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# Introduction

Barbara E. Wall

*Profound and rapid changes make it particularly urgent that no one, ignoring the trend of events or drugged by laziness, content himself with a merely individualistic morality. It grows increasingly true that the obligations of justice and love are fulfilled only if each person, contributing to the common good, according to his own abilities and the needs of others, also promotes and assists the public and private in situations dedicated to bettering the conditions of human life.<sup>1</sup>*

In 1965, Vatican Council II's document, *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*, again called for a dialogue between the Church and the modern world, especially on social and economic concerns of peoples throughout the world in order that the common good of all peoples might be achieved through just and peaceful means.

In 1965, the world exhibited a state of disorder: the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, and the Cuban Missile Crisis made the possibility of nuclear war a real threat. In addition, the peoples of the world became more aware of the impact of hunger, poverty and illiteracy on the citizenry of the world. In the United States, we witnessed the challenges to two hundred years of legalized discrimination by means of new civil rights legislation, which was enacted to secure basic human rights for all peoples including minorities.

The tradition of Catholic social teaching during the decade of the sixties attempted to emphasize the inherent dignity of the human person, *imago dei*, and that in a redeemed world all people have an inher-

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<sup>1</sup> David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon. "The Church in the Modern World," p. 183, GS 30 in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.

ent dignity given by God and that human life is ordained to fulfillment in the community. It is in the community that people achieve the realization of their basic human rights. There is also a cautionary tale here in how to support the quest for human rights, achievement of the common good, *and* avoid the excesses of individualism which often preclude a commitment to the common good.

In 2005, a consortium of kindred organizations that promote the value of Catholic social thought in public discourse arranged a conference to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Gaudium et spes*.<sup>2</sup> The conference carried the title “The Call to Justice: The Legacy of *Gaudium et Spes* 40 Years Later,” and included an array of papers that continue the long tradition of engaging Catholic social teaching and the changing historical situations throughout the world with regard to the continued commitment to achieve the common good. In collaboration with these institutions, the *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* agreed to publish a selection of the conference papers along with an address by Justin Cardinal Rigali. In this edition of the *Journal*, we proudly offer that selection.

Cardinal Claudio Hummes’ “Theological and Ecclesiological Foundations of *Gaudium et Spes*” is a pastoral reflection on the disorder he sees in the world from when the document was first published through the present day. “Today, in a world that more and more is globalized and interconnected thanks to the advance of communications technologies, the church’s mission, if it is to be an instrument of unity for the human race, becomes more relevant . . . a servant Church must have solidarity with the poor as her priority . . . a Church that, taking up the mission of Jesus, is in the world, not to judge humanity but to love it and save it.”

The theme of pastoral response to the contemporary world is the focus of Andrea Riccardi’s “An Historical Perspective and *Gaudium et Spes*.” The complex interpretations and dialogues that ensued with the publication of *Gaudium et spes* are all part of the rich, historical attempt to engage the contemporary world through the lens of Catholic social

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<sup>2</sup> The organizations include: the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the John A. Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought of the Center for Catholic Studies, the Center for the Study of the Social Doctrine of the Church, the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy, the Center for Catholic Social Thought, Leuven, Belgium, Peter J. Tobin School of Business and the Vincentian Center for Church and Society, St. John’s University, New York, Faculty of Social Sciences of the Pontifical University, St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome, and the Faculty of Social Science, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome.

teaching. According to Riccardi, the Church has an historical role for all time, and the methodology of *Gaudium et spes* directs our attention to an ever relevant message: “It is no longer possible to speak of the Church without raising the problems, the situations and the contexts of the modern world. It is the life-breath of a great Church that knows she is not a small community closed in on herself, but that is also aware of her duty to live with others who are religiously and culturally different.”

The spiritual practice of discernment is all the more critical when one is called to a process described in *Gaudium et spes* as the duty of “scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the gospel.” (GS, 4) Johan Verstraeten provides a much needed analysis of the nature of the methodological connections between theological interpretation and social analysis. Verstraeten encourages us to imagine the role of the Church as proclaimer of a new vision for the future of the human community—a vision rooted in a dialectic between the existing world and the future predicated on a vision that reflects “the future of reaching out to meet the present as an annunciation of something more or as a disjunction from what is.”

An address by Justin Cardinal Rigali on “*Gaudium et Spes* and Catholic Higher Education” challenges Catholic universities to take the message of *Gaudium et spes* and become the place where the new humanism announced in *Gaudium et spes* can and ought to be celebrated as a central component of its identity.

“People are conscious, the Council says, that they themselves can be the artisans and authors of the culture of their community. This presumes a sense of responsibility and solidarity. This is the context in which the Council says that we are witnesses of the birth of a new humanism, one in which the human being is defined especially by his or her responsibility toward his or her brothers and sisters and toward history. In the humanization of the world, how important it is that each person realizes his or her responsibility to others. Is not a Catholic university a powerful forum for this solidarity to be realized and this humanization to take place?”

The theme of human rights surely is an important concern of Catholic social teaching, especially of *Pacem in terris* and *Gaudium et spes* both issued between 1963-1965. The “signs of the times” with regard to human rights were most evident in these documents. Mateo Garr’s “*Gaudium et Spes* and the Struggle for Human Rights in Peru,” makes the case that human rights discourse has “not only become the back-

bone of social pastoral ministry in Latin America but has become, indeed, one of the basic principles of Church social teaching which need to be applied to any social analysis.” Garr’s article provides yet another example of the methodological connection between theological interpretation and social example.

Peter Henriot’s “A Church in the Modern World of Africa: the Zambian Experience,” provides a model of incarnation in the inculturation of the Church in the modern world of Africa and Zambia in particular. In its proclamation of Catholic social teaching, the Church has employed a *methodology* of ecumenical cooperation, an inductive approach, and a consultative, practical venue. The lessons from the Zambian experience reflect the need to read the signs of the times, provide intelligent research, promote international cooperation, and attend to issues of justice in the Church.

Economic applications derived from a forty year reflection on *Gaudium et spes* is first developed in Albino Barrera’s “*Gaudium et Spes* and Catholic Ethics in Post-Industrial Economics: Indirect Employers and Globalization.” Barrera argues that the Second Vatican Council’s (1) exposition on the inseparability of personal good and the good of the community and (2) its understanding of the human community as familial add much to the notion of the indirect employer by defining the addressees, scope, and strength of its concomitant duties. *Gaudium et spes* has much to contribute in formulating an appropriate economic ethics in a postindustrial ethos that attends to the adverse unintended consequences of market operations.

Robert DeFina and Barbara Wall contribute an analysis of the nature of “wealth” as treated in recent documents of Catholic social teaching as providing a context for the analysis of “wealth” in *Gaudium et spes*. This analysis provides reflection on the interconnections of wealth accumulation and income distribution as a foundation for future recommendations and action to determine just models for the accumulation of wealth. Having established a philosophical basis for questioning the ways in which wealth is actually used in capitalist economies, the paper then turns to practical ways in which Catholic social teaching has employed the notion of wealth when discussing issues of economic justice. The argument offered is that the Catholic social teaching tradition has generally overlooked important social processes related to the generation and distribution of wealth, focusing instead on income. The virtually exclusive reliance on income represents a significant shortcoming in the writings on economic production and distribution, and constitutes a logical disconnect from the tradition’s conceptual groundings.

Most importantly, it has prevented Catholic social teaching from making important contributions to the creation of an economic system consistent with Gospel values.

Social applications of *Gaudium et spes*—forty years later are found in the article by Séverine Deneulin’s “Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach to Development and *Gaudium et Spes*: On Political Participation and Structural Solidarity,” which brings into focus a dialogue between the economic approach of Amartya Sen’s thesis of human development as freedoms or capabilities that reflect a quality of life which enables people “to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being.” The connection to the common good as reiterated in *Gaudium et spes* has interesting possibilities for similarities and difference: “while in Sen’s capability approach, autonomy and individual freedom tend to have a normative priority over affiliation.”

Marilyn Martone’s “*Gaudium et Spes* Suggests a Change in Moral Imagination To Ensure the Just Treatment of Women,” provides a relevant treatment of the changes necessary for the transformation of the inequitable treatment of women throughout the world. She suggests that there is a need for “change in the moral imagination to break down the cultural traditions and stereotypes that allow women to be treated as less than human.” Martone provides a theological reflection on the nature of person as gift—applied universally to all people, male and female. Moving from an ownership model of human life—ours and others—we find an invitation to become stewards of the gift. Such a call takes us beyond the language of rights to think more about the sacramentality of human life as a gift to oneself and the other.

Profound and rapid changes continue to impact the lives of people throughout the world, and it is our hope that this issue will continue the dialogue to achieve a more just and peaceful world community where all people are respected for their inherent dignity and sacredness.





# Theological and Ecclesiological Foundations of *Gaudium et Spes*

Claudio Cardinal Hummes

## Introduction

The theme of the theological and ecclesiological foundations of *Gaudium et spes* (GS), a document of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, is richer and more fascinating than what I can present here. I shall not deal with this theme as a professional theologian would, rather I shall simply present it as a pastor of the Church. Within these limits, I shall attempt to underline certain aspects of the theme that strike me as more significant and pastoral.

Pope John XXIII first expressed his idea of celebrating a Council for the whole Church when, on 25 January 1959 in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, he said, and I quote: “Venerable Brothers, Beloved Sons! It is certainly with a little trembling because of the emotion, but at the same time with humble resolve of purpose, that we announce in your presence the name and the proposal . . . of an Ecumenical Council for the Universal Church.”<sup>1</sup> The Pope’s concerns and intentions are above all pastoral, for updating the Church so that she might be “the Church of all, especially the poor.”<sup>2</sup> He is concerned for modern humanity and its openness to the Church of Jesus Christ.

In the Bull *Humanae Salutis*, convoking the Council, John XXIII writes: “Today the Church is witnessing a crisis under way within society. While humanity is on the edge of a new era, tasks of immense gravity and amplitude await the Church. . . . It is a question in fact of bringing the modern world into contact with the vivifying and perennial energies of the Gospel.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> AAS 51 [1959], pp. 65-69.

<sup>2</sup> cf. G. Alberigo, *Historia dos Concilios Ecumenicos*, Sao Paulo, pp. 397-398.

<sup>3</sup> *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, S.J., America Press, 1966, p. 703.

Now, the document *Gaudium et spes* was identified as constituting the fundamental *pastoral* text, and the longest text, of the Council, such that it was given the name of Pastoral Constitution. The Most Reverend Emilio Guano, President of the Commission that drew up the initial draft of this Constitution, stated on 17 October 1964, in a conference given to journalists just a few days before the discussions of the draft began, “This draft is not like the others. Its immediate and direct object is not Church doctrine. It does not deal with the Church’s self-awareness, nor with Revelation, nor with the renewal of spiritual or liturgical life, nor with Church discipline or canonical issues. . . . The world of today with all its problems is the theme of this document. It is the Church directing her gaze upon modern civilization, upon the needs and aspirations of contemporary humanity, upon the new transformations and orientations that characterize modern society. . . . The interest for all that is human is something essential in the Church, for she was founded for humanity by the Son of God made man, a member of the human family. These motivations prompt the Church to seek to understand men and at the same time to be understood by men. . . . Naturally, upon entering into contact with daily reality, the Church cannot forget that her mission is that of proclaiming the Gospel, of communicating divine life to men, of leading men to God. With the present proposed document the Council seeks to express and promote the Church’s dialogue with the modern world. The purpose, moreover, of the document is to define the Church’s attitude with regard to the problems facing men today”.

Overall, this pastoral character of Vatican II and, particularly, of *Gaudium et spes* has theological and ecclesiological foundations, from which will consequently arise various concerns, content and aims of a pastoral nature.

### **God Acting in Human History: Incarnation, Earthly Realities, Eschatology**

The understanding that God acts in human history is not recent but comes to us from tradition. It belongs itself to Judeo-Christian tradition, forming part of the central core of the Old Testament. This is what we read, for example, in Exodus 3:7-8, when the liberating action of God on behalf of his people is proclaimed. This same action is also present in the central core of New Testament faith, as a fundamental understanding of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and hence we read that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14), becoming Emmanuel, “God-with-us”.

History is not foreign to its Creator. The Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* (DV) of the Council teaches that the revelation of God is made in history (DV, 2), God becomes present in history so as to offer salvation to humanity by means of his Son made man, Jesus Christ. Here, we find the affirmation of the total relevance of the Church's faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God, who became man for the salvation of mankind, as was already proclaimed by the Nicene Council.<sup>4</sup>

God makes himself known to men and women by his action in history. Revealing himself in history, God makes himself present in history for the salvation of humanity, this is the truth in which the Church believes. This shows the closeness of God, whom Jesus proclaimed as a loving Father. In Jesus Christ and through him, God becomes God-with-us, in order to lead us to his kingdom. Thus, human history is taken up by Jesus as the history of the Word among us.

This perspective of God the Creator, who makes himself present in history, acts lovingly in history and reveals himself in history, allows us to see the value of earthly realities. *Gaudium et spes* begins with words of a profound sharing in the whole of human reality in the world (GS, 1). It affirms the deep-rooted goodness of the world created by God, despite the contradictions present in it that arise from original sin and from all personal sins. The text of *Gaudium et spes* says: "For by the very circumstance of their having been created [by God], all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts. Therefore if methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. Indeed, whoever labours to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind, even though he is unaware of the fact, is nevertheless being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence, and gives them their identity" (GS, 36).

In this way, the Council affirms "the autonomy of earthly affairs". It does so more explicitly in the following passage from *Gaudium et spes*: "If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely required by modern man, but harmonizes also with the will of the Creator" (GS, 36).

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<sup>4</sup> cf. Denzinger, nos. 125-126 [H. Denzinger & P. Hunermann, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Paris, Cerf, 1997].

This positive view of creation, of human activity, of science, of technology, of the laws of human society and of history is a characteristic of the Second Vatican Council, and in particular of the document *Gaudium et spes*, which can also help us today in engaging in dialogue with society regarding the true autonomy of the State.

The clear recognition of the autonomy of earthly realities was a great advance made by this Council, which put it in step with modernity. In fact, faith is not opposed to science. *Gaudium et spes* states: “We cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, which are sometimes found too among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science and which, from the arguments and controversies they spark, lead many minds to conclude that faith and science are mutually opposed” (GS, 36).

On the other hand, *Gaudium et spes* rejects all scientism and secularism concerning the autonomy of “earthly/temporal realities”: “if the expression ‘the independence of temporal affairs’ is taken to mean that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator, anyone who acknowledges God will see how false such a meaning is. For without the Creator the creature would disappear. . . . When God is forgotten, however, the creature itself grows unintelligible” (GS, 36).

Nonetheless, *Gaudium et spes* does not forget that creation, history and human activity were wounded by human sin, from the very beginning of the human race. Man moved away from God and turned to himself as light and rule, attempting to be the sole autonomous subject of his history and destiny. His deep-rooted self-centredness brought disorder, the consequences of which have remained throughout the ages. *Gaudium et spes* has described these consequences as follows: “When the order of values is jumbled and bad is mixed with the good, individuals and groups pay heed solely to their own interests, and not to those of others. Thus it happens that the world ceases to be a place of true brotherhood. In our own day, the magnified power of humanity threatens to destroy the race itself. For a monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades the whole history of man. The battle was joined from the very origins of the world and will continue until the last day, as the Lord has attested (Mt 24:13; 13:24-30 and 36-43)” (GS, 37).

This situation of disorder needs to be healed. According to our faith, which *Gaudium et spes* seeks to express, creation too and all human activity enter mysteriously into the paschal event of human redemp-

tion, taking part in their own way in the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Creation too groans in birth pangs, says the Apostle Paul. At the end of time, when human history will be fulfilled and the definitive reign of God will be established, with the resurrection of the dead, creation too and all human actions will be transformed and there will be new heavens and a new earth, "where justice will abide, and whose blessedness will answer and surpass all the longings for peace which spring up in the human heart. Then, with death overcome, the sons of God will be raised up in Christ, and what was sown in weakness and corruption will be invested with incorruptibility. Enduring with charity and its fruits, all that creation which God made on man's account will be unchained from the bondage of vanity. . . . While earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the kingdom of God. For after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured, when Christ hands over to the Father 'a kingdom eternal and universal'. . . . On this earth that kingdom is already present in mystery. When the Lord returns it will be brought into full flower" (GS, 39).

### **Jesus Christ and the New Man: Christology and Anthropology**

In the desire to present the correct relationship between the Church and the world, *Gaudium et spes* begins with an anthropological synthesis, the fundamental elements of which are the following: man, created by God, created in the image and likeness of his Creator, created as a social being (male and female), one being composed of matter and spirit (body and soul), endowed with intellect, freedom and moral conscience as essential elements of a spiritual interiority and of a capacity to transcend the material world in which he has his roots, but at the same time with an internal division, rent from within by the wound of sin from the very beginning of human history. Consequently, "all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness. Indeed, man finds that by himself he is incapable of battling the assaults of evil successfully, so that everyone feels as though he is bound by chains" (GS, 13).

*Gaudium et spes* highlights the subjectivity of the human being, which enables him to be at the centre of the universe, despite the wounds of sin. In highlighting this subjectivity and a consequent anthropocentric vision of the world, the Council prompts the Church to

take a decisive step in the direction of modernity. In the end, the theme that is perhaps most representative of modernity—introduced by the Enlightenment—is precisely that of subjectivity. For example, when speaking of man and his subjectivity, *Gaudium et spes* follows the anthropological and anthropocentric themes of modernity, and in presenting the fundamental components of the human subject it makes a distinction between freedom/autonomy (GS, 17), equality (GS, 29) and brotherhood (GS, 32), the inviolable dignity and authority of the depths of moral conscience. These are components of human subjectivity situated within the framework of the community dimension of the person (GS, 24-26).

I mention separately here the very important doctrine found in *Gaudium et spes* concerning the dignity of the innermost moral conscience of the human subject. *Gaudium et spes* says: “In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths. . . . In fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals from social relationships. . . . Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity” (GS, 16). It is moreover proper to the dignity of the human subject, and a duty of his, to follow his conscience always, even when it may be in error because of invincible ignorance. In this latter case, then, the presumption is that there has been a prior and normal effort to form one’s conscience correctly, seeking to discern the good to be done and the truth to be held, although without positive result.

Seeking the truth about man, beyond what the light of human reason can offer us, *Gaudium et spes* illuminates anthropology with the light of Christology and teaches that only in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, “does the mystery of man take on light” (GS, 22). In fact, *Gaudium et spes* tells us, Jesus Christ is “the image of the invisible God”, he is “the perfect man. To the sons of Adam he restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as he assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart”. Hence, “Christ, the final

Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear". Consequently, everything that *Gaudium et spes* says about the human subject and his inviolable dignity has in Jesus Christ its "root" and in him attains its "crown" (GS, 22).

Light is also shed on the mystery of human life and death by Christ, and from him they receive their true meaning. "Born of the Virgin Mary, [Christ] has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin. As an innocent lamb he merited for us life by the free shedding of his own blood. In him God reconciled us to himself and among ourselves; from bondage to the devil and sin he delivered us. . . . By suffering for us he not only provided us with an example for our imitation, he blazed a trail, and if we follow it, life and death are made holy and take on a new meaning" (GS, 22).

This new meaning and this sanctification of man are made manifest and are brought about in those who believe in Jesus Christ and follow him. Thus they will be "conformed to the likeness of that Son who is the firstborn of many brothers"; the Christian man has "received 'the first-fruits of the Spirit' (Rom 8:23) by which he becomes capable of discharging the new law of love" (GS, 22). This Spirit, who Christians receive, will one day raise them from the dead, just as Jesus was raised, in accordance with what the Apostle Paul says: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you" (Rom 8:11). This is moreover the sublime vocation and dignity of the human being. After this mortal life, in which Christians are faced with "the need and the duty to battle against evil through manifold tribulations and even to suffer death", Christians are called to take part in the glorious resurrection of Christ (GS, 22).

At this point, *Gaudium et spes* opens the vast theme of the universality of this human vocation and of the Lord's consequent mercy for all human beings. It tells us that everything that is said about the Christian is also true for all people of good will who did not know Christ, but sought the path of good and truth. The text reads: "All this [what has been said about Christians] holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery" (GS, 22). This doctrine is of great relevance today in inter-religious dialogue, which is so necessary in a

globalized world in which the different religions and non-believers too must necessarily live together.

*Gaudium et spes* concludes this reflection on the human vocation by saying: “Such is the mystery of man, and it is a great one, as seen by believers in the light of Christian revelation. Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from his Gospel, they overwhelm us” (GS, 22).

### **The Church of God: In the World, as a Servant, in Solidarity with the Poor, in Dialogue, the Universal Sacrament of the Unity of Salvation, Promoter of Justice and Peace**

The ecclesiological foundations of *Gaudium et spes* show its understanding of the Church as being in the world. The Church “exists in the world, living and acting with it” (GS, 40). It is not an institution parallel to the world or an abstract institution, but is in the world. However, *Gaudium et spes*, as the final Constitution of the Council, understands the mystery of the Church in a way consonant with the previous Council documents that dealt with the Church, principally *Lumen Gentium* (LG), although looking closely at the Church in terms of her necessary insertion in the modern world and looking closely at the consequences of her being in the world.

Thus, *Gaudium et spes* sees the Church in her beginnings as “coming forth from the eternal Father’s love, founded in time by Christ the Redeemer and made one in the Holy Spirit” (GS, 40). Her origin, her foundation and her model is the Blessed Trinity, a mystery of communion. Being of the world, she, whose model is the Blessed Trinity, is constituted as a sign and instrument of the unity of the human race.<sup>5</sup> Today, in a world that more and more is globalized and interconnected thanks to the advances of communication technologies, the Church’s mission, if it is to be an instrument of unity for the human race, becomes more relevant and has new possibilities and challenges.

The Church, according to *Gaudium et spes*, is also and principally an instrument of salvation for the whole human race, a salvation “which can be fully attained only in the future world” (GS, 40), beyond human history, that is, in a transcendent eschatological fulfillment. “But she is already present in this world, and is composed of men, that is, of mem-

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<sup>5</sup> cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 1.



bers of the earthly city who have a call to form the family of God's children" (GS, 40). The Church is at the same time "a visible association and a spiritual community" that walks "together with humanity and experiences the same earthly lot which the world does. She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family" (GS, 40).

*Gaudium et spes*, taking its lead from all the reflections made by the Council, emphasizes that the Church is at the service of man and of every person, at the service of humanity, and she cannot seek to dominate humanity. In this she follows the example of Christ who came as a servant. "I am among you as one who serves" (Lk 22:27). "The Son of man also came not to be served but to serve and to give his life" (Mk 10:45). "I have given you an example . . . a servant is not greater than his master" (Jn 13:15-16). This is within the context of the love with which God has loved the world: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3:16-17). The Church is at the service of humanity. She "believes she can contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human" (GS, 40).

In this context, the Church supports and fosters all current efforts aimed at the full personal development of every human being, and she promotes the fundamental rights, dignity and freedom of man. But she also wishes to help man to discover the full truth of the human being and his vocation in this world. For this reason she points to Jesus Christ, in whom this full truth is found. *Gaudium et spes* states: "man will always yearn to know, at least in an obscure way, what is the meaning of his life, of his activity, of his death. . . . But only God, who created man to his own image and ransomed him from sin, provides the most adequate answer to the questions, and this he does through what he has revealed in Christ his Son, who became man. Whoever follows after Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more of a man" (GS, 41). In the light of this anthropology upon which Christology meditates, the Church "announces and proclaims the freedom of the sons of God . . . has a sacred reverence for the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice . . . proclaims the rights of man; she acknowledges and greatly esteems the dynamic movements of today by which these rights are everywhere fostered" (GS, 41). But the Church does not fail to give a warning: "Yet these movements [fostering human rights] must be penetrated by the spirit of the Gospel and protected against any kind of false autonomy" (GS, 41).

A servant Church must have solidarity with the poor as her priority. The Apostle Paul wrote that what matters is “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6). Faith must be expressed in love and in solidarity, which is the social version of love. This is an eminent form—extremely relevant, urgent and indispensable—of the Church’s presence in the world. *Gaudium et spes* makes a marked distinction between the service that the Church must give to the world through solidarity with all the poor and efforts to overcome poverty, misery and hunger in the world. Today more than ever, the Church takes up this challenge. In fact, effective solidarity with the poor, whether individuals or entire countries, is indispensable for building peace. Solidarity corrects injustices, re-establishes the fundamental rights of individuals and nations, conquers poverty and thus combats the revolt that injustice incites, removes violence that is born from revolt and builds peace.

In this fight against injustice, *Gaudium et spes* appeals to the principle of the universal destination of earthly goods and says: “God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner” (GS, 69). It is important to emphasize that *Gaudium et spes* notes a difference between this Christian position and mere justice, which the world takes as its guide, because many are the times that justice is not sufficient to rescue the poor, charity too is necessary, and faith alone can be the basis of charity. How can the rich and developed nations be brought truly to share the goods of the earth with the poor nations? How can the poor nations be brought to take their places at the universal table of the goods of the earth, in the context of the new worldwide globalized order of open and free markets? The Church must work hard at this task, proclaiming the rights of peoples, placing herself at the service of poor countries, engaging in dialogue about what needs to be corrected in the new world economic order. This is the path for building peace, because poverty creates a just revolt, which unfortunately erupts often in violence. Could it be that one of the elements of modern terrorism is the revolt against a poverty that is imposed and felt as practically unavoidable in the near future, a poverty that is not just short-term?

In a broad and extensive manner, *Gaudium et spes* exhorts Christians to fight against poverty, misery, hunger, the degradation of so many people and entire countries. We read: “Christians should cooperate willingly and wholeheartedly in establishing an international order that includes a genuine respect for all freedoms and amicable brotherhood between all. This is all the more pressing since the greater part of the world is still suffering from so much poverty that it is as if Christ

himself were crying out in these poor to beg the charity of the disciples” (GS, 88). It is here that *Gaudium et spes* condemns the following as a scandal: “some countries with a majority of citizens who are counted as Christians have an abundance of wealth, whereas others are deprived of the necessities of life and are tormented with hunger, disease and every kind of misery” (GS, 88). We all know how sadly true this is even in our own day; the fight against poverty in the world poses a challenge for the Church’s action on an international level.

The Church, present in the world and active in human society and in history, does not exist to exercise political power nor to govern society, for “the purpose which Christ set before her is a religious one” (GS, 42). However, she cannot remain indifferent to politics, in the broad sense of the word, as the quest to organize and promote the common good. “The Church and the political community in their own fields are autonomous and independent from each other. Yet both, under different titles, are devoted to the personal and social vocation of the same men” (GS, 76). The same is true for all sectors of public life, such as the economy, social and charitable services for the poor, building peace and so on.

In a special way, the Church is a kind of “sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind” (LG, 1). The unity of the human race continues to be ever more keenly seen in our modern day, mostly because of the phenomenon of globalization. This phenomenon was already foreseen by *Gaudium et spes*, which demonstrates how the Church can and must be at the service of this unity. In this process, according to *Gaudium et spes*, “the Church recognizes that worthy elements are found in today’s social movements, especially an evolution toward unity, a process of wholesome socialization and of association in civic and economic realms. The promotion of unity belongs to the innermost nature of the Church” (GS, 42). In this service to the unity of the human race, the Church does not seek any type of earthly power in society: “the force which the Church can inject into the modern society of man consists in that faith and charity put into vital practice, not in any external dominion exercised by merely human means” (GS, 42).

## **Conclusion**

I conclude by saying that in all her involvement and living presence in human society, the Church must constantly engage in dialogue. This may perhaps be one of the most important methods today for creating a positive and constructive relation with society. A courageous dialogue that is open, honest, sensitive and humble. A dialogue with modern man, with human reason, the sciences, the advances of biotech-

nology, with philosophy and cultures, with politics and the economy, with anything that has a connection with social justice, human rights, solidarity with the poor. A dialogue with all of society and its various component parts.

A dialogue with religions. A constant, systematic, professional, constructive dialogue of quality. A dialogue that is able to listen, discuss, discern and assimilate what is good and true, just and worthy of man: this is the kind of dialogue that is proposed. A dialogue that at the same time is able to proclaim the truth, which the Church has received and to which she must remain faithful. But always a dialogue and never an imposition of her beliefs and methods. Propose, not impose. Serve, not dominate. A Church that engages in dialogue with the modern world, this is what *Gaudium et spes* outlines and promotes. A Church that, taking up the mission of Jesus, is in the world, not to judge humanity but to love it and save it (cf. Jn 3:16, 17).

# An Historical Perspective and *Gaudium et Spes*

Andrea Riccardi

It is not easy to speak of *Gaudium et spes* in an historical perspective. One must choose between presenting a history of the drafting of the text and presenting the historical perspective and the problems of the times in which this text was produced. I shall say from the outset, and with the risk of disappointing you, that my choice has fallen to the second option. We already have available a vast and complete reconstruction of how the document came about, thanks to Giovanni Turbanti. In more than 700 pages, this author traces the complex and heated process of drafting the text, from the Roman sketches, to the Rahner-Ratzinger schema, to that of Malines, to the text of Ariccia, up to the conclusion of Vatican II. The idea took shape in 1962 with the suggestion of a message of the Council to the world, a proposal made by the Most Reverend Guerry (and prepared, before the Council, by the Dominican Lebrét, who had an important role in *Populorum progressio*).<sup>1</sup> One can easily see how a summary of the 700 pages of the Turbanti work would have presented no real difficulty, but such a summary on my part would hardly have been a contribution to the question at issue. In the extensive bibliography we must not forget the convention promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in 1995: on that occasion Cardinal Hamer, who had been one of the experts at the Second Vatican Council, offered a significant rereading of the process that produced *Gaudium et spes*.<sup>2</sup>

The literary genre of the text is new in the Magisterium: a Pastoral Constitution on the contemporary world. Not sociological analysis, not theology, but a “pastoral” text. The Church has not failed to make statements on themes outside her specific competence, in a manner of

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<sup>1</sup> G. Turbanti, *Un Concilio per il mondo moderno. La redazione della costituzione pastorale “Gaudium et spes” del Vaticano II*, Il Mulino, Bologna p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Pontificio Consiglio per i Laici, *Gaudium et spes. Bilancio di un trentennio*, “Laici oggi” 1996, n. 39. Laici oggi, 1996, 39.

speaking, such as occurs with her social doctrine starting with *Rerum novarum*. Nonetheless, there is something new here. We can sense it in Rahner's article on the Constitution, published in 1966 and intended almost to justify such an unusual text.<sup>3</sup> Defining the Constitution as "pastoral" (a word that has been somewhat over-used in the post-conciliar period) reveals something new and an effort to be concrete. But concrete in what manner? Many and varied are the aspects of the modern world (and different interpretations are possible), such that it appears difficult that *Gaudium et spes* should leave a single, unified impression. How can we summarize it all and make a judgment? This text does not arise, like a social Encyclical, from one authority who issues it, but arises from the mediation of conciliar positions that are different not only in theology but above all in the worlds from which they come, such as those of the young prelate Karol Wojtyła, of Cardinal Spellman of New York or of the Most Reverend Zoa of the Cameroon.

Why should we attempt such a risky undertaking? We find ourselves at the crossroads between a movement that comes from afar and the historical situation in which the Council takes place. This situation, I shall say it quickly, is the bipolar world of the Cold War, which, however, has undergone changes with regard to the days of Stalin: for there now appear to be some openings for the action of the Church. Such seemed the case with John XXIII's intervention in the serious Cuban Missile crisis of 1962 between Kennedy and Krushchev. Moreover, the movement of non-aligned nations has been active for ten years, and has been broadened by the decolonization of the 1960s: did this represent a new dialogue-partner for the Church beyond the East-West bipolarism? The Holy See, from Pius XII but above all with John XXIII, had watched the emergence of the New World with great attention, both with the creation of autonomous episcopates and with the increase of diplomatic missions. Was not significant space coming to be formed for the Church in the social and political worlds of decolonized countries and of the South? On the other hand, it seemed that beyond the frontiers of the Cold War a movement aimed at the unification of the planet (this expression appears time and again in *Gaudium et spes*)<sup>4</sup> was being advanced. This was also the case following McLuhan's insights on the world as a "global village", where everything is seen and everything is

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<sup>3</sup> Rahner, *La problematica teologica di una costituzione pastorale*, in *La Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo. Commento alla costituzione "Gaudium et spes"*, a cura di E. Giammancheri, Queriniana, Brescia 1966, pp. 61-83.

<sup>4</sup> "Moving gradually together and everywhere more conscious already of its unity . . ." (GS, 77).

easily obtained. There is found in the Constitution this sense of the universal destiny of peoples, which comes from the ancient tradition of the Church, but there is also found the perception that a process is underway, a process that today we would call globalization. Was this not the time of the Catholic Church, a community present among all peoples and beyond the confines of civilizations? The Catholic Church in fact felt called to interpret in depth the unification movement among peoples, starting also with her self-awareness as the sacrament of unity of the human race. On the other hand, progress—as was said, scientific and technological development—placed instruments in the hands of humanity such that it was possible to leave a profound mark on human destiny, in the sense also of grave harm if not destruction: did not the Church have the duty to speak out on this? Attention was paid to the “signs of the times”, an attitude launched by John XXIII in *Pacem in terris*, enthusiastically received by vast sectors of Catholicism. In short, it seemed necessary to look to history and to contemporary life.

The push to speak out in this situation came from afar: from the fact that, starting in the 1800s, the Church had refused to remove herself (as had been suggested by a certain secular culture) from social questions and to yield to liberal and socialist thinking. Every pontificate, sometimes in commemoration of *Rerum novarum*, had updated doctrine, repeating a constant theme: “the indispensable function that religion has in promoting social progress.”<sup>5</sup> The Church does not yield, affirms *Gaudium et spes*, “to a kind of mechanical course of the economic activity of individuals, nor to the authority of government”: she rejects “the guise of a false liberty” but also collectivism.<sup>6</sup> In the conciliar text, the break-through of *Populorum progressio* is prepared: from social doctrine for industrial society to the social question as a problem between the North and South of the world. In *Gaudium et spes* one looks to the South of the world with a certain optimism (the optimism of the 1960s, according to which the gap between the North and the South could in part be overcome). There is a desire to suggest guidelines for action aimed at development: a commitment of cooperation on the part of rich countries (defined as a “grave duty”), the investment of undeveloped countries in the total human fulfillment of their citizens, the coordination of the international community.<sup>7</sup> The development of the international community is one of the principal

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<sup>5</sup> A. Riccardi, *La fortune d'une encyclique*, in “Revue de deux mondes”, mai 1991, pp. 75-87, p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> GS, 65.

<sup>7</sup> GS, 86.

perspectives of the document, because only strong international institutions can guarantee peace and development. There is a constant interest on the part of twentieth century Catholicism in building the international community, with the accent placed on trust in international organizations, desired by John XXIII with respect to Pius XII and interpreted by Paul VI in his visit to the United Nations.

The Council made this appeal in the fight against poverty: “The greater part of the world is still suffering from so much poverty that it is as if Christ himself were crying out in these poor to beg the charity of the disciples. Do not let men, then, be scandalized because some countries with a majority of citizens who are counted as Christians have an abundance of wealth, whereas others are deprived of the necessities of life and are tormented with hunger, disease, and every kind of misery.”<sup>8</sup>

*Gaudium et spes* wishes to promote a movement towards the poor, giving “not only out of what is superfluous but also from the substance of one’s goods” (GS, 88). There is the echo of the group in favor of the Church of the poor gathered at the Belgian College, inspired by Ghautier. A volume, *Church and Poverty*, published in 1965 (with prefaces by two important Council leaders, Cardinal Leccaro and the Melchite Patriarch Maximos IV, and with contributions by Congar, Chenu, Viol-laume, Loew) seeks to develop this awareness. It opens with an essay by Father Cottier on the geography of poverty in the 1960s (which recalls Josué de Castro’s well-known and contemporary geography of hunger) and concludes with an invitation: “Is it not therefore the role of the Church to call humanity to an immense crusade against misery, to promote a general mobilization of spiritual and material energies for the fight in which the dignity of our species is at stake?”<sup>9</sup> These are the perspectives of the Church, which wants a kind of “Christian *Bandung*.”

Paul VI’s visit to India in 1964, with his appeal to invest in development and divert funds from arms, had demonstrated this orientation. Hunger and poverty—according to Cardinal Duval—open the way to war.<sup>10</sup> *Gaudium et spes* inseparably links the Church to the poor: the poor who are nearby but also those far off who, with the unification of

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<sup>8</sup> GS, 88.

<sup>9</sup> AA.VV, *Chiesa e povertà*, AVE, Roma 1968, p. 54.

<sup>10</sup> *Storia del concilio Vaticano II*, diretta da G. Alberigo, vol. V *Concilio di transizione. Il quarto periodo e la conclusione del concilio (1965)*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2001, p. 188. In questo senso anche il brasiliano don Larraín, *ivi*, p. 185.



the world (today we would say globalization), can be seen and reached by all. The articulated reflections of social doctrine, the charity of individuals, the fight against poverty, the witness of being close to the poor: these are all aspects of the profound connection between the Church and the poor, the roots of which are sunk deep in the Christian mystery. This is the conviction that Father Congar expresses so well in 1965 in the wake of *Gaudium et spes*: “The poor are the Church’s concern. They are not merely her clients or those who benefit from her substance: the Church cannot fully live her mystery if the poor are absent.”<sup>11</sup>

The Church of *Gaudium et spes* qualifies herself as an international subject between North and South, with her eyes attentive to all the situations in the world: everything concerns her, no situation is foreign to her, she is involved everywhere. In geopolitical terms, we could say that she has “imperialistic” interests for the world (that is, not limited to one area). But faced with a world divided by two empires, Pius XII in 1946 had made a further qualification, using words to which the Vatican II Church can subscribe: “The Church . . . is not an empire, above all in an imperialistic sense. . . . Her progress and expansion are marked on a path that is the opposite of that trod by modern imperialism. She makes progress above all in depth”. Behind this original vision there is the desire to belong to no country or civilization: the fight against nationalisms, having become tragic in the two world wars that seemed to overturn the Church’s position of impartiality, had made it clear that all was lost with war and nothing was lost with peace. This Church, persecuted in the Communist East, strove in the period following the Second World War not to identify herself with Western civilization. One is amazed to see in one of the notes of *Gaudium et spes* a citation from the important 1936 convention of the French Social Weeks (*Semaines Sociales*) held at Versailles, where discussion took place already at that time concerning the clash of civilizations (European, Soviet, Islamic, Jewish, and so on). The indication at that time was that the Church needed to transcend the borders of civilizations with the universalism of the Gospel.<sup>12</sup> *Gaudium et spes* affirms: “the Church by her very universality can be a very close bond between diverse human communities and nations”. It then adds: “the Church admonishes her own sons, but also humanity as a whole, to overcome all strife between nations and race in this family spirit of God’s children.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Chiesa e povertà, 286.

<sup>12</sup> GS, 59, note 7.

<sup>13</sup> GS, 42.

Here is placed the problem of peace and war, which occupies the last chapter, the fifth, of the Constitution. The Council could not fail to touch on a central theme for the Popes of the twentieth century, when Catholics were strongly attracted by nationalistic passions. The Catholic Church revealed her supranational character and took up the aspirations for peace in the heart of conflicts. This action, with Benedict XV and Pius XII, had known moments of disagreement: the polemics with regard to the “silence” of Pius XII on the Shoah begin in 1963. John XXIII’s work for peace had received general approbation: “However, one would say that now, when the Pope speaks of peace, people stop to listen”, Pope John XXIII had said to Monsignor Pavan.<sup>14</sup> The Church, in her twentieth century experience, was convinced of the perverse effects of war: had not the First World War provided the bases for the Second? And did not the Second leave the legacy of a divided world that was still the case at the time of Vatican II?

War was to be strongly resisted. But the Vatican II Church had to deal with the most diverse positions in this area: with pacifism, the underlying rationale of which had never been completely taken up by Catholicism, but which was not spurned either. She had to measure herself against a realist pacifism, like that of Father Luigi Sturzo who, between the two wars, wondered whether it was not possible, in a progressive manner, to abolish war as an instrument for regulating conflicts, as had been done with slavery. The brutality of war and the use of violence especially on the part of totalitarian regimes had strengthened the non-violent movements that had a point of reference in Gandhi (and the theme of conscientious objection is to be placed in this same context). On the other hand, one wondered how a State’s right to legitimate defense in case of aggression, which had always been recognized by Church doctrine, could be denied. The Council re-launched two aspects of the papal Magisterium on war: the insistence that total war represented something truly new and the progressive restriction of the conditions for a “just war”.

But which war? The world conflict, which the Council Fathers speak of as “total war”? The Cold War? The American Bishops raised understandable questions, whether a condemnation of atomic weapons would not lead to a tendency of unilateral disarmament with regard to the Soviet Union. Was it a question of civil wars, to which the Spanish Bishops make reference, thinking of the 1930s? Was it a question of

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<sup>14</sup> A. Riccardi, *Il potere del papa da Pio XII a Giovanni Paolo II*, Laterza, Roma–Bari 1993, p. 192.

guerrilla warfare and wars of liberation, asks Ottaviani, which are often used to impose an ideology?<sup>15</sup> The Council has in mind the complex morphology of war in the twentieth century. The stimuli, the situations, the answers are different. The conciliar text cannot fail to end up being complex, but the whole is pervaded by a great concern for peace: "All these considerations compel us to undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude. The men of our time must realize that they will have to give a somber reckoning of their deeds of war."<sup>16</sup>

Differences remained concerning atomic weapons, but from the Church's history of the twentieth century there emerged a desire for peace: "War must be absolutely prohibited", declared Cardinal Ottaviani (someone who was not in favor of new things) to applause in 1964. Peace was one of the Church's great objectives: "It is our clear duty, therefore, to strain every muscle in working for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent" (GS, 81). This is the ideal. The Church must work in the area of international relations with her many different subjects (among other things, it is said in the text that Catholic associations need to be strengthened, for these associations "can contribute in many ways to the building up of a peaceful and fraternal community of nations" (GS, 90). Paul VI, accompanied by five cardinals representing the five continental areas, brings his message of peace to the assembly of the United Nations with the slogan "*jamais plus la guerre* (war never again)."

Peace and development are made realities with the involvement of everyone, in a world where non-Catholics are the majority. *Gaudium et spes* is for all people: non-Catholic Christians (on the part of whom Paul VI brought a message to the U.N., also at the behest of Patriarch Athénagoras); "all who acknowledge God, and who preserve in their traditions precious elements of religion and humanity"; humanists, "those who cultivate outstanding qualities of the human spirit."<sup>17</sup> The difficulty, as the theologian Giuseppe Colombo observes, is found precisely in the universal destination of the text, and not in its being addressed to other Churches or to other Christians. This is an innovative perspective, which was merely hinted at in the past. Pius XI, in the Encyclical *Caritate Christi* of 1932, had invited believers of every religion to confront together the problem of atheistic Communism. John XXIII, in addressing all "people of good will" with regard to peace and the social

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<sup>15</sup> *Storia del concilio Vaticano II, cit.*, vol. V p. 188.

<sup>16</sup> GS, 80.

<sup>17</sup> GS, 92.

question, held that cooperation with non-believers or believers of other religions was legitimate. The Council speaks not only with its magisterial authority, but with what Paul VI called the “experience of humanity.” Christians and non-Christians alike share a common destiny in a world marked by the need to live together: the people of God, says the Constitution, “can provide no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with, as well as its respect and love for, the entire human family with which it is bound up” (GS, 3).

In this regard, *Gaudium et spes* advances the new method of “dialogue”, proposed by Paul VI in his programmatic Encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*: “The Church becomes word; the Church becomes message; the Church becomes dialogue,” the Pope wrote. But in the Encyclical, dialogue is staunchly connected to the renewed affirmation of the identity of the Christian and of the Church, which is found in the first part of the document and in the other texts of the Council. We must remember (despite my desire to avoid looking at the contribution made to the text by Karol Wojtyła), how this young prelate suggests the category of “presence” for speaking of the Church in the world. There is undoubtedly a transition—which became enthusiastic in the years following the Council—from a time marked by opposing positions (we can think of that contrary to the communist world) to a period of coming closer together, of cooperation and of dialogue. For Jacques Maritain, to whom *Gaudium et spes* owes much (and to whom Pope Paul VI at the end of the Council entrusts the message for intellectuals), this is “a kind of kneeling down in front of the world that is manifested in a thousand ways”: the error arises from the concept of “world”.

Paul VI had already raised the problem of the “world”: “The fact that we are distinct from the world”, he says in *Ecclesiam suam*, “does not mean that we are entirely separated from it. Nor does it mean that we are indifferent to it, afraid of it, or contemptuous of it. When the Church distinguishes herself from humanity, she does so not in order to oppose it, but to come closer to it” (ES, 63). This opposing position relative to the world was less real in concrete reality than it was said to be. Catholics were very close to others on many different paths, and above all they lived with others: from American society marked by religious pluralism, to cooperation in Western Europe in the areas of politics and unions, to the coexistence with other religions in Lebanon, to cite just a few examples. It was necessary to give reasons for complex paths of coexistence and cooperation that begin well before Vatican II. The word “dialogue” offered a category in which one could think about these paths that continued for decades.

The Constitution had an important significance: the overcoming of contempt for the world, which, more than from an ascetic attitude arising from *de contemptu mundi* of Innocent III, arose from a kind of minority or Manichaeistic flight, as Maritain says: “the pendulum suddenly swung to the opposite extreme, to an almost Manichaeistic contempt for the world professed in the Christian ghetto”. Another aspect is found here (which I cannot dwell upon), the use of the world, understood as human and material resources: “Throughout the course of the centuries, men have labored to better the circumstances of their lives through a monumental amount of individual and collective effort . . . this human activity accords with God’s will.”<sup>18</sup> The reflections on the economy—which, as Michel Novak noted in 1994, are obviously dated because the economic world has undergone profound change since 1965<sup>19</sup>—can be ascribed to this chapter. Nonetheless, certain instances (such as the universal destination of the goods of the earth) represent long-term affirmations that come from the far past and are destined to remain. If the Constitution has been criticized because of a certain optimism concerning development, I believe that the value seen in human work must also be attributed to this optimism: the commitment to the prosperity of the human race (far removed from any Manichaeistic contempt) is connected to peace.

Nonetheless, *Gaudium et spes* does not intend to be a *Magna Carta* of the social involvement of the Church or of Catholics. It is not a social catechism. We could speak of themes purposely not dealt with by *Gaudium et spes*: the absolute condemnation of war and nuclear weapons; communism; birth control (an intervention which Paul VI reserved to himself and which he will make three years later in *Humanae vitae*). We have already said something about the first theme: *Gaudium et spes* has taken a step forward in limiting the possibilities for war, in line with the twentieth century Magisterium, but it does not espouse the position seeking the abolition of nuclear weapons. With regard to communism, we take into account the condemnations particularly of Pius XI and Pius XII (even if Benedict XV’s pragmatic attempt at negotiation between the Vatican and Soviet power, interrupted in 1926, must not be forgotten). Atheism is treated at length in the document, its oppressive forms are condemned (“they vigorously fight against religion, and promote atheism by using, especially in the education of youth, those means of pressure which public power has at its disposal”,

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<sup>18</sup> GS, 34.

<sup>19</sup> M. Novak, *L’etica cattolica e lo spirito del capitalismo*, Edizioni di Comunità, Milano 1994, p. 82; pp. 159 ss.

(GS, 20). It is considered a serious human problem, it is sometimes also seen as the fruit of the errors of believers; nonetheless, an offer of prudent dialogue with it is made. An explicit condemnation of communism is found only in a note of the text, which cites magisterial documents. In reality, 454 Council Fathers had asked for the condemnation of communism and their request fell unceremoniously into the Council's endless red tape. This theme is of particular importance. John XXIII had begun a draft of Eastern policies that Paul VI intended to continue. There is the more or less explicit commitment with the Russian Orthodox Church (which sent observers to Vatican II) to refrain from condemnations that could embarrass the Soviets. There is the desire to avoid a Council of condemnations, as expressed by John XXIII in *Gaudet mater ecclesia*. The absence of condemnations is a break with the general orientations of the twentieth century, with the 1949 excommunication of Communists, with the denunciation of the persecutions against what was called the "Church of silence". Cardinal Tisserant, a member of the Curia who was very attentive to the danger of communism in the years following the war (he had met with Metropolitan Nikodim to negotiate the Russian presence at the Council), writes to Paul VI: "Anathemas have never converted anyone". In *Ecclesiam suam*, Paul VI had written: "The voice we raise against them is more the complaint of a victim than the sentence of a judge" (ES, 101). In a restricted meeting on the Constitution in the Pope's study, "agreement is made not to renew expressly the condemnation of communism, but to say in the report that the errors of communism have already been condemned . . . and if the question is explicitly avoided for now, this is to avoid political interpretations."<sup>20</sup>

In the text we catch a fleeting glimpse—but I wish to underline it—of the idea that this is a time of persecution for the Church, almost in the sense of the new martyrs that Karol Wojtyła had already spoken of: "Many martyrs have given luminous witness to this faith and continue to do so."<sup>21</sup> The statement is added afterwards: "The Church admits that she has greatly profited and still profits from the antagonism of those who oppose or who persecute her."<sup>22</sup> Karol Wojtyła, preaching Paul VI's 1976 spiritual retreat, observes: "We live in an era in which the whole world proclaims freedom of conscience and religious freedom, and also in an era in which the fight against religion, which is defined 'the opium of the people', is taken up in such a way so as not to create—as far as possible—new martyrs". He adds: "It also seems that the

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<sup>20</sup> G. Turbanti, *Un Concilio per il mondo moderno*, cit., pp. 774-775.

<sup>21</sup> GS, 21.

<sup>22</sup> GS, 44.

means most necessary for creating this 'paradise on earth' is found in depriving man of the strength that he draws from Christ."<sup>23</sup> For Karol Wojtyła it was important to demand religious freedom, convinced as he was that communism was not humanism.

While I cannot touch here upon all the fundamental themes dealt with in the Constitution, it would be sufficient to think of the family, to which a first chapter is dedicated, considering it among the most urgent problems (together with peace, culture, the economy and politics). I underline only the fact that the reflections on the family lead to the affirmation of a specific anthropological point of view of the Catholic Church. In fact, with *Gaudium et spes* the Church places herself in line with the central themes of world development. The Church—this emerges from the Constitution—feels that she has a great contribution to make to the modern world. Mention is made of the economy, solidarity, even human rights (this is a theme that is forcefully re-proposed in the first years of John Paul II's pontificate). But, in this perspective, the Church does not become a social agency. Significantly, in a note there is a citation from Pius XI: "We must never lose sight of the fact that the Church's objective is to evangelize and not to civilize. If she civilizes it is by means of evangelization". We read in the Constitution: "The Church, therefore, by virtue of the Gospel committed to her, proclaims the rights of man; she acknowledges and greatly esteems the dynamic movements of today by which these rights are everywhere fostered. Yet these movements must be penetrated by the spirit of the Gospel and protected against any kind of false autonomy."<sup>24</sup>

*Gaudium et spes* represents a landing-place for the many questions experienced in the twentieth century, with a text that cannot define everything but that gathers together, makes connections and shines the light of a perspective of the Church's presence in the world. It would be very interesting to see how the Constitution has been received. This is a story that I do not have time to deal with here. Certainly, there was an initial hot season, that of immediate reception permeated also by the movement of 1968, criticized by Maritain as "kneeling down", which nonetheless shows the enthusiasm with which the document was received: *From Anathema to Dialogue*, this was the title of a volume published after the end of the Council, with texts of the theologian Metz and of the Marxist Garaudy. There was a successive period in which the Constitution was considered as not particularly radical or clear (as

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<sup>23</sup> K. Wojtyła, *Segno di contraddizione*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1977, pp. 217-218.

<sup>24</sup> GS, 41.

Dossetti observes), and incapable of offering suitable solutions to the world's great problems; at the same time a traditionalist critique considers it the *Magna Carta* of the reduction of the Church to an humanitarian agency. With John Paul II, *Gaudium et spes* becomes a platform on which rests not only part of his teaching but above all the background of his action.

In fact, *Gaudium et spes* offers an historical perspective, or rather, *the* historical perspective; in the vision of this document the Church declares that she lives within the problems of history, that she is not far-removed but is a companion: history is not only tradition but is also contemporariness. Not everything can be said and *Gaudium et spes* does not say or resolve everything: "It is an encyclopaedia!", Paul VI said to Hauptmann who showed him the draft in February 1965.<sup>25</sup> The structure of *Gaudium et spes*, beyond the individual discussions of the various problems, remains a permanent intellectual and pastoral structure of Christian thought and life from the second half of the twentieth century to the twenty-first century. It is no longer possible to speak of the Church without raising the problems, the situations and the contexts of the modern world. It is the life-breath of a great Church that knows she is not a small community closed in on herself, but that is also aware of her duty to live with others who are religiously and culturally different. We cannot speak of the Church without an historical perspective and a modern perspective. There is also an institutional consequence in taking on the perspective of *Gaudium et spes*: the creation of "Iustitia et Pax" for an activity that is distinct from Vatican diplomacy and different from the pastoral mission of other Curial offices. The Church has become more actively involved in the modern world under numerous aspects: not only pastorally, but also culturally; not only politically, but also in the perspective of solidarity. She has shown the profound connection between the Gospel and human freedom, but also the real connection between the Gospel and human suffering, in that intermingling of freedom and suffering, of dependence and aspiration for freedom which is the modern world. At the end of 1965, Cardinal Franziskus Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna and eminent active participant in the Council, held a conference in Rome on *The Council and the World's Spiritual Powers* in which he declared: "This Council has moreover been . . . an example of spiritual freedom, such as would be sought vainly in this world; also spiritually it was so uniform and well-organized. There were no tabus in this Council; personal agendas were absent; no question was avoided. . . . Where does there exist in the

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<sup>25</sup> G. Turbanti, *Un Concilio per il mondo moderno*, cit., p. 558 ss.



world an institution that can allow itself to engage in such free discussion? Despite the sincerity, even in the tenacious support of opposing concepts, unity was never placed in danger.”<sup>26</sup>

Some have emphasized how the political and social culture of *Gaudium et spes* are now outdated. There have undoubtedly been transient elements in the language used to describe certain problems, but the decisive backdrop remains: the Church in the perspective of our history. This is a Church that deals with the history of peoples and individuals in the awareness of being the bearer of a message. Maritain understands well the conviction underlying the Pastoral Constitution: “In the era that our civilization has attained, the Church will become ever more . . . the refuge and support (perhaps the only refuge and support) of the person.”<sup>27</sup> *Gaudium et spes* was considered to be outdated in the course of just a few years; in reality, it is destined to a much longer life than was thought. This is what Paul VI said to Father Hauptmann, on 20 May 1965, when the drafting process of *Gaudium et spes* was coming to its conclusion: “Much time is needed for things to mature. In the day of the atomic bomb also, the one who gathers is not the one who sows. Sometimes we would like to gather even without having sown. Thus, some observers are gentler than in the first session, but that’s normal; from their contact with us, they become aware of the differences and vice-versa. What we do far surpasses our persons.”<sup>28</sup>

We are here to follow once more the path of this sowing!

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<sup>26</sup> F. Koenig, *Il Concilio e le potenze spirituali del mondo*, in “Studi Romani”, gennaio-marzo 1966, pp. 1-16. Studi Romani, January-March 1966.

<sup>27</sup> J. Maritain, *Il contadino della Garonna*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1977, p. 82.

<sup>28</sup> G. Turbanti, *Un Concilio per il mondo moderno*, *cit.*, pp 606.



# Catholic Social Thought as Discernment

Johan Verstraeten

The pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* is a landmark in the development of Catholic social teaching. It has not only confirmed and developed the person-oriented approach introduced by Pope John XXIII in *Mater et magistra* (1961), but it also has adopted his concept *i signi dei tempi* or *signa temporum*<sup>1</sup> (signs of the times) as a methodological basis for the teaching of the magisterium: “The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.”<sup>2</sup>

Taking into account the authority of *Gaudium et spes* as pastoral constitution of an ecumenical council, these words can be considered *de iure* as the methodological point of departure for the further development of the Church’s official social teaching and it has paved the way towards a more open attitude in which social analysis and diversity of contexts are taken into account.

The question, however, is whether this open method has become the *de facto* heart of the matter, particularly when we take into consideration the reinterpretation of Catholic social teaching by Pope John Paul II as a “doctrine.” Despite his insistence on the unity of the vision the answer might be positive.

In his social encyclicals, this Pope leaves no doubt about the nature of the social teaching of the Catholic Church as belonging “to the field . . . of theology and particularly of moral theology.”<sup>3</sup> This theological in-

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<sup>1</sup> He used this expression for the first time in his apostolic constitution *Humanae Salutis* announcing Vatican II on December 25, 1961; cf. A.A.S. 54 (1962), 12. It was repeated as “signa temporum” in *Pacem in terris* no. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 4 (hereafter cited in text as GS).

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus annus* (1991), no. 55 (hereafter cited in text as CA, with references to section numbers); John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), no. 41 (hereafter cited in text as SRS, with references to section numbers).

terpretation is articulated in mainly two ways. First, by way of clarifying that the human person and his or her dignity have to be understood in light of the redemption of humankind through Christ “whose mystery of love and justice renews the earth.”<sup>4</sup> This focus on the redemptive mode implies a greater pessimism with regards to the world than was the case during the Second Vatican Council. Secondly, the theological focus is present in the contention that the Church has to be interpreted as a radical community of witness. But at least in one regard, this theological turn, which has enriched and radicalized Catholic social thought substantially, needs further clarification.

Although like his predecessors, John Paul II formally acknowledges the role of analysis and of social sciences as “helpful for interpreting man’s central place within society and for enabling him to understand himself better as a ‘social being’ . . .” he also gives the impression to interpret their role as quite secondary, since he immediately adds to his acknowledgment that “man’s true identity is only fully revealed to him through faith” and that “it is precisely from faith that the church social teaching begins” (CA, 54).

Without further clarification this *solâ fide* can easily be misinterpreted. It urges us to elucidate again the methodological link between theological interpretation and social analysis. The basic question in this regard is: How can we ensure that the “faith” perspective does not end up as an abstract “doctrine” disconnected from real life? The Pope himself is clearly aware of this problem in as far as he has repeatedly confirmed that his teaching is not dealing with the “abstract” person, but with the real, concrete, historical person. Due attention to the nuances of the problem is necessary in order to avoid over-simplification and to ensure that the complexities of the answer are adequately dealt with.

While it is fine for the Church to enunciate ethical principles and inspiring ideals, it is also a challenge to bring those ideals to birth in the concrete social, economic, and political circumstances of individuals

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<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis* (1979), no. 9 (hereafter cited in text as RH, with references to section numbers). I will not elaborate on this since I have worked it out in other articles. See for example J. Verstraeten, “Solidarity and Subsidiarity,” in David A. Bolieu, *Principles of Catholic Social Teaching*, Marquette Studies in Theology, 14 (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1994), pp. 133-47.

and communities<sup>5</sup> and to do this without neglecting the theological meaning of discernment as articulated by *Gaudium et spes*. Indeed, subtleties of mediation between these two are required. Classically, they may take the form of either “middle level thinking” (based on an articulation of the dignity of the human person and the common good in terms of solidarity, subsidiarity, and justice)<sup>6</sup> or the form of the three mediations of liberation theology (socio-analytic, hermeneutic and practical mediation), which are an elaboration and radicalization of the “see, judge, act” method. But whatever concrete form this mediation takes, both cases require a more fundamental clarification about the particular meaning of Catholic social thought understood by Vatican II as discernment.

I will try to demonstrate that despite John Paul II’s use of the term “doctrine,” there is still an understanding of Catholic social teaching possible as social discernment. It is possible to do this by linking his social *teaching* to the broader *tradition of thought and action* of which his teaching is a particular articulation.<sup>7</sup> By way of reinterpreting and reconnecting the teaching of John Paul II to the broader methodological framework opened by Vatican II, I assume the duty of the moral theologian to be an “agent of memory” who links the present to a significant past—the “shared understandings” of which risk becoming marginalized today.

### **The Primacy of Social Witness**

Many comments on *Centesimus annus* have mainly focused on the Pope’s opinion about the fall of communism or his innovative approach to capitalism or both. But most commentators have overlooked one of the most notable statements John Paul II has ever made: “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

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<sup>5</sup> Vivian Boland, review of Jonathan S. Boswell, Frank P. McHugh, Johan Verstraeten, *Catholic Social Thought: Twilight or Renaissance?* (Leuven: Peeters/University Press, 2000), p. XVII.

<sup>6</sup> Middle level thinking is the reflection with which one connects Christian anthropology and general notions of complex solidarity, subsidiarity, justice, and options for the poor to ideas for policy. Cf. Boswell, McHugh, and Verstraeten, introduction to *Catholic Social Thought: Twilight or Renaissance* p. XVII.

<sup>7</sup> Although I talk here about the methodological option of Vatican II, this does not mean that discernment can be reduced to a “method,” it is more a fundamental attitude of incarnated faith life that seeks to understand its implications for real life as well as the challenges experienced in life for faith.

consistency.” This awareness, he continues, “is a source of her preferential option for the poor” (CA, 57).

The focus on action and witnessing characterizes the whole of John Paul II’s social teaching. Since the beginning of his pontificate and particularly in his encyclicals *Redemptor hominis* and *Dives in misericordia*, he has continuously pleaded for a revitalization of the role of the Church as a community of witness, a community that is not simply a defender of abstract truths about the human person, but a living body of Christ, whose mission it is to be of service to the world (RH, 13), and to make human life on earth “more human” in all its aspects (RH, 15). Despite his reintroduction of the term doctrine, he is confirming the basic intuition of *Gaudium et spes* according to which Catholic social thought is an articulation of the historical and practical response of the Church to “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men [people] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted” (GS, 1).

Catholic social thought is, indeed, a theoretical reflection as articulation of the transformative presence of the Church in the world. Before any abstract reasoning, there is a commitment to life and humanity, and the embodiment of this commitment in real acts is the litmus test of the credibility of the Church’s social teaching.

The General Synod of Bishops on Justice (1971) has interpreted this radically in terms of “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world” as a “constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”<sup>8</sup> It has been confirmed in a more nuanced way by *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975)—so often quoted by John Paul II—and even recently by the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church issued by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004).

Any project aimed at understanding the nature of Catholic social thought must start from the historical presence of millions of Christians in the world operating through a cluster of social movements,

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<sup>8</sup> Synod of Catholic Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971, section 6. Misunderstandings about these words have led to a reinterpretation of the link between action for justice in terms of “profound links” in *Evangelii nuntiandi*. The misunderstanding was, however, not caused by the original text but by its translation in German and Dutch in which constitutive was interpreted as “essential.”

charitable institutions, and actions for justice. Their commitment to the humanization of the world and the common good starts (or should start) from the experience of the poor, the excluded, the exploited, the unemployed, the victims of direct or structural violence—all the women and men whose cry for justice and peace is often not heard by the powers of the world, and whose basic needs are often not met by merciless markets or corrupt state bureaucracies.

One of the most striking characteristics of movements involved in the development of Catholic social thought is their amazing diversity. They represent a variety of forms: from Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker Movement to the organizers of the meeting of the other globalists in Porto Alegre; from grassroots movements in rural areas to social workers in the slums of the big cities; from people who give assistance in refugee camps of Eastern Africa to participants in the empowerment movements of the Dalit in India; from care centers for the homeless in New York City to trade union activists in Korea; from the peace efforts of Pax Christi to diplomatic breakthroughs by new communities such as Sant Egidio; from groups arguing for debt relief to groups reflecting upon job creation or sustainable development; from the European social movements to the American Center of Concern; from Catholics involved in the development of professional ethics or business to Catholics who criticize the power of the professions and of multinational corporations. In and through a wide variety of social movements, as well as via the participation of Catholics in humanizing secular movements, Catholicism reveals the best of itself. The end result is that the Catholic social tradition is more than a collection of official documents and even more than a tradition of thought. As the real history of social movements show, it "includes the prophets and activists, thinkers and analysts who wrestled with the meaning of Christian faith amid turbulent social times."<sup>9</sup>

This wrestling in order to detect the theological meaning of emerging history is a matter of discernment and the starting point of a reflection by theorists and scholars who try to understand and articulate the experience and concerns of the movements in light of official Catholic social teaching, the Gospel, and social sciences. This reflection is "non-

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<sup>9</sup> Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Mystic, CN: Twenty-Third Publications, 2000), p. 1.

official Catholic social thought” that together with the official teaching constitutes the social tradition of the Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup>

### **Discernment and Scrutinizing the Signs of the Times**

Starting from the Church’s insertion in the process of transformation of the world, *Gaudium et spes* has adequately assessed the Catholic social teaching as discernment. In this regard, the words “scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in light of the Gospel” are constitutive.

Scrutinizing and understanding the signs of the times does not start from an abstract or apparently ‘neutral’ perspective, because social discernment is based on a commitment: being linked “with humankind and its history by the deepest of bonds” (GS, 1), the people of God is called to contribute to the humanization of the world in view of the coming of the kingdom of God. But this is not an easy task, since it confronts the Church with the real ambivalence of history—a history characterized by both positive trends and destructive developments, by a tension field between life-giving forces and tendencies leading to a culture of death. Such positive developments can be soteriologically confirmed and articulated as *signs of the times* anticipating the kingdom of God, which is on earth “already present in mystery” (GS, 48). But what does such an interpretation of particular tendencies as signs of the times mean? The first task is negative and critical, since negative tendencies must be unmasked (see point 4 on semantic vigilance). The second task is positive, since developments that really contribute to more humanity can be interpreted as significant indicators of the coming of the kingdom of God.

In both cases, theological interpretation must be mediated by careful analysis and ethical reflection. Judgements on the world cannot be merely made on the basis of faith alone.<sup>11</sup> Indeed as a “continuing learning process” (Nell Breuning), social discernment requires both social analysis and an interpretation of the facts in the light of the Gospel.

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<sup>10</sup> For an elucidation of the relation between catholic social thought and catholic social teaching see Johan Verstraeten, “Rethinking Catholic Social Thought as Tradition,” in Boswell, McHugh, and Verstraeten, *Catholic Social Thought: Twilight or Renaissance?*, pp. 59-78. Author: Again, please confirm the text we have inserted here.

<sup>11</sup> For a reflection on this problem see Johan De Tavernier, “Eschatology and Social Ethics,” in Louis Janssens, Joseph A. Selling, and Franz Böckle, *Personalist Morals: Essays in Honor of Professor Louis Janssens* (Leuven: Peeters/University Press, 1988), p. 279-300.



Without the perspective of faith, social analysis lacks depth or it runs the risk of being disturbed by ideological biases.<sup>12</sup> This is as important as acknowledging that without social analysis the faith perspective loses touch with reality or leads to the construction of a world of pious ideas, which is more an expression of social alienation than a solution to it. Indeed, “a vision must track the contours of reality; it has to have accuracy, and not simply imagination or appeal,”<sup>13</sup> but it must remain a vision.

One of the most significant articulations of the role of social analysis is *Octogesima adveniens* no. 4 in which Pope Paul VI acknowledges the impossibility of uttering as pope a unified message in which he would put forward a solution that (as the text literally says) would be “in congruity with all local situations” (*qua solutio, omnibus locus congruens, proponatur*). His response to that problem is clear: It is up to the Christian communities [a clear reference to the integral ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* chapter II] to analyze (*perscrutentur*) with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel’s unalterable words and to draw *principles of reflection* (*principia cogitandi*), *norms of judgment* (*iudicandi normas*) and *directives for action* (*regulas operandi*) from the social teaching of the Church. . . . It is up to these Christian communities [in other words, it is not only the task of the magisterium or of bishops’ conferences, although in communion with them], with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops who hold responsibility and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of good will [ecumenical perspective and open attitude towards secular movements], to discern (*discernere*) the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed. The last sentence confirms again how much Catholic social thought is practical. It is not a self-referential theory but a method responding to real needs and aiming at real historical change. This change requires an analysis guided by the triad of “principles, norms, and directives.”

But as was already pointed out, analysis in itself is not sufficient. As much as social analysis is required to complete judgements made in faith, so a faith perspective is needed to complete social analysis. What does an “interpretation in the light of the Gospel” mean in this regard?

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Octogesima adveniens*, no. 38-40.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 24.

### **In the Light of the Gospel: The Role of Narrative and Vision**

Biblical stories, and particularly the Gospel are more than a reservoir of citations that can be used as illustration of moral insights. They are also more than texts that are a sort of historical testimony of Christian thinking in the first stage of its development, as MacIntyre suggests.<sup>14</sup> On the contrary, Christian social movements as well as Catholic social thought have a living hermeneutic relationship with biblical texts. Their commitment is even rooted in a continuing remembrance of the biblical narratives in liturgy or memorializing celebration. As Karen Lebacqz put it, “If the story is not told, justice will die.”

In order to elucidate the implications of this living relationship to the texts of the bible in general and to the gospel in particular, we can refer to a most interesting answer given by Pope John Paul II himself, despite his rather restrictive interpretation of the method of *Gaudium et spes* in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* as an “accurate formulation [by the magisterium of the Church] of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence.” In the same context (SRS, 41), he demonstrates a clear understanding of what the semantic innovation through interpreting biblical texts means, more precisely by contending that Catholic social teaching possesses not only the task of *condemning* actual injustices in the light of an adequately understood concept of human dignity but also of *proclaiming a meaningful new future* (SRS, 42).

Indeed, something new is announced—a vision that opens our closed hermeneutic horizon, a vision that stimulates our imagination and allows us to discover new and unexpected possibilities for change. This is not simply from our own perspective, but from the perspective of God. To put it in the words of one of the martyrs of our time, Archbishop Romero, “We are prophets of a future that is not our own.”<sup>15</sup>

This visionary aspect does not mean (as Elsbernd and Bieringer rightly contend) that the Church proposes something completely foreign to human experience. On the contrary, since the vision is “already present in human longings, desires, and hopes.”<sup>16</sup> In a pre-reflexive

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<sup>14</sup> My interpretation of Paul Ricoeur is mainly influenced by Alain Thomasset, *Paul Ricoeur, Une poétique de la morale* (Leuven: Peeters/University Press, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Mary Elsbernd, Reimund Bieringer, *When Love is Not Enough: A Theo-Ethic of Justice* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), p. 156 note 20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 155.

way, it is suggested by way of negative contrast experiences. These are experiences in which the negativity implicitly suggests something of the dream of what is or ought to be human.

But this requires a further articulation in a more substantial vision, as well as an understanding according to which the vision is not only a confirmation of what we already know about ourselves—it also produces something new. There is semantic innovation. The dialectic of the already known and not yet known is particularly present in the biblical metaphors (also in their predicative form of stories), which do not only express what people experience but also suggest new meanings and new perspectives on reality.<sup>17</sup> The biblical narratives offer “generative metaphors” that contribute to a vision about the not yet.<sup>18</sup> This vision reveals the paradoxical character of social discernment: the Church functions as *sacramentum mundi*, as an inspiring and healing force in the concrete history of women and men, in so far as on the one hand, she is fully *connected* with the world, and on the other hand, she marks a *difference* by way of *interrupting* time-bound hermeneutic schemes (particularly by way of proclaiming new life). To put it in the words of Elsbernd and Bieringer: “vision is not an extension of present possibilities into the future, but rather the future reaching out to meet the present as an annunciation of something more or as a disjunction from what is.”<sup>19</sup> One of the consequences is that there will always be an inevitable creative friction between vision as source of renewal and reality. One could even say more: precisely because the Christian vision (although not alien to human experience) is different from merely secu-

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<sup>17</sup> Biblical stories do not simply tell us something about the past, they open a new world of meaning and make a semantic and practical innovation possible. Particularly, the metaphors play a crucial role here. They not only function on the denominational level of words, but also as *predicative metaphors*: they function on a level of predication in the broader context of sentence or text. As such, biblical narratives function as metaphors. Together with extravagant and eccentric elements, they create a metaphoric tension between everyday life and the extravagant world of the narrative (cf. Paul Ricoeur).

<sup>18</sup> In order to understand stories and metaphors, particularly the biblical ones, Christians need not only to be initiated into reading the bible but into reading texts in general. In order to learn to discover new meaning one must learn to interpret and disclose texts, which is a matter, not of memorizing facts about texts or their authors, but of initiation in the art of reading. Therefore, courses on literature and on how to interpret reality and enrich our imagination are, as Martha Nussbaum has demonstrated in *Poetic Justice*, more necessary than ever. Without initiation in literature, the closing of the mind becomes a real danger in a world in which language, in general, becomes so impoverished by instrumental rationality and utility criteria that life itself loses meaning, since we are language animals.

<sup>19</sup> Elbernd, Bieringer, *When Love is Not Enough*, p. 156.

lar interpretations of reality, it is capable of semantically enriching secular thinking. In this regard, Charles Curran's thesis about a dual audience in Catholic social thinking is not fully adequate. He makes a distinction between Christian communities and the secular world. In the first case, the community of Christians can express its own distinctiveness and refer to the Gospels; in the second case, a more general and rational language can and must be used.<sup>20</sup> Far from denying the utility and necessity of a universal language or of one or other form of natural law thinking (including a human rights discourse), one cannot prevent such a dualization from making it impossible to assess the particular challenge that Christian thinking can be for a secular society, as a source of semantic and practical innovation. Insights that are universal and thus valid for each are not unhistorical, as if they were merely a matter of abstract and "thin" principles. The universal gets continuous meaning from particular traditions that provide the thin categories with meaning. What today is not yet considered as "universal," can become universally acknowledged as reasonable under the influence of an enriched understanding of our own humanity via the semantic and practical innovation stimulated by our hermeneutic relation to narrative texts. In this perspective, it is precisely through the distinctiveness of her social vision that the Church realizes her universality, as the following examples illustrate:

- Palliative care, as a completion of the normal medical treatment of terminally ill patients, is now acknowledged generally as a valid and meaningful practice, although it originally was generated in a faith context.
- New practices in diplomacy, based on a Christian vision of reconciliation are successfully practiced and have ended hopeless conflicts such as the civil war in Mozambique. What twenty years ago was unthinkable is now generally acknowledged by scholars as a meaningful innovation of classic diplomacy.<sup>21</sup>
- Non-combatant immunity. An interesting example is the reflection of Grotius in *De Iure Belli ac Pacis*.<sup>22</sup> According to this father of

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891–Present: A Historical, Theological and Ethical Analysis* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002) *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Luc Reychler, "Religion and Conflict," in *International Journal of Peace Studies* 2 no. 1 (1997): pp. 19-38 and R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred. Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> I follow here the description of Grotius thought by James Turner Johnson, *Ideology, Reason and the Limitation of War: Religious and Secular Concepts, 1200-1740* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 222-26.

international law, there seems to be in “nature” (before Christianity) very few restraints on the prosecution of war against non-combatants. “Enemies,” including women and children, may be taken prisoner and any prisoner may be killed (with one exception imposed by the *jus gentium*: they may not be put to death by poison). The winner has the right to decide about life and death just like a master decides about his slaves. But what “nature” allows is not Grotius’s last word: In the Christian world, charity commands to temper violence and to behave more humanely. Some elements of moderation are also present in the *jus gentium* and in other religions, but Christianity brings to perfection what is present in imperfect form in their war ethics. On the one hand, Grotius maintains a distinction between the requirement of charity and the reasonability of modesty (or as Grotius says, “moderation”). Via charity, nature is made more perfect, and charity generates a special sensitivity to the dictates of nature (a sensitivity that only those who have charity possess). But on the other hand, the requirement to moderate violence is accessible to all men through the conscientious use of right reason. Thus, in a certain sense one could say that, despite the formal distinction between the requirements of charity and reason, charity commands what every reasonable person finally will accept as the most reasonable option.

These examples demonstrate that Christian ideas and practices can be the source of universal ideas and practices, even though they appear at first glance as particular. In this regard, the kenotic vision of human dignity in the light of the cross can acquire a universal meaning. Renouncing your own rights in order to make room for the rights of others is not an obvious attitude. Nevertheless, as Klaus Demmer argues, the perspective of the cross can lead to a better understanding of the human person and his or her universal nature “under the conditions of a kenotic existence.”<sup>23</sup>

The story of the suffering of Christ also urges us to see with new eyes and to look at the achievements of markets or political powers from the perspective of the victims of history. It enables us to acknowledge, as the French bishops wrote, that “society has the face of its victims” and

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<sup>23</sup> Klaus Demmer, “Naturrecht und Offenbarung,” in Franz Furger, Marianne Heimbach-Steins, Andreas Lienkamp, and Joachim Wiemeyer (Hrsg.), *Brennpunkt Sozialethik: Theorien, Aufgaben, Methoden* (Freiburg in Breisgau, Germany: Herder, 1995), p. 42.

this face is real. In this regard, the option for the poor, understood as a particular commitment of the Church to see things from the side of the poor and to assess lifestyles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor, gets universal meaning. It opens the eyes of the world to a forgotten dimension of human life; it contributes to a more universal consciousness of what it means to be humane.

This is of the utmost importance for one of the often neglected carriers of the social commitment of the Church—universities. Even in a culture of functional differentiation and disconnection between the different scientific disciplines, there must be something that orients the disciplines again to their fundamental end: contributing to making the world more human. Universities need a vision on the dignity of the human person, based not only on what the sciences or philosophy teach but also on the kenotic understanding of it in the light of the Gospel. This understanding mobilizes imagination, moves beyond fragmentation, reconnects, and leads to building a human future—not merely designed for self-interest, but for the common good. It produces inspiration for research in the field of job creation, rethinking the international monetary system, alleviating poverty, rethinking intellectual property in light of the common destination of the goods, and so on. For departments of economics, social sciences, and business there is plenty of work to do in that regard.

### **Semantic Vigilance**

Catholic social thought not only produces semantic innovation but also a semantic vigilance: it adopts a critical attitude towards all sorts of perversion of meaning. By disclosing a *different* hermeneutic horizon, powerful enough to break open the narrow hermeneutic horizon of the time in which we live, biased or ideological interpretations and misrepresentations of reality can be unmasked, such as misrepresentations flowing from the dominance of instrumental rationality, disconnection, mental walls, and the bifurcation of the world in terms of a clash of civilizations.

One of the most urgent tasks in this regard is to challenge dominant root-metaphors that disturb an adequate perception of the world. The biblical root-metaphors that inspire Catholic social thought as theoretical reflection are a most useful tool in this regard. Root-metaphors are the most basic assumptions used to depict the nature of the world, society or experience:

The function of the root-metaphor is to suggest a primary way of looking at things or experience, and this way of looking at things assists us in building categories or in creating art forms that will express this insight. Our very notion of what is true and what is meaningful rests upon our underlying assumptions about the nature of reality. Without such assumptions knowledge would be impossible, for we would have no way of organising our perceptions into a coherent whole.<sup>24</sup>

A shift of metaphors implies a change in our perception of life and world.

For example, the Gospel inspires us to shift from the image of the invisible hand as root-metaphor for a society based on collective individualism (Robert Bellah), to the image of an invisible handshake, as root-metaphor of a society based on solidarity and justice. Such a new imagination leads to a fundamental reinterpretation of social theories and traditions such as the human rights tradition, which, as David Hollenbach has elucidated, can be transformed from a tradition based on the claims of individuals into a tradition that defends human rights as basic conditions for life-in-community-with-others.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most powerful perspectives in this regard is again the *Cross*—Calvary hangs over all of history. The *memoria passionis* opens our eyes to the tragedies of history. It warns against all sorts of aesthetic minimization of suffering (such as talking about minimal collateral damage caused by smart bombs or using words such as peace shields and nuclear “umbrella’s” that suggest something else than the cruel reality) or against a too optimistic and too linear interpretation of history. It urges us to pay not only attention to success stories, but also to the depths of human suffering into which our societies can descend; it warns against utopian ideas that can lead to catastrophic and irreversible decisions<sup>26</sup> or to centuries (such as the twentieth century) that are comparable with a road littered with corpses.<sup>27</sup> The dangerous memory of the Cross (which also opens as redemptive power a dangerous future, cf. Metz) finally urges the Church to fight against perversions of memory. It shapes a prophetic company of critics who remain

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 94-95.

<sup>25</sup> David Hollenbach, “A Communitarian Reconstruction of Human Rights,” in R. B. Douglass, David Hollenbach, *Catholicism and Liberalism: Contributions to American Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 127-50.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Peter Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo* (London: SCM, 2001).

vigilant with respect to meanings that risk being perverted by the logic of the market or technology.

Semantic *vigilance* vis-à-vis false representations of reality or ideologies makes us also vigilant vis à vis the influence of these ideologies on Catholic social teaching or Catholic social thought itself. Without a new imagination (inspired by deep remembrance or mediated by biblical texts and narratives), the Church—like any other establishment—runs the risk of becoming caught in the illusions of a certain era, in a mind blocking *status quo* thinking or even of becoming the guardian of the “established disorder” thinking and its legitimizations. This is the case when one tries to “hijack” Catholic social thought in order to use it as an instrument in service of particular interests (such as using it as a new ideological framework for capitalism or any other sort of ideology). Such an instrumentalization neglects the normativity of God’s future. We even need semantic vigilance vis à vis scientific research.

In this context, Catholic social thought can become a source of critical resistance against ideologies and biases that invade the university as an institution of research and education. This is, for example, the case when one treats a university as if it were nothing else than just another business organization or where fundamental research is neglected in view of immediate utility or where education and research are subjected to the instrumental rationality of the market (cf. Josef Pieper’s term “proletarianization of the intellectual” or the term “Taylorization of knowledge”). Against such tendencies, Christians can influence universities so that they become again centers of resistance, refusing any attempt to erode the meaning of a university as such. From a pedagogic view, universities can cease to be “education industries” and become centers of “life-enabling education” in which future professionals are prepared for a life in service of society.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

*Gaudium et spes* makes us aware that the words “scrutinizing the signs of the times” and “interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” imply that Catholic social teaching is more than an abstract doctrine. Starting from the experience of movements and as a result of a fundamental process of discernment, it can be an indispensable source of inspiration and critical thinking, leading even in an academic context to

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<sup>28</sup> See Robert Bellah et al., *The Good Society* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1991), ch. 5.



“educated attention to real needs of people and to a disciplined sensibility to human suffering.”<sup>29</sup> So Catholic social thought can inspire people at all levels of society to think differently and to act differently, knowing that a renewal of the earth ultimately depends on the conscious choices and commitments of individuals and institutions that practice their faith in the world. Such a perspective in no way contradicts the vision of John Paul II about the Church as a community of witness.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Michael Buckley, “The Search for a New Humanism: The University and the Concern for Justice,” in *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998). See also Johan Verstraeten, “L’enracinement spirituel de la citoyenneté. Un défi pour les universités catholiques”, in Vincent Engel, *L’université européenne, acteur de citoyenneté* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Bruylant, 1999), pp. 99-113.



# ***Gaudium et Spes* and Catholic Higher Education**

Justin Cardinal Rigali

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,<sup>1</sup> promulgated on December 7, 1965, the last day of the Second Vatican Council was indeed a great gift of the Council to the Church and to the world. And I would add: it was a special gift to Catholic higher education. This is so, I believe, because so much of the content of *Gaudium et spes* is linked to the aims of Catholic higher education and to what Catholic Universities are meant to be about. Therefore, I would like to present *Gaudium et spes* in its relevance to Catholic higher education.

So much of the flavor of this document is already present in the first sentence which reads: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, are also the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

This is a very lofty vision which, while expressing the outreach of the Church to the world, also can suggest the power of Catholic higher education to have a bearing on whatever intimately affects humanity. It shows to what degree the Council envisioned solidarity with all people. In this document the Church was proposing to speak to the world and to all humanity. She was proposing to tell the world how she conceives her own presence and activity in the midst of the world. At the same time the Church spelled out so much of what Catholic higher education can so appropriately reflect upon, aspire to and help bring about.

What is immediately apparent in the document is the continuity of its teaching. Much of its social content echoes the teaching of Leo XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII and John XXIII, especially the latter famous encyc-

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican II, 1965. *Gaudium et spes* (GS).

licals *Mater et magistra* and *Pacem in terris*. It is worth noting that the teaching of *Gaudium et spes* was so vigorously proclaimed and applied by Pope John Paul II during all the years of his pontificate. The document proposed to speak to all people in order to shed light on what it called the mystery of man. It was all about the human person, the individual, the community, the entire human family. It was concerned in cooperating to find true and just responses to the enormous challenges of our time, to the outstanding needs of our brothers and sisters. Is not Catholic higher education and all university life deeply involved in this?

It is useful to recall the document's two main divisions. Part I: The Church and Man's Calling. Part II: Some More Urgent Questions.

A general glance at the outline confirms an affinity with themes of Catholic higher education. The four chapters of Part I show this: 1) the dignity of the human person 2) the community of mankind 3) human activity throughout the world and 4) the mission of the Church in the modern world.

The same can be said of the five urgent questions treated in Part II: 1) the dignity of marriage and the family 2) the proper development of culture 3) socio-economic life 4) the life of the political community and 5) the promotion of peace and the community of peoples.

The first important question treated in the document is the dignity of the human person. This is basic to everything else in the document, everything else in the Church and in university life. This is presumed in everything that follows. Vatican II sees this dignity of the human person as being linked to the fact that the human person is created by God, redeemed by Christ and called to communion with God for all eternity. This was one of the favorite themes of John Paul II for the twenty-six and a half years of his pontificate. He was constantly inspired by this conciliar vision. In season and out of season, he proclaimed the dignity of the human person.

Linked to the dignity of the human person, however, are the ever relevant questions of conscience and human freedom. *Gaudium et spes* describes conscience, saying: "In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which he is bound to obey. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience can when necessary speak to his heart more specifically: Do this. Shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man. According to it he will be judged"

(GS, 16). If obedience to conscience is part of human dignity, then reflecting on it must touch the realm of Catholic universities.

Intimately linked to the theme of conscience is that of freedom. The Council insists that the dignity of the human being demands that he or she act according to a knowing and free choice, which excludes “new forms of social and psychological slavery” (no. 4). In effect, God wanted the human being to be able to say no precisely so that his or her yes would be authentic and meritorious. The dignity of the human person demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice. *Gaudium et spes* recognizes authentic freedom as “an exceptional sign of the divine image within man” (GS, 80).

Two other themes that vex the human spirit are likewise considered in this first chapter that concentrates on the human person: the question of death with its perennial mystery and the issue of atheism. The Council asserts that atheism must be counted among the more serious problems of this age and is deserving of closer examination. A key statement is found in *Gaudium et spes* 22, as *Gaudium et spes* relates its Christology to the human being with this bold assertion: The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on life; It gives a reason for this statement, adding: “By his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being.”

The vision of human dignity presented in chapter one is enlarged in chapter two to take into account the community of mankind, which is the family of God. Here the Council’s insights are deep and ever relevant. It says: “One of the salient features of the modern world is the growing interdependence of people on each other, a development very largely promoted by modern technological advancements” (GS, 23). It goes on to explain, however, that authentic dialogue among people does not reach its perfection on the level of technical progress but on the deeper level of interpersonal relationships. Here the Council is emphasizing the communitarian nature of the vocation of human beings as one family. It is speaking of the interdependence of individuals and society, with the goal of all social institutions remaining the human person. Human interdependence grows more tightly and the notion of the common good takes on an increasingly universal complexion involving rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. This interdependence and common good speak to us of the whole notion of universal solidarity.

Later on in *Gaudium et spes* we will find a remarkable text about the truth of our identity as human beings. It states: “We are witnesses of

the birth of a new humanism, one in which man is defined first of all by his responsibility to his brothers and sisters and toward history” (GS, 55). I submit that the birth of a new humanism is very much connected, whenever it occurs, with the activities of Catholic universities, and that the “new humanism” of Vatican II—the humanism of solidarity, indeed of being defined in relationship to others, must be an evangelical guiding light for the orientation of all Catholic higher education. What great dignity, what great responsibility, what a great mission is entrusted to the human person! And what service the university can fulfill in being a herald of this “new humanism”!

In 1987, in continuity with *Gaudium et spes*, Pope John Paul II amply developed the theme of solidarity and the act proper to it, which is collaboration, in his encyclical letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis*. Included in *Gaudium et spes* there had also been a splendid treatment of reverence for the human person. This emphasis by Vatican II was subsequently developed magnificently by John Paul II in his encyclical the Gospel of Life and in many other documents. Meanwhile, *Gaudium et spes* had given us a summary of what is opposed to this human dignity. It says: “Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self destruction; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as mere tools for profit rather than as free and responsible persons; all of this and the like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator” (GS, 27).

It was also to be expected that in speaking about human dignity and the essential equality of people the Council would reject “every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language, or religion” (GS, 29). Certainly every Catholic university must in every way possible bear evangelical witness to this essential equality.

The Council complained that fundamental personal rights are not yet universally honored as in “the case of a woman who is denied the right and freedom to choose a husband, to embrace a state of life or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men” (GS, 29).

Vatican II spoke intriguingly (cf. Part I, chapter 3) about the Church's religious and moral principles that derive from the heritage of God's word, but which do not always have at hand the solution to particular problems. *Gaudium et spes* admits clearly that it does not offer ready-made solutions to the many problems of the world, but rather sees the Gospel as the guide and source of principles that will respond to the issues of the modern world (GS, 33). In this way the Church scrutinizes the signs of the times, interpreting them in the light of the Gospel (GS, 4). Surely Catholic universities are called to do the same, striving to respond to perennial questions, without at the same time having simplistic solutions to every problem. Gospel principles in the life of the Church are crystal clear, but their application involves prayer and openness to the Spirit of Truth.

In treating the mission of the Church in the modern world (cf. Part I, chapter 4), *Gaudium et spes* expresses the conviction that the Church believes that she can contribute greatly toward making the human family and its history more human. The Church holds in high esteem and values the contribution of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities and of all human society. A special part of the Church's mission is to proclaim all human rights. The forces of all people of good will are needed in this vital cause. Certainly the leadership role of Catholic higher education must not fail. There is still so much to be done throughout the world.

In the aftermath of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI and John Paul II led the world in the implementation of human rights. In 1967, just shortly after the close of the Council, Paul VI would issue his great encyclical "The Development of Peoples" Two years later, in Africa, and on many other occasions, he would vigorously supplement this by his personal teaching.

John Paul II would fall heir both to the Ecumenical Council and to Paul VI. The incarnational spirituality of *Gaudium et spes* was evident as it proclaimed that the split between the faith that many people profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among "the more serious errors of our age" (GS, 43). It further stated that there can be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one hand and religious living on the other. In perfect harmony with the Gospel it further went on to assert: "The Christian who neglects his temporal duties neglects his duties toward his neighbor and even God, and jeopardizes his eternal salvation . . . . In the exercise of all their earthly activities, Christians can thereby gather their humane, domestic, professional, social and technical enterprises into one vital synthe-

sis with religious values, under the supreme direction of which all things are harmonized for God's glory" (GS, 43). How fittingly Catholic higher education can contribute to this synthesis where the Lord is considered "the goal of human history, the focal point of the longings of history and of civilization, the center of the human race, the joy of every heart and the answer to all its yearnings" (GS, 45).

Five crucial issues of special urgency and particular relevance are presented to the world's consideration in Part II of *Gaudium et spes*: the dignity of marriage and the family, the proper development of culture, socio-economic life, the life of the political community and fostering peace and the international community. It seems to me that all five issues require special reflection, study and promotion as matters supremely relevant to Catholic higher education.

The Council's treatment of marriage and the family (Part II, chapter 1) begins with a recognition of the great challenges that face the family today. In this context the Council proclaims the sanctity of marriage and the family and the entire Catholic doctrine of Christian married love and Christian married life. Certainly Catholic universities, inspired by divine revelation as interpreted by the magisterium of the Church, have many authentic reflections to share on these divine mysteries.

The Council zeros in on the centrality of conjugal love and the concept of a covenant relationship between two people in which marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and the educating of children. The Council asserts that the intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and made subject to His laws. It is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent. *Gaudium et spes* speaks of children as the supreme gift of marriage. Anticipating the encyclical *Humanae vitae*, the Council asserts that "when there is a question of harmonizing conjugal love, the responsible transmission of life, the moral aspect of any procedure does not depend solely on sincere intentions or an evaluation of motives" (GS, 51). This aim of the Council to inculcate the dignity of marriage and the family is certainly today a tremendous support for married couples as they endeavor to fulfill their great mission of human and Christian love in the Church and in the world. I submit that Catholic higher education should not be absent from offering its support to this cause.

Another issue to which Vatican II devoted particular attention is culture (Part II, chapter 2). The Council stated that human beings can



only come to an authentic and full expression of their humanity through culture. The Council attempted to give an adequate description of culture, saying that it indicates all those aspects by which a human being refines and unfolds his or her manifold spiritual and bodily qualities. It is a feature of culture that throughout history man expresses, communicates and preserves in his works great spiritual experiences and desires (GS, 53). In this sense we can speak so fittingly of Catholic culture. People are conscious, the Council says, that they themselves can be the artisans and authors of the culture of their community. This presumes a sense of responsibility and solidarity. This is the context in which the Council says that we are witnesses of the birth of a new humanism, one in which the human being is defined especially by his or her responsibility toward his or her brothers and sisters and toward history. In the humanization of the world, how important it is that each person realizes his or her responsibility to others. Is not a Catholic university a powerful forum for this solidarity to be realized and this humanization to take place?

The Council speaks also about socio-economic life (cf. Part II, chapter 3), placing all economic development at the service of man, the human being, the human person. Two years after Vatican II, in his encyclical “On the Development of Peoples” already mentioned, Pope Paul VI powerfully developed this theme.

In this context, *Gaudium et spes* then speaks about human labor—how it is superior to all the other elements of economic life, and how the human person is a partner in the work of bringing God’s creation to perfection. In 1981 John Paul II developed in his encyclical *Laborem exercens* the whole theology of work. In this encyclical Pope John Paul II presented human work as a key to the whole social question of our day. While seeing private ownership and property as an expression of human freedom, the Council also speaks of the profound plan of God in which there is a common destination for created things and in which all human beings are called to recognize interdependence and exercise solidarity. In this chapter three the Council has initiated us into a great reflection on solidarity and globalization. These themes are important for the humanization of the world. Surely they cannot be alien to the scope of Catholic higher education.

*Gaudium et spes* makes it clear that the political community exists for the common good (cf. Part II, chapter 4). This political community and public authority are based on human nature and belong to an order of things divinely foreordained. For this reason those who serve in politics contribute greatly to the building up of society. The political

community and the Church are mutually independent and self-governing but they both serve the personal and social vocation of the same human beings in accordance with the truth of humanity. Catholic politicians are expected to bring to their service of the community those principles based on the natural law, inscribed in the human heart and subsequently also proclaimed by the Church.

In recent times the need for political participation of Catholics in public life according to their own upright consciences has been amply reinforced and clarified by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is an area that requires consistency, wisdom, serenity of judgment and courage.

*Gaudium et spes* concludes by turning the attention of the world to the subject of peace: the fostering of peace and the promotion of a community of nations (Part II, chapter 5). It makes clear that it is speaking about a peace that is based on justice and love. It makes clear that by peace it does not mean only the absence of war, but rather the work of justice.

The Council draws greatly in this regard on the encyclical of Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*. Even as the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council were preparing to issue an appeal for peace, Pope Paul VI was visiting the United Nations on October 4, 1965, pleading for the avoidance of war and at the same time expressing hope that nations would come together in a spirit of harmony to understand the basic need for peace in the world.

In regard to the United Nations, the position of the Holy See has constantly been that, notwithstanding its weaknesses and limitations, it is a structure that the world cannot prescind from and that must be utilized to fulfill a peace-making role for all humanity.

The principles found in the last chapter of *Gaudium et spes*, on fostering peace and promoting a community of nations, should prove extremely useful in all serious reflections about the effective and just response to world tensions. In particular, in regard to the total avoidance of war—and we remember Pope Paul VI's appeal made at the United Nations in New York two months before the promulgation of *Gaudium et spes*: “*jamais plus la guerre*”—Vatican II calls for “an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude” (GS, 80). This attitude cannot be simplistic, but it must be new. Just before making this most important appeal, *Gaudium et spes* had stated: “The horror and perversity of war are immensely magnified by the multiplication of scien-

tific weapons” (GS, 80). And it added: “The arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity” (GS, 81).

More recently the Holy See made an appeal before the United Nations, urging the universal ratification of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry-into-Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Two other considerations are proposed by Vatican II in this complicated matter: 1) “Government authorities and others who share public responsibility have the duty to protect the welfare of the people entrusted to their care and to conduct such grave matters soberly” 2) “Those who are pledged to the service of their country as members of its armed forces should regard themselves as agents of security and freedom on behalf of their people” (GS, 79). We can never forget, however, the statement of Pope John Paul II that all war is “a defeat for humanity.”

*Gaudium et spes* also expressed its conviction that there should be an agency of the universal Church set up for the worldwide promotion of justice and for charity for the poor. After the Ecumenical Council, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Pontifical Council Cor Unum were both established to serve the needs recognized by Vatican II. It is inconceivable that these themes of justice, peace and solidarity in Christian love be absent from the dynamic reflections of Catholic higher education.

As mentioned, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World came to life on the very last day of the Council. The document was a beautiful sign of Christian hope for the world. Are Catholic universities not conceived as being signs of hope for humanity in need of light and goodness and truth? *Gaudium et spes* was a clear indication of the Church’s willingness for dialogue within the Church, with those not in full communion with her, with those who believe in God and with those also who do not as yet acknowledge God, and even with those who oppress the Church. It was likewise a great sign of the Church’s desire to serve, and in this it represented the highest ideal of the Church that imitates Christ, who says: “I have come not to be served, but to serve.”

Catholic higher education that reflects on Christ’s servanthood in our midst is invited to offer all its energies to consolidate that new humanism in which the human being is indeed defined first of all by responsibility to his or her brothers and sisters and to history. *Gaudium et spes* offered to the modern world the challenges inherent in embracing solidarity and globalization. Forty years later, this challenge presents itself anew with special relevance to the world of Catholic higher education and particularly to this and every Catholic university conscious of its calling and its purpose.



# Gaudium et Spes and the Struggle for Human Rights in Peru

Mateo Garr, S.J.

The organization for which I work in Peru, the *Comisión Episcopal de Acción Social*—the Catholic Bishops' Social Action Commission (CEAS) began the same year as the promulgation of *Gaudium et spes*. The organization is the Peruvian church's official organization for promoting church social teaching and for defending human rights—one of the church's social doctrine's important principles. The organization celebrated both events with a *Semana Social*—a Social Week—focused on the importance of that pastoral constitution in our own modern world. The organization feels strongly that human rights is an essential aspect of all of social ministry, and that *Gaudium et spes*<sup>1</sup> is the most important church document which speaks about human rights. It is from this perspective that I propose to address four questions:

- What does *Gaudium et spes* say about human rights?
- How does *Gaudium et spes* emerge from and extend John XXIII's encyclical, *Pacem in terris*?<sup>2</sup>
- What is the essential relationship between human rights in particular and church social teaching in general?
- How has attending to human rights served as the backbone of social ministry during the past forty years in Latin America in general and in Peru in particular?

I do not suggest that there always exists a direct causal relationship between the document that Paul VI promulgated on December 7, 1965 and what church groups are doing in human rights ministries in Latin America. I do want to propose, however, something perhaps even more

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<sup>1</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, 1964

significant: Certainly those Christian communities in Latin America that are involved in the defense of human rights find the justification for their work in the words of *Gaudium et spes* (and, indeed, also in the many other church documents published since 1965—especially by John Paul II). But what is even more important is that the work of these Christian communities in the field of the defense of the rights of the human person has also influenced what the institutional church says about the topic. In other words, these basic Christian communities have been actively participating in the process of the continual formation of church social teaching.

### 1. *Gaudium et Spes* and Human Rights

The concept of “rights” is mentioned in 19 of the pastoral constitution’s 93 paragraphs. More importantly, it is mentioned in three of the four chapters in the first part of *Gaudium et spes* concerning the orienting principles and in all five chapters of the second part of the constitution on some more urgent problems. In other words, the concept of rights underlies the whole document. It is not merely an aside.

The first reference to rights occurs in number 21 in the context of a discourse on the problem of atheism and stresses the right of each person to practice his or her religion. Further, in the second chapter on the communitarian nature of the human person, *Gaudium et spes* (GS, 25) employs John XXIII’s terminology of *socialization* and envisions that phenomenon positively as a way to protect one’s human rights. The following paragraph outlines a list of some basic economic, social, and cultural rights:

*Therefore, there must be made available to all people everything necessary for leading a life truly human, such as food, clothing, and shelter; the right to choose a state of life freely and to found a family, the right to education, to employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to appropriate information, to activity in accord with the upright norm of one’s own conscience, to protection of privacy and to rightful freedom, even in matters religious.*

*Gaudium et spes* adds a condemnation of discrimination and a defense of civil rights:

*. . . with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s intent.*  
(GS, 29)

In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Gaudium et spes* on the role of the church in the modern world (GS, 41), the Council fathers insist that greater human rights do not mean being *exempt from every requirement of divine law*, because that *way lies not the maintenance of the dignity of the human person, but its annihilation*. In other words, human law and divine law are not opposed.

In a manner which would be repeated by church social teaching over the following four decades,

*the church, therefore, by virtue of the Gospel committed to her, proclaims the rights of the person; the church acknowledges and greatly esteems the dynamic movements of today by which these rights are everywhere fostered.*

In the second part of *Gaudium et spes*, the first chapter refers to marriage and the family, and number 52 states that the family *is the foundation of society* because it is the place where personal rights are harmonized *with the other requirements of social life*.

In the following chapter on the progress of culture, the Bishops insist that culture itself can only develop correctly in a context of freedom and respect for human rights:

*Culture, because it flows immediately from the spiritual and social character of the human person, has constant need of a just liberty in order to develop; it needs also the legitimate possibility of exercising its autonomy according to its own principles. It therefore rightly demands respect and enjoys a certain inviolability within the limits of the common good, as long, of course, as it preserves the rights of the individual and the community, whether particular or universal.* (GS, 59)

But the greatest emphasis on human rights occurs in the chapters on economic development and the life of the political community. Both chapters manifest a similar starting point. With an analogy from Mark's Gospel (2:27) about the Sabbath, the Council fathers proclaim that both political and economic structures are made for the human person, and not the person for the structures.

*(Economic) growth is not to be left solely to a kind of mechanical course of the economic activity of individuals, nor to the authority of government. For this reason, doctrines which obstruct the necessary reforms under the guise of a false liberty, and those which subordinate the basic rights of individual persons and groups to the collective organization of production must be shown to be erroneous.*<sup>3</sup> (GS, 65)

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<sup>3</sup> Cf John Paul II, *Mater et magistra*: 53.

*Among these basic rights of the human person is to be numbered the right of freely founding unions for working people, which includes, at least as a last resort, the right to strike. (GS, 68)*

The following chapter on the political community notes that the forms of political communities have been changing in the modern world, and that

*the present keener sense of human dignity has given rise in many parts of the world to attempts to bring about a politico-juridical order which will give better protection to the rights of the person in public life. These include the right freely to meet and form associations, the right to express one's own opinion and to profess one's religion both publicly and privately. (GS, 73)*

Such civil and political rights are the pre-condition for the functioning of a modern democracy, for as the same paragraph states:

*The protection of the rights of a person is indeed a necessary condition so that citizens, individually or collectively, can take an active part in the life and government of the state,*

which is a pre-condition for the all-important task of seeking the common good. As we shall see later, *Gaudium et spes* envisions both the political and economic system as the structural means necessary to obtain the common good of each and every person. Thus people do not have the right to harm the common good in order to assure their own particular good,

*but it is legitimate for them to defend their own rights and the rights of their fellow citizens against the abuse of this authority, while keeping within those limits drawn by the natural law and the Gospels. (GS, 74)*

These basic human rights, which belong to everyone simply because they are human, nevertheless need to be supported in society by means of positive law for

*the rights of all persons, families and groups, and their practical application, must be recognized, respected and furthered, together with the duties binding on all citizens. (GS, 75)*

In the final chapter of *Gaudium et spes* on the fostering of peace and the promotion of a community of nations, the main argument is that the outlawing of total war requires the establishment of a universal public authority which respects the rights of the individual persons:



*It is our clear duty, therefore, to strain every muscle in working for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent. This goal undoubtedly requires the establishment of some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all and endowed with the power to safeguard on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights. (GS, 81)*

In summary then we can conclude that the topic of rights plays an integral part in the message of *Gaudium et spes*. That is, if these references were removed from the text, the central message of the pastoral constitution would be changed substantially. Before finishing this section, let me comment on one possible objection: Some commentators suggest that the basic reason why the church supports human rights is in order to protect itself in those countries where religion in general or Catholicism in particular is proscribed. While that was one of the issues, though certainly not the most important one, taken up by the Vatican Council's declaration on religious freedom, *Dignitatis humanae*,<sup>4</sup> promulgated the same day as *Gaudium et spes*, both the importance given to the principle of human dignity in *Gaudium et spes* and the numerous reference to different types of rights in the pastoral constitution make it clear that the protection of the church's own rights are only one small part of the way in which the Council Fathers understood the concept of rights.

What we shall examine next is how such a message was not entirely or even principally an original formulation on the part of the bishops who wrote the pastoral constitution but rather a compilation of earlier writings in church social teaching.

## **2. Historical Influences Concerning Human Rights on *Gaudium et spes***

The importance of rights did not begin with *Gaudium et spes*, but is found first in John XXIII's encyclical letter *Pacem in terris*, written two years and nine months before *Gaudium et spes*. In fact, great portions of the pastoral constitution owe their origins to John XXIII, especially the reference to both of his social encyclicals, *Pacem in terris* and the earlier *Mater et magistra*. *Gaudium et spes* quotes John XXIII more than twice as much as any other Pope. Those two encyclicals substantiate the four basic social principles presented in the first part of

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<sup>4</sup> Herminio Rico, *John Paul II and the Legacy of Dignitatis Humanae*, Washinton, D.C.: Washington, D.C., 2002.

*Gaudium et spes* and also stand at the root of the final four chapters on the practical application of those four principles to the issues of culture, economics, politics, and peace.

Mary Ann Glendon in her book, *A World Made New*,<sup>5</sup> on Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights,<sup>6</sup> makes an interesting allusion to the fact that one of the three key writers of that 1948 Declaration was the French lawyer, René Cassin, who was also a personal friend of the then Apostolic Nuncio to France, Angelo Roncalli. What influence did each man have on the other? Considering John XXIII's ability to listen and learn from others,<sup>7</sup> it is certainly possible that Cassin provided the future John XXIII a method for interpreting his own lived experiences before and during the world war in Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, and France itself. Similarly, I believe that one of the real purposes of the Council Fathers in publishing *Gaudium et spes* was to pay tribute to the man by whose inspiration the whole phenomenon of the Second Vatican came into existence.

Perhaps those are only speculative theories which cannot be definitively proven. And perhaps too *Gaudium et spes* adds only a little structurally to the issue of human rights than what *Pacem in terris* had already stated. Nevertheless, I do affirm that the importance of the Council in general, and specifically of the pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World, is that it provided the support of an entire Council which promoted human rights not merely as one other important aspect of the Church's role in the world but indeed as the very backbone of the church's entire social commitment.<sup>8</sup> And that is my central thesis.

### **3. The Relationship between Human Rights and the Church's Social Teaching**

The Catholic Church speaks out on many social issues: from abortion to capital punishment, from economic development to humanitarian interventions. But the topic of human rights is not merely one among

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<sup>5</sup> Mary Ann Glendon, *A World made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, New York: Random House, 2001:132.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Cahill, *Pope John XXIII*, New York: Viking Books, 2002: 96 & 156,

<sup>8</sup> I develop these same themes in *Pacem in terris* in the article "Pacem in Terris, 40 Years After: Human Rights and Practical Action in *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 1.1(2004): 83-92.

many topics about which the church has taken a prophetic stand. Rather human rights are one of the very principles of the church's social teaching which need be applied to all other social issues.

According to that principle, the church view on human *rights* never stands alone; it is always complemented with an equal insistence on human *duties*.

It is not surprising that human rights and duties are envisioned as a mutual relationship in church social teaching. Almost all of the principles of church social doctrine form into pairs and qualify each other. They either lead up to or are a consequence of the central most principle of social doctrine which stands by itself: the *common good*. And all of these principles are mentioned one way or another in *Gaudium et spes*.

- *Human rights* are mutually complementary with *Human duties*.<sup>9</sup> In this sense the church's social doctrine is way ahead of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, for that latter document only mentions "duties" in one number (29). The framers of the Declaration were able to make use of the window of opportunity between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War between the East and the West to secure the universal declaration of rights. To ask them to produce in addition a universal declaration of human *duties* would have broken the fragile equilibrium they momentarily achieved. The synthesis of the two is one important contribution which the church makes to the modern world.

Similarly with the other principles of Catholic social teaching:

- *Solidarity* is possible when it works alongside *Subsidiarity*.<sup>10</sup> (The principle of solidarity is already mentioned in the very first paragraph of *Gaudium et spes* and then in another six of the constitution's nine chapters.<sup>11</sup> Subsidiarity is mentioned explicitly once in

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<sup>9</sup> Pontifical Council For Justice And Peace *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, from here on cited as "CSDC", 2004: 156 which cites *Pacem in terris*, 32 and *Gaudium et spes*, 26.

<sup>10</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education. *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests*, 1988: 38 and CSDC 2004: 194.

<sup>11</sup> In addition to the introduction, the word "Solidarity" appears another seven times in the text: N° 32, 39, 48, 57, 75, 85, and 90.

Nº 86 in the chapter on peace and the international community.<sup>12</sup> By virtue of solidarity we respond to the person who is in need; by virtue of subsidiarity we protect and preserve the right of those same persons to use our aid in the form which they judge as best. We can't have one without the other.

- Most importantly of all, the *Dignity of the Human Person* only makes sense in relationship to the *Communitarian nature of the individual Person*. This is one of the points where church social teaching takes an entirely different tact than most of western philosophy since the Enlightenment: the commonly held view by contemporary western culture is that of the *social contract*: human-kind lives in community and permits the principle of authority as a lesser evil, as a necessary condition for the individual's pursuit of happiness. For *Gaudium et spes* (24), as for *Pacem in terris* (46), human beings were created by God as social creatures by nature, that is, from the beginning, and therefore the principle of authority is a positive good: It is our way of working for the common good which is our purpose in this life. We cannot make general statements that the human person is always more important than the community nor vice-versa. The point is, both here and with the other principles, they stand in a mutual relationship which requires a constant prayerful discernment.
- The *Common Destiny of the Goods of Creation* stands alongside the principle of the *Preferential Option for the Poor*. Both are principles employed in order to discover concretely in what the Common Good consists. *Gaudium et spes* (34)<sup>13</sup> and then in more detail in the chapter on economic activity in (69)<sup>14</sup> speaks about the principle of the common destiny of the goods of creation. Although the specific wording of “the preferential option for the poor” occurs for the first time in the writings of John Paul II,<sup>15</sup> *Pacem in terris* (56). adds that while by definition the common good is for everyone, “(c)on-

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<sup>12</sup> The concept of “Subsidiarity” is also described without using that word in Nº 75 in the chapter on political activity and again in Nº 90 on peace and the international community.

<sup>13</sup> Human beings “can justly consider that by their labor they are unfolding the Creator’s work, consulting the advantages of men and women who are their brothers and sisters, and are contributing by their personal industry to the realization in history of the divine plan.”

<sup>14</sup> “God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner.”

<sup>15</sup> CELAM, Puebla, 1979 and *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 1988: 42.

*siderations of justice and equity, however, can at times demand that those involved in civil government give more attention to the less fortunate members of the community, since they are less able to defend their rights and to assert their legitimate claims.”* so they carry the same message: What is good for the wealthy is not necessarily good for the poor, but what is good for the poor is not going to harm the fundamental dignity of the wealthy. In the same paragraph in which *Gaudium et spes* speaks about the common destination of the goods of creation, (69), the text refers to this complementary principle of giving priority to the needs of the poor.<sup>16</sup> Thus both concepts taken together are necessary in order to relativize the concept of private property and place the emphasis of church teaching on the common good: The *Compendium* reminds us that although “*it is true that everyone is born with the right to use the goods of the earth, it is likewise true that, in order to ensure that this right is exercised in an equitable and orderly fashion, regulated interventions are necessary, interventions that are the result of national and international agreements, and a juridical order that adjudicates and specifies the exercise of this right.*”<sup>17</sup>

- All of the above mentioned double sets of principles lead up to or are derived from this central principle of the church social teaching: the *Common Good*. *Gaudium et spes* defines the common good in (26) as “*the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment*” which is based on John XXIII’s definition in *Mater et magistra* (55) and in *Pacem in terris* (58): “*the sum total of those conditions of social living whereby people are enabled to achieve their own integral perfection more fully and more easily*”. Indeed, we could interpret the whole purpose of *Gaudium et spes* as the church present in the world to help all the peoples of this world to achieve that common good.

Each of the principles stand in relationship to one another, and all must be taken into account. Church social teaching has always considered that the dignity of the human person and the communitarian

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<sup>16</sup> Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this sacred council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism of the Fathers, “Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him,” and really to share and employ their earthly goods, according to the ability of each, especially by supporting individuals or peoples with the aid by which they may be able to help and develop themselves.

<sup>17</sup> *CSDC* (2004):173-174.

nature of the person are the starting points for any reflection. And I have tried to demonstrate here that all of these principles have as their purpose the pursuit of the common good. The defense of human rights and the universal call to human duties are a consequence of those first principles and a fundamental condition for the central principle of the common good. Demonstrating this unity among the principles of church social teaching was the purpose for which John Paul II in 1999 asked the Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace to prepare the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (CSDC).

The point of this long explanation on the complementary nature of church social teaching is to demonstrate that these are not mechanical principles. They cannot be applied automatically to every social situation. Rather what is required is the application of these principles in the context of the ongoing prayerful discernment of the Christian community.

#### **4. The Effect of *Gaudium et Spes* on the Latin American Human Rights Movement**

What I want to show in the second part of this paper is how that teaching on human rights has had a significant effect on the structure of the Catholic church in Latin America and perhaps even on the universal church. Or in other words, *Gaudium et spes* is still exercising an important role in the church forty years later.

This can be seen in the first place by the response in Latin America in the immediate aftermath of the Council. The major consequence of *Gaudium et spes* on the Latin American church as a whole were the General Conferences of the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) held in Medellín, Colombia in 1968, Puebla, México in 1979, and the Dominican Republic in 1992.

The experience in Medellín was a surprise to everyone including Pope Paul VI and the bishops who met in Colombia. The purpose of the second official meeting of the Latin American bishops<sup>18</sup> was to motivate the implementation of the documents and decrees of Vatican II. No one expected the bishops to go beyond what the Council had done. After all, the active participation of the Latin American bishops at the Council was hardly significant. Of the 600 or so Latin American bishops who

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<sup>18</sup> The first was in 1955 in Rio de Janeiro where CELAM was established.

went to Rome from 1962 to 1965, only one in twelve actually participated in the commissions which prepared the decrees. On the other hand, one out of every four European bishops were part of those commissions.

What Medellín actually produced was the first autonomous statement of the bishops of the continent. One of its key documents was the chapter on justice and its insistence on “institutional violence” as being the primary cause of injustice. Medellín was neither a cause nor an effect of the theology of liberation, but in the practice it was the first time that the bishops publicly sanctioned that theological perspective, and it was from that time on that theologians from Central and South America began to make significant contributions to theology in general and no longer simply be recipients and adapters of theologies which were developed in Europe.

By the time of the Third General Conference of the Latin American bishops which was held in Puebla, Mexico in 1979, the structures of the conservative reaction to the Council were already well established. And the purpose of the theologians who prepared for Puebla was to turn the conclusions of Medellín around. The first preparatory document for Puebla was stamped as top secret and sent only to the bishops. Of course, as any high school teacher knows, a sure way to get one’s students to read the assigned material is to prohibit it! In fact, the best example of community participation in the preparation for an important church event was the contributions presented during 1977 and 1978 in preparation for Puebla. Proposals and suggestions came from literally thousands of communities. As a result, far from turning its back on Medellín, the conclusions of Puebla went even further, and became known for their insistence on the preferential option for the poor as the way of carrying out the Gospel’s injunctions.

The 4<sup>th</sup> General Conference of CELAM occurred in Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic) as part of the celebrations for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first evangelization of America. This time the conservative forces were prepared: instead of prohibiting the reading of the preparatory documents, they inundated the local churches with three separate documents but provided very little time for the local communities to respond. In addition, in countries like Peru where we were still involved in a terrorist conflict and where the economy was evolving from hyper-inflation to hyper-recession, few Christian communities had the luxury of time for such participation (plus the fact that many communities had already concluded that their suggestions were mostly ignored). Still, the documents of Santo Domingo produced some signifi-

cant notes of progress. The entire second section of the conclusions (157–227) was dedicated to the topic of Human Development, and the very first chapter of that section was on Human Rights (164–168) in which the bishops stated that “*every violation of human rights contradicts God’s plan and is a sin.*” (164), and they go on to say that “*When the church proclaims the Gospel, where human rights finds its deepest roots, this is not some extraneous task, but rather it obeys the command of Jesus Christ who made help for the needy an essential requirement of its evangelizing mission*” (165)

All three general conferences advanced the social proposals of Vatican II: First, with respect to its analysis of the structures of institutional violence (Medellín); secondly, the preferential option for the poor (Puebla), and finally the priority of human rights (Dominican Republic) and have thus contributed to the ongoing growth of Church social teaching.

What happened at the level of CELAM during these four decades is the result of what happened previously at the grassroots level in the local churches. J. Bryan Hehir, *The Ministry of Human Rights and Catholic Higher Education*<sup>19</sup> in speaking about the effects of John XXIII’s encyclical, *Pacem in terris*, showed that the encyclical provided the necessary justification for local church groups to get involved in directly human rights work. The concrete example he cites is Brazil where a military coup occurred in 1964 which led to the repression of many political and social leaders. The principal organization that came to the defense of the victims of this violence and their families was the Catholic Church. While it was not the case that everyone was reading the encyclical and decided spontaneously to put its lessons into practice, the fact remains that the local church human rights groups found their motivation in Pope John’s words.

The publication of *Gaudium et spes* at the end of 1965 had an even stronger effect. Three key examples are the *Vicarías de Solidaridad*, founded by the church in the aftermath of Pinochet’s coup in Chile in September of 1973; the work of Archdiocesan office of human rights in El Salvador established by Mons. Oscar Romero; and the network of human rights offices in 25 dioceses in Peru in order to respond to the terrorist violence of the Shining Path and the consequent government repression during the 1980’s and 1990’s are all examples of the church’s

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<sup>19</sup> Available at <<http://www.vincenter.org/96/hehir.html>>.



commitment to human rights. This is the example I will develop in more detail.

It was in the optimistic context of the last year of the Council, the Peruvian Bishops founded its Social Action Commission (*Comisión Episcopal de Acción Social*—CEAS) on March 11, 1965, just nine months before the promulgation of the pastoral constitution. CEAS began as a forum where pastoral agents from around the country could get together to reflect on the ongoing political, economic, and cultural reality in the light of the Gospel and the Council.

By the 1970's CEAS moved from being merely a forum for reflection and began to assume practical applications of Church social doctrine. In response to the *Gaudium et spes* principle that the economic structures of society must exist for the service of the human person, CEAS helped to attend to the demands of workers who had been fired from their positions during the second phase of the 1970's military government. And in relation to the cultural welfare of the people during that same period, CEAS began to promote programs for training rural peasants who were already pastoral catechists for health care and promotion. Those concerns are examples of *economic and social rights*. 1980 marked the beginning of what turned out to be two decades of terrorist violence and government repression in Peru. When the south-central Peruvian Andes fell into the hands of the terrorist "Shining Path" organization, the newly elected democratic government declared that the region was under a state of constitutional exception and sent in military forces to restore order. At that time the local Bishops began to receive more and more calls to come to the aid of the victims of the violence and to defend the cause of the innocent people who were being arrested and "disappeared." CEAS responded by creating a central team of more than 60 lawyers, social assistants, and teachers and by supporting local human rights organizations in some 25 dioceses. So, in addition to its previous work, CEAS also began working on the promotion and defense of *political and civil rights*.

Since the end of the political violence in 2000, CEAS has supported the creation, carrying-out and follow-up of Peru's official Truth and Reconciliation Commission whose purpose was to discover the structures of violence and propose conditions for a permanent peace.

Since the 1990's and into the new millennium CEAS is working in a number of other areas of social concern described by the Council and by CELAM: In the face of globalization and neo-liberalism, CEAS works

for an economy based on solidarity, and on the issue of the reduction of the foreign debt: In the Jubilee 2000 campaign, Peru presented more signatures than any other country in the world. Secondly, in the movement from social attention to advocacy, CEAS works for those goals of citizen participation in the political sphere (as proposed by *Mater et magistra* and *Gaudium et spes*). CEAS also proposes structures for citizen vigilance of municipal and regional governments and by proposing legislation at the national level for the adequate control of the environment and the economy with relation to such issues as the massive presence of foreign mining companies and the issues of the so-called free trade agreements with the United States.

Parallel to its work in social action in favor of an integral view of human rights, CEAS has always promoted educational programs in Church social teaching, and when the Pope or CELAM presents a new social document, CEAS prepares “popular versions” of the social Magisterium so that basic Christian communities can know and apply these principles to their ongoing reality. In that way CEAS accomplishes the goal not only of educating people in terms of what church social teaching is all about but also promoting the effort so that those base Christian communities can become active participants in the ongoing process of the formation of this doctrine.

I present the case of CEAS and Peru as one example of what happened around the continent: This can also be seen in the work of CELAM. One of the departments of CELAM, Justice and Solidarity, holds regular meetings on human rights and church social teaching to which representatives of all of the countries are invited.

In 1993 representatives from several countries began to share their own experiences in the ministry of human rights. They were surprised to discover how similar their work had been over the whole continent. Even more so they came to realize that during the years of political violence, the ministry of human rights not only occupied most of their time *quantitatively* but, indeed also provided a *qualitative* focus for all of their social ministries. In other words, even when they weren't working specifically on a human rights case, like for example when they were giving parish courses in church social teaching, the focus on human rights became the unifying principle of their efforts. CELAM then convoked a continent-wide encounter on the topic of human rights ministry and in order to ask that very question. Representatives from 19 Latin American countries met in Lima in 1994. At the conclusion of their experience, they formulated the following hypothesis: “*Human rights ministry on our continent is not simply one of many ways of being*

*involved in the church's social apostolate. It is rather the unifying principle of all of our social commitment".*

Then in 1997 representatives, this time from 24 countries on the continent, including the U.S. and some observers from Catholic organizations in Europe, met again in Lima to share the results of their surveys. The conclusion of the CELAM encounter was the *magna carta* for bringing human rights into the mainstream of the church on the continent. Human rights activities could no longer be seen as a topic better left to the secular world.

One year later, 1998, marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the part of the United Nations. John Paul II himself considered it an important enough event that he dedicated his message for world peace day on January first, both in 1998 and 1999, to commemorating that declaration. In fact, human rights and the dignity of the human person is perhaps the principle contribution that the Pope has made to the whole corpus of church social teaching. That was the central point he makes in his letter for 2003 world peace day which commemorated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Pacem in terris*.<sup>20</sup>

In July of 1998 the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, very much aware of the grassroots level development of the ministry of human rights, organized the first World Congress on Human Rights to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights. While the Congress did not explicitly take on the thesis of the Latin American conferences about the essential nature of human rights for all of social ministry, nevertheless the Pope's talk to the delegates on that occasion re-affirmed his own commitment to the apostolate of human rights. In that speech the Pope stressed two themes: first, that it is necessary to bring the spirit of human rights into agreement with the letter of the law, and secondly, in addition to civil and political rights, we need to work for the juridical application of economic, social, and cultural rights. That can be explained by an example: If one's political rights were abused, that person in principle could have juridical recourse all the way up to the International Court of Justice. But if a person suffers from the abuse of his or her economic or social rights, there is no where to turn in search of a juridical sanction. I would conclude that as a result of that Congress

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<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment*. World Peace Day, 2003.

and the Pope's own message, confirmed too by his messages for World Peace Day in both 1998 and 1999, the content that human rights is now part of the ordinary agenda of the universal church.<sup>21</sup> I suggest that the experience of human rights ministry around the world, but especially in Latin America, is an example of the normal procedure by which the local churches participate in both the formation and the application of church social teaching. It is the way the process is supposed to work.

Church social teaching works (or *should* work) in two complementary directions: It is at the level of grassroots basic Christian communities that the members reflect on their own lived experience in the light of the Gospel. This reflection is not the same as a strictly political or economic social analysis of reality, although it certainly does not exclude those methods. But what distinguishes the reflection of the Christian community from a purely academic or political analysis is that it is accomplished in a spirit of personal and community prayer. It has as much or perhaps more to do with the rules of the discernment of spirits than with sociology or anthropology.

The important thing is that the results do not remain at the grassroots level. Here too the ideal of participation is that the basic Christian communities share their insights at the level of the parishes; representatives of the parishes do the same at the level of the dioceses; and the diocesan bishops or their representatives carry these experiences to the national bishops' conference. The results of the bishops' reflection might be shared when the bishops gather together at the continental level, which was the case of the General Conferences of the Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Puebla, and Santo Domingo. It is also the system designed for further participation in the preparation for the Bishops' Synods in Rome.

Participation is one side of the process. And the other side can be called application: The pastoral letters written by individual bishops are sent to the local parishes where the basic Christian communities reflect on their content. Ideally the same thing happens with the declarations of the national bishops' conferences and the regional organi-

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<sup>21</sup> John Paul II, *From the Justice of Each Comes Peace for All*. World Peace Day, 1998 and John Paul II, *Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace*. World Peace Day, 1999.

zations like CELAM. In theory something similar should have occurred at the level of the tri-annual Bishops' Synods in Rome. Certainly that was the proposal which Paul VI made in his apostolic letter, *Octogesima adveniens*,<sup>22</sup> and it was put into practice by the 1971 Bishops' Synod on Justice in the World. But by the time of the following Synod on Evangelization in 1974, the bishops turned the task over to the Pope himself to write Apostolic Exhortations to summarize the results of the Bishops' deliberations. That procedure has produced some very important documents concerning church social teaching such as *Evangelii nuntiandi*<sup>23</sup> or *Christifideles laici*<sup>24</sup> but what was often neglected in the process was this principle of ample participation of the grassroots' level of the universal church.

In the adult education work I do in Peru on church social teaching, I can demonstrate this lack of broad participation with a simple technique: I ask the people if they can tell me the topic of the most recent Bishops' Synod or what the topic of the next Synod is going to be. Perhaps I should ask the same question right now of this group! The fact remains that most practicing and believing Christians would have little if any idea. In other words, the practice of participation in and application of church social teaching is not working as well as one would hope.

Nevertheless, in order not to end my presentation on a negative note, I would conclude that the ministry of promoting and defending human rights, at least in Latin America, is proof that the process of participation and application of the church's social doctrine is still possible. *Pacem in terris* and *Gaudium et spes* responded to the challenge made by society in general in the U.N. declaration on Human Rights. Then the local churches in Latin America were able to defend their work in human rights ministry by referring to that social teaching. And over the decades of concrete practice concerning human rights, the church's message about human dignity has widened to cover environmental, cultural, social, and economic rights as well as political and civil rights.

Another way to say the same thing is to note that the method of the theology of liberation has been confirmed: Grass roots Christian communities whose members are involved in a social ministry whose ob-

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<sup>22</sup> Paul VI, 1971: 4.

<sup>23</sup> Paul VI, 1975.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, 1988.

jective is systemic change have a privileged stance from which to do theological reflection.

The issue of the relationship between the teaching role of the church's Magisterium and the practice of the local churches around the world is still in debate.<sup>25</sup> Though the new *Compendium of Church Social Teaching* brings up the topic, a deeper reflection on this dynamic will be one of the most important tasks for theology in the future. The development of the ministry of human rights as a response to the call of John XXIII in particular and *Gaudium et spes* in general will play an important role in this discussion for it presents a positive example of the participative nature of what the church teaches about society and justice.

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<sup>25</sup> See Charles Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002.

# A Church in the Modern World of Africa: The Zambian Experience

Peter J. Henriot, S.J.

## Introduction

How often have you and I used the opening words of *Gaudium et spes*, “The joys and hopes, the fears and anxieties. . .”. to call attention for ourselves and for others to the overriding priority of the Church’s mission today, the service of all humanity to enjoy life to the fullest! Surely, there is no “church in the modern world” if there is not that Christian community composed of women and men, united in Christ, led by the Holy Spirit, in a journey to the Kingdom intimately linked with humankind and its history.<sup>1</sup> I want in this paper to present the experience of one part of our universal Christian community, reflecting my own encounter of what this means in putting our church’s social teaching (CST) into real daily life. This is more of a personal reflection on experience than an academic analysis of texts. I bring to this reflection sixteen years of working, pastorally and politically, in one African country, Zambia.

Zambia became independent of British colonial rule in 1964, one year before that greatest document of the Second Vatican Council, *Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*, was published. The Catholic Church in Zambia has over the past forty years played a very significant role in the development of the country. This has occurred both through direct service institutions (e.g., schools and hospitals) and through explicit social teaching on key issues facing the country at large. Today the church enjoys a prominent and respected place, in cooperation with other church bodies, in influencing the social, eco-

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<sup>1</sup> GS, 1.

conomic and political life of the people, as well as the religious life of individuals and the community.

It is certainly true that key to the influence of the Catholic church has been the guidance provided by the church's social teaching, in offering both *clarification* of issues and *motivation* for responding to those issues. This social teaching is found both in official documents (many of them ecumenically produced)<sup>2</sup> and in actions undertaken by churches and small Christian communities (SCCs) and by significant organizations such as the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection. The CST has also served as the basis for formation of clergy, religious and laity with the tools of social spirituality and social analysis.

One can quite honestly say that the *Church in the Modern World* has found an *incarnation*—could we even say an *inculturation*—in the Church in Modern World of Africa as experienced in Zambia. Because of this experience, I want to explore here (1) the *context* of Zambia, (2) the *methodology* of the church's teaching, (3) the major points in its *content*, and (4) a few significant *lessons* that can be drawn from its experience.<sup>3</sup>

## 1. Context

It is very important to realize that Zambia is a *very rich country*, one of the richest in Africa, and that Zambians are *very poor people*, some of the poorest in the world. Zambia is rich in land, water, agriculture, minerals, tourist sites and most especially, a people at peace—forty years of seventy-two tribes living without conflict. We are indeed the envy of our neighbours! But Zambians are very poor, ranking 163 out of 173 on the UNDP *Human Development Index*, with the World Bank estimating more than 80% living on less than one dollar a day. Life expectancy is around 37 years, as malaria, malnutrition and AIDS inflict high mortality on the population.

In many ways, Zambia is a classic case study of what afflicts so much of Africa today: a legacy of colonial exploitation, a history of bad gov-

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<sup>2</sup> An excellent collection of these documents can be found in J. Komokoma, ed., *The Social Teaching of the Catholic Bishops and Other Christian Leaders in Zambia: Major Pastoral Letters and Statements, 1953-2001*. Ndola, Zambia: Mission Press, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> In my discussion of *Gaudium et spes*, I will mainly limit my references to Part II, Chapters I, III and IV, paragraphs 53 to 76.



ernance, and an experience of the inequitable structures of globalisation. The current worldwide campaign, *Make Poverty History*, identifies well the global problems faced by Zambia: unjust debt burden, unfair trade relationships and inadequate aid arrangements.<sup>4</sup>

Zambia is a multi-party democracy, struggling to achieve good governance after twenty-seven years of one party rule and ten years of highly corrupt rule. We are in the midst now of constitutional review and up-coming presidential elections—highly contentious issues, but issues being dealt with *politically*, not *militarily*, thank God! Within Zambia, we have a very vital civil society, often led by a very vital church. The Catholic church plays a major role, as it is a church working to implement the guidelines designed by the 1994 African Synod and articulated in the 1995 apostolic exhortation of John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*. These guidelines describe the task of *evangelisation* as five-fold: (1) *proclamation*, (2) *inculturation*, (3) *dialogue*, (4) *justice and peace*, and (5) *communication*.<sup>5</sup> The life of the church is grounded in the *small Christian communities* that form each parish in the country.

Early in *Gaudium et spes*, there is a beautiful and powerful description of “The Role of the Church in the Modern World.”<sup>6</sup> The description highlights the mutual relationship between church and world and the contribution that each can make to the other. I believe a look at how that relationship functions in the church in Zambia in a few major points can throw important light on this topic. In a brief paper, I can cite only a few of the more important instances, but enough to show how a specific *methodology* influences the *content* of the Zambian church’s social teaching. I also cite how this CST is put into practice.

## 2. Methodology

How the church goes about its formulation and proclamation of the CST that guides its being a “church in the modern world” is extremely important. The methodology needs analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> See website of this campaign: <<http://www.cafod.org.uk/make-poverty-history.org>>.

<sup>5</sup> For articles that provide a good overview of the Synod and also the text of the Apostolic Exhortation, see Maura Browne, SND, ed., *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> GS, 40-45.

*Ecumenical Cooperation*

The Zambian expressions of CST have been examples of serious ecumenical cooperation in articulation and action. There are three major church bodies (frequently referred to as “mother bodies”) in Zambia: the Zambian Episcopal Conference (ZEC—national secretariat for ten dioceses), the Council of Churches of Zambia (CCZ, comprised of mainline Protestant churches), and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ, comprised of mainline evangelicals, not including the newer “tele-evangelicals” coming in from North America). This cooperation surprised and encouraged me when I came to live in Zambia in 1989. These church bodies cooperate in some service missions such as health care, particularly in the rural areas of the country. Most significantly, many major pastoral letters have come out over the signatures of the leaders of these three major church bodies. This ecumenical cooperation influences both the *presentation*—enriching the message—and the *reception*—strengthening the response. Surely this fact is a recognition of the wisdom of *Gaudium et spes* when it stated that the church “must rely on those who live the world, are versed in different institutions and specialties, and grasp their innermost significance in the eyes of both believers and un-believers.”<sup>7</sup> Effective ecumenical cooperation makes good sense in today’s church and world, especially in Zambia.

One important joint pastoral letter came in 1979 from the leaders of the Christian Churches, entitled “Marxism, Humanism and Christianity,” addressing the crisis provoked by the Ruling Party’s desire to introduce “scientific socialism” as a compulsory course of study in all schools, from primary to university level. That effort was subsequently successfully defeated as the churches’ unified voice and cooperative action forced a backtracking by the Ruling Party.

Another very important ecumenical document was the joint statement in 1987, “Christian Liberation, Justice and Development: The Churches’ Concern for Human Development in Zambia.” This statement covered a wide range of political, economic, social, cultural and religious issues. Whether or not it received the response that such a substantial document deserved is a serious question that needs to be

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<sup>7</sup> GS, 44.

raised in the evaluation of such efforts by the churches, either singularly or together.

Other important ecumenical documents will be highlighted below under the discussion of economic and political content. But it is helpful to note here that even if some very strong CST documents were signed only in the name of ZEC, they were often immediately endorsed by leaders of the other church bodies. This was true, for instance, in the important ZEC statement, “Economics, Politics and Justice,” that was issued in the wake of the 1991 “IMF riots,”<sup>8</sup> attempted military coup, and movement toward multi-partyism.

### *Inductive Approach*

The philosophical/theological methodology that begins with the reality experienced and moves to theoretical understandings is a mark of contemporary CST around the world. It is an application of the “see, judge and act” approach popularised in the social action movements inspired by Canon Cardijn in the mid-1900s and the “pastoral circle” approach that my colleague Joe Holland and I developed in the 1980s.<sup>9</sup> Though sometimes recently disparaged in more conservative church circles, this approach is certainly endorsed in the “Introductory Statement” of *Gaudium et spes* where *reading the signs of the times* to discern the situation of women and men in the modern world is clearly described as a starting point for the church’s mission.<sup>10</sup>

A good reading of the signs of the times, followed by a cogent social analysis, was the method employed by the Zambian bishops in their 1993 letter on the effects of the IMF-World Bank imposed SAP reforms. Entitled, “Hear the Cry of the Poor,” this letter begins with a story of a woman facing immense problems of poverty, with the specific case of poor health care offered by government facilities. Similarly, the Fortieth Anniversary letter referred to above does an inductive review of

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<sup>8</sup> The “IMF riots” were a week of citizenry rampage caused by removal of subsidies on mealie meal, the maize basic food commodity, because of strict Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) reforms enforced by the World Bank and the IMF.

<sup>9</sup> See Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, revised and enlarged edition, Marynoll, NY: Orbis Books, and Centre of Concern, 1983. See also *Revisiting the Pastoral Circle: A Critical Quest for Truth and Transformation*, eds. Frans Wijzen, Peter Henriot, Rodrigo Mejia, Marynoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> See GS, 4-10.

national history, its graces and sins, to discern the hopes and resolutions for the future.

The inductive approach praised by *Gaudium et spes* is facilitated by the structure of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) in Zambia. Over 250 parishes around the country have local CCJP teams, well trained in CST, social analysis and political advocacy. By feeding in their local experiences, these groups enable the national Commission to prepare very good annual statements on the government's national budgets, with recommendations for a set of more pro-poor, pro-justice priorities in policies.<sup>11</sup>

### *Consultative Fashion*

We all know that pastoral statements are usually not written by one person, but by a committee of advisors and experts on a particular topic. This assures the degree of technical and theological competence necessary for the document to gain acceptance and have an influence. But beyond the committee approach there is also an approach occasionally used that involves wider public consultation. The consultative fashion can be very creative, but can also be a bit contentious when different points of view are heard from those who are solicited to offer input.

When I worked at the Center of Concern in Washington DC before coming to Zambia in 1989, I saw three examples, two successful and one unsuccessful, of an effective consultative fashion of developing CST. The first two involved the production of pastoral letters by the US Catholic Bishops on peace and on the economy, where insights were gathered from hearings around the country on what should be said about these important topics. This approach resulted in two letters that serve as standards for excellent CST. The third example did not fair as well. A letter on women in society and church, developed through the same open hearing process, was halted by the Vatican, to the loss of significant religious and social insights and responses.

The Zambian church's experience has on occasion utilized the consultative approach to make its CST more credible and more relevant. A good example is the Bishops' pastoral letter, "The Future Is Ours," published in 1992 at the start of the Third Republic, following multi-party elections. In preparing the letter, ZEC requested the diocesan

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<sup>11</sup> Good information about the work of CCJP can be found on its website at <<http://www.ccjp.org.zm>>.

offices to solicit suggestions and recommendations for the country's key policies in this new era. This resulted in a very good document. Besides the expected political and economic discussions, one topic is raised which, in my opinion, surfaced because of the consultative fashion. This was the urging of all Zambians to be personally responsible and take up hard work to move the country forward. This echoes the injunction of *Gaudium et spes* for personal responsibility in the political order.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the future is ours!

In Zambia, a consultative fashion is also possible because of the inductive approach utilized through the activities of the 250 local CCJP groups. The national CCJP statements on the government's budget, mentioned immediately above, are effective because of consultation with the local groups. In my opinion, wider consultation would have helped improve some others statements such as those on family and on abortion. I will return to that later in the discussion of content.

### *Practical and Policy Relevant*

It is understandable that universal church statements (e.g., encyclicals, decrees of Councils and Synods) will usually be fairly general and non-specific. Happily, *Gaudium et spes* does occasionally speak more concretely and practically in some appropriate instances, for example in discussion of "new forms of art . . . introduced into the sanctuary,"<sup>13</sup> "gigantic rural estates . . . insufficiently cultivated,"<sup>14</sup> "civic and political education . . . painstakingly provided."<sup>15</sup>

The Zambian CST has had to take up issues of daily concern for the people and address larger topics that have consequences for the nation's future. While repeating the caution of *Gaudium et spes* about politics and the church,<sup>16</sup> the leaders of the Zambian church have not hesitated to be quite practical and policy relevant when addressing key economic and political issues. This is done not to lay down laws that all Catholics must follow but to introduce into the public discourse very specific topics that have great significance for the common good of society. Two good examples are "Hear the Cry of the Poor" (1993) and "Let My People Go" (2004). The first spoke practically about a mechanism for price

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<sup>12</sup> GS, 75.

<sup>13</sup> GS, 62.

<sup>14</sup> GS, 71.

<sup>15</sup> GS, 75.

<sup>16</sup> GS, 76.

control to limit the impact of spiraling costs on the poor (a policy unacceptable to the IMF and World Bank because of interference in the free market); the second urged a policy of a popular Constituent Assembly to be adopted to deal with the new Constitution (a point opposed by the President because of possible infringement on his powers).

Another example of practicality and policy relevance in CST is the work of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) on a monthly “Basic Needs Basket” (BNB).<sup>17</sup> This BNB provides data that highlights the great *gap* between what is required to meet basic needs for a family of six (currently around USD 210.00) and what employed workers take home as pay (currently ranging for most civil servants, for example, from between USD 50.00 to USD 150.00). This very specific information is used in policy advocacy campaigns for improved wages, nutritional adequacy for ARV recipients, agricultural inputs, attention to gender differentials, etc. And all of this within a CST framework for sustainable development!

### *Values Approach*

While it is obviously true that all CST is about values, it is sometimes important to stress that explicit attention to values is more effective—both *pedagogically* and *politically*—than frequent references to “quotations” from papal encyclicals and other church documents. This in no way lessens the *authority* of official documents, but simply makes the obvious point that it is for the most part the values espoused that make the difference and not the authority cited. Indeed, it is the set of values that provide CST’s power to *clarify*, *motivate* and *sustain* in the struggle for great justice, development, peace and the integrity of creation. A good set of values drawn from the CST can be found in introductory material of the latest edition of the very popular book, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*.<sup>18</sup>

In the Zambian picture, constant reference is important to the values of (1) *human dignity* (e.g., what happens to workers with families when

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<sup>17</sup> The JCTR is a project of the Zambia-Malawi Province of the Society of Jesus. Working in close collaboration with the ZEC and CCJP, it considers itself a faith-based organisation “promoting faith and justice.” The author of this paper is the current Director. Website <[http:// www.jctr.org.zm](http://www.jctr.org.zm)>.

<sup>18</sup> See Edward P. DeBerri and James Hug, with Peter J. Henriot and Michael J. Schultheis, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*, fourth revised and expanded edition, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, and Washington, DC: Center of Concern, 2003, pp. 18-34.

a company is privatised?), (2) *community* (how can we justify an ever-growing gap between rich and poor?), (3) the *option for the poor* (e.g., how can the views of the majority poor influence constitutional development?), and (4) integrity of creation (e.g., will new industries violate our fragile ecological situation?). The CST of the church in Zambia—documents and in actions—has clearly emphasised these values over the years. The examples already cited in this paper demonstrate that emphasis.

A new institutional commitment to the values approach is the establishment a few years ago of the African Forum on Catholic Social Teaching (AFCAST).<sup>19</sup> With a current working group of a dozen CST practitioners (teachers, church officials, activists) from countries in southern and eastern Africa, AFCAST promotes study and implementation of the values—principles, norms, standards, ideals—of CST. Its commitment to promoting social justice is grounded in the belief that the CST provides a value-added dimension to public policy discussions, debates and decisions. Recent topics focused on are issues of great relevance to Africa: elections, poverty eradication, land reform, corruption, integrity of creation and church-state relations.

### 3. Content

There are of course many topics that might be highlighted in this section. But I choose five that are useful in the work of the JCTR and the CCJP that I have personally experienced. These topics are clearly developed in the sections of *Gaudium et spes* under consideration and in the documents and activities of the church in Zambia.

#### *Political Democracy*

As mentioned earlier in the paper, Zambia is a struggling democracy, trying to shape both the *institutions* and the *attitudes* that were sadly lacking in the first 27 years of our nation's history. When defeated in multi-party elections in 1991, the founding president, Kenneth Kaunda, stepped down in an exemplary fashion. The second president, Frederick Chiluba, was forced to step down ten years later, when civil society (led by the churches) rebuffed his efforts to change the constitution in order to secure a third term. (Chiluba is now under arrest and

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<sup>19</sup> AFCAST is directed by Dr. David Kaulemu and is based at Arrupe College (Jesuit philosophical college) of the University of Zimbabwe, with address: P.O. Box MP 320, Harare, Zimbabwe.

on trial for “plunder of the national economy” through a series of corrupt activities.) Elected third president in a 2001 election fraught with irregularities,<sup>20</sup> Levy Mwanawasa is in conflict with opposition parties and civil society about his constitutional reform process. The church has played a key role in each of these moments in the political history of Zambia.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, even before Independence, the Catholic bishops (all ex-patriates) issued two strong pastoral statements challenging the non-democratic rule of the English colonial powers. From early days of the new Republic, statements have been made that call Zambians to greater political responsibility and that challenge the government to institute more effective democratic arrangements.

One interesting development can be noted. In a 1974 letter on “The Tenth Anniversary of Independence,” the Bishops encourage Christians to cooperate with the government in promoting social welfare but “do not specifically urge Church members to be politically involved as a way of promoting justice.”<sup>22</sup> However, in the 1987 ecumenical letter, “Christian Liberation, Justice and Development,” there is explicit call for all Zambian Christians “to involve themselves more activity in the political life of the Country.”<sup>23</sup> This is certainly more in keeping with the emphasis in *Gaudium et spes* to take up more effective political responsibility<sup>24</sup> and the call of the African Synod for Christians to be engaged in the democratic struggle and even a call for “holy politicians.”<sup>25</sup>

By many, the church was called the “midwife” for the birth of multi-partyism in the 1991 elections. Education, prayers, election monitoring, challenges: all these activities marked the church’s presence at that key moment. And these activities have continued and expanded since then. The stress placed by *Gaudium et spes* on civic and political education<sup>26</sup> has been responded to in the works of the CCJP (e.g., through its 250 local committees) and JCTR (e.g., through its CST homily guidelines and annual calendars). Another significant contribution to this educa-

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<sup>20</sup> Only in mid-February 2005, over three years after his December 2001 election, did the Zambian Supreme Court uphold the legitimacy of Mwanawasa’s election against petitions filed by several losing candidates.

<sup>21</sup> A very good study detailing this history is Hugo Hinfellaar, M.Afr., *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia: 1895-1995*, Lusaka: Bookworld Publishers, 2004

<sup>22</sup> Komakoma, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>23</sup> GS, 157.

<sup>24</sup> GS, 75.

<sup>25</sup> See *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 111-112.

<sup>26</sup> GS, 73 and 75.



tion comes from the five church-sponsored community radio stations. To be honest, these stations have sometimes faced political persecution (even threats of state prosecution!) by trying to communicate openly and fairly about the political situation in the country.

### *Economic Development*

We must acknowledge that *Gaudium et spes* is pre-*Populorum progressio* and pre-UNDP *Human Development* reports. As such, it does not bring out so very forcefully or fully the new thinking about *sustainable and integral development*. But it certainly does lay down the foundations for that thinking, especially in its discussion of socio-economic life, which opens with the statement: "In the socio-economic realm, too, the dignity and total vocation of the human person must be honoured and advanced along with the welfare of society as a whole. For the human person is the source, the center, and the purpose of all socio-economic life."<sup>27</sup> And, of course, today we would place that human person in the community of creation, with greater respect for the God-given dignity of the natural environment.

I believe that particularly relevant to the Zambian situation is the discussion in *Gaudium et spes* of (1) economic resources that should be put to the use of development of all the people, even with necessary state action, (2) narrowing the growing gap between rich and poor, (3) agricultural progress to be emphasised, (4) workers' decent wages and good conditions to be provided (with the proper role of trade unions), and (5) the common purpose of created things qualifying the understanding of property.<sup>28</sup> As indicated already, the church in Zambia has since earliest days been actively involved in economic development efforts with and for the people. Local parish training programmes, technical schools, agricultural projects, cooperative schemes, housing projects: these and many other practical efforts have marked the church's history—with varying levels of success.<sup>29</sup> But since Independence these programmes have been supplemented by advocacy efforts to assure better government policies for effective development. Pastoral letters

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<sup>27</sup> GS, 63.

<sup>28</sup> See GS, 64-71.

<sup>29</sup> 2005 marked the centenary of Jesuit presence in Zambia and one of the earliest Jesuits, Father Joseph Moreau, is known for introducing the oxen plough in the southern region of the country and revolutionizing maize production. See Edward P. Murphy, S.J., ed., *A History of the Jesuits in Zambia: A Mission Becomes a Province*, Nairobi: Paulines, p. 149.

(many of them ecumenical), CCJP statements, local diocesan and parish advocacy programmes and cooperation with wider civil society efforts have all contributed to the push for more equitable socio-economic development, especially relating to Zambian government priorities.

But the impact of wider international policies has not been neglected. As the consequences of IMF and World Bank neo-liberal policies became clear in the lives of the ordinary Zambian, the church raised a clarion call to set as the evaluation criteria of the imposed economic reforms one clear norm: “they must serve all the people.”<sup>30</sup> The development model of liberalisation, privatisation, curtailment of social services and overall retreat of the state has not met that criteria in the Zambian experience.<sup>31</sup> That was made very clear indeed in the 1993 pastoral letter, “Hear the Cry of the Poor,” and repeated as recently as the 2004 ecumenical letter for the Fortieth Anniversary of Independence, “Looking to the Future with Hope.”

The Jubilee 2000 Zambia campaign was launched in 1998 by a joint pastoral statement, “Cancel Zambia’s Debt!” There it was made clear that the debt *could* not be paid back because that would be economically destructive, *would* not be paid back because that would be politically destabilising, and *should* not be paid back because that would be ethically discriminatory—hurting the poor the most.<sup>32</sup> The debt campaign is a good example of churches and civil society cooperating together for economic development.

### *Cultural Questions*

African cultures are many and varied. In Zambia, culture is a key to development and national unity. As *Gaudium et spes* clearly put it, “It is a fact bearing on the very person of the human that the person can come to an authentic and full humanity only through culture, that is, through the cultivation of natural goods and values.”<sup>33</sup> In *Gaudium et spes* the right to culture is balanced with the need to create harmony with genuine Christian formation.

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<sup>30</sup> “The Future is Ours,” 25.

<sup>31</sup> See Peter Henriot, “Retreat of the State: Political Consequences and Social Implications for Zambia,” *Trocaire Development Review* 1997, pp. 39-60.

<sup>32</sup> GS, 9.

<sup>33</sup> GS, 53.

This effort at balance is at the heart of the task of *inculturation*: making our faith understanding and expression *authentically Christian* and *genuinely African*. (It is noteworthy that the concept of inculturation is not used in the discussion of culture in *Gaudium et spes*.) The Zambian bishops devoted several paragraphs to inculturation in their 1991 pastoral letter on the church's centenary, "You Shall Be My Witnesses." Noting considerable progress in this task since the days of the early missionaries, the bishops called for further research and action to move forward.

An important example of research and action touching culture in the Zambian church is the recent product of the JCTR's Task Force on Inculturation, a small pamphlet for use in small Christian communities entitled, "Traditional Healing: A Pastoral Challenge for the Catholic Church in Zambia" (2004). The pamphlet, following the methodology of the pastoral circle, gets communities to *recount* their personal experiences of traditional healing, to *analyse* why this healing is still very popular, to *reflect* on the faith meaning of this practice, and to *respond* with good guidelines for approaching healers.

Another area of great importance in discussions of culture in Zambia is the *role of women*. "You Shall Be My Witnesses" devotes a section to the topic, asking how women are treated in families, work places, public life and the Church, and what the Church should do to promote greater justice for women. Related to women's issues—but of course, much wider—are the topics of *family* and of *abortion*. The fact that the African Synod called the church "the family of God" has prompted much reflection on the family. A 1997 pastoral letter from the Catholic bishops, "The Church as a Caring Family," tied this concept to the life of the small Christian community.

Zambian law is quite liberal on the matter of abortion. A major bishops' letter in 1997, "Choose Life," addressed the topic in a direct and pastoral fashion. Indeed, there is a story behind this document. It first was written quite narrowly, emphasising primarily the sanctity of human life and therefore the absolute evil of abortion. The second version, written after wider consultation, clearly maintains the church's teaching on no abortion, but promotes a positive approach to dealing with the causes of abortion, offering help to mothers, and creating greater respect in society for women's rights. And its tone is more compassionate than that of the first version. A good example of what consultation can do for faithful construction and effective communication of CST documents!

### *Training Programmes*

As noted earlier, civic education is stressed in the political discussions in *Gaudium et spes*. But good civic education requires good civic educators. And the Zambian church has made a commitment to good training of pastoral agents to communicate the values of justice, peace, development and the integrity of creation. Courses on CST are mandatory in all seminary instruction—I have personally taught in these courses. Special workshops on CST are provided for women and men in formation for religious life. The purpose of this focus on pastoral agents is to equip them both to communicate the CST values and also to encourage the efforts of others involved in promoting these values through justice and peace work.

A recent bishops' pastoral letter, "Empowerment through Education" (2004), highlights the values that are essential to the centre of the Catholic education system. Justice is one of these central values and the students must be educated to know the social problems and to act to change the unjust situations in Zambia.

One of the best instruments for promotion of the CST values in Zambia has been a well organised and well trained network of justice and peace committees throughout the country. Members of these local groups, usually based in parishes, are required to go through five phases of training: (1) spirituality of justice (including CST), (2) research methods, (3) social analysis, (4), social action, and (5) evaluation. The national CCJP office and the JCTR office are staffed by highly competent women and men, able to do excellent research, make clear presentations, and interact effectively with government and church personnel at national and international levels.

I am undoubtedly prejudiced, but I believe that Zambia has the best organised and trained justice and peace set-up on the African continent (comparing favourably with others outside Africa). But one area that we have not adequately developed through training programmes is a wider outreach to laity in general and in particular to those in influential positions. We need to do more of this. One significant event has been a more or less regular annual "retreat day" for Catholic Members of Parliament and other significant national leaders. This has provided exposure to CST values in an atmosphere of prayer and reflection—something much appreciated by participants.

### *Model of Church*

It is true to say that *ecclesiology* (the theology of the church) is key to CST. Of course the great document *Gaudium et spes* is at its basic

foundation an ecclesiological document. For to speak of the “church in the modern world” is to speak of a particular kind of church, a specific character of Christian community. Accordingly, *Gaudium et spes* says clearly: “That is why this community realises that it is truly and intimately linked with humankind and its history.”<sup>34</sup> The church in Zambia has been influenced by this vision of *Gaudium et spes* and by the vision of “church as family” expressed by the African Synod.<sup>35</sup>

It is for this reason that a church that incorporates promotion of justice and peace into the task of integral evangelisation would react so negatively to the declaration of Zambia as a “Christian Nation” made by President Chiluba shortly after his 1991 inauguration. It is not clear exactly what his intention was, other than to gain political mileage with more conservative church members. But the letter “The Future Is Ours” expressed strongly the conviction that “a nation is not Christian by declaration but by deeds”—especially the deeds of justice and concern for the poor.<sup>36</sup> And in 1995, during the debates over constitutional amendments, the ZEC and the CCZ issued a joint statement opposing the inclusion of the Christian nation declaration in the constitution. Significantly, their opposition was rebuffed, and the Catholic Bishops have again, in the 2003 Pastoral Letter on the constitutional review, “Let My People Go,” stated their opposition to this declaration, as religiously and politically untenable.

#### 4. Lessons

To really become a “Church in the Modern World” requires more than a brilliant document, no matter how theologically solid, pastorally oriented and politically sensitive that document might be. Certainly the many and varied papers presented at this “Call to Justice” Conference will demonstrate the truth of that statement. An essential part of the growth into a community responsive to the “joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties” of our sisters and brothers is a learning from the lessons all of us gain from *experience*. What I have attempted in this paper is to highlight the *Zambian experience* by noting the church’s efforts to put the CST into daily life. I believe that reflection on some aspects of the

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<sup>34</sup> GS, 1.

<sup>35</sup> For an very insightful analysis of this concept by a young African theologian, see A.E. Orobator, S.J., *The Church as Family: African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context*, Nairobi: Paulines, 2000.

<sup>36</sup> GS, 40.

methodology and content of that experience can indeed offer some important lessons for the church universal.

### *Reading the Signs of the Times*

*Gaudium et spes* makes clear at the outset of its discussion the duty of the church “to read the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel.”<sup>37</sup> This duty demands a serious study of the world in which we live, the expectations that people have and the significant characteristics that mark it in the unfolding of history. Without such a commitment to discern God’s action in history around us, the church has neither ability nor legitimacy to share something it would call “Good News” with people.

This has surely been the experience of the Zambian church. The fact that the church is seen—by members and non-members alike—as an important actor in the life of the country is, in my opinion, largely due to its service of the people in relevant word and deed. Surely the Catholic Church in Zambia has had a mixed history of grace and sin. Our church may have a *divine foundation* but it also is a *human institution*! As such, it can and does face difficulties and fall into mistakes.

But the fact is that the Zambian church has not faced some of the difficulties or fallen into some of the mistakes other churches in Africa (and elsewhere!) have experienced. Difficulties and mistakes like tribalism, withdrawal of leadership from public life, over-zealous involvement in an other-worldly religiosity, fixation on narrow personal moral issues to the neglect of wider social moral issues, etc. The CST of the Zambian church reveals a serious attempt to read the signs of the times and this surely has had its effect in enabling the Zambian church to be a true “church in the modern world” according to the letter and spirit of *Gaudium et spes*.

### *Intelligent Research*

More than simply reading the signs of the times, the church needs a commitment to serious investigation through scholarly research of what is happening and how the church can respond. The task of being prophetic is not only helped by good study but the lack of that good study can indeed hinder a truly effective prophetic voice. No one lis-

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<sup>37</sup> GS, 4.

tens—or should listen—to shoddy analysis or unwise pronouncements, however well intentioned.

The experience of the Zambian church has shown that intelligent research does make a difference. This is evident in the work that several scholars—laity, sisters, priests—have done on issues of importance in Zambia today such as theological reflection, inculturation, education, HIV/AIDS, gender issues, church history, socio-economic problems, etc. It is also shown in the commitment to place well-trained staff at the ZEC secretariat, in the offices of the Catholic Centre for Justice, Development and Peace, and in the team of the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection.

What this results in is a *respect* that is paid to the statements coming from the church, even if there is *disagreement*. For example, the CCJP's annual budget analyses seriously challenge the government's priorities, but key government officials come to the forums to debate the findings and recommendations. The JCTR's critique of the IMF and World Bank proposals for debt relief (such as the HIPC initiative) get widely circulated nationally and internationally and taken into account when evaluations of these programmes are made.

An example of the value of intelligent research on a highly controversial topic is what has occurred in the on-going debate over the refusal of the Zambian government to allow the importation of genetically modified foods (popularly referred to as "GMOs") into the country. This refusal has gone on during serious food shortages and in the face of immense pressure by the government of the United States of America. There has even been considerable dialogue with some offices of the Vatican that have tended to show a more favourable stance toward GMOs. But after its own research, in cooperation with others nationally and internationally, the JCTR has supported the Zambian government's position as more in accord with clear CST principles, reliable scientific data and sound economic analysis.

### *International Cooperation*

One of the strengths of the church in Africa in building a good CST foundation has been good international cooperation. This has involved sharing of information, programmes, materials, personnel, etc. This has occurred not only at levels outside of Africa (e.g., with the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and with development and advocacy groups) but also at the African continental and regional levels.

The Zambian church is a member of AMECEA, the regional conference of bishops for eastern Africa. But Zambian representatives also participate in the programmes of IMBISA, the regional conference of bishops for southern Africa. A good example of cooperation was in the preparations for the African Synod that met in Rome in 1994. There was very good exchange among bishops and consultants in the AMECEA region, which meant that the AMECEA bishops went to the Rome well prepared and confident in their presentations on the Synod's key topics. These bishops played an influential role in the debates, decisions and documents of the African Synod. Another example of international cooperation that benefits the Zambian church is the work of AFCAST. As mentioned earlier in this paper, AFCAST strives to make the CST relevant to policies that profoundly affect the development of people in Africa. As this organization matures, it will continue to assist the church in Zambia to be a "church in the modern world."

### *Justice in the Church*

I imagine that my experience is not unusual: every time I give a lecture or workshop on the church's call to promote justice, I receive a question like, "Does this also mean promote justice in the church?" Of course I can answer with a very clear *yes*, recalling the strong words of the 1971 Synod of Bishops to the effect that those who would teach justice to others must first be seen to be just themselves!

The theme of justice in the church is certainly hinted at in the discussion in *Gaudium et spes* of the help which the church strives to give to human activity through Christians.<sup>38</sup> There it is recognized more in a *negative* fashion, however, by noting that defects in the church hinder the communication of the gospel. But there is no full discussion of the witness of justice that the church is obliged to give in social matters within its own organization if it is to authentically and effectively work for justice in the wider society. This message was more clearly developed by the 1971 Synod. And it is a point picked up by the African Synod with the message that justice must start within God's family itself.<sup>39</sup>

Within the Zambian church, the issues of justice are not all that unique. The questions that usually arise are around wages paid to church workers, treatment of women (including the role of women in

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<sup>38</sup> GS, 43.

<sup>39</sup> See *Ecclesia in Africa*, 111.



decision-making places), participation of laity in shaping priorities in the church (through councils, etc.), and the principle of subsidiarity that recognises the legitimate role of the local church. Many of the statements coming from the bishops over the years touch the issue of justice in the church either directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly. But I believe it can fairly be said that there is need for greater focus on this topic if the church is to retain credibility in its prophetic role in society at large.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Zambian experience of being a “church in the modern world of Africa” points to an on-going effort to build a Christian community that has a message at once credible and relevant. *Credible* in that its message can be believed because the church tries to practise it itself, and *relevant* in that its message relates to real life concerns of the African people. Truly, the “joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties” of the people are our own!



# *Gaudium et Spes* and Catholic Ethics in Post-Industrial Economics: Indirect Employers and Globalization

Albino Barrera

## I. Introduction

Globalization has highlighted a well-known, unaddressed problem in economic life: What do we do with the unintended consequences of market operations? This is not even to mention the even more intractable question of who has responsibility for rectifying the ill effects of market exchange. Pope John Paul II's notion of the indirect employer in *Laborem exercens* is an important conceptual tool in this regard. Unfortunately, this 1981 social encyclical does not develop in greater depth who precisely is an indirect employer, and why. All it does is to define the indirect employer as anyone who is in any way responsible for sustaining or enabling the relationship between the direct employer and the employees.<sup>1</sup> John Paul II's concern is, of course, neither original nor unique. In appealing to the First World to be more solicitous of the poor countries in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum progressio*,<sup>2</sup> Paul VI already alludes to the wealthy nations' duty of providing a fair, if higher, price for the exports of Third World nations. In effect, First World consumers are indirect employers of workers in developing countries.

The notion of the indirect employer goes beyond religious social thought. Recall Cesar Chavez's call for the boycott of grapes in his fight for better working conditions for migrant agricultural workers. Or, remember the worldwide grassroots movement to curtail the consumption of Nestle products until the company changed its marketing practices of infant formula in poor countries. More recently, students succeeded in improving the working conditions of overseas subcontracting manufacturers of college and brand-name apparel and

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II. 1981. *Laborem exercens*, 77-81.

<sup>2</sup> Paul VI. 1967. *Populorum progressio*, 47.

souvenir products. The same is true for the “fair price” campaign that has sought to pay coffee farmers a living wage for their crops.<sup>3</sup> The common point in these examples is consumers’ acknowledgment of their responsibility in ensuring that they are not party to sustaining morally reprehensible working arrangements no matter how remote their material cooperation may be. While these moral sensibilities are not the norm in the larger culture, they are nonetheless heartening because they are evidence of our ability to see and recognize ourselves in each other and to see in others a brother or a sister eking out a living and pursuing similar hopes and aspirations for a better life.

## II. Globalization

Global economic integration poses an unusual challenge to the notion of the indirect employer. Globalization greatly strengthens the economic ties (and therefore the attendant obligations) that bind people together even as it (globalization) makes the satisfaction of these duties that much more difficult. Let us examine both of these developments.

### A. *Ever Tighter Web of Indirect Employer Relationships*

Globalization strengthens indirect employer relationships because (1) we have become more interdependent, (2) we have the benefit of superior access to more complete information, and (3) we are in a better position to provide real assistance to others.

First, global economic integration magnifies the process of socialization that had been described in *Mater et magistra*<sup>4</sup> over forty years ago. People have become much more interdependent especially when it comes to economic affairs. The whole world has become a single workshop in which parts for many essential products (such as airplanes, cars, computers, and other electronic goods) come from all over the world. The same phenomenon is true for services given the increased reliance on offshore outsourcing for back-office operations, software

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<sup>3</sup> See Seth, S. Prakash. 1994. *Multinational Corporations and the Impact of Public Advocacy on Corporate Strategy: Nestle and the Infant Formula Controversy. Issues in Business Ethics*, Vol 6. Boston: Kluwer Academic; Starnes, Richard. 2002. “Coffee Companies Roasted for Squeezing Farmers: Oxfam Hopes to Shame Buyers Into Providing Consistently Fair Price,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, September 18: A7; Featherstone, Liza and United Students Against Sweatshops. 2002. *Students Against Sweatshops*. London and New York: Verso.

<sup>4</sup> John XXIII. 1961. *Mater et magistra*, 59-60.

programming, product design, and other routine operations. Economists have described this as the slicing up of goods and services into ever more refined divisions of labor in an effort to squeeze every ounce of efficiency and cost savings. The immediate benefit of such international vertical specialization is the increase in real incomes enjoyed by consumers worldwide given the decline in the cost of goods and services. This is not even to mention the much-needed employment opportunities created in emerging nations. The moral implication of this is that we have truly become each other's indirect employers because we are in effect consumers of each other's work effort and output.

Second, an essential feature of globalization is technological change, in particular, information and communication technologies. It has been said that all the current fuss about globalization is much ado about nothing because we already had an integrated global economy in the quarter century leading up to the First World War.<sup>5</sup> However, one must remember that twentieth-century globalization is distinctive because of its accompanying "death of distance."<sup>6</sup> Not only have we continued to enjoy great strides in bringing down transportation costs, but we have also achieved unimaginable cost reductions in communications and information processing and storage. In other words, the death of distance in the twentieth century is not so much due to cheap transportation as it is because of the widespread availability of low-cost information and communication. The moral significance of this development is that we can no longer plead ignorance to the plight and the dismal working conditions of workers overseas. We have the means to keep ourselves informed of the lives of people halfway across the globe.

Third, globalization has empowered people worldwide to come to each other's assistance wherever they may be or however great the physical distance that may separate them. Better communications, enhanced information sharing, improved transportation, and higher real per capita incomes mutually reinforce each other in imbuing people with real and viable capabilities in extending aid to each other. We have seen this new-found capacity at work in times of natural or man-made disasters as in the December 2004 Asian tsunami tragedy and the Darfur crisis.

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<sup>5</sup> Hirst, Paul and Grahame Thompson. 1999. *Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*. Second edition. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

<sup>6</sup> Cairncross, Frances. 1997. *The Death of Distance: How the Communications Revolution is Changing our Lives*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

In summary, global economic integration has greatly strengthened our mutual obligations as each other's indirect employers given our extensive economic interdependence, our greater awareness of one another's living conditions, and our enhanced capacity to come to each other's assistance. Globalization has made us even more responsible for our mutual well-being.

### *B. More Difficult Obligations to Fill*

Even as it further reinforces the web of indirect employer relationships in the postindustrial economy, globalization ironically also makes it that much more difficult to fulfill these attendant duties because of the increased complexity in assigning responsibility. The market's much-touted allocative efficiency is effected through a continuous process of price adjustments that shape the subsequent behavior and decisions of economic agents.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, there are collateral effects to these price changes including those that inflict harm on unsuspecting and unprepared market participants. These requisite localized price and quantity adjustments precipitate wide ripple effects on the rest of the economy.<sup>8</sup>

Even the most ardent proponents of globalization acknowledge the need to mitigate the harmful unintended consequences of market operations. However, the difficulty lies in identifying who has responsibility for these corrective measures, to what degree, and why. *An accurate assignation of responsibilities requires an explicit identification and validation of liabilities. This is not an easy task because market operations and outcomes do not, as a general rule, readily lend themselves to measurements of formal and material cooperation (both proximate and remote) for the harms done.*

This dilemma is best illustrated by pointing to some of the more contentious economic debates of our day. To what extent are US consumers (greatly benefiting from inexpensive imports) liable for the plight of laid-off US manufacturing workers? And how about the fresh college graduates who are just entering the labor market and are unable to secure jobs because of international outsourcing and the transfer of capital to low-cost manufacturing sites in Asia and Latin

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<sup>7</sup> Thus, excess demand is eliminated by a rise in prices that increase quantity supplied and decrease quantity demanded.

<sup>8</sup> International Monetary Fund. 1997. *World Economic Outlook*. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.

America? Is there any obligation to provide them relief? If so, whose duty is it to provide such aid?

The quotas of the Multifiber Agreement that had been in force since 1974 ended on January 1, 2005, and it is feared that China will dominate the worldwide textile and apparel industries to the detriment of poor countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. It is feared that over a million jobs will be lost in Bangladesh alone where apparel goods constitute 80 % of this poor country's exports. Who has responsibility for those who will be adversely affected by such liberalization: the Bangladeshi, Chinese, EU, or US governments? Is there any residual obligation to provide adjustment assistance considering that this liberalization had been planned well ahead of time since 1994 and even had a phased-in period of increasingly free markets? Is this looming major disruption in the Bangladeshi labor markets the fault of its own government for not having done enough in the past ten years to take the necessary preemptive economic reforms to remain competitive in international markets even without having to hide behind protective quotas?

The rapid and unusual spike in oil prices in 2004 and 2005 wreaked enormous damage in non-oil producing Third World economies and inflicted hardship on its citizens, a vast number of whom are already living below \$1 a day. These emerging nations had to expend much more of their scarce foreign exchange reserves for oil imports. Who has responsibility for providing relief for this economic shock: the Chinese for the large jump in their oil consumption given their white-hot economic growth or Americans driving gas-guzzling SUVs?

The decline in the value of the dollar has inflicted economic hardship on many EU exporters. Who has responsibility for providing assistance to those who have been unfavorably affected by a weakening dollar: the Chinese for undervaluing their currency relative to the US dollar, the US government for its uncontrolled budget deficit, US consumers for accumulating such record trade deficits, or the OECD countries who have simply relied on the US economy to provide the necessary consumption demand to prevent the world from sliding into recession? In a similar vein, who is culpable for the numerous international financial contagions of the last decade: currency speculators, emerging market governments, the IMF, or the global commercial banking sector?

Many more examples can be cited. These cases all illustrate a feature of the market: A change in one sector occasions a corresponding reaction somewhere else in the economy. Every element of the economy is

somehow related to everything else in the market. These examples also highlight an important downside of globalization: Market participants should expect to endure economic disruptions that are much more damaging in their impact, that are generated from even the remote corners of the global market, and that occur with much greater frequency and with little warning. And because there are often multiple shocks and erroneous economic decisions that mutually compound each other, it is often difficult to track causation and to identify who is ultimately responsible for rectifying adverse economic changes. This is not even to mention the need to distinguish the obligations proximate from remote indirect employers. Establishing accountability for market processes and outcomes is an unmanageable task. Globalization makes it even more difficult to assign obligations with precision because of the increased speed and complexity of market transactions.

### III. Indeterminate Philosophical and Political Liabilities

Outside of theological circles, there are few conceptual and practical aids to resolving the problem of the indirect employer in a globalized economy. One of these is the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its list of social and economic rights. These human rights are important in identifying that all-important economic baseline beneath which no human being will be allowed to sink. Unfortunately, economic rights are not universally accepted because of their yet unresolved conceptual difficulties.<sup>9</sup> Unlike civil and political rights that can be satisfied through noninterference (negative rights/freedoms), economic rights often require an interpersonal transfer of real resources (positive rights/freedoms). This means that we must resolve questions, such as, to what extent do we furnish ameliorative transfers, what do we provide, to whom, and, most important, who is the holder of such an obligation. This indeterminacy limits the utility of economic rights in resolving the issue of the indirect employer. Some would even go so far as to argue that it makes no sense to speak of human rights at all if they are unenforceable.<sup>10</sup>

The question of the indirect employer's culpability in economic exchange has also been examined in the philosophical literature.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, see Trimiew, Darryl. 1997. *God Bless the Child That Got Its Own: The Economic Rights Debate*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press for a survey of the debate surrounding economic rights.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Cranston, Maurice. 1967. "Human Rights, Real and Supposed." in *Political Theory and the Rights of Man*. Edited by D. D. Raphael. London: MacMillan.



Zanardi<sup>11</sup> (1990) deals with the problem head-on and provides an excellent exposition on the formidable philosophical hurdles that must be surmounted in order to make the notion of the indirect employer work. In the first place, one must remember that the indirect employer is only one economic agent in a vast and complex system characterized by a recurring dynamic. To establish blameworthiness for the ripple effects of an economic decision, it is important to be able to establish the link and the impact of a *particular* economic agent's actions on a *particular* market outcome. This is not an easy undertaking in an often frenetic and highly fluid market. Second, one must remember that the economic agent is only a small part of a much broader context and wields absolutely little control, if any, over the economy's unending circular flow of goods and services. These "sequence of events" will flow uninterrupted with or without this or that particular economic agent. Consequently, it is very difficult to hold *particular* market participants accountable for *particular* market outcomes. Indeed, there is much philosophical work that must be done before we can make the notion of the indirect employer meaningful and useful.

We could compensate for these conceptual deficiencies through mutual accord. Unfortunately, we are also wanting in this regard. The rapid evolution of our globalized economy has simply outstripped the ability of the international community of nations to set up multilateral institutions that can rectify some of the more disagreeable features of market operations. While the World Trade Organization (WTO) is an important first step in providing a forum where competing claims can be adjudicated peaceably and where nations voluntarily surrender part of their sovereignty for the sake of the global common good, there are many other areas in need of international agreement and action if we are to curb the excesses of the market.

Take the case of foreign exchange speculation. As of 1995, the daily turnover was \$1.2 trillion, and it is estimated that only a small fraction of this was directly related to facilitating the trade of goods and services in the global economy.<sup>12</sup> The rest was trading for profit-making. It is widely acknowledged that such speculative trading in foreign currencies has been responsible for the self-fulfilling currency crises endured by many emerging nations. The poor in these countries bear the brunt of the cost of such currency disruptions because of the resultant cuts in

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<sup>11</sup> Zanardi, William. 1990. "Consumer Responsibility from a Social Systems Perspective," *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*. 8:57-66.

<sup>12</sup> Data is from International Monetary Fund (1997, Table 15, 64).

social spending to restore macroeconomic balances. A possible solution to such a problem has been long known—the Tobin Tax in which short-term currency traders are assessed a surcharge to curtail their speculative transactions. An added advantage to such a tax is that its enormous revenues can be used for development assistance. The problem with this proposal is that making the Tobin tax feasible requires political will and courage on the part of the major economies. No serious effort is currently underway to establish an international mechanism for this corrective tax. The same deficiency is true when it comes to establishing a global body to deal with sovereign bankruptcies.

Beyond finance, there are no multilateral institutions to handle the concerns of people who believe that globalization is a race to the bottom. In particular, we have yet to address (1) the problem of the commons in the case of over-fishing and global climate change, (2) tax competition, and (3) the erosion of labor and environmental standards. In addition, we should also remember the continuing damage wrought on poor nations by OECD agricultural subsidies. In all these cases, there is need for global extra-market interventions that are possible only at a supranational level. The problems of living up to the duties of indirect employer relationships in the globalized economy cannot be resolved in the absence of a credible and effective multilateral capacity to rectify deficient market outcomes and processes.

#### **IV. Contributions from *Gaudium et Spes***

I claim that *Gaudium et spes* has much to contribute in operationalizing the notion of indirect employers in the face of such philosophical and practical limitations in ameliorating the unintended consequences of market operations. In particular, this pastoral constitution's teachings on the nature of the community and on the inseparability of the personal and common good provide the foundational warrants and the means with which to dispel the indeterminacy of obligations in indirect employer relationships.

The first part of this pastoral constitution is a theological reflection on the nature of the person and the human community. In contrast to secular notions of the community as a contractual arrangement, *Gaudium et spes*<sup>13</sup> views the human community as familial in nature. Recall that in the former, people are bound to each other by a social

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<sup>13</sup> Vatican Council II. 1965. *Gaudium et spes*. Boston: Daughters of St. Paul.

contract in which personal freedoms are voluntarily surrendered to an overarching authority that prevents people from preying on each other in a state of nature in which everyone is at war with everybody else. The community is a human creation, the product of a rationality that contains the problem of selfish and predatory behavior through self-interested mutual accommodation and compromise.

The Second Vatican Council subscribes to a much more optimistic anthropology and believes in the fundamental goodness of people. Instead of being undergirded by a rational social contract, the human community comes with personhood itself. It is a constitutive part of human nature. In other words, humanity is one family bound together by a common filial relationship to God.

These two opposing conceptions of the human community have different ramifications for the nature of obligations. First, under *Gaudium et spes*, we simply cannot walk away from our duties toward each other, nor can we pick and choose whichever responsibilities we want to accept or not. The bonds that tie us together are anchored deeply in human nature; they are the unchangeable parameters of life that we simply have to accept as givens as we strive to flourish. We cannot absolve ourselves of what we owe to each other by simply choosing to withdraw from the social contract. Natural obligations are permanent in a familial view of the community.

Second, a community based on a social contract is animated principally by justice. As a result, it seeks to give every person numbered in its ranks his or her respective due based on strict measures defined by the law. In contrast, a community that is viewed as a family is enlivened by charity. Its overriding concern is that of self-giving and working for the good of the others. Friendship, rather than the rule of law, governs interpersonal relationships; it is unmeasured in what it imparts.

Third, the goal of a contractual community is the maintenance of the public, juridic order. Tolerance is the primary virtue it seeks to instill in its membership. In contrast, a familial community seeks nothing less than the common good in which there is a union of hearts and minds in their quest to reach their shared end in God. As a result, far from being in conflict with each other, the good of the individual and the community are necessary conditions to each other. Neither can attain their fullness without the other. Personal good and the good of the community are distinct but inseparable. The human person instantiates the common good.

Given these foundational warrants for the mutual obligations we owe each other, *Gaudium et spes* dispels the ambiguities of indirect employer relationships, even with the complexities occasioned by global economic integration. Recall that the difficulty of validating these dues stems primarily from the failure to come up with precise measures in the assignation of duties in terms of their addressees, content, and strength. Less precision is called for under a familial view of community because we are all responsible for each other as brothers and sisters, regardless of whatever place or role we may fill in the common economic life. This clears away the ambiguity when it comes to identifying the addresses of economic obligations. Moreover, since friendship is never measured in its self-giving, the inability to parcel out people's dues in their exact proportion fades away as a problem. Indeterminacy is not an insurmountable problem for *Gaudium et spes* in living up to the obligations we owe each other in indirect employer relationships.

It is best to end this exposition with an example of why *Gaudium et spes* is distinctive in its contribution when it comes to actualizing our economic obligations as each other's indirect employers. Matusz and Tarr (1999) examine the cost and the benefits of trade liberalization by comparing the stream of future benefits enjoyed with the adjustment costs incurred in the short run. The principal adjustment cost is, of course, the disruption in the livelihoods of displaced workers. The economy is deemed to be efficient and operating properly if social costs (benefits) equal private costs (benefits). Policy interventions and corrective remedies are called for only in market failures, that is, when private and social costs (benefits) are not equal to each other. Observe how worker dislocation is treated in neoclassical economic reasoning:

[A] worker who experiences a reduction in his wage because his skills are no longer in demand bears a private cost. However, this is not a social loss if his wage is a true reflection of how society values his skills.<sup>14</sup>

[L]iberalization of the trading regime might induce changes in the values that an economy places on various forms of human capital. Workers who have accumulated significant amounts of firm-specific or sector-specific human capital may suggest a substantial (private) loss as the demand for their skills declines. In any event, this is no more a social cost than is the change in *any* price that is induced by changing market conditions.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Matusz, Steven and David Tarr. 1999. "Adjusting to Trade Policy Reform," World Bank Globalization Policy Research Working Paper #2142, n. 20, 37.

<sup>15</sup> Matusz and Tarr, 21, original emphasis.

In effect, the loss of a livelihood due to skill obsolescence or redundancy in the course of market operations is counted as a private and not a social cost. It is deemed to be part of the necessary and constant price and quantity adjustments in the marketplace (a pecuniary externality). Since the goal of mainstream (neoclassical) economic thinking is merely allocative efficiency, it would not call for ameliorative extra-market intervention on the part of the community.

Two passages from *Gaudium et spes* highlight the distinctive and the more demanding nature of its position. First, recall that Leo XIII (1891) discusses the notion of the superfluous income criterion as part of the just-use obligation. He follows Thomas Aquinas in defining superfluous income as that part of one's income that is not needed to sustain one's social standing and that of his/her family in the community.<sup>16</sup> The Second Vatican Council revisits this criterion and changes its definition by adopting John XXIII's view:

As for the determination of what is superfluous in our day and age, cf. John XXIII, radio-television message of Sept. 11, 1962: AAS 54 (1962) p. 682: "The obligation of every man, the urgent obligation of the Christian man, is to reckon what is superfluous by the measure of the needs of others, and to see to it that the administration and the distribution of created goods serve the common good."<sup>17</sup>

The difference between Leo XIII's and John XXIII's approach to superfluity is the outward orientation of the latter. The point of reference is not ourselves but the plight of our neighbors and reflects a lively sense of responsibility for the welfare of others, especially those who are marginalized or in distress.

Second, this keen concern for our neighbors is succinctly and eloquently expressed in the opening lines of *Gaudium et spes*:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Leo XIII. 1891. *Rerum novarum*, no. 36 . See also Aquinas Aquinas, Thomas. 1947/8. *Summa Theologica*. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 3 volumes. New York: Benzinger Brothers, II-II, q. 32, a. 6, reply).

<sup>17</sup> Vatican Council II 1965, II:3, n. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Vatican Council II 1965, #1.

The unique strength and contribution of *Gaudium et spes* in dissipating the indeterminacy of indirect employer relationships can be found in the familial spirit that characterizes Christian discipleship. We care for one another because we see in each other ourselves and a fellow child of God.

## V. Summary and Conclusions

The theological and philosophical reflections of *Gaudium et spes* on the nature of the person and the human community can be used effectively to resolve the problems of tracing and assigning economic responsibility for market processes and outcomes, especially in a globalized economy. In particular, this pastoral constitution offers two specific conceptual warrants for implementing the notion of indirect employers.

First, contrary to social contract theories, the human community is familial rather than contractual in nature. Second, a key contribution of *Gaudium et spes* to social ethics is its articulation of how personal good and the good of the community are not mutually exclusive but are necessary conditions to each other. Far from being inherently in conflict with each other, personal freedom and the interests of the community are, in fact, inseparable, even as they are necessarily distinct from each other. The common good is instantiated in personal integral human development, while individual human flourishing can only be actualized within community.

These two fundamental tenets in *Gaudium et spes*' understanding of the nature of the human person and the human community assert that there is a strong web of natural obligations that bind people together. Moreover, because these are natural liabilities, people cannot simply walk away from them or absolve themselves of their attendant duties.

This means that, for purposes of attending to the harmful effects of market operations, the economic obligations we owe each other are primarily and principally moral rather than merely legal. Thus, providing relief to those who have been adversely affected by globalization is not the exclusive responsibility of government but is in fact the shared obligation of everyone who has reaped handsome gains from expanded global trade. The greater the benefits received, the more significant are the duties owed to those who have to bear a disproportionate share of the burdens. Moreover, the assistance that beneficiaries of trade extend to those who have lost much in the process is not supererogatory in nature but is a demand of general, commutative, and distributive justice. A collateral implication of these duties is the role and

the genuine service that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can play in facilitating such private interpersonal ameliorative action.

These exacting economic duties should not come as a surprise. After all, moral imperatives are founded on higher standards compared to legal liabilities. Thus, as indirect employers, consumers in the major industrialized nations are accountable for the externalities (unintended consequences inflicted on third parties) of their personal lifestyles and consumption habits. Market widening as part of globalization only serves to expand the scope and the gravity of such obligations. Note, for example, the relevance of the notion of indirect employers in the case of OECD oil consumption, environmental damage, and excessive fiscal deficits that crowd out less developed countries from the global savings pool.

In summary, the Second Vatican Council's (1) exposition on the inseparability of personal good and the good of the community and (2) its understanding of the human community as familial add much to the notion of the indirect employer by defining the addressees, scope, and strength of its concomitant duties. Attending to the adverse unintended consequences of market operations is everyone's moral obligation and cannot be left simply to governmental action. After all, as the opening lines of *Gaudium et spes* so eloquently and unforgettably affirms, the joys and the griefs, the hopes and the dreams of the distressed and marginalized cannot fail to raise an echo in the hearts of the followers of Christ. For these become are our own joys and griefs, our own hopes and dreams. Indeed, *Gaudium et spes* has much to contribute in formulating an appropriate economic ethics in a postindustrial ethos that has come to be marked by an inordinate desire for private gain and consumption to the exclusion of conscientious social responsibility for each other.





# Economic and Philosophical Reflections on Private Wealth

Robert H. DeFina and Barbara E. Wall

*Finally, man painstakingly searches for a better world, without working with equal zeal for the betterment of his own Spirit.<sup>1</sup>*

This paper considers the idea of private wealth and its importance for Catholic social thought (CST), especially in the light of *Gaudium et spes*. It begins by offering a treatment of **wealth** in papal documents prior to 1965, specifically Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*, Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno*, and Pope John XXIII's *Mater et magistra*, followed by a philosophical reflection on the nature of wealth as a means of dominance drawing on the writings of Gerda Lerner, John Dewey, Karl Marx and *Gaudium et spes*, especially the document's call to restore the goal of human flourishing through recognition of the importance of solidarity, equality and the pursuit of the common good.

Having established a philosophical and theological basis for questioning the ways in which wealth is actually used in capitalist economies, the paper then turns to the practical ways in which CST has employed the notion of wealth when discussing issues of economic justice. We argue here that the tradition has generally overlooked important economic aspects related to the generation and distribution of wealth, focusing instead on income. The virtually exclusive reliance on income represents a significant shortcoming in the writings on economic production and distribution, and constitutes a logical disconnect from the tradition's conceptual groundings. Most importantly, it has prevented CST from making important contributions to the creation of an economic system consistent with Gospel values.

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<sup>1</sup> David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000, p. 168.

## Philosophical Reflections on Wealth Creation

It is helpful to begin this part of the paper with an examination of wealth in Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*, Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno* and Pope John XXIII's *Mater et magistra*.

In *Rerum novarum*, Pope Leo XIII's most notable achievement was the emphasis on human dignity, especially the dignity of the worker, which appears throughout all the succeeding encyclicals with the gradual evolution of more comprehensive treatment of social and economic rights and the emergence of a theory of "social justice" which first appears in Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo anno*. The theory of "social justice" is rooted in the belief that human dignity is **social** rather than a purely individual achievement. The human community has a moral responsibility to establish "social justice" for all peoples. It is in *Quadragesimo anno* that one finds the context for addressing the importance of sharing **wealth** with all classes of society for the common good:

*... By these principles of social justice one class is forbidden to exclude the other from a share in the profits. This law is violated by an irresponsible wealthy class who, in their good fortune, deem it a just state of things that they should receive everything and the laborer nothing.*<sup>2</sup>

In *Mater et magistra* of Pope John XXIII, the term **wealth** is used in the context of commenting on Pope Pius XI's encyclical, *Quadragesimo anno*. In the forty years since Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*, the historical and social changes were evident in the growth and acceptance of unrestricted competition. Wealth was seen as (1) a concentration of power, and (2) concentrated in the few who "are frequently not the owners, but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, who administer them at their good pleasure."<sup>3</sup>

Pope John XXIII commented on Pius XI's discovery of the creation of a new force in the world:

*'... economic power has been substituted for the free marketplace. Unbridled ambition for domination has replaced desire for gain; the whole economy has become harsh, cruel, and relentless in frightful measure.' Thus it happened that even public authorities were serving the interests of more wealthy men and that concentrations of wealth, to some extent, achieved power over all peoples . . .*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> O'Brien and Shannon, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> O'Brien and Shannon, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> O'Brien and Shannon, p. 89.

Pope John XXIII provided a lens for understanding the nature of wealth as it has evolved through changing historical conditions. The nature of the economy has changed due to unrestricted competition which results in a concentration of power or wealth as a kind of invisible power controlling the owners and workers of an institution. The corporate decision making is outside the relationship between owners of a business enterprise and the workers. The very *relationships* between employers and employees change dramatically because of an external will (which is empowered to make decisions affecting others) and removed from the social nature of the work environment. According to Catholic social teaching, the relationship between employer and employee ought to be governed by mutual respect that flows from the inherent dignity of the person who is made in the image and likeness of God. Relationships of mutual respect acknowledge the dignity and equality of each individual to enter relationships for the purpose of securing one's needs and the fulfillment of the common good. The principle of subsidiarity in Catholic social teaching holds that functions and decisions should be made at the lowest levels possible in an organization enabling the members to claim some participation and decision-making power in the organization. If the levels within the organization cannot make appropriate decisive interventions, then a higher level needs to intervene. However, the problem that Pope Pius XI underscored is that decision making power is taken entirely outside the appropriate relationships of subsidiarity, thereby denying the working community of a quality of life that ought to be constitutive of working relationships. Such power is always rather seductive. Catholic social teaching has always emphasized the importance of scrutinizing the relationships of the economy from the standpoint of human dignity and social justice.

The description of the modern economy characterized by the power of domination is reflected in relationships of subordination and dominance that are accepted in the social context. It takes a while for these relationships to emerge and find acceptance in society. Gerda Lerner provides an interesting analysis of the domination of women and the ways social relations change through the power of dominance that might be helpful in critiquing the nature of dominance in the economy:

*As Meillassoux has pointed out, once male dominance is established, women are seen in a new way. They may, even earlier, have been seen as being closer to 'nature' than to 'culture' and thus inferior, although not devoid of power. Once exchanged, women are no longer seen as equal human beings; rather, they become instruments for the designs of men, likened to a commodity. Women become reified because they*

*are conquered and protected, while men become reifiers because they conquer and protect. The stigma of belonging to a group which can be dominated reinforces the initial destruction. Before long, women come to be perceived as an inferior group . . .*<sup>5</sup>

Relationships of dominance are predicated on a model of relationship characterized as superior/inferior that is reflected in a fragmented, exclusive and polarized social relationship. Perhaps there are elements of feminist critique that can provide a prophetic insight regarding the nature of wealth as dominance. The biblical sense of human nature portrays the individual as a being created by God, created in the image and likeness of God and is destined to reunion with God. The end of each person's life is determined by the choices the person makes in her/his life. We have come from God, we are created in God's image and likeness, and we will, at some point, return to God. This is a journey of the spirit.

The Christian tradition as evidenced in the Gospels consistently rejects material domination with regard to humans. As a parenthetical aside, it is only recently that the thinking of Catholic social teaching has evolved to include a rejection of the notion of "domination of nature."<sup>6</sup> The tradition rejects the theory that humans, regardless of race, ethnic origin or sex, be viewed and treated as **objects** of control by another human being. The human person is to be respected as having an inherent quality of dignity and sacredness. The Catholic Church's response to slavery is another matter, and Catholic social teaching evolved and only recently rejected all forms of slavery and racism.<sup>7</sup> *Gaudium et spes* was written during the decade of the civil rights movement in the United States and elsewhere. *Gaudium et spes* emphasized that the Biblical story of humankind is one of liberation which flows from the assumption that all human beings are capable by nature of a freedom that is of God.

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<sup>5</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 99.

<sup>6</sup> On January 1, 1990, Pope John Paul II delivered "The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility" for the celebration of the World Day of Peace in which he addresses the plundering of nature and lack of respect for creation. On prior documents, such as *Rerum novarum* (paragraphs 11, 12, 57), *Quadregesimo anno* (paragraph 53) and *Gaudium et spes* (paragraph 12), the relationship between human and nature is referred to as a relationship of dominion.

<sup>7</sup> With regard to the Catholic Church's position on slavery, especially in the United States, see John T. McGreevy's *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (NY: W.W. Norton, 2003) especially chapter 2. Marvin L. Krier Mich in *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements*, Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998, points out in ch. 5 that the White Church of Europe and North America was not aware of its own racism.

Returning to our consideration of wealth as dominance, not only do new forms of wealth control the economic enterprise, they also control other peoples. Pope John XXIII stated in *Mater et magistra*, “even public authorities were serving the interests of more wealthy men and that concentration of wealth, to some extent, achieved power over all peoples.”<sup>8</sup> There is an interesting quality to this new emerging wealth—the power of invisible control over economic relationships and people. There is no social or economic structure of mutual accountability for the employers and employees because both are controlled by an invisible external force.

The impact of a world governed by the determinations of wealth in modern economy can be seen in the ways it affects relationships within the community by reducing labor relations to a materialistic base. The new form of wealth described by Pope Pius XI and Pope John XXIII flows from a historically conditioned view of human nature that is materialistic. A materialistic view of human nature uses categories we ordinarily apply to nature at large and applies them to human nature itself. When people are used as instruments for securing profit, they are used as *means* for the accumulated wealth of a few who are removed from the very productive relationships that create the profit. This is a form of human bondage in the economic sphere. Such a view of humankind as employers and employees conceives of profit as primary and the development or flourishing of humankind as secondary. In such a society, technological development is pushed in the name of freedom, and societies, such as indigenous peoples, are diminished, if not wiped out.

Within the Christian tradition, we have long honored the potential sacramental quality of human encounter. There is no place for the use of domination or control of other people or between people. According to Charles Curran, *Gaudium et spes* provides clearly in part one the communitarian and social nature of human beings. “The social aspect of human existence is not something added on to the person but an essential part of the human reality.”<sup>9</sup> It is in part one that this document underscored the importance of the Church’s social mission, a mission that involves each person in the important work of transforming a culture that celebrates individualism.

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<sup>8</sup> O’Brien and Shannon, p. 89.

<sup>9</sup> Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological and Ethical Analysis*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002, pp. 133-134.

In American culture such transformation is even more difficult because our society privileges profit, rabid individualism, and technological control of the world's resources and indirectly control of world populations such as third world countries that supply the raw materials for our successful lifestyles. American philosopher John Dewey in *Human Nature and Conduct* describes and identifies capitalism's notion of the nature of the human person and Dewey provides a critique of same. The system of capitalism is described as one that involves the exploitation of some human beings for the advantage of others. Capitalism places us in a proprietary stance towards nature and other human beings, even toward oneself. The capitalism Dewey criticized, as well as, the long standing history of the Papal encyclicals, is Liberal Capitalism which emphasized radical individualism:

*No unprejudiced observer will lightly deny the existence of an original tendency to assimilate objects and events to the self, to make them part of the 'me.' We may even admit that the 'me' cannot exist without the 'mine.' The self gets solidity and form through an appropriation of things which identifies them with whatever we call myself. . . . Possession shapes and consolidates the 'I' of philosophers. 'I own, therefore I am' expresses a truer psychology than the Cartesian 'I think, therefore I am.'*<sup>10</sup>

What is the nature of the person that capitalism subtends? According to Dewey, capitalism identifies human nature as an individual moved only by an incentive of personal profit:

*Those who attempt to defend the necessity of economic institutions as manifestations of human nature convert this suggestion of a concrete inquiry into a generalized truth and hence into a definitive falsity. They take the saying to mean that nobody would do anything, or at least anything of use to others, without a prospect of some tangible reward. And beneath this false proposition there is another assumption still more monstrous, namely, that man exists naturally in a state of rest so that he requires some external force to set him into action.*<sup>11</sup>

According to Dewey, our ability to control even nature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is thwarted by individualism, i.e. progress for the few—"But such progress will not be initiated until we cease opposing the socially corporate to the individual, and until we develop a constructively imaginative observation of the role of science and technology in actual society. The greatest obstacle to that vision is, I repeat, the perpetuation of the older individualism now reduced, as I have said, to the utilization of science and technology for ends of private pecuniary gain."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, NY: Random House, 1950, pp. 116-117.

<sup>11</sup> John Dewey, p. 118.

<sup>12</sup> John Dewey, p. 118.

What does all this have to do with wealth and human flourishing? The Judaic-Christian notion of the human person is operative for all persons; despite historical theories of economic growth that justify the greed and accumulation of a few over against the masses of humanity, and even go so far as to enshroud acquisitiveness and greed with the mantle of virtue. It is **justice** then that is understood and characterized as the **proper** relationship between people and not domination.

The nature of this kind of wealth is also characterized as exclusive by Karl Marx whose definition of the nature of private property might provide more insight into the nature of wealth as described by Pope John XXIII. In "On the Jewish Question," Marx writes:

*The right of property is, therefore, the right to enjoy one's fortune and to dispose of it as one will; without regard for other men and independently of society. It is the right of self-interest. This individual liberty and its application form the basis of civil society. It leads every man to see in other men, not the **realization**, but rather the **limitation** of his own liberty. It declares, above all, the right 'to enjoy and to dispose, **as one will**, one's goods and revenues, the fruits of one's work and industry.'*<sup>13</sup>

Relationships of privatized wealth are disconnected from the common good and the social nature of the human person. These are the results of economic undertakings that are not governed by "justice and charity as the principle laws of social life."<sup>14</sup>

In *Gaudium et spes*, we find a few references to wealth which are rather descriptive of the world as we know it. "Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources, and economic power. Yet a huge proportion of the world's citizens is still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy. Never before today has man been so keenly aware of freedom, yet at the same time, new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance."<sup>15</sup>

In *Mater et magistra*, the treatment of wealth is more philosophical and humanistic in its analysis of economic activity and human needs. *Gaudium et spes* is more reliant on a biblical context, especially the references to the person as a partner with God in the creation of a more just and peaceful world. The document reinforces the Church's commit-

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<sup>13</sup> Robert C. Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, New York: W.W. Norton, Inc., 1978, p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> O'Brien and Shannon, p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> O'Brien and Shannon, p. 168.

ment to the common good as an appropriate end of human activity. There is an understanding that economic relationships will continue to change, however, there is a constant that ought to prevail in human relationships. The fundamental reality of the human condition is that we are social beings by nature and will only find human self-actualization through working for the common good of all.

“Hence, the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and allow men as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfill it.”<sup>16</sup>

*Gaudium et spes* addresses the relationship that **ought** to obtain between individuals and institutions:

*... Human institutions, both private and public, must labor to minister to the dignity and purpose of man. At the same time, let them put up a stubborn fight against any kind of slavery, whether social or political, and safeguard the basic rights of man under every political system. Indeed human institutions themselves must be accommodated by degrees to the highest of all realities, spiritual ones, even though meanwhile, a long enough time will be required before they arrive at the desired goal.*

*... Let everyone consider it his sacred obligation to count social necessities among the primary duties of modern man, and to pay heed to them. For the more unified the world becomes, the more plainly do the offices of men extend beyond particular groups and spread by degrees to the whole world. But this challenge cannot be met unless individual men and their associations cultivate in themselves the moral and social virtues, and promote them in society. Thus, with the needed help of divine grace, men who are truly new and artisans of a new humanity can be forthcoming.*<sup>17</sup>

In terms of the effects of the changes in the nature of wealth on the common good, we can see how the combined influence of establishing social, cultural and economic legitimacy for theories of dominance, exclusivity, individualism are detrimental to the human community and the common good.

*Gaudium et spes* identifies the purpose of all human life as destined for human solidarity. The seductiveness of dominance, exclusivity and individualism subvert our true potential as humans. It is only through an ethic of community that “the obligations of justice and love are fulfilled only if each person, contributing to the common good, according

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<sup>16</sup> O'Brien and Shannon, p. 186.

<sup>17</sup> O'Brien and Shannon, p. 183.



to his own abilities and the needs of others also promotes and assists the public and private in situations dedicated to bettering the conditions of human life.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Economic Reflections on Wealth Creation**

CST, from its earliest foundations, has attended to questions of justice in the material distribution of goods and services. In doing so, it has sought to articulate a vision of personal and communal access that constitutes right standing before God and community. Paul VI addressed the issue at several points in *Gaudium et spes*, among them:

*God destined the earth and all it contains for all people and nations so that all created things would be shared fairly by all humankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity . . . we must never lose sight of this universal destination of earthly goods. (69)*

*To meet the requirements of justice and equity, every effort must be made, while respecting the rights of individuals and national characteristics, to put an end as soon as possible to the immense economic inequality which exists in the world, which increases daily and which go hand and hand with individual and social discrimination. (66)*

More recently, John Paul II has proffered a similar vision in claiming that all private property is burdened by a “social mortgage” and subject to the service of the common good.

The statements in *Gaudium et spes* make no distinction between intra-nation and inter-nation inequality, nor do they specify precisely how one is to gauge inequality. However, in examining the demands of justice, encyclicals and pastorals including *Gaudium et spes*, have almost universally concentrated on aspects of income generation and distribution, with wages and working conditions serving as the main indicators of economic well being. Thus, beginning with *Rerum novarum* and continuing through *Centessimus annus*, encyclicals and pastoral letters have been oriented to issues such as living wages, the need for social insurance, the desirability of unions, and so forth. In this spirit, *Economic Justice for All* specifically denounced what appeared to the U.S. Bishops at the time as an unacceptably high level of income inequality.

The generation of income and its distribution are clearly important issues and certainly merit attention. However, a focus on wages and

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<sup>18</sup> O’Brien and Shannon, p. 183.

work has needlessly constrained the ability of CST to foster the full and authentic development of individuals and communities. In particular, as many researchers, especially in sociology, have emphasized, life chances and social stratification/mobility are more a function of wealth than income. The ability to take risks, afford education, start a business, and obtain decent and stable housing all depend on wealth and not just current income.

Although income and wealth are related, they are not identical. Wealth, as will be discussed, is a more general concept and similar incomes can lead to very different wealth levels. Moreover, the level of income currently received by members of certain groups in society (e.g., women and racial/ethnic minorities) can be much less indicative of the members' long-term financial situation than is the level of income for members of other groups.

A contention of this paper is that CST can be usefully applied to scrutinize both the levels and types of wealth inequality, and the complex social processes from which they arise. By expanding its analysis to cover wealth, CST gains opportunities to speak prophetically and in new ways about a variety of issues of great practical importance, and to create a new and more powerful lens through which to view the demands of justice in the light of faith.

## **Wealth Creation and Distribution**

### *Wealth Versus Income*

It is useful to begin by distinguishing income from wealth. Income constitutes a flow. That is, it represents an amount paid or received *per unit of time*. An individual, for example, receives a certain salary per month or interest payments per year. For each period the person works or invests, the income will continue to flow. Of course behind the income flow is a corresponding flow of new production for which the income is payment. That new production flow can be either consumed or saved. To the extent it is saved, it contributes to wealth.

Indeed, wealth is simply the accumulated flow of all past savings, that is, the sum total of past production that has not been consumed.<sup>19</sup> As

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<sup>19</sup> Although the paper concerns private wealth, wealth has both a private and a public dimension. That is, individuals can accumulate savings privately or, by paying part of their income as taxes, accumulate savings in the public sector for communal use.

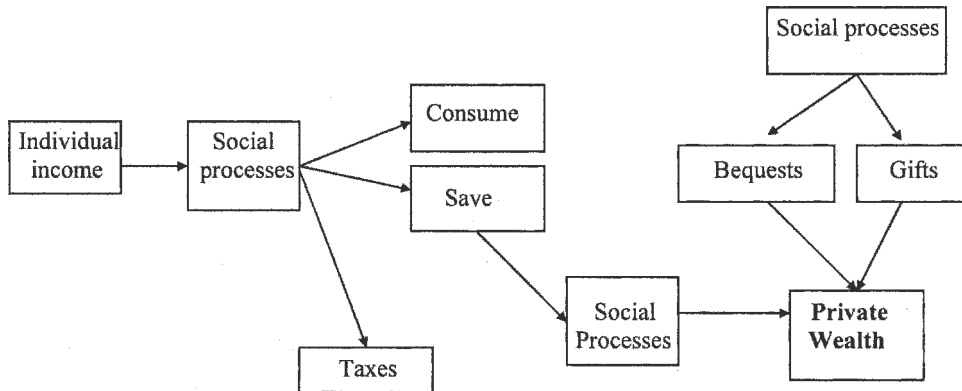
such it is a *stock or an amount at a point in time*. One talks about the amount of wealth available, say, today as opposed to the amount of income continually flowing in per month. And that part of any new production that is saved can be stored as wealth in a variety of forms, both as financial assets, such as a savings account, and as real assets, such as housing.

Income and wealth thus are related but distinct. At first glance, it may appear that the distinction is purely academic. Since wealth is directly related to income, it would seem that understanding wealth and wealth disparities is simply the flip side of understanding income generation and its disparities. In fact, standard economic analyses tend to follow this line of reasoning. However, a more realistic description of the relationship between income and wealth explicitly recognizes that the conversion of income into wealth involves various social processes affected by social context, norms, and power differentials between counterpart groups. As such, the relationship between income and wealth is a dialectical one that will vary both across time and across various groups in society. Moreover, the amount of wealth held by an individual need not only reflect the saving of that individual. Rather, any particular person also can establish and add to wealth from the savings generated by others via gifts and bequests. While such transfers do not add to aggregate wealth, they do help explain individual differences in wealth holdings.

Figure 1 illustrates schematically the relationship between an individual's income and wealth. The diagram necessarily simplifies, but is presented to emphasize two key points. One is that wealth creation and distribution is a broad process that includes income generation and distribution as components. Thus, a focus on wealth does not exclude CST's traditional scrutiny of income, but rather simply widens the lens to cover other phenomena. The other is the complexity and social distance in the link between income and wealth. Clearly, both individual behaviors and social processes and structures intervene. For example, the conversion of savings into wealth entails the mediation of financial

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In terms of the foregoing framework, the taxes paid to all levels of government constitute public sector income. Like individuals, the government can consume part of the taxes, for example by providing food to hungry children, and can save part through investments in public infrastructure, like roads, bridges and schools. The division of taxes among their potential uses, and hence the creation of public wealth, is a social (political) process. CST can usefully be applied to questions of the sufficiency and types of public wealth, although we do not do so here.



**Figure 1.** The Conversion of Individual Income into Private Wealth

institutions and markets, housing markets and government policy. Similarly, the amount and form of bequests reflect social expectations and policies. We will elaborate on the nature of the different relevant social processes shortly. At this point we simply point out that CST's emphasis on income ignores a host of issues relevant to the common good. By looking beyond income (but not ignoring it) and scrutinizing each part of the wealth creation and distribution process, CST can contribute significantly by offering guidance both on behaviors and structures.

### *The Ways in which Wealth Matters for the Common Good*

Because wealth is accumulated savings, it constitutes a reserve that can be drawn upon for infrequent, large and necessary outlays and in times of crisis and need. Individuals' abilities to successfully negotiate both occurrences often prove foundational for their full and authentic development. Examples abound. Access to considerable funds for college and beyond is now a basic necessity for a decent job. Similarly, families must provide lump sum down payments for housing. A range of studies covering different areas have shown that obtaining decent housing in good neighborhoods with close proximity to jobs provides an array of benefits to adults and children. These include higher pay, better performance in grades K through 12, higher graduation rates, less illness, lower rates of teen pregnancy, less drug and alcohol use, and lower crime and incarceration rates.<sup>20</sup> Accumulated wealth allows

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Richard Rothstein, *Class and Schools*, Columbia University and Economic Policy Institute, 2004.

one to provide collateral for loans to start a business or to acquire needed business capital such as tools and computers.<sup>21</sup>

Wealth is also critical because it provides insurance that supports risk taking and cushions the impact of adverse circumstances. Generally, actions that carry the potential for personal and community improvement entail uncertainty. The move to a new job or career, for instance, or the decision that a spouse remains at home to raise children requires the possible or probable loss of income. Accumulated wealth can promote these positive activities by lessening the concern about the ability to meet financial obligations. Since these kinds of risks can also carry higher rewards for the individual and community, lack of wealth for some means that they are systematically disadvantaged. Similarly, problems that otherwise might appear transitory, such as sickness, injury, job loss or divorce can have longer range consequences unless individuals have adequate wealth to handle associated income losses. Job losses that last six months or more, not an uncommon occurrence during the past three years in the U.S., can exhaust government unemployment insurance and leave individuals vulnerable to the loss of their house, car and other necessary belongings.<sup>22</sup> Research by Jonathan Gruber, for example, has found that 80 percent of workers who become unemployed have savings that equal at most two months income.<sup>23</sup>

Wealth also plays a special role in the common good relative to income in that it can promote greater social solidarity and firmer support for citizenship. King and Waldron (1988) point out that almost all great theorists of citizenship in the tradition of Western political thought, from Aristotle to Arendt, believed that full participation in public life involves the attainment of a certain social status, which is more typically thought to be a function of wealth than of income.<sup>24</sup> This is true because of the need for a minimum level of education and access to

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<sup>21</sup> See, K. Edin, "More than Money: The Role of Assets in the Survival Strategies and Material Well-Being of the Poor," in Thomas Shapiro and Edward N. Wolff, eds., *Assets for the Poor*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation), 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Estimates reveal for example that over 3 million unemployed workers currently have exhausted their federal unemployment insurance. See, I. Shapiro, "Number of Unemployed Workers Who Have Gone Without Federal Benefits Hits Record 3 Million," *Center For Budget and Policy Priorities* (October 13, 2004).

<sup>23</sup> J. Gruber, "The Consumption Smoothing Benefits of Unemployment Insurance," *The American Economic Review*, 87, March 1997.

<sup>24</sup> King, D. and J. Waldron (1988): "Citizenship, Social Citizenship and the Defence of Welfare Provision," *British Journal of Political Science*, 18, pp. 415-443. The discussion in the paragraph draws from their article.

decision makers, and of the need to remain insulated from economic and political intimidation. Other political theorists stressed the dangers inherent in a widely unequal distribution of wealth. Rousseau, for example, argued that such inequality corrodes social solidarity and a sense of common purpose.<sup>25</sup> Thus, for example, those who own property and those who do not can hold very different opinions about basic community issues such as the need for taxes and their appropriate uses, and might even resent one another. Galbraith's 2004 article in this journal makes similar arguments in the current economic context, noting the adverse consequences of wealth shortfalls and maldistribution for economic growth.

Finally, wealth provides a window into the history of a person's or group's struggles that is masked by income levels. Two individuals might currently have equal incomes, but one may have only recently attained it while the other has had a higher level for a long period of time. The same is true for counterpart groups, such as men and women, and whites and non-whites. Additionally, individuals with similar current incomes can experience different frequencies and durations of unemployment. This appears to be the case for whites versus non-whites.<sup>26</sup> Since wealth captures the entire history of income and savings flows, it will reveal these differences whereas income levels *per se* will not.

### *The Current Distribution of Private Wealth*

Given the special significance of wealth for the common good, it becomes important to delve more deeply into the distribution of wealth and the underlying reasons for disparities. To do so, we present some data on private wealth holdings in the United States.

The data come from a study by Professor Edward Wolff of New York University.<sup>27</sup> His study makes two things very clear that are relevant for our discussion. First, trends in income and wealth can diverge noticeably, underscoring the need for particular attention on wealth. Second, the extent of wealth inequality in the United States is astonishing and much greater than income inequality.

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<sup>25</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, trans. And ed. G.D.H. Cole (London:1966), p. 134, cited in King and Waldron, *ibid*, p. 426.

<sup>26</sup> See Rothstein, *op cit*.

<sup>27</sup> E. Wolff (2004), "Changes in Household Wealth in the 1980s and 1990s in the U.S.," The Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, *Working Paper No. 407*.

Concerning trends, different summary measures of family wealth have grown considerably faster during the past twenty years than have comparable summary measures of family income. Mean and median family incomes, adjusted for inflation, have grown 13.7% and 28.9% respectively between 1983 and 2001. The corresponding growth rates for inflation adjusted net worth are 23.1 % and 64.6%. If one narrows the focus to financial net worth (essentially abstracting from housing wealth), the figures are 81.1% and 78.1%. So while both income and wealth rose during the period, the widely different growth rates suggest that unique circumstances are generating the growth and that understandings of changes in material well-being are contingent upon which measure one adopts (i.e., income or wealth).

There are a variety of ways to explore income and wealth inequality. One is to examine a summary measure of inequality such as the well-known Gini coefficient. The Gini coefficient takes values between 0 and 1, with values closer to 1 indicating greater inequality. According to Wolff's (2004) calculations (his Table 1), the Gini coefficient in 2001 was 0.826 for total net worth, 0.888 for financial net worth and 0.562 for income. That is, the Gini index indicates that wealth is considerably more concentrated than income.

A more intuitive way to depict inequality is to calculate the percent of total income or wealth held by different percentiles of the distribution. By Wolff's (2004) estimates (his Table 2), the top 10% of income earning households received 45.2% of all income. By contrast, the top 10% of wealth owners held 71.5% of all wealth. For the top 10% of all financial wealth holders, the fraction of financial wealth owned is 79.9%. Again, wealth is considerably more concentrated than income. If one looks at the wealth owned by the top 1% of wealth holders, the figures are 33.4% for total net worth and 39.7% for financial net worth, while the fraction for income is 20%. By contrast, the lowest 40% of wealth holders owns only 0.3% of all wealth and -0.7% of financial wealth (i.e., they are net debtors). These data are nothing short of breathtaking. Indeed, the current concentration of wealth has led the eminent economist Paul Krugman to liken the current situation to the period of the robber barons.

Another disturbing perspective concerns racial differences in wealth holding. Here again, the data are skewed so much as to make one ask whether there was a mistake in the calculations. Wolff (2004) calculates the ratios of Non-Hispanic African American wealth to that of Non-Hispanic White wealth. The median ratio for total net worth is 0.1; the median ratio for financial wealth is 0.03. That is, a typical African-

American family has 3 cents in financial wealth for every dollar held by the typical White family. By contrast, the corresponding median ratio for incomes is 0.57 or 57 cents for every dollar. The relevant median ratios for Hispanic wealth to Non-Hispanic White wealth are even smaller (0.03 and 0.01).

As always, it is useful to state explicitly that neither *Gaudium et spes* nor any other encyclical or pastoral letter has ever called for perfect equality in the material distribution of goods and services. Rather, the documents suggest various foundational principles that should guide our thinking about justice, and that should be applied to three dimensions of economic activities.<sup>28</sup> These include justice in exchange (commutative justice), justice in ownership (distributive justice), and justice in participation (contributive justice). As such, all aspects of economic life, including production and consumption activities, are subject to scrutiny in the light of faith.

In light of these criteria, some economic and social differences reasonably can be considered useful and just. However, the extreme inequality that currently exists in the United States calls into question both the usefulness and the fairness of the wealth distribution. Only a market fundamentalist would claim that existing overall and racial wealth inequality simply reflects historical differences in individual and group productive contributions to society. That point notwithstanding, it is useful to recall Paul VI's words in *Gaudium et spes*:

*Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity and international peace.* (29)

The challenge for CST is to understand the underlying causes and to prophetically speak about disparities that undermine the common good and other basic guiding principles.

### *Reasons for Large Wealth Disparities*

As mentioned earlier, a basic reason for wealth differences is different levels of income. The lower the level of income an individual has, the

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<sup>28</sup> The principles include human dignity, the primacy of the person, the social nature of the person, solidarity of the human family, the common good as inseparable from the good of persons, subsidiarity, participation as a basic right, the universal destination of material goods, and the preferential option for the poor. These are discussed in W. Byron, "Ten Building Blocks of Catholic Social Teaching," *America*, 179, 1998.



less the person can save other things equal. Thus, CST's longstanding focus on incomes does contribute to the analysis of wealth. Still, statistical analyses have shown that income differences can explain only part of the wealth differences that are observed in the population. Wolff's (2004) analysis shows, for example, that "Though wealth and income are positively correlated among households, the correlation is far from perfect and there exists a large variation of wealth holdings within income classes" (p.2).

One way to see this is to examine wealth ratios for Whites and African-Americans by income class. This allows us to abstract to some extent from the role of different incomes in generating different wealth levels. If income differences were the whole story, then Whites and African-Americans with the same income level should have the same wealth (and a ratio of 1). The data, however, indicate otherwise. According to the Wolff's (2004) computations, the ratios are between 0.2 and 0.4, depending on the income level used. Clearly, other and more complex factors apparently are at play.

Take, for instance, saving behavior. More wealth will be available to a person the greater fraction of income that is saved. In part, the fraction saved will reflect individual preferences, but in part it can also reflect social processes like government policies meant to encourage saving. A good example is the tax exempt status of contributions to employer 401(k) retirement funds, and the associated matching contributions of employers. The policy is clearly aimed at increasing retirement saving and allows workers to accumulate much more wealth than otherwise from a given amount of individual saving. Thus, \$1 saved by an individual worker represents \$2 saved after the matching employer contribution; on top of that, the \$1 saved avoids federal income taxes in the year of contribution and all future interest earned is tax deferred until retirement. An issue arises, however, because not all jobs provide such a program. Consequently, \$1 saved by one individual will produce far less wealth than \$1 saved by another person. And because the availability of 401(k) programs is likely to vary systematically by race and gender, since women and racial minorities tend to have less desirable jobs, these groups will systematically be disadvantaged.<sup>29</sup> CST has an opportunity to comment on the justice issues raised by the differen-

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<sup>29</sup> A response to this observation is that women and racial minorities simply have not invested enough in their own "human capital" and so are individually responsible for their situation. While recognizing the basic idea that individual decisions at least partly explain individual outcomes, we take seriously the notion that certain groups in society face daunting systemic constraints, social expectations and a lack of power that calls

tial treatment of workers (and non workers). Other opportunities for scrutiny related to retirement savings concern the proposed privatization of social security and the increasing willingness of courts to allow firms to abrogate their pension responsibilities to workers so that the firms can remain profitable.<sup>30</sup>

Another key social process that affects wealth creation is the housing market. Housing remains one of the most widespread forms of wealth holding in the United States.<sup>31</sup> Yet, the process is biased in various ways toward particular individuals and groups and contributes to observed disparities. The deductibility of mortgage interest paid constitutes one source of bias. Because the tax code uses progressive tax rates, individuals with higher incomes obtain a greater tax benefit per dollar of mortgage interest paid. That is to say, \$1 devoted to housing by a high income person results in more wealth accumulation than \$1 devoted by a low income person. And if a person receives income too low to be taxed, he or she gets no tax benefit at all. As a result, about 53% of the value of the deduction in 2000 went to families with income greater than \$100,000. Only 1.3% of the deductions went to families with incomes of \$30,000 or less.<sup>32</sup>

The accumulation of housing wealth is also biased toward certain groups because of racial discrimination in the housing market, whereby racial minorities are restricted from entering certain neighborhoods.<sup>33</sup> The discrimination not only directly reduces the ability to accumulate housing wealth, but also has a variety of significant indirect effects on life chances, such as a lack of access to jobs and diminished physical health.

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into question the meaning of “voluntary” actions. Decisions about education, hours worked, and occupations among other things are not made in a social vacuum.

<sup>30</sup> Recent court decisions concerning US Airways machinists are an example. See *NY Times*, January 6, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> According to Wolff (2004), Table 5, the overall home ownership rate in the U.S. in 2001 was 67.7%, higher than the ownership rate of any other form of wealth. If the category “other real estate” is included, the fraction is 84.5%.

<sup>32</sup> Jacob Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2002, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> Discrimination in home purchasing has been widely documented both in academic and government studies. The classic study is D. Massey and N. Denton, *American Apartheid*, (1994: Harvard University Press). See also J. Yinger, “Housing Discrimination and Residential Segregation as Causes of Poverty,” in University of Wisconsin-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty Focus, 21, (fall 2000). There is also strong evidence of racial discrimination in the home loan process, although recent regulatory and technological changes appear to have mitigated it. See A. Munnell et al., “Mortgage Lending in Boston: Interpreting HMDA Data,” *American Economic Review*, 86, (March 1996), pp. 25-53 and A. Yezer, “Discrimination in Mortgage Lending,” in Daniel McMillen, ed., *Companion to Urban Economics*, (New York Blackwell), 2005.

Bequests, as noted earlier, are another factor lying between individuals' incomes and their ability to accumulate wealth. Indeed, studies have shown that bequests are an important source of U.S. wealth differentials.<sup>34</sup> How the proceeds from estates are to be divided and how public policy should intervene are questions to which CST can speak. One opportunity was the recent policy decision to eliminate the U.S. estate tax. Estimates revealed that the tax change produced no overall benefits to the U.S. economy, but rather only served to enrich families that were already extraordinarily rich.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the policy change had the indirect impact of harming the poorest individuals in that it eliminated an important incentive to make charitable contributions from estates. The Congressional Budget office and others have estimated that the change reduced charitable giving by at least \$12 billion per year, an amount equal to the total amount of corporate charitable donations.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, the Church was silent during the debate and in its aftermath, apparently failing to heed Paul VI's penetrating words in *Gaudium et spes*:

*At the very time when economic progress, provided it is directed and organized in a reasonable and human way, could do so much to reduce social inequality, it seems all too often only to aggravate them; in some places it even leads to a decline in the situation of the underprivileged and to contempt for the poor. (63)*

There are many other examples in which social processes and structures favor the wealth accumulation of some individuals and groups over others. Unfortunately, and contrary to Paul VI's admonishment, the already well-to-do are often the favored group. These have contributed to a degree of wealth inequality that, as described earlier, is remarkable. To the extent that these differences are unjust and to the extent that they reflect factors beyond income differences, CST can profitably redirect attention to wealth creation and distribution *per se*.

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<sup>34</sup> M.O. Wilhelm, "The Role of Intergenerational Transfers in Spreading Asset Ownership," in Thomas Shapiro and Edward N. Wolff, eds., *Assets for the Poor*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation), 2001.

<sup>35</sup> See Iris J. Lav and James Sly, "Estate Tax Repeal: A Windfall for the Wealthiest Americans," Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, June 21, 2000. Out 2.3 million people who died in 1997, fewer than 43,000 had to pay estate tax. Joint Committee on Taxation, *Present Law and Background on Federal Tax Provisions Relating to Retirement Savings Incentives, Health and Long-term Care, and Estate and Gift Taxes*, (JCX-22-99), June 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Congressional Budget Office, "The Estate Tax and Charitable Giving," (July 2004). See also, David Kamin, "New CBO Study Finds That Estate Tax Repeal Would Substantially Reduce Charitable Giving," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, July 31, 2004.



# Amartya Sen's Capability Approach to Development and *Gaudium et Spes*

Séverine Deneulin

## The Capability Approach

“Development can be seen, it is argued here, as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy.”<sup>1</sup> So opens *Development as Freedom*. The book by economist and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen summarizes his thirty-year long works in seeking an alternative basis for economic theory. Sen's pioneering works in welfare economics have emphasised that quality of life does not lie in the amount of commodities that people possess, or the utility levels that they reach, but lies their “capabilities” or freedoms, that is, in their “abilities to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being.”<sup>2</sup> There are components of human well-being that income cannot capture, such as a greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, political and cultural freedoms, and participation in community activities. This is why the end of development cannot be reduced to a single measure, such as income, but needs to be multidimensional and concerned with the nature of the lives that people are living. As the *Human Development Reports* of the United Nations Development Programme state it, the end of development is to enhance people's freedoms in all areas of their life (economic, social and cultural).<sup>3</sup> Within the human development paradigm, development is a process of “expansion of the real freedoms

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<sup>1</sup> Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Sen, Amartya. “Capability and Well-Being.” *Quality of Life*. Eds. Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Reports*. New-York: Oxford University Press, 1990-2005 (published annually). For how the *Reports* are indebted to Sen's capability approach, see especially Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko, and A.K. Shiva Kumar, eds. *Readings in Human Development*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.

that the citizens enjoy to pursue the objectives they have reason to value.”<sup>4</sup> Or alternatively, development can be seen as “the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency.”<sup>5</sup>

The most fundamental freedom in Sen’s approach to development is that of agency, that is, “the ability of people to help themselves and to influence the world.”<sup>6</sup> Throughout his works, Sen has emphasised that people should not be seen as passive spoon-fed patients of social welfare institutions, but “have to be seen as being actively involved in shaping their own destiny.”<sup>7</sup> Each person has to be seen as a “doer and a judge” instead of a “beneficiary,”<sup>8</sup> as subject and actor of her own life rather than an object of actions that are being made for her.

By “agent”, Sen understands “someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives.”<sup>9</sup> Sen distinguishes agency achievement, which is “the realisation of goals and values a person has reasons to pursue, whether or not they are connected with her own well-being,”<sup>10</sup> and agency freedom, which is “one’s freedom to bring about the achievements one values and which one attempts to produce.”<sup>11</sup> Although Sen understands agency as the ability to bring about the goals that a person values, whether these goals are connected to human well-being or not, as an approach to development, the exercise of individual agency has closely been associated to goals related to the enhancement of human well-being. For example, speaking of the deep afflictions that affect mankind in terms of hunger, malnutrition, preventable diseases, poverty, oppression, Sen underlines that, “we have to recognise the role of *individual freedoms* of different kinds in countering these afflictions. Indeed, *individual agency* is, ultimately, central for addressing these deprivations.”<sup>12</sup>

Exercising individual agency may take an infinite variety of forms and ranges of actions. The question of what kind of agency is central to

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<sup>4</sup> Drèze, Jean, and Amartya Sen. *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Sen. *Development as Freedom*, p. xii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> Sen, Amartya. “Well-Being Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984.” *Journal of Philosophy*. 82.4 (1985), p. 208.

<sup>9</sup> Sen. *Development as Freedom*, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> Sen, Amartya. *Inequality Re-examined*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Sen. *Development as Freedom*, p. xi. Italics added.

addressing human deprivations is left open. Sen's writings devote a lot of attention to the ability to participate in the life of community, as a form of exercise of agency to do something for oneself and for other members of the community.<sup>13</sup> Participation in the life of the community is one form of expressing individual agency, but other forms may be valuable too, like for example migration to another country in the search for a greater well-being.

In addition to the above freedoms, Sen's capability approach identifies two crucial attitudes for development: sympathy, where concern for others directly affects one's own welfare, and commitment, where concern for others is independent of one's own welfare, where one's choice is not motivated by its effects on one's own welfare.<sup>14</sup> For example, one can help a destitute person because one feels unhappy and uncomfortable at the sight of this destitution. Helping the poor as a way of alleviating one's unhappiness and making oneself more comfortable, would then be a sympathy-based action. But one can also help a destitute person because one thinks that it is not fair for someone else to suffer from destitution while one is not. In that case one's action would be based on commitment.<sup>15</sup>

The role that these other-regarding concerns play for making participation work for the greatest well-being of all has been especially underlined in Drèze and Sen's analysis of participation in India. For example, they write that, a way for democratic decision-making not to be a game where the voices of the powerful trumps the voice of the underprivileged, is to create a sense of solidarity between the most privileged and the underprivileged (e.g. intellectuals and higher social classes speaking on behalf of the underprivileged and defending their interests).<sup>16</sup>

### **Poverty and Development in *Gaudium et Spes***

The capability approach emerged in a secular environment in the early 1980s. Yet, its ideas bear many striking similarities with those set

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<sup>13</sup> Drèze, Jean, and Amartya Sen. *India: Development and Participation*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Sen, Amartya. "Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioural Foundations of Economic Theory." *Choice, Welfare and Measurement*. Amartya Sen. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982. 84-106.

<sup>15</sup> Sen. *Development as Freedom*, p. 270.

<sup>16</sup> Drèze and Sen. *India: Development and Participation*, p. 29.

up in *Gaudium et spes* forty years before the capability approach and the *Human Development Reports* became popular.

First, there is the primacy of freedom and personal dignity over all economic and social ends. Paragraph 25 affirms for example that, “the subject and the goal of all institutions is and must be the human person.” Paragraph 63 reaffirms the idea that “man is the source, centre, and purpose of all economic and social life.” Paragraph 17 directly links the end of economic and social activities with human freedom: “Only in freedom can man direct himself towards goodness.”<sup>17</sup> These words echo the capability approach’s emphasis that human well-being is to be assessed in terms of the freedom of the human person, and not in terms of the possession of commodities. In *Gaudium et spes*, as in the capability approach, it is the human person who is the end of all social institutions. A liberalisation of markets would do no good if the end result is that farmers in developing countries get a lower price for their crops, and have a lower ability to be adequately nourished, or a lower ability to be educated (if they cannot afford sending their children to schools as a consequence of their loss of income).

The recurrent idea of the capability approach is that human freedom is curtailed by poverty. Poverty makes people unable to lead a life they have reason to choose and value. For example, a clever female teenager in a rural village in Zambia dreams of going to go to university and be a doctor, but her freedom to choose such a life is crippled by the poverty of her family who cannot pay for her going to school and by the inability of the government to offer free education for all. Such a conceptualisation of the link between freedom and poverty is explicit in *Gaudium et spes*.

Human freedom is often crippled when a man encounters extreme poverty, just as it withers when he indulges in too many of life’s comforts and imprisons himself in a kind of splendid isolation. Freedom acquires new strength, by contrast, when a man consents to the unavoidable requirements of social life, takes on the manifold demands of human partnership, and commits himself to the service of the human community.”<sup>18</sup>

The core element of the capability approach, human agency, and the ability of people to shape their own destiny, is also implicitly underpinning *Gaudium et spes*. It has however been made more explicit in the later encyclical *Populorum progressio*: “Man is truly human only if he

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<sup>17</sup> Vatican II. *Gaudium et spes*. 1965.

<sup>18</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 31.1.



is the master of his own actions and the judge of their worth, only if he is the architect of his own progress. He must act according to his God-given nature, freely accepting its potentials and its claims upon him.”<sup>19</sup> This emphasis on making people actors of their own lives has been particularly exemplified in Catholic social thinking in what is known as the principle of subsidiarity. The encyclical *Mater et magistra* defines it in the following terms: “Neither the State nor any society must ever substitute itself for the initiative and responsibility of individuals and of intermediate communities at the level on which they can function, nor must they take away the room necessary for their freedom.”<sup>20</sup>

While the capability approach talks about the importance of the moral sentiments of “sympathy” and “commitment”, or in other words of other-regarding concerns for reducing poverty and increasing the freedoms of people to live a life they have reason to value, *Gaudium et spes* uses the word “solidarity”. It underlines that an emphasis on freedom has to go hand in hand with an equal emphasis on solidarity. The encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* defines solidarity as “this firm and constant determination to work for the common good; that is, for the good of all and each because we are all responsible for all.”<sup>21</sup> *Gaudium et spes* had earlier defined the common good as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment.”<sup>22</sup>

This is where the striking similarities between the capability approach to development and *Gaudium et spes* cease. The capability approach conceives human well-being in terms of the freedoms that individuals have reason to choose and value. These freedoms are properties of individuals. Although the capability approach does acknowledge that some freedoms, such as democratic freedom, are valuable freedoms which cannot be reduced to individual characteristics, they are valuable to the extent that they are “a significant *ingredient*—a critically important *component*—of individual capabilities.”<sup>23</sup> The importance and value of democratic freedom are only relevant to the extent that they enter as a component of individual human well-being, to the extent that it makes the lives of individuals better.

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<sup>19</sup> Paul VI. *Populorum progressio*. 1967, 34.

<sup>20</sup> John XXIII. *Mater et magistra*. 1961, 138.

<sup>21</sup> John Paul II. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*. 1987, 38.

<sup>22</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Sen, Amartya. “Symposium on Development as Freedom: Response to Commentaries.” *Studies in Comparative International Development*. 37.2 (2002), p. 79.

Social arrangements are to be “investigated in terms of their contribution to enhancing and guaranteeing the substantive freedoms of individuals.”<sup>24</sup> As Sen insists, all actions finally bear upon their effects on the lives that human beings live, lives which are only lived by individuals and not by some supra-individual subjects. Individual lives are deeply dependent and inter-connected, but they are not in fusion: “The intrinsic satisfactions that occur in a life must occur in an individual’s life, but in terms of causal connections, they *depend* on social interactions with others.”<sup>25</sup> For the capability approach, other-regarding concerns are important because they increase “my” quality of life, and “your” quality of life. While for Catholic social thinking, other-regarding concerns are important because they increase “our quality of life”, because “my” life can only be full improved if “our” lives are improved.<sup>26</sup>

By using the example of migration remittances in El Salvador, I will argue that contemporary development theory would need to be anchored into a common good approach to development if it is to offer sufficient benchmarks for promoting human well-being. If individual freedom and individual agency fail to be understood within the wider framework of the common good, then a freedom-centred approach to development, such as the capability approach and the human development paradigm, can hope to do very little to address human deprivations, and remove the unfreedoms that deprive so many people of living a life they have reason to choose and value.

### **Migration Remittances in El Salvador**

El Salvador is one of the poorest countries of Latin America. While 20 per cent of the Latin American population live with less than \$2 a day in 2001, almost half of the Salvadorian population does so (table 1). The figure is especially high in rural areas, where more than 60 per cent of the population is labelled as “poor”. The signature of the Peace Agreements in 1992, which marked the end of the Salvadorian civil war, does not seem to have brought along a better social context. Poverty in rural areas is even higher in 2001 than in 1994, and poverty in urban areas has stagnated.

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<sup>24</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*, p. xiii. Italics added.

<sup>25</sup> Sen. “Symposium on Development as Freedom”, p. 85.

<sup>26</sup> For the differences between liberal political thought and Catholic social thinking on the issue of the common good, see Keys, Mary M. “Personal Dignity and the Common Good: A Twentieth-Century Thomistic Dialogue.” *Catholicism, Liberalism and Communitarianism*. Eds. K. Grasso, G. Bradley and R. Hurt. London: Rowan and Littlefield. 173-195.

**Table 1.** Percentage of Families Below the Poverty Line (Percentage of Families Whose Income Is Double the Costs of a Basket of Basic Food, or Below \$2 a Day)

	1980	1990	1994			1999			2001		
	Total	Total	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
El Salvador	—	—	48 <sup>a</sup>	40	58	44	34	59	48.9	39.4	62.4
LAC average	35	41	38	32	56	35	30	54	20.3 <sup>b</sup>	17.5 <sup>b</sup>	24.3 <sup>b</sup>

Source: CEPAL, Statistical Yearbook, 2002 and 2004.

<sup>a</sup> Data for 1995.

<sup>b</sup> Data for 2002.

**Table 2.** Illiteracy Rates (Population Above 15 Who Cannot Read and Write)

	Total				Male				Female			
	1980	1990	2000	2005	1980	1990	2000	2005	1980	1990	2000	2005
El Salvador	33.8	27.4	21.3	18.9	29.1	23.7	18.4	16.4	38.4	30.7	23.9	21.2
Costa Rica	8.3	6.1	4.4	3.8	8.1	6.1	4.5	3.9	8.4	6.1	4.3	3.7
LAC average	—	—	11.7	9.5	—	—	—	8.8	—	—	—	10.3

Source: CEPAL, Statistical Yearbook, 2002 and 2004.

When assessed in terms of the capability approach, the well-being of the Salvadorian population does not fare much better than when assessed in monetary terms. The tables compare with data from Costa Rica, which is well-known for its exceptional achievements in human development.<sup>27</sup> In 2005, illiteracy rates were still about twice the Latin American average, and the decrease in illiteracy rates has been even during the last two decades. This suggests that the end of the civil war in 1992 did not bring significant improvements in tackling illiteracy (table 2). In terms of the capability to be healthy, as measured for example by access to basic services, table 3 shows that a quarter of the population still does not have access to piped water in 2003. The percentage of people who have access to a sewage system has not increased significantly during the 1990s. More than 40 per cent of the population does not have access to a sewage system. These figures critically reflect the lack of public action in promoting people's well-being, as illustrated by a low public spending on education and health (tables 4 and 5).

There has been a long history of migration to the United States prompted by the civil war during the 1970s and 1980s. After the signature of the Peace Agreements in 1992, few migrants did return to El Salvador, and migration to the United States has continued at an even

<sup>27</sup> Jolly, Richard and Santosh Merothra, eds. *Development with a Human Face*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

**Table 3.** Access to Basic Services

	Access to Piped Water			Sewage System			Electricity		
	1990	1995	2003	1990	1995	2003	1990	1995	2003
El Salvador	67.7	67.2	73.6	54.3	53.5	59.7	91.7	94.9	90.6
Costa Rica	—	—	99.5	—	—	—	—	—	99.8

Source: CEPAL, Statistical Yearbook, 2004.

**Table 4.** Public Spending on Education (as a Percentage of GDP)

	1980	1985	1990	1995	1998	2000	2001
El Salvador	3.4	2.7	2.0	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.5
Costa Rica	6.5	5.1	4.2	4.4	5.3	4.8	5.0
LAC average	—	—	—	—	4.5	—	—

Source: CEPAL, Statistical Yearbook, 2002 and 2004.

higher pace. Only the reasons behind migration changed. What was once the search for a safe haven from the violence of the civil war has become the search for a better economic and social life. It is estimated that about two millions Salvadorians live in the US (out of a total population of 6.3 millions). Half of the Salvadorians in the US are estimated to be undocumented without proper visa, working mainly as domestic workers, cleaners, construction workers. In 2004, remittances amounted to more than 16 per cent of the country's GDP, a figure that is growing higher as years go on, as table 6 indicates. The share of remittances in the country's GDP has tripled in the last fifteen years.

The presence of remittances makes a significant difference in the life of poor families. A survey conducted with 200 families in 2002 in a district of El Salvador (with a total number of 326 families of which only 4 families were “non-poor”), obtained the following results:<sup>28</sup> 35.5 per cent of families had migrants, more than two thirds of migrants were men below 25, half of migrants had only primary education, and 85 per cent of them had gone illegally. The study also revealed that the money from remittances was essentially spent on consumption goods, mainly food, medication, education, and telecommunications.

Remittances also seem to play a non-negligible role in the decision of parents to send their children to school. A study showed that remit-

<sup>28</sup> Benavides, B., X. Ortiz, C. Silva, and L. Vega. *¿Pueden las Remesas Comprar el Futuro?*. Universidad CentroAmericana: San Salvador, 2003, mimeograph.

**Table 5.** Public Spending on Health

	1980	1985	1990	1995	1998	2003
El Salvador	1.5	1.3	1	1.3	—	—
Costa Rica	7.2	5	7.2	7.1	7.4	6.7
LAC average	—	—	—	—	3.1	—

Source: CEPAL, Statistical Yearbook, 2002 and 2004.

**Table 6.** Participation of Remittances in GDP (in Percentage)

1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2004
5.9	9.8	11.5	11.8	12.0	11.2	10.3	10.5	11.3	11.2	13.2	13.6	16.2

Source: UNDP. *Informe de Desarrollo Nacional*. UNDP: San Salvador, 2002, and Salvadorian Central Bank.

tances had a significant impact on school retention, as family budget is the primary factor for school drop-outs.<sup>29</sup> In urban areas, remittances of US\$100 lowers the hazard of leaving primary school by more than a half, and by more than a quarter in rural areas (in rural areas, the family budget is not the main constraint for school enrolment, distance from school is another important factor).

Not only do individual migrants put their own individual efforts for improving their well-being and that of their family members, they are also putting together collective efforts. This phenomenon of collective remittances is also known in the literature of migration as “hometown associations”, which are organizations of immigrants which channel the money earned by immigrants in order to improve their communities of origin.<sup>30</sup> Hometown associations usually finance central public goods of a community, such as road infrastructures, school maintenance, water and sanitation facilities, and community recreation facilities. Empirical studies of some hometown associations in Mexico have found that in some communities, the donations of immigrants through these associations represent as much as the amount the municipality allocates to public works.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Cox, A., and M. Ureta. “International Migration, Remittances and Schooling: Evidence from El Salvador.” *NBER Working Paper Series*. 9766. Cambridge, MA, 2003.

<sup>30</sup> Orozco, Manuel, with Michelle Lapointe. 2004. “Mexican Hometown Associations and Development Opportunities.” *Journal of International Affairs* 57.2 (2004): 1-21.

<sup>31</sup> Orozco, Manuel, and Katherine Welle. “Hometown Associations and Development: A Look at Ownership, Sustainability, Correspondence, and Replicability.” *New Patterns for Mexico Observations on Remittances, Philanthropic Giving, and Equitable Develop-*

El Salvador does not escape from this growing phenomenon of collective remittances. For example, the government's social investment fund, the *Fondo de Inversión Social para el Desarrollo Local* (FISDL) is using collective remittances to finance social investment in municipalities.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, no studies exist so far regarding the extent and impact of collective remittances on El Salvador's social development.

Despite the dearth of data, the hypothesis which can be advanced is that migration risks taking over the role of what was once the responsibility of governments: the provision of public goods. Migration may be one way of shaping one's own destiny and improving one's own well-being, the well-being of family members and of members of their community of origin (in the case of collective remittances), migration is a form of agency which risks replacing a structural solution to poverty. As long as families and communities get their needs met by migration, there are little incentives to render the government accountable for its neglect of its responsibilities of providing public goods. To borrow Hirschman's famous terms, migration is a form of "exit" strategy which does not encourage people to "voice" their concerns regarding the government's incompetence in fulfilling its social duties.<sup>33</sup> Hirschman had argued that three options were open to those using an imperfect public service: 1) "exit" where people exit the service and find their own private solution to provide the service (such as funding the public service through migration remittances); 2) "voice" where people keep using the imperfect service and voice their concern to demand improvement (such as for example public protests to demand improvement); and 3) "loyalty" where people simply put up with the imperfections of the service delivery.

By encouraging an "exit" strategy to public services, migration silences the "voice" strategy, hence providing the fuel for further migration and further "exits". The paradox is that migrants contribute to a system which further excludes them. Migrants contribute to a type of

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ment. Ed. Barbara J. Merz. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006. The article cites the case of a school improvement project in a Mexican municipality which was three times the budget that the municipality allocated to public works in education.

<sup>32</sup> Lugo, Mario. "La Política Migratoria del Actual Gobierno. Una Revisión Crítica." *Revista de Estudios CentroAmericanas* 648, 2002. 873-8.

<sup>33</sup> Hirschman, Alfred. *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1970. I thank James Copestake for drawing my attention to the parallels between migration and Hirschman's work.

social development which increases dependence on migration.<sup>34</sup> While being a temporary solution to meet family and community needs, by silencing “voice”, migration breeds itself in an unsustainable way. Poor people would need to rely endlessly on migration to pay for health care and education, and communities would need to rely endlessly on migration to finance public infrastructures and utilities.

This erosion of “voice” is especially reflected in the lack of political participation. Most Salvadorians do not consider the government, through its elected representatives, as the major agent of change in the Salvadorian society. A political survey concluded that,<sup>35</sup> in 1999, only five per cent of the population trusted political parties. In 2000, less people trusted electoral processes than in 1994. In 2000, while 54 per cent believe that democracy is the best political system, 10.3 per cent would like a return to an authoritarian government, and 21.2 per cent are indifferent to a democratic or authoritarian regime. It is also worrying to observe that the Salvadorian government strongly encourages migration as a poverty exit mechanism, and sees migration as a positive aspect of globalisation.

When assessed in terms of individual well-being, migration is a positive way of exercising agency for the sake of promoting one's own well-being and that of the members of the same community. The shift from public to private provisioning of health and education for example equally promote people's freedoms to be healthy and educated, and perhaps even better if private provisioning of public goods is linked to greater efficiency in delivery.

Migration is also a powerful sympathy and commitment-based action. Often migrants undergo a loss in their own well-being (such as the risk entailed by the illegal travel to the US) for the sake of other members of the family. Fathers go abroad to secure a better living for their children. Sons go abroad for the sake of securing health care to their parents. Assessed in terms of the capability approach, migration can thus be seen as a good way of promoting individual freedoms. However, there is a strong argument that migration may be undermining incentives to undertake structural reforms towards the promotion of human well-being. This in turn may be increasing the likelihood that poor people will look for better living options abroad, further undermining

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<sup>34</sup> Vega, Lilian. “Diaspora Salvadoreña.” *Revista de Estudios CentroAmericanas* 648, 2002. 901-10.

<sup>35</sup> UNDP. *Informe de Desarrollo Nacional*. UNDP: San Salvador, 2002, chapter 5.

the country's capacity to promote human well-being. In other words, migration is a form of exercising individual agency for the sake of enhancing human well-being which may erode other forms of individual agency such as participation in the kinds of political activity which build up socially responsible public institutions. The individual agency that Sen's capability approach stresses as being so important for promoting human well-being may fail to do so in the long run if expanding human well-being goes on being considered in terms of the freedoms of individuals. When well-being is considered in terms of the common good, there is hope for individual agency to address human deprivations more effectively.

### A Common Good Approach to Development

The concept of the common good has a long history, which can be traced back to Aristotle. Although not talking of the 'common good' as such, Aristotle affirms that the political community exists for the sake of the good of the community which embraces all other goods:

Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for everyone always acts in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest good of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.<sup>36</sup>

The encyclical *Gaudium et spes* directly paraphrases the above passage:

The political community exists for the sake of the common good, in which it finds its full justification and significance, and the source of its inherent legitimacy. Indeed, the common good embraces the sum of those conditions of the social life whereby men, families and associations more adequately and readily may attain their own perfection.<sup>37</sup>

In a seminal contribution to the political debate in the United Kingdom, the Catholic Bishops' Conference for England and Wales issued in 1996 a report entitled *The Common Good*. The common good was defined therein as "the whole network of social conditions which enable human individuals and groups to flourish and live a fully, genuinely human life, otherwise described as 'integral human development'. All

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<sup>36</sup> Aristotle. *Politics*. *Revised Oxford Translation*. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 1252<sup>a</sup> 1-6.

<sup>37</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 74.



are responsible for all, collectively, at the level of society or nation, not only as individuals.”<sup>38</sup>

The central idea of the common good is that it is a good shared in by all those who are forming a certain community. The common good “is immanent within the relationships that bring this community or society into being.”<sup>39</sup> The common good is a good that goes beyond individual human well-being. It is “a good proper to, and attainable only by, the community, yet individually shared by its members.”<sup>40</sup> The good of each community member cannot be separated from the good of the community as a whole. The common good of the community and the good of the members are mutually implicating.<sup>41</sup> Lisa Cahill writes that, “The common good defines a solidaristic association of persons that is more than the good of individuals in the aggregate. ‘Common good’ says something about social communication and cooperation as essential to the fulfilment of our very personhood.”<sup>42</sup>

The idea of the common good has tended to be received with quite some scepticism in secular writings. As emphasised earlier, the capability approach insists that social arrangements are to be assessed in terms of the freedoms of individuals, and not the freedom of some collective body, which would be more than the aggregation of the freedoms of individuals. Secular writings might accommodate the idea that a good would be common to all (for example, democratic freedom would be such a good), but it does not accommodate very well the idea that such a common good has an existence in its own right. The capability approach fully embraces the fact that “the welfare of individual persons is contingent upon the interdependent social relations that constitute the common good”<sup>43</sup> But it would not accommodate the statement that, “yet, the common good is a value in its own right, as more than the aggregate of the individuals participating in it.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. *The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching*. Catholic Bishops' Conference: London, 1996, paragraph 48.

<sup>39</sup> Hollenbach, David. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Dupré, Louis. “The Common Good and the Open Society.” *Catholicism and Liberalism*. Eds. R. Bruce Douglass, and David Hollenbach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 172.

<sup>41</sup> Hollenbach. *The Common Good*, p. 189.

<sup>42</sup> Cahill, Lisa. *Bioethics and the Common Good*. Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 2004, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42. See also footnote 25 for a similar quote in Amartya Sen's writings.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

I have summarised five objections that secular writings may formulate to the idea of the common good. First, the idea of the common good is another form of talking about the need for adequate institutional arrangements to promote individual human well-being. The common good is in that sense instrumental to individual flourishing. Second, the common good might trump individualities and subsume them into a totalitarian system. Third, it is similar to the idea of public good in economics. Fourth, the common good is a disguised way of talking about a good which is common to human life, and therefore can amount to the human rights or lists of human well-being.<sup>45</sup> Finally, is the idea of “a” common good or “the” common good which matters?

The first objection is that there is actually no need for an explicit idea of the common good. It is just another way of talking about the need for institutional arrangements which are shared by the members of a same community and which contribute to promoting the good of each of its members. This instrumental vision has especially been portrayed by the natural law developed by John Finnis. For Finnis, the common good is “the whole ensemble of material and other conditions, including forms of collaboration, that tend to favour, facilitate and foster the realization by each individual of his or her personal development.”<sup>46</sup> The common good is hence a question of creating the conditions in which people can pursue their own objectives.<sup>47</sup> A common good approach to development would thus insist on the importance of the institutional conditions in which people can pursue the freedoms they have reason to choose and value. This is actually what Sen’s capability approach already says.

Such view of the common good as instrumental for pursuing one’s personal fulfilment is however incompatible with the essence of the common good. Personal fulfilment or the pursuit of one’s own well-being requires participating in goods that transcend individuals. Although some social conditions are necessary for individual freedoms to be met, and in some sense the common good is instrumental to the good of each individual, the common good is part of individual flourishing itself. As Hollenbach noted in what is the major contemporary academic study to date on the issue, the shared life of interaction with others is a good in

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<sup>45</sup> For lists of human well-being, see Alkire, Sabina. *Valuing Freedoms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>46</sup> Finnis, John. *Natural Law and Natural Rights*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, p. 153.

<sup>47</sup> For a critique of Finnis’s view on the common good, see Pakaluk, Michael. “Is the Common Good of Political Society Limited and Instrumental?” *Review of Metaphysics* 60.1 (2001). 57-94.

itself, and this is why it cannot be disaggregated into the good of each individual, "for such disaggregation dissolves the bonds of relationship that constitute an important part of good lives".<sup>48</sup> This leads Hollenbach to conclude that the common good can best be described as the good of being a community, as "the good realized in the mutual relationships in and through which human beings achieve their well-being."<sup>49</sup> These words echo the words of one of the main revivers of the idea of the common good in the modern world, the Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain:

We must not say that the aim of society is the individual good (or the mere collection of individual goods) of each person who constitutes it. This formula would dissolve society *as such* for the benefit of its parts, and would lead to the 'anarchy of atoms'. The end of society is the common good. But if one fails to grasp the fact that the good of the body politic is a common good of *human persons*, this formula may lead in its turn to other errors of the collectivist or totalitarian type. [. . .] The common good of society is neither a simple collection of private goods, a good belonging to a whole which draws the parts to itself [. . .]. The common good is the *good human* life of the multitude, of a multitude of persons; it is their communion in the good life; it is therefore common to the whole and to the parts, on which it flows back and who must all benefit from it.<sup>50</sup>

The above quotation answers by the same token the second objection. The idea of the common good does not trump individualities, but enhances them. By participating in the common good, i.e., by participating in the whole network of social conditions which enable human individuals and groups to flourish, individuals are better able to improve their own well-being. For example, by paying one's taxes, one participates in these conditions that will allow oneself, and other members of the community to better flourish (if tax money is used to finance public goods such as the National Health Service). Or to cite another example, by participating in the life of the community through establishing trade unions and being a member of them, one is able to enhance the establishment of labour conditions (such as minimum legal wage, legal holiday, sickness leave) for the sake of one's own good and the good of others. Participating in the common good, in a good shared by all, does not hence sacrifice individual flourishing for the sake of the flourishing of the group. Enhancing the flourishing of the group does enhance in the long run the flourishing of each individual. One has to acknowledge,

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<sup>48</sup> Hollenbach, *The Common Good*, p. 81.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Maritain, Jacques. "The Human Person and Society." *Degrees of Knowledge*. J. Maritain. London: G. Bles, the Centenary Press, 1937, p. 55. See also Maritain, Jacques. *The Person and the Common Good*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1946.

however, that in some extreme cases, individual flourishing might be sacrificed for the sake of the group in the short run. For example, a trade unionist in a dictatorship might be put into prison and be tortured, but his or her action will pave the way for a greater good for his or her fellow workers and future generations. Cases where individual flourishing might be severely trumped for the sake of the collective are however exceptional.

This example offers a response to the third objection that I have identified, that of the similarity with the already existing idea of public good in economics. One of the key characteristics of a public good is its non-exclusive character. Participation in the good does not exclude other people's participation in it. By using the public good of public transport, I do not exclude others using that public transport (provided one has not reached the saturation point of use). Participation in the common good is different in the sense it does not only not exclude another person's participation, but actually promotes it. For example, by working towards establishing the structural conditions for decent labour, one does not exclude others from decent labour but one facilitates other people's contribution in establishing these structural conditions, and furthering the possibilities of decent labour. Workers might militate for the right of setting up trade unions for the sake of guaranteeing minimum living wages. Once the trade union is legally established and politically recognised, it might facilitate the claim of further labour guarantees such as maternity cover or sickness leave.

Fourth, if the common good is a good shared in by all, then one could say that lists of human well-being, such as Martha Nussbaum's list of ten central human capabilities,<sup>51</sup> exemplifies in some sense the common good, as these central human capabilities represent a good shared by all humans—all human beings, by virtue of being human, would need to have these capabilities in order to have a good human life. This is however a precipitated conclusion. The concept of the common good goes actually beyond what is “the good human life”. The common good is the common life of the community and the structural conditions for the good human life. While the *human* good is a good that only dwells in individual lives (for example health is a good that only individuals have), the *common* good is a good that dwells beyond individual lives. In that sense, the idea of the common good is very close to the idea of “structures of living together” put forward by the philosopher Paul

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<sup>51</sup> Nussbaum, Martha. “Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism.” *Political Theory* 20 (1992): 202-246.

Ricoeur. He defined them as structures which belong to a particular historical community, which provide the conditions for individual lives to flourish, and which are irreducible to interpersonal relations and yet bound up with these.<sup>52</sup> The common good could be seen as the sum of these structures of living together. It is irreducible to interpersonal relations. It is something that emerges from life in common, from the "living together" in human communities.

This leads us to our final point, what is "the common good"? Is it possible to identify the set of all these structures of living together which provide the conditions for individual lives to flourish? Or better speak about "a common good" that is relative to different communities? A common good would hence be a good that a particular historical community shares in common and that sustains its life in common. Considering "a" instead of "the" common good would quickly fall in a certain form of relativism. If one endorses the view that there is such an idea of "the" human good, a good common to all humans in their quality of being human, it follows that one can endorse the idea of the common good that makes the good human life in common possible. The idea of the human good does not pretend having an objective and exhaustive definition of what the human good consisted of. Similarly, the idea of the common good can, and has to, be left vague as one will never be able to exhaust all the structures that sustain the good human life in common.

### **Concluding Remarks**

A common good approach to development focuses not as much on the freedoms that individuals may have as on the structural conditions supporting these freedoms. Within such an approach, individual agency is seen as the ability to promote the conditions in which the well-being of oneself *as* a member of a certain political community can be enhanced. Not any type of individual agency is central for addressing human deprivations, but the type of individual agency which builds the structures of life in community. While Sen's capability approach focuses on individuals, and then looks at institutional arrangements to promote the well-being of individuals, a common good approach focuses on the institutions themselves, in addition to individuals, because it is precisely within these institutions that individuals are formed and nur-

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<sup>52</sup> Ricoeur's original definition refers to institution: "By institution, we understand the structure of *living together* as this belongs to a historical community, a structure irreducible to interpersonal relations and yet bound up with these." See Ricoeur, Paul. *One Self as Another*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 194.

tured.<sup>53</sup> Because the institutional fact is constitutive of a person's individuality, it is not only the well-being of individuals which is to be secured but also the well-being of these institutions.

Seeing membership to a community as constitutive of the self implies seeing solidarity and responsibility at the heart of human freedom. Indeed, the very idea of the common good “implies that every individual, no matter how high or low, has a duty to share in promoting the welfare of the community as well as a right to benefit from that welfare.”<sup>54</sup> The human being is fully free and human to the extent that he or she is responsible for others.<sup>55</sup>

For freedom and solidarity to be mutually self-reinforcing, one would need an adequate institutional framework that promotes people's participation in the common good for the greatest advantage of all. Hollenbach insists that such an institutional framework is a requirement of social justice: “Social justice requires an overall institutional framework that will enable people both to participate actively in building up the common good and to share in the benefits of the common good.”<sup>56</sup> Of such adequate institutional frameworks, he singles out participation in the political life as a constitutive part of the pursuit of the common good. When political participation is low, the common good is low as well, and people have less freedom to determine the conditions of the life they share together. A low political participation confines people to pursue the good they can in their private lives.<sup>57</sup> The example of migration in El Salvador well illustrates this point.

In today's increasingly more connected world, the prophetic words of *Gaudium et spes* expressed forty years ago still have a forceful actuality. Unless one realises that the human being is free only to the extent that he or she participates in the good that is common to all, not only the good of their families, or communities of origin, but the good of all humans and the natural environment, a good that surpasses all individual good, very little can indeed be achieved to address human deprivations.

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<sup>53</sup> Hollenbach, *The Common Good*.

<sup>54</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. *The Common Good*, paragraph 70.

<sup>55</sup> This point has particularly been emphasised by the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, paragraph 33.8: “In order to be genuine, development must be achieved within the framework of solidarity and freedom, without ever sacrificing either of them under whatever pretext.”

<sup>56</sup> Hollenbach, *The Common Good*, p. 201.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

# ***Gaudium et Spes* Suggests a Change in Moral Imagination to Ensure the Just Treatment of Women**

Marilyn Martone

*Gaudium et spes* (GS) is a pastoral constitution that puts a great deal of emphasis on the dignity of the human person and the solidarity of the entire human family. It encourages us to support this dignity and solidarity in the context of the modern world, to scrutinize the “signs of the times,” and to interpret these signs in the light of the gospel.<sup>1</sup> It recognizes the shift from a static concept of reality to a more dynamic and evolutionary one and highlights various concerns that have arisen as a result of this shift.<sup>2</sup> One of the concerns that the document highlights is the social relationships between men and women.<sup>3</sup> The constitution stresses that “every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God’s intent.”<sup>4</sup> *Gaudium et spes* recognizes discrimination as an evil that is to be overcome and encourages us to work towards the elimination of discrimination.

Forty years after the publication of *Gaudium et spes*, women around the world are still struggling to be treated with dignity, to be afforded basic human rights, and to live free from the threats of violence and injustice, despite attempts that have been made to legislate rights and protections. Women suffer from systematic discrimination in every country in the world, whether it is through more explicit and violent forms as in many Third World countries and patriarchal societies, or subtler job discrimination and pay inequities that occur in Western societies. Individual countries, as well as the United Nations, have

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<sup>1</sup> GS, 4.

<sup>2</sup> GS, 5.

<sup>3</sup> GS, 8.

<sup>4</sup> GS, 29.

enacted laws to end discriminatory practices, but, even in countries that have ratified the UN Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), state delegations consistently report how difficult it is to change traditions and stereotypes. This paper makes the case that to change the plight of women around the world there must be not only strong external controls and protections that laws impose, but also a change in the moral imagination to break down the cultural traditions and stereotypes that allow women to be treated as less than human. First, we must recognize the stereotypes that persist to harm women and how these lead to violence and discrimination.

### **Treating Women as Property**

Women, in many countries, are viewed as property and as belonging to someone, overwhelmingly a male. William Countryman in his book, *Dirt, Greed, and Sex*, shows how traditionally in patriarchal families women are defined by property rights. They belong to the male head of the household. Countryman states that “property denotes something which is understood as an extension of the self, so that a violation of my property is a violation of my personhood.”<sup>5</sup> In this framework, injuries done to women are wrong because they are injuries done to the head of the household. The head of the household, however, can dispose of his property as he wishes.

Women, as property, are used for sexual fulfillment, economic advantages, power plays, reproductive lineage, etc. Women, in other words, are at the disposal of their owner. In many countries this image of women continues and globalization, with its emphasis on laissez-faire capitalism, only strengthens this image. Where women have no other financial resources, they too sometimes regard their bodies as property and sell it for financial gain whether it is through prostitution or more and more frequently for reproductive reasons, only now they regard *themselves* as the owner of this property.

### **Women and Violence**

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence as “any gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation

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<sup>5</sup> L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988) 147.



of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”<sup>6</sup> It includes but is not limited to:

- “(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and the intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.”<sup>7</sup>

Although there are many international documents and treaties that condemn violence against women, violence against women continues at unprecedented rates. One in three women throughout the world will suffer from violence simply because they are female and most likely at the hands of their intimate partners. A common feature in all forms of violence against women is that of domination. Men view themselves as the dominators of women and use violence to assert their power. “Through this assertion of power, men instill fear in women, control their behaviour, appropriate their labour, exploit their sexuality and deny them access to the public world.”<sup>8</sup> Because men control the knowledge systems, violence against women has been trivialized and often viewed as a private matter. In many countries, men view themselves as the owners of the women in their family, and this belief has become strongly embedded in cultural and traditional practices. “Cultural norms associated with abuse include tolerance of physical punishment of women and children, acceptance of violence as a means to settle interpersonal disputes, and the perception that men have ‘ownership’ of women.”<sup>9</sup> When women are viewed as property and not as persons it becomes almost impossible for them to leave abusive relationships especially if there are children involved or if dowries have been paid.

There is also a strong link between violence against women and HIV/AIDS. The virus is both a cause and a consequence of violence against

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<sup>6</sup> *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, Articles 1 and 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Not a Minute More: Ending Violence Against Women*. UNIFEM, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

women. In many societies the women who are tested for the AIDS virus are pregnant women and if they test positive they are accused of bringing the virus into their families even if they have been infected by their male partners.<sup>10</sup> Women also become HIV infected as a result of rape and sexual assaults and in many marital relationships they do not have the power to refuse sex with an infected spouse. A recent UN study done in South Africa “showed that women who were beaten by their husbands or boyfriends were 48 per cent more likely to become infected by HIV than those who were not. Those who were emotionally or financially dominated by their partners were 52 per cent more likely to be infected than those who were not dominated.”<sup>11</sup>

When countries are in conflict or at war the violence against women escalates. Not only does domestic violence increase but also women are raped and trafficked in overwhelming numbers. For example, during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda between 250,000 and 500,000 women and girls were raped.<sup>12</sup> To highlight the atrocities done against women in conflict I quote from the UN experts who traveled the world and listened to women’s testimony and published the document, *Women, War, Peace*:

But knowing all of this did not prepare us for the horrors women described. Wombs punctured with guns. Women raped and tortured in front of their husbands and children. Rifles forced into vaginas. Pregnant women beaten to induce miscarriages. Fetuses ripped from wombs. Women kidnapped, blindfolded and beaten on their way to work or school. We saw the scars, the pain and the humiliation. We heard accounts of gang rapes, rape camps and mutilation. Of murder and sexual slavery. We saw the scars of brutality so extreme that survival seemed for some a worse fate than death.<sup>13</sup>

Statistics show that during the wars of the last decade, 75% of the victims were civilians, and the majority of those were women and children. Women’s bodies become the battleground for men.

In addition to rape and sexual abuse, many women are trafficked out of one country into another to be used in forced labor that often includes

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> *Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the Crisis, A Joint Report by UNAIDS/UNFPA/UNIFEM*, 2004, pp. 45-46.

<sup>12</sup> *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts’ Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women’s Role in Peace-Building*. United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2002, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

prostitution.<sup>14</sup> From 1995 to 2000, trafficking in women grew almost 50%, and it is estimated that almost two million women are trafficked across borders annually.<sup>15</sup> The annual profit from trafficking is between five and seven billion US dollars and this trafficking has become the third largest source of profit to organized crime after drugs and arms. Many of those trafficked are young girls. A 1995 survey in Cambodia, indicated that 31% of the sex workers in Phnom Penh and 11 provinces were between the ages of 12 and 17.<sup>16</sup> The Human Rights Task Force in Cambodia reports that those children under 18 who were trafficked were sold by various individuals: 44% were sold by intermediaries, 23% by family members, 17% by boyfriends, 6% by an employer, 6% by unknown persons. These girls are forced to service 20 to 30 men a day.<sup>17</sup> As a result many of these girls acquire sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

### **Negating Women's Decision-Making Capabilities**

In addition to the explicit violence done against women, women are also discriminated against in more subtle ways. One of the most prominent methods is to keep women out of decision-making roles. As a result, decisions are made for them. Women often have little input as to what is in their best interests. Two ways this is systematically done is to: (1) deny women education and (2) keep women in traditional caregiving roles so that they have little time or energy to participate in the political realm. Both of these approaches limit women's economic security and make them vulnerable. (Statistics show that seven out of ten of the world's poor are women and children.<sup>18</sup>)

### **Limiting Women's Access to Education**

Throughout the world many women and girls are illiterate. Without an education women are unable to pursue further goods and are often reduced to chattel. Statistics show that in the countries where women are uneducated they are most likely to be regarded as the possessions of men who use women to serve and cater to them without any reciprocity on their part. Without an education, women often become disposable and have little recourse from society. The four main reasons

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> See: <<http://www.wfp.org>>. February 11, 2005.

why girls are less likely to attend school than boys worldwide are: “(a) parents are more likely to spend meagre resources on educating a boy; (b) many families do not understand the benefits of educating girls, whose role is often narrowly viewed as being prepared for marriage, motherhood and domestic responsibilities; (c) girls in many communities are already disadvantaged in terms of social status, lack of time and resources, a high burden of domestic tasks and sometimes even a lack of food; and (d) the burden of care for ill parents and younger siblings often falls on girls, which jeopardizes their ability to attend school.”<sup>19</sup>

### Devaluing Care-giving Responsibilities

One of the most difficult issues to address is women’s care-giving activity. Throughout the world women are the primary caregivers. A UN-NGO working group report states: “Sole responsibility for caring for children, older people, the sick or disabled, combined with domestic work, is a major barrier to women’s equality; this is because of the time and energy it demands and the consequent stereotyping of women’s capacities.”<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, this care-giving work that women provide is essential to the maintenance of individuals and communities. The former United Nations Secretary-General, Javier Perez stated: “The way a society treats its children reflects not only its qualities of compassion and protective caring, but also its sense of justice, its commitment to the future and its urge to enhance the human condition for coming generations. This is as disputably true of the community of nations as it is of nations individually.”<sup>21</sup> Women cannot and should not walk away from caregiving, nor should men. Caring for individuals who need assistance is one of the most important tasks of a society. It is how we best protect human dignity, asserting to individuals that they are of value not only when they are free, independent individuals but also when they are in need of care. It is how we best express our solidarity. As *Gaudium et spes* states: “. . . we are witnesses of the birth of a new humanism, one in which man is defined first of all by his responsibility toward his brothers and toward history.”<sup>22</sup>

Too frequently, however, this care-giving work has not been viewed as work in the full sense of the word. In most societies it is not financially

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<sup>19</sup> *Women and HIV/AIDS*, p. 41.

<sup>20</sup> Helen O’Connell. *Women and the Family* (London & New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1994) 53.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>22</sup> GS, 55.

reimbursed nor valued. It is usually not included in nations' GDPs. It is also assumed that this work will be done by women without financial reimbursement. Even when this work is part of the paid economy, such as nurses' aides, daycare workers, etc., it is at the bottom of the pay scale. To keep women from becoming economically vulnerable, women have been encouraged to enter the paid workforce and abandon their care-giving responsibilities. This, however, has left many people who are in need of care, unattended. There must be a new recognition that it is not the care-giving labor that makes one vulnerable but the way that care-giving labor is organized. Joan Tronto, in her book *Moral Boundaries*, argues that "our perception that care is somehow tied to subordinate status in society is not inherent in the nature of caring but is a function of the structure of social values and moral boundaries that inform our current ways of life."<sup>23</sup>

Pope John Paul II's "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World" also stresses the importance of this work. Although the letter still links caring labor more closely to women it concludes by stating:

Far from giving the Church an identity on an historically conditioned model of femininity, the reference to Mary, with her dispositions of listening, welcoming, humility, faithfulness, praise and waiting, places the Church in continuity with the spiritual history of Israel. In Jesus and through him, these attributes become the vocation of every baptized Christian. Regardless of the conditions, states of life, different vocations with or without public responsibilities, they are an essential aspect of Christian life. While these traits should be characteristic of every baptized person, women in fact live them with particular intensity and naturalness. In this way, women play a role of maximum importance in the Church's life by recalling these dispositions to all the baptized and contributing in a unique way showing the true face of the Church, spouse of Christ and mother of believers.<sup>24</sup>

The important point that John Paul is stressing here is that all of us, male and female, are called to care for others. This is what our baptism calls us to do. I am not arguing here whether women are more or less adept at doing this labor than men but trying to make a case that whoever does this work should not suffer from discrimination as a result of doing it. All societies must come to greater appreciations of this labor and change structures and organizational patterns so that this work can be done appropriately without having caregivers suffering

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<sup>23</sup> Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 63-64.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World," 2004, 16.

specifically because of the work they do. Care is a central concern for all human life. But laws can only go so far. Peoples' hearts also need to be changed and I suggest that the church can play an important role in this work by helping to reform moral imaginations.

### **Moral Imagination**

Mark Johnson, defines the moral imagination as our: “. . . capacity to see and to realize in some actual and contemplated experience possibilities for enhancing the quality of experience, both for ourselves and for the communities of which we are a part, both for the present and for future generations, both for our existing practices and institutions as well as for those we can imagine as potentially realizable.”<sup>25</sup> He explains that the way we frame and categorize a situation will determine how we reason about it, and how we frame it will depend on which metaphorical concepts we use.<sup>26</sup> He states: “Metaphor enters our moral deliberation in three ways: (1) It gives rise to different ways of conceptualizing situations. (2) It provides different ways of understanding the nature of morality as such (including metaphorical definitions of the central concepts of morality, such as will, reason, purpose, right, good, duty, well-being, etc.) (3) Metaphor also constitutes a basis for analogizing and moving beyond the ‘clear’ or prototypical cases to new cases.”<sup>27</sup>

Andrew Greeley highlights how the Catholic imagination is very attuned to this way of reasoning because of its sacramental world-view. The Catholic imagination, he states, “tends to emphasize the metaphorical nature of creation. The objects, events, and persons of ordinary existence hint at the nature of God and indeed make God in some fashion present to us.”<sup>28</sup> For Catholics, God and grace lurk everywhere.

Metaphors have power. Paul Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor*, reminds us that metaphor always involves a pair of terms or relationships. He states: “If metaphor always involves a kind of mistake, if it involves taking one thing for another by a sort of calculated error, then metaphor has to disturb a whole network by means of an aberrant

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<sup>25</sup> Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) 209.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000) 6.

attribution.”<sup>29</sup> Metaphors redescribe reality. They are the “apprehension of an identity within the difference between two terms.”<sup>30</sup> It is important therefore that we use our metaphors correctly because the descriptive power of metaphor has the ability to change thought processes.

Traditionally, the primary metaphor that has been used to define women is that of “property.” William Countryman in his book *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, demonstrates that the property metaphor played a primary role in patriarchal families. In such families, it is the male head of the house who controls all other members. For example, “The wife was a form of property; adultery was violation of the property of another and should therefore be punished with violation of one’s own.”<sup>31</sup> This seems to still be the overriding metaphor in many societies. For instance, when we find countries at war, men from the enemy ranks frequently rape the women of the opposing sides as occurred during the conflict in Rwanda. These rapes are not so much sexual acts as they are demonstrations of power. The enemy is collecting the spoils of war and women are part of those spoils. Just as the losers’ material possessions are gathered and distributed, so are their women. One kills one’s enemy; one rapes his property.

When women are viewed as property they become objectified and are used and disposed of as men wish. They are not viewed as fully human but as extensions of the male. If a man views his wife as property, he may feel that by beating her he is only doing what he is entitled to do. He can do what he wishes with his property and others should not infringe on his rights. Women sometimes also internalize this property metaphor only now they view themselves as the owners of property. We hear this argumentation used when women claim that it is their right to have an abortion. They view the fetus as an extension of themselves, therefore, they should be able to dispose of the fetus as they wish. Likewise, when women claim that they have a right to sell themselves into prostitution they are using a property metaphor. Their claim is, “It’s my body.” Property metaphors are individualistic metaphors that separate owners of property from relationships to others. When one owns something, that thing can be used solely at the owner’s discretion. Property is disposable. One sells, rents, uses property as one wishes.

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<sup>29</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) 21.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>31</sup> William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex*, p. 149.

Hence, under this metaphor, even when women are not abused, they are still under the control of men. Men control their movement, their daily activity, their citizenship, their state in life. The emphasis is not on the well-being of the woman, for she has been reduced to a commodity, but on how the woman, the extension of the male self, can promote the well-being of the man. This usually means doing those activities that he does not care to do such as preparing the food, maintaining the household, caring for the children, the sick and the elderly.

Property metaphors stress individual ownership, autonomy, and control; remove bonds of reciprocity; and objectify persons. For women to be regarded as fully human, this metaphor must be changed, and I would suggest that the change should be to the metaphor of gift.

### **The Concept of Gift**

Throughout *Gaudium et spes*, persons are referred to as gifts. We are reminded that everything is a gift of God, and we are to use God's gifts to build up society. *Gaudium et spes* states that: "man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."<sup>32</sup> Likewise, when speaking of the relationship between men and women the document speaks of the "mutual gift of two persons."<sup>33</sup> Although *Gaudium et spes* repeatedly uses the metaphor of gift, it does very little to develop what is meant by gift. But a better understanding of this metaphor is necessary because the concept of gift as it has been studied in the philosophical literature often is referred to in economic terms, and as such has become suspect. Jacques Derrida, for example, states that not only is the gift impossible, but it is *the impossible*.<sup>34</sup> To understand what he means by this, we need to look at some of the seminal literature that defines gift and explores the components of gift giving.

### **The Relationship between Givers and Receivers**

Most researchers on the topic of gift would agree that one of the most prominent works in this field is *The Gift* by Marcel Mauss.

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<sup>32</sup> GS, 24.

<sup>33</sup> GS, 48.

<sup>34</sup> Jacques Derrida, "The Time of the King," in *The Logic of the Gift*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997) 124.



Mauss begins by examining the gift-giving systems in the archaic societies of North America, Melanesia, Polynesia, and Oceania. He highlights how gift giving in these societies is a social event that involves collectivities and not individuals.<sup>35</sup> Although the gift giving may appear to be voluntary, it is strictly compulsory, and failure to participate in either the giving or receiving aspect of the process could possibly lead to war because it would be viewed as a rejection of the bond of alliance and commonality.<sup>36</sup>

Gift giving carries obligations. Mauss observed a three-part structure to the gift giving in these societies. There was the gift, the obligation to give, and the obligation to receive and reciprocate.<sup>37</sup> The gift was important not only for the inherent quality of the object itself, but because it was believed that in passing on a gift, one passes on part of oneself. This was referred to as the *hau*.<sup>38</sup> It was the *hau* of the thing that yearned to be returned to its owner. Through the presence of the *hau*, a connection was established between the giver and the receiver. Hence, to make a gift to someone was to pass on part of oneself, and to receive that gift was to receive part of the giver. In a diluted way, we experience this in our culture, when we view a gift that we have been given and begin to reminisce about the person who gave us the gift. We may not believe that the gift carries the spirit of the giver, but the gift does connect us, even if only momentarily, to the person who gave us the gift.

One is obliged to give because this is the way that one proves one's good fortune. By sharing one's fortune and giving it away, one puts others into one's debt. One can only give because one has also received. The gift is not given in order to make others happy, but to establish a relationship. Mauss states: "Yet it is also because by giving one is giving *oneself*, and if one gives *oneself*, it is because one 'owes' *oneself*—one's person and one's good—to others."<sup>39</sup>

The obligation to receive is as important as the obligation to give. When one is offered a gift, refusal to accept it would be refusal of not only the gift but part of the giver as well, because the thing that is

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<sup>35</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (London: W.W. Norton, 1990) 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

passed on is infused with the individuality of the donor.<sup>40</sup> It would also mean refusing the bond that the gift would establish, for by accepting the gift the receiver binds oneself to the giver. Although being a receiver puts one in an inferior position to the giver, it also enables one to become a giver oneself. The circle of giving is established and reciprocating gifts, passing on what one has been given, is central to the entire concept of gift giving in archaic societies. Those who are the recipients on one day become the givers on the next.<sup>41</sup> Not to share what one has received is to kill its essence and to destroy it both for oneself and for others.<sup>42</sup>

Gift giving formed the central means of distribution in these societies. Although there were obligations attached to all forms of the giving process, the emphasis was not so much on the gift given, as it was on the relationships and the bonds that were established in the process. One was obliged to be generous, but one was also obliged not to refrain from putting oneself into the debt of another. Everyone who was a giver had also been a receiver. The very system depended on the fact that gifts circulated, because if gifts were pulled out of circulation, the process stopped. By pulling a gift out of circulation, one remained forever indebted. All that one had had been given by another, hence one was in a constant state of indebtedness. And yet, although all of these obligations existed, there was still the possibility that things could be otherwise. One could refuse to give, and one could refuse to receive. Hence, the concept of gift remained intact.

Mauss never explains, however, how the gifting process began. The donor is already always a donee. Therefore, one never knows why there is a gift in the first place. One is caught up in the circularity of gift giving without understanding the logic behind the first gift, and if in giving one gives oneself, then everyone spiritually becomes a member of everyone else.<sup>43</sup>

It is because of this very circularity that Derrida states that there can be no gift because in order to be gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift or debt.<sup>44</sup> Each time that there is a countergift, the gift is annulled. Derrida concludes therefore that the only

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>43</sup> Marshall Sahlins, "The Spirit of the Gift," in *The Logic of the Gift*, p. 85.

<sup>44</sup> Derrida, p. 128.

thing that the gift gives is time—time to forget that a gift has been given before a gift returns. It is the lapse of time between the gift and the countergift that permits one to mask the contradiction between the experience of the gift as a generous, gratuitous, unrequited act and the fact that it is a stage in a relationship of exchange.<sup>45</sup> Once it is realized that gift giving is only a stage in a relationship of exchange, it should also be realized that if one gives a gift that cannot be adequately returned, relationships of dependency are established and there is no true autonomy on the part of the receiver of the gift.

Gary Shapiro highlights, however, that Mauss would counter this argument by stating that the phenomenon of gift as experienced in archaic society cannot be understood in terms of the modern individualistic and economic categories, where gift giving is an exception and not the very nerve of communal life.<sup>46</sup> In the economy of a gift giving society, the gift is for all and none. It is put into circulation, but it is destined to be the permanent possession of none.<sup>47</sup> As it circulates, it also establishes bonds of solidarity. The relationship between the giver and the receiver is one of solidarity with reciprocal dependence, and, although there is obligation attached to this process, the gift giving and the resulting obligation are not calculated. Although one may be obliged to give, one may not do so while calculating what one will receive in return.<sup>48</sup>

Lewis Hyde defines gift as “a thing we do not get by our own efforts. We cannot buy it; we cannot acquire it through an act of will. It is bestowed upon us.”<sup>49</sup> It is therefore something that we are not entitled to, but something that another has given to us, but need not have given to us. Because we have been gifted we are pulled into the gifting circle and are nudged towards becoming gift givers ourselves. The spirit of the gift is kept alive by passing it on. Once one pulls the gift out of circulation and amasses it for oneself, the gifting cycle is broken, and with it new relationships are kept from developing. Gifts establish bonds and evoke gratitude and generosity.

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<sup>45</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Marginalia—Some Additional Notes on the Gift,” *The Logic of the Gift*, p. 231.

<sup>46</sup> Gary Shapiro, “The Metaphysics of presents: Nietzsche’s Gift, the Debt to Emerson, Heidegger’s Values,” *The Logic of the Gift*, p. 275.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Maurice Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 48.

<sup>49</sup> Lewis Hyde, *The Gift* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983) xi.

What is missing from these sociological and philosophical approaches to gift giving is an understanding of why the circle of gift giving began in the first place. Although there is an analysis of how the cycle works once one is caught up in it, there is no attempt to discern how the process began. Theology offers an explanation.

### A Theological Approach

Enda McDonagh in his book, *Gift and Call*, stresses that all that is comes from God. Everything that we have has been freely given to us by God, and we are not entitled to any of it but are to receive it gratefully and direct it towards accepting and helping others.<sup>50</sup> It is not only our possessions but our very selves that are gifts, and we are called to be a particular individual human being. We can become givers, therefore, because we have been receivers—receivers not only of objects but of our very existence.

To do this, however, we need to begin with a recognition of our total dependence on others and refuse the appearance of self-sufficiency. Takeo Dai in his book, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, stresses how this is a difficult concept for Western societies to comprehend. In the West there is an emphasis on self-reliance and self-sufficiency. In Japan, however, dependency is honored and the persons who embody it in its purest forms are most qualified to stand at the top of Japanese society.<sup>51</sup> In the West, market economies make dependency and gifts suspect and marginalize gifts to the private realm where they become unrelated to issues of justice. Generosity is displaced from the public realm.

Webb in his book, *The Gifting God*, analyzes how this plays out in Western, capitalistic societies. He stresses that in capitalistic societies, needs are exploited for profit and one does not give to others what they need so that they too can become gift givers. Rather one takes advantage of their needs for one's own aggrandizement.<sup>52</sup> This market approach attempts to remove property from circulation and those who exchange are treated as strangers and remain so after the exchange has taken place. In this approach, "There are owners and property and

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<sup>50</sup> Enda McDonagh, *Gift and Call: Towards a Christian Theology of Morality* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1975) 77.

<sup>51</sup> Takeo Dai, *The Anatomy of Dependence* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd.) 58-59.

<sup>52</sup> Stephen Webb, *The Gifting God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 19-20.

prospective buyers. The property has no independent moral significance. Its 'worth' is measured fully by the price agreed upon by buyer and seller. The relationship of buyer and seller is governed by contract, an agreement that specifies in often precise detail what each party expects from the other."<sup>53</sup> This is in direct contradiction to the concept of gift as put forward in archaic societies, where it is the gift that binds people to each other and widens the individual's sense of belonging. As was stated before, gifts lead to solidarity.

In contrast to this market understanding of gift, theology teaches that God is the original giver of everything, and God is excessive. God gives grace and grace overflows from God's fullness. It is the means by which we advance from nonbeing to being.<sup>54</sup> This gift is given freely, is not coerced, and the proper response to this gift is gratitude, which signifies an understanding of dependence on another and a realization that what we have received is to be shared and not hoarded.<sup>55</sup> As humans, we are able to give only because we have been given, and the first giver is God. As we accept God's gift and become gift givers ourselves, we define our very personhood and establish connections to others, recognizing that we do not belong to ourselves.<sup>56</sup> The end point of giving then becomes a community that responds to giving with further giving.<sup>57</sup>

### **Replacing the Ownership/Property Image with the Concept of Persons as Gifts**

Everything about gift runs counter to the ownership/property image and operation. The concept of gift is applied universally—all persons, male and female, are gifts and not possessions. Because our lives are gifts from God, we are already caught up in the gifting cycle. The fact that we have been gifted calls us to be givers ourselves. The spirit of the giver that has been passed on to us in the *imago Dei* means that our lives do not belong to us but to God. We become stewards of our lives. Stewardship means that we are endowed with something to which we are not entitled, but which is entrusted to our care for a period of time. It involves caring for something that has ties to another. It means that

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<sup>53</sup> Thomas Murray, *The Worth of a Child* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 18.

<sup>54</sup> Edward Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994) 181.

<sup>55</sup> Richard Gula, *The Good Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999) 125.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen Webb, *The Gifting God*, p. 129.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

we cannot absorb this thing into ourselves, but must nurture it so that it can one day be passed on as good as or better than we received it. When we are stewards of something, we must one day let it go, for it is only loaned to us. Stewardship makes us caretakers, not owners, and therefore ownership cannot be transferred. William May refers to this relationship as follows: “It emphasizes a relational rather than a possessional view of the self. It explores the relationship between human beings for its clues to their being and value and our obligations to them, rather than assigning values according to the numbers scored.”<sup>58</sup> Because we are gifts of God and possess God’s spirit within us, we cannot sell ourselves nor can anyone own us. We can only self-gift ourselves to another and in the process pass on the spirit of God and establish bonds of solidarity.

These bonds that gifts create are not the contractual, legal bonds of the market, which are only valuable as long as both parties have something to gain from the relationship. Gifting bonds, unlike contractual bonds, which are between people who are concerned about maintaining their independence and equality, establish relationships that are asymmetrical. People in gift relationships are not in positions of equality. The receiver becomes beholding to the giver. So when a woman gifts herself to a man, not only does he not own her; he is in a position of indebtedness, and likewise, when a man gifts himself to a woman. Once we recognize that another has gifted himself or herself to us it enables us to be gift givers ourselves.

It is our very indebtedness, therefore, that pushes us into becoming gifters ourselves. Being indebted is not a sign of weakness but a sign of solidarity. It connects us to others, reminding us that we are all interdependent and that sometimes we need to be receivers and sometimes we need to be givers. Gifting relationships lead to alternating inequality or interdependence. These relationships require trusting that others will be there for us when we need them and remind us that we must be there for others when they need us, without any kind of selfish calculation. We put ourselves into the hands of our gift partners, realizing that unconditional love and compassion are the foundation of these relationships. We give to another not because we expect something in return but because we have experienced gift.

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<sup>58</sup> William May, *The Patient’s Ordeal* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 37.

## Reciprocity in Gift Giving

Reciprocity in the sense of gift giving is very different from the reciprocity of exchange, which states that because you gave something to me, I now owe something in return. This is a very individualistic and legalistic approach to reciprocity. Reciprocity in the sense of gift giving means that because I have been gifted I too can be a giver. I may not simply take my gifts and use them for my own welfare, but I need to move beyond myself and help others to become givers. The value of the gift is not in ownership but in dispossession. In order to keep the spirit of the gift alive, the gift needs to be connected to the larger community, so that the community may be a gifting community. When gifts are drawn out of circulation and amassed by specific individuals the community suffers. Gift giving is expansive, it moves outward, whereas accumulation removes things from circulation and moves inward. When we are concerned about amassing things or people rather than sharing our possessions or those people we know with others, we turn in on ourselves and are more concerned with what others can do for us than with the gifting process. Gift giving always involves letting go and moving outwards.

This is the opposite of thinking that we are entitled to something, which often leads to spending all our energy protecting our entitlement. When we recognize that we are not entitled to a gift, but that it has been freely and spontaneously given, we become grateful rather than demanding. Martha Beck, when describing her experience of raising a son who was born with Down Syndrome writes: "I have been blessed with love both human and divine, and I believe that there is no essential difference between them. Any person who acts out of love is acting for God. There is no way to repay such acts, except perhaps to pass them on to others."<sup>59</sup> This captures the type of reciprocity that gifting bonds encourage.

The importance of gifting relationships then is not the gift that is passed on but the ties that the gift establishes. With each gift we give, we pass on part of ourselves as well as God's love. Possession, on the other hand, pulls everything to the self. When we recognize another as gift, it enables us to hold onto them with a lightness of touch. They are not ours. They are not extensions of ourselves. We cannot control them and some day they will be taken from us.

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<sup>59</sup> Martha Beck, *Expecting Adam* (New York: Random House, 1997) 296.

## Applying the Concept of Gift to Improve the Status of Women

Recognizing persons as gifts rather than as possessions is the call of *Gaudium et spes*. This metaphor enables us to understand that others do not belong to us but have come into our lives because someone has loved us. Rather than attempting to control others we should be grateful for their presence and attempt to become gift givers ourselves. Bonds of solidarity are established between those who gift and those who have been gifted and the circle of reciprocity is continued.

There is a danger, however. Some people who have been gifted may opt out of the gifting cycle and pull all to themselves. This means that some will do more gift giving than others and reciprocity is broken. Although we are all called “not only to exist ‘side by side’ or ‘together,’ but are also called to exist mutually ‘one for the other’ . . .”<sup>60</sup>, nevertheless, because sin exists, this mutuality is frequently not expressed. This then puts those who constantly give, usually women, in vulnerable positions. Pope John Paul recognizes this when he states: “Among the fundamental values linked to women’s actual lives is what has been called a ‘capacity for the other.’ Although a certain type of feminist rhetoric makes demands ‘for ourselves,’ women preserve the deep intuition of the goodness in their lives of those actions which elicit life, and contribute to the growth and protection of the other.”<sup>61</sup>

The tension that exists then is that women are called on to continue to be givers and lovers even when this very activity puts them at great risk. On the other hand, church documents recognize that women should not be discriminated against for doing this activity. Although women should continue to be gift givers and caregivers, as should all people, the high price that women have paid because of these activities must be more fully recognized. Many more concrete statements and actions must be put in place to protect women.

First, everyone must continue to fight for the human rights of women recognizing their full humanity. Laws must be put into effect that protect women. Although hearts need to be converted there also must be external controls for those who do not wish to respect women. The church needs to recognize more fully the depth of violence against women and needs to work on weeding out any tendencies in church

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<sup>60</sup> John Paul II, “Letter to the Bishops,” 6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.



language or action that might contribute to the injustices and violence committed against women.

Second, the church needs to develop more fully the concept of complementarity. Too frequently this concept has been used to discriminate against women. A careful analysis is needed showing how discrimination is a social construct, built around difference, so that stereotypes and traditional practices that harm women are eliminated.

Third, there needs to be a greater appreciation that many young girls and some boys have not had the opportunity to develop sufficiently to be mature givers. Before one can freely give there must be an understanding and appreciation of the self. Too frequently, young women have been pushed into the care-giving role before they have sufficiently matured. Much more education needs to be done in this area.

Fourth, the church needs to do a much deeper, critical analysis of the family. The family can be a dangerous place for women and children. It is insufficient to simply tell husbands to love their wives. Much more concrete guidance is necessary. For example, husbands should be encouraged and taught to help with the dishes, changing the diapers, and carrying the water. In many cultures, men must be taught to be caregivers and the church should be in the forefront of this education. Changing practices changes hearts. The family is the domestic church and it is in the family that children learn what justice and mutuality look like.

The call of *Gaudium et spes* is that women must be respected and appreciated. All discrimination against women must end. For this to happen, however, there needs to be a change of hearts as well as laws put into place that protect women. I close with another comment from Pope John Paul's "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World," "But, in the final analysis, every human being, man or woman, is destined to be 'for the other.' In this perspective, that which is called 'femininity' is more than simply an attribute of the female sex. The word designates indeed the fundamental human capacity to live for the other and because of the other."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 14.