with

this total mutual surrender. In the oneness of marriage neither husbands nor wives have exclusive ownership over their bodies, and adultery is a cheating of one's partner. The union of a Christian marriage has been made a sacrament, a union which merits sacramental grace. For those who are faithful to one another, the conjugal union is a source of grace and of union with Christ. This will help toward perfecting their love and the fidelity for one another.

b. *The indissolubility of marriage's bond.* As the union of Christ and his Church will never be broken, so too the union of husband and wife lasts until "death do them part." The quality of indissolubility enables married people to endure with steadfastness their burdens, problems, sufferings and trials to the end. The enduring quality of married life means that the home is not to be broken up for selfish reasons. Christ does not desert his Church because of the sins of its members. The married couple will endeavor to follow close upon Christ's example. Sacramental marriage gives a supernatural stamina that refuses to yield to difficulties. The indissolubility of marriage is a must for the sake of the children, whose welfare requires that their parents remain united.

c. *The holiness of the sacrament.* As the union of Christ with the Church sanctifies her, so the union of husband and wife sanctifies them both. The sacrament of matrimony is holy because Christ instituted it to lead people to God along the pathway of married life. Both husband and wife receive many graces enabling them to find God through their mutual human love. Thus, the union of man and a woman becomes the sign of their sanctification. Christ is the third party in every marriage, and through his presence the union of the spouses becomes a real means to their sanctification.

d. *The ennoblement of parenthood.* As the union of Christ and his Church is fruitful in good works and in bringing souls to heaven, so the union of the two spouses is intended by God to produce fruits of virtue and to people the kingdom of heaven with new citizens, for the noblest fruit in the garden of marriage is the child. Parents are God's instrument in bringing children into this life. Parents are free, responsible instruments of God. To act against the very foundation of married life is a great offense. To be faithful to it is to merit an eternal reward in heaven.

PEDRO G. TEJERO, O.P.

## Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 13, 1991

(Ws 7:7-11; Heb 4:12-13; Mk 10:17-30)

**True Wisdom.** We wonder if the words of today's first reading, taken from the book of Wisdom, make any sense at all for those who are totally engrossed in a life whose highest ideal is material progress and material prosperity, high positions, high honors, distinctions, privileges, exemptions, and so on.

Are these people ready to believe that "wisdom" is preferable to "scepters" and "thrones" (to positions in Congress and the Senate, to the highest position in the land), and that, riches are nothing in comparison with wisdom, that, gold is a "little sand," and silver as "mire" in comparison with wisdom? Can wisdom alone win an election? Can we say, that those who have been elected to government positions were elected because of their wisdom? Who are those in power? Are they not the rich and the powerful? How does wisdom work if it is not in the achievement of gold and power?

The words of today's first reading are the words attributed to Solomon, the wise king whom God gave his wisdom, but whom God also gave, together with wisdom, "wealth" and "fame," and the promise of a long life (1 K 3:13). Solomon was, indeed, a wise king, but not wise enough to remain faithful to the Lord until the end of his life. For at the end he turned his heart away from the Lord (1 K 11:9). "Yahweh became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from Yahweh, the God of Israel." Luxury corrupts, just as power corrupts...

**True Wisdom.** Wisdom in general is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action based on knowledge and understanding. There is what we call "practical wisdom" which consists, mainly, of wise sayings that offer guidelines for a successful and happy life. This kind of wisdom encourages the pursuit of all kinds of wisdom and the practice of strict discipline, hard work, high moral standards, as to the way to happiness and success.

There is also what we call "speculative wisdom" which goes beyond practical maxims about daily life or conduct. It reflects upon the deeper issues of the meaning of life, the worth and value of life, and the existence of evil in this world.

The classical view of wisdom saw it as seeking to determine the mysteries of existence and of the universe by means of philosophy and man's natural knowledge.

The biblical view of wisdom is that man should humble himself before God in reverence and worship, obedient to his commands.

The wisdom of God is a gift from God, who creates, saves, directs history, chooses his people, and guides individuals along the way of salvation. Against this wisdom St. Paul contrasts the wisdom of the world (1 Co 2:4); the wisdom of men (1 Co 2:5); the wisdom of this age (1 Co 2:26) and man's wisdom (1 Co 2:13).

James 3:13 ff. says: "If you consider yourself wise and learned, show it by your good living and let your actions, in all humility, be an example to others. But, if your heart is full of bitter jealousy and ambition, do not try to show off, that would be covering up the truth. This kind of wisdom does not come from above, but from the world, and it is earthly and devilish. Wherever there is jealousy and ambition you will also find discord and all that is evil. Instead, the wisdom that comes from above is pure and peace-loving. These persons show understanding and listen to advice, they are full of compassion and good works; they are impartial and sincere; peace-makers who sow in peace and reap a harvest of justice." Do we have this kind of wisdom?

*The Word of God.* Never before has the word of God been so popular among the people of God, as in our own times. Millions of Christians around the world read the word of God, meditate upon it, discuss it with others (sharing), and try to adjust their lives according to this word.

All Christians of whatever denomination, unanimously agree that the Bible is the word of God, though, not all of them mean the same thing when they say "word of God." In the Mass as the passages of the lectionary are terminated, the lector proclaims: "This is the word of the Lord." The Vatican II document on Revelation, was entitled: "Dei Verbum," "the Word of God."

Perhaps the best description of the nature of the word of God is found in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah (20:9): "I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more. But then,

it becomes like a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. I grow weary holding it inside. I cannot endure."

The word of God makes a man a prophet. God's word takes possession of the prophet, so that he cannot contain it. It pushes him to a proclamation which is faithful and exact. When God speaks, it expresses his will and the word of God will not be in vain. He does not issue empty threats, nor does he promise salvation without guaranteeing it. The word of God, therefore, is *God speaking and acting*. It goes out from God and does not return without having brought to fulfillment its works, acting as agent of God. "For just as from the heaven, the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful... so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth, it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it" (*Is* 55:10, 11). God's word is not only an instrument of salvation but also a creative word.

In the Acts and letters of St. Paul, the word of God, or simply the Word, is the Christian message, the revelation of God which is the event of Jesus, his appearance, death and resurrection (*1 Th* 1:6, 2:13; *Ac* 6:24). It is efficacious word (*Heb* 4:12, *Ep* 6:17); a saving word (*Jm* 1:21) and, a sanctifying word (*1 Tm* 4:13; *1 Co* 1:18). It is a word of salvation (*Ac* 13:26) and of life (*Ph* 2:16). We will reach our eternal destiny if we are faithful to God's word (*Heb* 4:12-13).

The word of God is alive and active in the Scriptures. Whether married or celibate for the sake of the kingdom of God, our way of life should be marked by that all penetrating word of God.

*Jesus and the rich man.* The encounter between Jesus and the rich man recorded by the three synoptic gospels, though with some variants, has been considered as the most vivid story in the gospels. Whoever this man was and whatever his name was, he must have been someone very special. He appeared from nowhere, ran after Jesus, and falling at his feet entered into a dialogue with him. That he was a very special man, apart from being rich, is seen by the fact that he was able to impress Jesus, who looked at him steadily and loved him, something we seldom find in the gospels. Yet despite the fact that Jesus loved him and invited him to follow him, the rich man rejected the invitation, but not without being sorry and sad, because he was a man with great wealth.

Is this the mystery of salvation, the freedom to accept or to reject God's grace, man's responsibility for his eternal destiny? Is wealth an impossibility for salvation? Did Jesus ask too much of the rich man? Why did Jesus ask him to sell everything he had, give the money to the poor and then follow him, as condition to enter the kingdom of heaven, or better, eternal life? Why did he not ask any of these things from his friends: Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, Zacheus and women from Galilee who followed him and whose support he accepted? None of them was excluded from the kingdom. The case of this rich man must have been a very special case, not a general answer for all cases or for all men. Not everyone has to give away everything he possesses, just as not everyone has to lay down his life for Jesus and the gospels. Jesus is not saying here that the rich man cannot be saved, he is merely saying that it is very difficult for him to be saved, so much so that only God can save him. . . What is impossible for man is possible to God. . .

Jesus' saying has been interpreted in different ways by different commentators. The Catholic tradition has seen in this saying the source of the evangelical counsels. Others have seen in this saying an outright condemnation of wealth. Do the Scriptures condemn wealth? Is wealth a blessing or a curse in the life of man? Did Jesus condemn wealth?

In the Old Testament wealth was never condemned provided that it was shared. Moreover, it was considered as a sign that a person knew how to direct his life well, and that God has blessed him. In Genesis and Deuteronomy wealth is simply a gift from Yahweh. Wealth was not a social or a moral problem. In the early days of Israel no one had acquired great wealth, and, therefore, it cannot be said that there was any opposition between a minority of rich people against the mass of the poor. After the division between the rich and poor during the monarchy the prophets' criticism was directed more to the protection of the poor than against the rich as a distinctive class. In some prophets we find words of criticism against the rich who oppress the poor, exact debts without mercy and drive the poor into enslavement (*Is* 10:1, 2, 25; *Ez* 22:25; *Am* 2:6 ff., 3:10, 5:11; *1 M* 2:1). According to Isaiah and Amos, no one could acquire wealth except by dishonest means. They about speak the wives of the wealthy who, by their demands for luxury, impel their husbands to acquire wealth by dishonest actions. These texts point out the



existence of a small class of the wealthy who were greedy and rapacious and who were utterly unscrupulous in their business. This class arose during the monarchy and under its patronage; it most probably had its origin in the officers of the court whose positions gave them opportunity to amass wealth.

In the Wisdom Literature there is an ambivalent attitude towards wealth. At times wealth is praised and admired. It is the fruit of wisdom (*Pr* 10:4, 11:16). It is the reward of humility and the fear of the Lord (*Pr* 10:22). The blessing of Yahweh brings wealth: both in the book of Proverbs and in the book of Sirach we find contrasts between wealth and poverty as well as between the rich man and the poor man.

The poor man is hated while the rich has many friends. The rich man's wealth is his fortress, the poor man's poverty is his ruin... When the rich man fails there are many who help him; when he speaks all are silent. When the rich man rests from his toils to amass wealth, he enjoys luxury; if the poor man rests he becomes destitute. Wealth and poverty are the adequate criteria of a man's worth: the rich man is honored for his wealth, the poor man for his knowledge.

In the New Testament the words of Jesus himself are more frequently directed to a positive approach toward poverty than to a negative criticism of wealth. The classic text is the gospel of this Sunday where Jesus demands that the rich man sell all his property, as a condition for following Jesus, and so that he may enter eternal life. His rejection of Jesus' invitation prompted Jesus to pronounce words which are still today enigmatic. His words imply it is an impossibility for a rich man to be saved. . . Whatever interpretation we give to his words, one thing is clear, that is that wealth is an unsurmountable or insuperable obstacle to salvation, and he offers no solution to the difficulty except that one should give away his riches.

A striking contrast between the extremes of wealth and poverty is presented in the parable of Dives and Lazarus.

The greatest indictment against the wealthy is found in the epistle of James (5:1-6) where he speaks about the dreadful vengeance that will overtake the rich who have deprived the poor of their wages and who live in luxury.

From what we have said about wealth, both in the Old and in the New Testament, we can conclude with the following sentences:

Riches or wealth are at times, considered as a sign of God's blessing. At times however, riches are considered as illusory and dangerous. Finally, riches can become an obstacle between God and man, and man has to make a choice to assure himself of a place in the kingdom of God.

JESUS MANCEBO, O.P.

## Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 20, 1991

(Is 53:10-11; Heb 4:14-16; Mk 10:35-45)

In today's liturgy of the Word we have three complimentary themes: that of the *atonement suffering of Christ*; that of the *confidence he gives as Great High Priest of the New Law*, from whom "we shall have mercy and find grace in the time of need," and that of the *real working out in time and space of God's Redemptive Plan*, in which Christ so humbles himself that his humility become the paradigm of service in a new style of leadership.

The first reading from Deutero-Isaiah is a fragment of the Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant. The whole song is a veritable paean of paradox: what seems ill to man is majestically used for good by God. And the victory of God's Servant is placed squarely within the context of what looks like defeat. The sin and guilt of Israel can be totally wiped away. This sin is no memory-blocked inadvertence. It is real, conscious and deliberate and has caused an uncanceled guilt which men know no way of canceling. But the Servant deals with it. He conforms his will to God's will. And God rewards him in endless light, with heirs who live with him forever in a life likewise endless. He is allowed to *share* his goodness to take on their faults and to justify them.

The second reading puts on a heavenly level, so to speak, what Christ has done by his death. His death has given him pontifical stature as a *glorified man* in the Father's sight. Therefore, as Great High Priest he can efficaciously bring us into God's presence and assure us of his own "theandric" help: the help of one who is both God and man. Christ who below suffered all temptations turns the throne of power into the throne of grace. We can be confident because his

"agency" is sealed by his resurrection and heavenly presence at the Father's right hand.

It may seem like a fall from lofty grandeur to prosaic everyday reality to turn from these first two readings to "Stark Mark." In reality it is not. For in the midst of apostolic bickerings and sheer human stupidity, Jesus (who is, of course, Deutero-Isaiah's Servant-image fulfilled and the Great High Priest of Hebrews) show majestic calm. True, he admits, he himself will suffer and so will all who follow him. But the legacy of that suffering is more than mere hardship overcome. To believe in Christ's suffering and to pattern our lives on it is to share in a victorious leadership greater than sitting on his right or his left. He who has given his life as a ransom for many shares with us the secret of his "success." What seems like failure, what seems like nothing to speak of, what is humble and of no account becomes the source of grace and glory!

What are we doing here at Mass? Are we passing an hour of monotonous boredom? Are we singing a few songs and dropping some coins in a basket? If that is all, let's go home and relax in comfort. But what if our humble worship centered in bread and wine is the very Sacrifice of the Servant himself? What if by this liturgical action we can find ourselves before God's heavenly throne? What if here we are commissioned to apostolic life and self forgetting service? Should all this be true, light is ours. Glory is ours. Life eternal is ours. For we are one with the One who effects all this.

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.

### **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**October 27, 1991**

*(Jr 31:7-9; Heb 5:1-6; Mk 10:46-52)*

*Return to God through Christ our Mediator and Priest.* Almost from the outset man was punished by God because of man's infidelities and disobedience. From Adam and Eve to Abraham the history of man is the history of human infidelities. From Abraham to Jesus the history of Israel is the history of Israel's infidelities to the covenant with God. From Jesus to our days is the history of man's unfaithfulness to the new and eternal covenant. Everytime man sins he severs his relations with God. Sin is a departure from the way of

God and from his friendship. It puts man against God. Everytime man severs his relation with God and he is punished, but God gives him hope. He does not reject man forever.

*Return of Israel.* The reading from the prophet Jeremiah serves as an example. The prophet witnessed the fall of the kingdom of Judah, the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem and how the chosen people of God tearfully went into exile. They became slaves of their conquerors. They felt rejected and abandoned by God. But the prophet foresaw the glorious return of Israel to the Promised Land, where they would be free again and they would receive the blessings of God. It would be a glorious return to the land of Israel, because they could go up once more to Jerusalem to offer gifts and sacrifices, because they would feel again the power of God as the chosen people, and God would be again like a Father to them.

*Jesus is the Mediator and Priest.* The second reading deepens the understanding of man's return to God. The infinite distance between man and God, creator and creature, infinite and finite being, seeks and requires a mediator. Someone who will stand between the majesty of God and the sinner man. Man who disobeyed God, who ran away from God, cannot approach God; he needed and needs a mediator, a priest. A priest according to the letter to the Hebrews must be: 1) a man, that is, a member of the human race; 2) he must represent God before men, and men before God, that is, he must be a true mediator; 3) he must offer sacrifices for sins; 4) he must be compassionate to the ignorance and weakness of man; and 5) he must be chosen.

These characteristics truly and really belong to Jesus Christ, the anointed one of God, that is, the chosen one. He is the perfect mediator for he is the Son of God and the Son of Man, born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is the Second Divine Person, the Son of God, who became incarnate, that is, he assumed human nature and became man. He became the Son of man by being the Son of Mary. In Jesus Christ there is only one person: the Divine Person; and two natures: human and divine nature. Jesus, the Christ, that is, the anointed, the chosen one offered the eternal and living sacrifice of himself to God for the redemption of mankind. "He is the Lamb of God who take away the sins of the world."

Christ is the mediator and priest. Through Christ the Church and man offer sacrifices, prayers and offerings. All prayers of the Church end "through Jesus Christ, your Son..." or "through Jesus Christ our Lord," because it is only through Christ, our mediator, that the Church and man can approach God.

*Bartimaeus.* Bartimaeus was a blind man who begged on the road to Jericho. In the ecclesial tradition Jericho represents the world, while Jerusalem is the Holy City, the City of God. Bartimaeus is blind and poor. Because he is blind he cannot perceive color, light and all sensations related to them. He is poor, but because of his physical condition he cannot work to earn a living. Thus he depends on others to guide him on his way, and depends on the alms of others to have something to eat. Bartimaeus, because he is deprived of the sense of sight, cannot determine which way to go; and because of his poverty and blindness he was deprived of the dignity of earning his living.

*Recognition of Christ as the Messiah.* A handicapped man compensates for his deficiency by an increase of the capacity of other faculties. A blind man has a keen sense of hearing and touch. Bartimaeus heard the voice of those who accompanied Jesus, and inquired what was happening. When he was told that Jesus was passing by, he called out: "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." Bartimaeus proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, when he called him: *Son of David*, which is one of the titles of the promised Messiah. He proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah and recognized his healing power when he begged from Jesus that he might see. His proclamation and prayer were persistent in spite of the crowd who told him to be quiet, and confidently, "he shouted all the louder, 'Son of David, have pity on me!'" It was the pleading of the poor and needy claiming to be heard over and above of those who are insensitive to it. Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, representing man, proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God.

*Mediator.* Jesus, the gentle master, heard his pleading and told those who followed him to "call him over." The encounter of Jesus and Bartimaeus is through the mediation of the followers of Jesus. They are the ones who brought Bartimaeus the good news: "He is calling you." How many Bartimaeuses are there praying: "Son of David, have pity on me." And how many remain there in the road to Jericho,

because the followers of Jesus do not bring them the good news that Jesus is calling them? They will remain blind and poor, because Jesus' followers fail in their mission of announcing to them that God is calling them to console them and to guide them. The disciples of Christ must approach men with the consoling word: "Get up! He is calling you!"

Bartimaeus did not wait. He immediately "threw aside his cloak," that is, put aside all that in a way might interfere with his prompt response to the calling of Jesus, "jump up and came to Jesus." To answer the call of God man must put aside those things that cover his nakedness; those things that separate man from God, be it riches, pride, pretense, injustice, stubbornness. He must jump in joy for he has been called by Jesus who can restore his sight and free him from the poverty of sin, and restore his dignity by making him a child of God.

*The Encounter.* The last stage of the story of Bartimaeus is his direct encounter with Jesus. The initiative is from Jesus who asked Bartimaeus: "What do you want me to do for you?" It is Jesus who encourages the blind man to speak for himself. What is the meaning of the question of Jesus? Bartimaeus had made a clear confession of his faith in Jesus as Messiah and as healer. What else could he do? Yet Jesus asked Bartimaeus to reaffirm his trust in Jesus, and he did so, when he said, "Master, I want to see." Jesus has become for Bartimaeus the "Roboni," that is, the Master, a teacher who leads his people out of the darkness of error, who leads his disciples to a better life. Thus, Bartimaeus receives from Jesus two kinds of vision: the material or natural vision and the light of faith. He was cured from the physical blindness and from the spiritual blindness for he "he received his sight" in the natural sense, and he received the grace to be a follower of Christ when he "started to follow him up the road."

*Return to God.* Man, sinful man, is blind like Bartimaeus and like him he begs and waits for alms on the road. All men at one point of their lives will hear that Jesus is passing by. He could be another Bartimaeus calling Jesus to have pity on him or he may choose to let Jesus pass. A man becomes aware that Jesus is passing by when he becomes conscious of his pitiful state; when he is conscious of his sin and that he cannot be cured except by Christ. Then, he will call out, "Jesus, Son of David have pity on me!" It is when we come to know

that we are powerless that our prayer will be persistent and sincere. But the first thing to do for a man who wishes to be free from sin is to be aware of his own condition.

There is another condition for reaching Christ. According to the Gospel Bartimaeus met Christ through his followers. They are the ones who brought him the good news that Jesus was calling him. The Gospel tells us of two attitudes of his followers. The first one refers to those who are satisfied with being followers of Christ and do not care for others because to care for others they think will separate them from Christ. The second attitude is that of those followers who understand that the call of Jesus is extended to all and joyfully go out to bring the good news to the poor. A Christian is a disciple of Christ who brings the good news to those who are waiting on the road for Christ to pass by and someone to bring them to Christ.

MAXIMILIANO REBOLLO, O.P.

## Curia Appointments

The Holy Father made the following appointments on 1 July:

- Cardinal Angelo Sodano as Secretary of State;
- Cardinal Pio Laghi as Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education;
- **Cardinal Jose T. Sanchez as Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy;**
- Cardinal Antonio Innocenti as President of the Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei";
- Cardinal Camillo Ruini as Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome and Archpriest of the Patriarchal Lateran Basilica.
- The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Cardinal Aurelio Sabbatani, who is succeeded by Cardinal Virgilio Noe as Archpriest of the Patriarchal Vatican Basilica, Vicar General for Vatican City and President of the Fabric of St. Peter's.

## Changes in Episcopate

The Holy Father appointed as Bishop of Daet, Philippines, Bishop Benjamin Almoneda. He has been Titular Bishop of Timida and Auxiliary of Daet (7 June).

Bishop Almoneda, 61, was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Caceres in 1958. He served in parish ministry and as spiritual director in the seminary and later as rector. In 1971 he began working for the Philippine Bishops' Conference; from 1982 to 1989 he was rector of the Philippine Pontifical College in Rome. Named Auxiliary of Daet in December 1989, he was consecrated bishop by Pope John Paul II in Rome on 6 January 1990. He has also served as Diocesan Administrator of Daet.