



INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Course Notes 2022



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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Social Doctrine of the Church

The Social Doctrine of the Church is a body of doctrine that sits within its teachings about the whole truth about man, in light of Divine Revelation. Guided by the Holy Spirit, it provides deeper understanding of how to live as human beings who are social,

When she fulfills her mission of proclaiming the Gospel, she bears witness to man ... to his dignity and his vocation to the communion of persons. She teaches him the demands of justice and peace in conformity with divine wisdom.¹

This means that the Church speaks on temporal matters, particularly on economic and social matters, to teach us how to order them to their ultimate end, in keeping with natural and divine law. The Church does not exercise political authority; rather it speaks when temporal matters affect fundamental rights and the salvation of souls.² She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships, and hence proposes fundamental principles for reflection, criteria for judgement and guidelines for action for others to take to heart and use, freely, competently, and responsibly, in their decision-making in temporal affairs.³

The Social Doctrine of the Church is rooted in the Gospel and Tradition, but developed into a concrete body of teaching in the nineteenth century when the Gospel encountered modern industrial society with its new structures for the production of consumer goods, its new concept of society, the state and authority, and its new forms of labour and ownership.⁴ The development of the doctrine of the Church on economic and social matters attests the permanent value of the Church's teaching at the same time as it attests the true meaning of her Tradition, always living and active.⁵

In this course we will draw on the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* to look at key teachings about the human person relevant for this topic; some principles the Church gives us, with a particular focus on the notions of Dignity and the Common Good, and then look briefly at some key areas of the Church's social teachings, i.e., the family, economic life, and political life.⁶

1. Creation & the Human Vocation

The Church's social doctrine is rooted in Divine Revelation and natural law. These sources tell us about the dignity and vocation of the human person. In the creation account in the Book of Genesis we find some fundamental truths about human beings that are the basis for the rest of this subject. For when we know who we are and to what we are called, we can think

¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2419.

² CCC, 2420.

³ CCC, 2423.

⁴ CCC, 2421.

⁵ CCC, 2421.

⁶ There is not sufficient time to cover all areas of the Social Doctrine of the Church in this course, for instance Church teachings on the international community and international affairs (*Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*, 428-450).

about what elements of social life might promote or hinder it, and strive to shape family, social and work life accordingly.

1.1 Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (imago dei), with a supernatural vocation.

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (*Gen 1:27*).⁷ We come from God, we are made for God. Human beings have a spiritual soul with faculties of intellect and free will which enable us to know, to act freely, and to love. Just as God is not solitary but a communion of Persons, so we are also called to communion with God. Being created in the image and likeness of God, with a spiritual soul and supernatural vocation, is the foundation for human dignity. The fact that a person is *imago dei*, and that they are made for communion with the Trinity, gives each person an intrinsic, inalienable worth, which is what we refer to as human dignity. Human beings are valuable for their own sake.

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. Further, he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.⁸

Knowing who human beings are and their ultimate end helps us think about the purpose of life and human freedom, the way human beings should be treated, and what environment they need to be able to attain the end for which they were created.

This is the basis of what the Church calls the Personalist Principle: that a human person is a subject, valuable for his or her own sake, never to be reduced to an object, or regarded as a mere means or a resource for someone else.⁹ A person is unique and irreplaceable, transcendent and free. We will come back to this when we talk about the principle of Dignity.

1.2 Human beings are social by nature.

'The relationship between God and man is reflected in the relational and social dimension of human nature. Man, in fact, is not a solitary being, but "a social being, and unless he relates himself to others, he can neither live nor develop his potential".¹⁰ In the Creation account in Genesis, God declares that 'it is not good that man should be alone' (*Gen 2:18*). He creates Eve, whom Adam welcomes as 'bone of bone and flesh of flesh' (*Gen 2:23*).¹¹ Of all creation, only other persons

in whom the spirit of God the Creator is also alive, can satisfy the need for interpersonal dialogue, so vital for human existence. In one's neighbour, whether man or woman, there is a reflection of God himself, the definitive goal and fulfilment of every person.¹²

⁷ On the dignity of the human person, see *CSDC*, 108-123.

⁸ *CSDC*, 108; *CCC*, 357.

⁹ *CSDC*, 105-107.

¹⁰ *CSDC*, 110; Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 7.12.1965, 12.

¹¹ The word 'helper' God uses for Eve is not servile or inferior, as we might read it, but is a Hebrew word which is actually used for God in his relations with man.

¹² *CSDC*, 110; Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, 25.3.1995, 35.

Then God blesses our first parents and gives them a mission 'increase and multiply'; (*Gen* 1:28), the foundation for the family and for society. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, working from natural law, also held that human beings are social by nature. Family and civil society are not artificial constructs; in fact, the family is the first society and basis for civil societies. We are social and interdependent, and flourish in relationships. We will come back to this.

1.3 Work, and by extension, economic activity, are natural activities of human beings and part of the mission entrusted to them by God.

God places Adam and Eve in the garden of Paradise and entrusts them to tend it (*Gen* 2:15) Thus we see the mission to work, by which Adam and Eve participate in God's creative power and providence, cooperating with Him in ordering and perfecting Creation. Work, then, is connected to our dignity, a right and a duty, not a punishment. This passage from Sacred Scripture also takes us from our relationship with God and other people, to our relationship with temporal realities. We will come back to this when we look at work and economic life, and also in relation to goods and the environment.

God's plan reflected a state of harmony: harmony between God and humankind, harmony between Adam and Eve, and harmony between humans and their world. The drama of the Fall, recounted in *Gen* 3, introduced a rupture. Original sin damages the harmony between God and our first parents who first distrusted, then hid from God; between the first man and woman (*Gen* 3:16), and between humankind and the world (*Gen* 3:18). Human nature was wounded, but not corrupted. We are redeemed by Jesus Christ; however, the consequences of the wounds remain. The human intellect is clouded (ignorance) and easily influenced by the passions, making it difficult to discern what is true and good; the will is weakened, and the passions are no longer easily integrated (concupiscence) and ordered to help us attain the good. The effects of the disharmony caused by original sin are felt in family and social life, from the most intimate relationships to the international sphere. Many people live as practical atheists, especially in secularized societies, and have no sense of a transcendent meaning by which to order their lives.

In this setting, the Church calls us to conversion, strengthens us with the sacraments, instructs us clearly, and invites us to be what we are, children of God in the world, to live up to our vocation and fulfil the mission given us at creation, to sanctify ourselves in, and sanctify, the family, society and temporal realities, according to the original divine plan.

2. The Desire for Happiness: Human Flourishing

Human beings are 'capax dei': they have a capacity to know and enter into a relationship with God; in fact, they are made for this.¹³ They come from God and are made to return to Him. The 'capacity for God' manifests in various ways, one of which is the desire for happiness. The desire for happiness exists in the heart of every human being. We all want to be happy, and the desire is never fully satiated.

Aristotle observed that happiness is something we desire for its own sake. His *Nicomachean Ethics* is a study of the science of happiness. He observed that, if we wish to be happy, we

¹³ *CSDC*, 109; *CCC*, title of Chapter 1, Section 1, Part 1; cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 12; Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 34.

need to work out what things truly lead to happiness and do them. Today's idea of happiness is largely about emotion and desire satisfaction, fleeting and subjective. Aristotle's idea of happiness (*eudaimonia*) was different; it included feelings and desires, but he was searching for something with solid foundations. It was more stable and more objective, based on human nature and more akin to 'flourishing'. His idea was to work out what human beings needed in order to flourish according to their nature, and then cultivate those aspects of life and meet those needs.

This meant recognising that there is such a thing as human nature and that it is shared by all human beings. It claims that there are some basic requirements needed for all human beings to flourish. Room for diversity remained in many non-essentials and also in the way in which some of these requirements were expressed (e.g.: cultural diversity), but these basics had to be met if one was to live a fully human life. One might survive without some of them, but all were required if one was to truly thrive.

The desire for happiness can move us to reflect on human nature. Societies need to provide opportunities for their members to thrive; a 'human ecology' that allows people to flourish in all the dimensions of our humanity.¹⁴ The social doctrine of the church is a rich resource for reflection on this question. It offers guidelines to help us put this into practice and speaks out clearly about situations or practices that contravene this. The Church defends the right to live a fully human existence in accord with the nature and gift of human life. It indicates

the different dimensions of the mystery of man, who must be approached "in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being."¹⁵

2.1 Human Flourishing: Multidimensional

Human beings are corporeo-spiritual, a unity of body and soul. Aquinas argued against the dualists of his day (who despised the body and its needs) and taught that what is good for you depends on your nature. Humans, unlike angels, have bodies, and attain the good, not in spite of it, but relying on its help.¹⁶ Neither spiritualism nor materialism do justice to the totality of human beings.¹⁷ History has shown that, while people can become saints in any situation, denying people basic opportunities to develop some aspect of human nature, can stunt their ability to grow according to their dignity and to discover and live their vocation (e.g.: lack of education, religious instruction, a poor moral environment, stable family, poor nutrition, displacement, etc). They might physically survive, but never thrive. To thrive, human beings need to be kept healthy and safe, educated, taught virtues in practical situations, exercise their freedom, work and rest, participate in culture, love and engage in relationships.¹⁸

2.1.1 Corporeal

Human beings are corporeal-spiritual beings. Human happiness cannot be met by only providing material things. But human beings do need material things if they are to flourish: food, water, shelter, healthcare, safety, etc. A lack of basic material needs is not only against human dignity, but it also makes it difficult to pursue other basic goods (for instance, it is hard

¹⁴ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, 24.5.2015, 5.

¹⁵ *CSDC*, 126; Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 4.3.1979, 14.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Benziger Brothers: Cincinnati, 1911), I-II, q. 56, a. 3, ad. 3. Aquinas was speaking particularly about the positive role of the passions – as a positive dynamism.

¹⁷ *CSDC*, 129.

¹⁸ *CSDC*, 127-128.

for a family to thrive without secure housing or if the parents need to split or leave the family to find employment; education requires books, etc.)

2.1.2 *Open to Transcendence*

Human beings are open to the infinite, and especially to God. The human being has a capacity to open to the transcendent, able to 'come out of himself, from the self-centred preservation of his own life, to enter into a relationship of dialogue and communion with others'.¹⁹

This spiritual dimension of human beings needs to be nourished. A society or family that offers material benefits but stifles spirituality or makes it harder to know and love God, is not a healthy society for human beings; by ignoring this dimension of their being, it makes it harder for people to understand the ultimate meaning of their lives or pursue it. A consumerist or materialistic environment, for instance, while not overtly anti-religious, reduces the meaning and purpose of life to possession and gratification, offering only what cannot fill.²⁰

2.1.3 *Unique and Unrepeatable*

The human person must always be understood in his unrepeatable and inviolable uniqueness. In fact, man exists above all as a subjective entity, as a centre of consciousness and freedom,²¹ with unique life experiences. Each person has inherent dignity and is valuable for his or her own sake. Endowed with intelligence and free will, each person has a unique inner life. It is possible to find someone who is more talented, prettier, cleverer, funnier; someone else might do their job; a person him or herself might change due to age, illness, etc, but he or she is always the same person, and no-one else can ever be that person.

Man exists as a unique and unrepeatable being, he exists as an "I" capable of self-understanding, self-possession and self-determination. The human person is an intelligent and conscious being, capable of reflecting on himself and therefore of being aware of himself and his actions. However, it is not intellect, consciousness and freedom that define the person, rather it is the person who is the basis of the acts of intellect, consciousness and freedom. These acts can even be absent, for even without them man does not cease to be a person.²²

This dimension of the human person is overlooked in some bioethical theories that define personhood by the ability to perform conscious and autonomous acts.²³

2.1.4 *Free*

Human beings have the faculties of intellect and will, and to flourish need to be able to exercise them. Unlike animals who are moved by instinct, God made us free and left us in the hands of our own counsel²⁴, so we might seek Him freely and adhere to Him freely.²⁵ The fact that

¹⁹ *CSDC*, 130.

²⁰ On the need for meaning, see Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).

²¹ *CSDC*, 131.

²² *CSDC*, 131.

²³ The unborn and newborns, severely intellectually disabled people and people with dementia, for instance, are deemed non-persons on this basis, and hence denied dignity or human rights, beginning with the right to life.

²⁴ *Sir* 15:14

²⁵ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 17; *ST*, II-II, q. 104, a. 3.

we are free is the basis for important rights and responsibilities, because without them we cannot flourish.²⁶ Human freedom is not unlimited as we are creatures, made by God and dependent on God.

Man is certainly free, inasmuch as he can understand and accept God's commands. And he possesses an extremely far-reaching freedom, since he can eat 'of every tree of the garden'. But his freedom is not unlimited: it must halt before the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil', for it is called to accept the moral law given by God. In fact, human freedom finds its authentic and complete fulfilment precisely in the acceptance of that law.²⁷

True freedom requires us to understand ourselves, which includes knowledge of the truth and of the natural moral law, which God has inscribed in our nature.²⁸

To flourish as free beings, we need knowledge, the opportunity to work, exercise creativity, and to take on the responsibilities that come with freedom.

Because we are free, rights and responsibilities are complementary and indissolubly linked. It is inherently contradictory to claim rights without acknowledging corresponding responsibilities.²⁹

Those, therefore, who claim their own rights, yet altogether forget or neglect to carry out their respective duties, are people who build with one hand and destroy with the other.³⁰

2.1.5 Social

Human nature is social as well as individual.³¹ We are social and interdependent. We are born to parents, upon whom, initially, we are totally dependent for all our needs; as children we depend upon others for much longer than other animals. Even when we no longer depend on others for survival, social life helps us live with dignity, meet and surpass our needs, for instance in the production of goods and services we could not provide for ourselves. We turn to others for safety and stability.

More importantly, we need others to learn how to be human. We are born with a human nature, but, unlike many animals, cannot develop it alone. We rely on others to help us and teach us: language and speech, cultural heritage and wisdom accumulated over generations, and moral values. Human beings hone their intellects and mature in the framework of interaction with others. Above all, human beings, made for communion, need to love and be loved, in order to thrive.³²

²⁶ *CSDC*, 135-9. When we talk about rights, we also need to acknowledge corresponding responsibilities. It is part of genuine freedom and maturity.

²⁷ *CSDC*, 136; Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, 6.8.1983, 35.

²⁸ 'By deviating from the moral law man violates his own freedom, becomes imprisoned within himself, disrupts neighbourly fellowship and rebels against divine truth.' *CCC*, 1740. On natural moral law, see *CCC*, 1954-60.

²⁹ *CSDC*, 156.

³⁰ Pope John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 11.4.1963, 55.

³¹ Society is natural for human beings. Some philosophers proposed a social contract theory. Various types, but essentially idea was that we are not naturally social but come together and sign up in some way, if only mythological, to meet our needs.

³² *CSDC*, 149.

So radical is our interdependence that Aristotle observed that "he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god"³³.

Aquinas observes,

Nature has provided the other animals sufficiently with food, covering and means of defence, like teeth, horns and claws, or at least with speed to run away. On the contrary, man is born with none of these natural means. Instead of them, he has reason, because of which, with the help of his hands, he is able to procure what is necessary. But in order to obtain it and preserve it, one man alone is not enough. One man alone cannot store up enough for life. Consequently, it is natural for man to live in society with many others.³⁴

Animals, Aquinas notes, are endowed with instinct that guides their survival. Instead of instinct human beings have general knowledge which they can apply to particular circumstances. However,

Also in this, one individual is not enough. Hence there is a need to live in society and that one person helps another, each one dedicating himself with the help of natural lights, to different discoveries and arts, some to medicine, others to this thing, still others to that other thing, for the common utility³⁵.

This relationship is not just one of mutual dependence where individuals use others to achieve their own personal ends. Flourishing is a common goal; one we undertake and achieve together. Human beings have a deep tendency towards social life because fulfilling this dimension helps fulfill the other dimensions too. Because we are interdependent, we never truly thrive on our own. The individual and society are interrelated – their flourishing is mutual. Individualism has eroded awareness of this in many societies, and post-enlightenment attitudes to self-sufficiency and autonomy mean that many reject dependence as something negative, burdensome and degrading.³⁶ Pope Benedict called attention to this problem in the USA,

In a society which values personal freedom and autonomy, it is easy to lose sight of our dependence on others as well as the responsibilities that we bear towards them. ... Yet from the beginning, God saw that "it is not good for man to be alone" (*Gen* 2:18). We were created as social beings who find fulfillment only in love – for God and for our neighbour. If we are truly to gaze upon him who is the source of our joy, we need to do so as members of the people of God. If this seems counter-cultural, that is simply further evidence of the urgent need for a renewed evangelization of culture.³⁷

³³ Aristotle, *Politics, The Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), Bk 1, Ch. 2, 1253a, 28ff.

³⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *De Regimine principum*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), Bk I, Ch. 1.

³⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *De Regimine principum*, Bk I, Ch. 1.

³⁶ MacIntyre argues that as we are material beings rejecting this is rejecting something about humanity. And you cannot thrive if you are trying to live as something you are not. Also, he says you cannot develop some virtues while you reject it. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).

³⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to the Bishops of the USA*, 16.4.2008. From a secular perspective, some contemporary thinkers from a variety of angles are increasingly recognising the reality and value of interdependence and rediscovering its implications for relationships, for self-acceptance, for instance in relation to vulnerability and by re-examining local communities eroded by having lost sight of the intrinsically social nature of the human being and the positive aspect of interdependence to see what aspects promote or discourage interpersonal connection (e.g.: Hugh Mackay, Alasdair MacIntyre & Brené Brown).

If the individual members of a society are not thriving, then the community is not thriving, even if the GDP is high. If something important is lacking in society, for instance if it is marked by great inequality or injustice, corruption, immoral policies, spiritual poverty or other things so that some seem to thrive while others cannot, then it is difficult for individuals who recognise their interconnectedness to truly thrive. The social doctrine of the Church reminds us of this.

Man's social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on one another. For the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life.³⁸

As we experience, the fact that human beings are naturally social 'does not automatically lead to communion among persons, to the gift of self.' Due to the effects of original sin and our personal sins and failings, we carry 'seeds of asocial behaviour', impulses that lead us to close ourselves within our own individuality and to dominate others.³⁹ Social life is an important sphere of moral activity, of opening out towards others. Part of seeking truth and the good involves seeking it not just for oneself, but for all members of society.

Every society worthy of the name can be sure that it stands in the truth when all of its members, thanks to their ability to know what is good, are able to pursue it for themselves and for others. It is out of love for one's own good and for that of others that people come together in stable groups with the purpose of attaining a common good. The different human societies also must establish among themselves relationships of solidarity, communication and cooperation, in the service of man and the common good.⁴⁰

A question arises: is it really possible to do this, to flourish as individuals and as a society? Is it realistic or achievable? Many see the world as a rat-race and individuals as rivals competing for status, resources, influence, etc. In this scenario one must first look out for oneself and one's family. Then, if one feels magnanimous, there's room for charity, but no one realistically owes anything to anyone, or expects it. 'Society' is then just the setting in which the competition takes place, or a collective name for rivals and strangers.

The social doctrine of the Church, with its basis in Scripture and natural law, tells us otherwise. In each person we see the *imago dei*; we share a common humanity, and we share a world. Scripture and the Magisterium speak of seeing and treating a person as 'another self', a reflection of all we share and of our equal dignity and interrelatedness.⁴¹ We are called to take responsibility for temporal affairs and create an ecology in which we can all progress together. In this context, the principles of the social doctrine of the church are gifts the Church offers us to find ways to work together so we can thrive as individuals and as a society. They are a right ground for dialogue and shared work with non-Catholics and non-Christians, accessible because they respond to human nature.

The *Compendium* observes

³⁸ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 25.

³⁹ *CSDC*, 150; Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 25.

⁴⁰ *CSDC*, 150; Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 30.12.1987, 26; Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 76.

⁴¹ *Sir* 17:7-8. 9; *Rom* 2:14-16; Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 27.

History attests that it is from the fabric of social relationships that there arise some of the best possibilities for ennobling the human person, but it is also there that lie in wait the most loathsome rejections of human dignity.⁴²

3. Human Nature and the Natural Moral Law

From a philosophical perspective, a nature is a 'mode of being'. It is related to the 'essence', or 'whatness' of a thing, capturing its 'essential' elements as, for instance, captured in a dictionary definition. It looks particularly at what capacities a thing has, and what it does, to define what it is. When we refer to human nature, we refer to what it means to be human, and what things are essential to humans. To do this, we look particularly at the operations we see humans perform. This tells us what sorts of capacities they have, which in turn tells us about what sort of soul they have.

The point to be made here is that the same human nature is shared by all human beings. It is universal. Each person is unique and there is great diversity, but underlying that is something we all have in common. This is what Aristotle was relying on when he thought about human flourishing. This common ground is lost in subjectivism and cultural relativism, that reject anything objective or universal. Most cultures and religious traditions, however, do recognise a shared human nature, and use it as a basis for thinking about ethical and social behaviour, in accordance with the natural law. It is the basis of the Golden Rule, 'treat others as you would like to be treated yourself', that appears in most cultures. It is an expression of natural law, the most basic acknowledgement of shared humanity and of seeing in a person 'another self'. It is seen as necessary for co-existing.

The universality of the Golden Rule reveals that we are capable of recognising our common nature and acknowledging that there are some things that will be good for all human beings, and that there are some things we all need and deserve because we are all human. The Golden Rule connects us. It allows us to communicate with each other, to understand each other's needs, to have empathy. It is also a natural expression of the concept of human rights – that people have a right to be treated a certain way because they are human. Human nature and human needs are different to those of other beings.

Human nature, then, is fundamental for establishing moral norms, it is *universal* and *immutable*. The way we treat individuals and the way we live in society, the laws we pass and customs we live, and the conduct of the State and civil authorities, need to reflect these universal characteristics of human nature if they are to respect human dignity and promote flourishing.

Studying and reflecting on human nature is a way in which all people can know something of the divine law and God's plans for humankind. It helps us to identify what sorts of actions and ways of living promote human flourishing and which do not. Knowledge of the natural moral law allows us to govern ourselves and to discover what is true and good. It is called the natural law as it is the law God inscribes in our nature.

Because it is rooted in human nature, the natural law is accessible to all and applies to every human being (universal). Like human nature, it does not change (immutable). The natural law provides a stable basis for building and organising communities, and civil laws should be built on it. The natural law is a foundation for universal human rights.

If the perception of the universality of the moral law is dimmed, people cannot build a true and lasting communion with others, because when a correspondence between

⁴² CSDC, 107.

truth and good is lacking, "whether culpably or not, our acts damage the communion of persons, to the detriment of each."⁴³

The truths of natural law are not always immediately evident, and the intellect is further obscured in cultural environments where it is not observed and where there is little reflection or little openness to truth.

The precepts of natural law are not perceived by everyone clearly and immediately. In the present situation sinful man needs grace and revelation so moral and religious truths may be known "by everyone with facility, with firm certainty and with no admixture of error." The natural law provides revealed law and grace with a foundation prepared by God and in accordance with the work of the Spirit.

The Magisterium of the Church provides clarification and guidance with the light of Divine Revelation, proclaiming and explaining it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

4. What is a Society?

Generically, society can be defined as the union of persons who co-operate in a stable manner for the achievement of a common good.⁴⁴ The Catechism defines a society as

a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them. As an assembly that is at once visible and spiritual, a society endures through time: it gathers up the past and prepares for the future. By means of society, each man is established as an "heir" and receives certain "talents" that enrich his identity and whose fruits he must develop. He rightly owes loyalty to the communities of which he is part and respect to those in authority who have charge of the common good.⁴⁵

The social nature of human beings is expressed in many different ways. In fact, 'the common good depends on a healthy social pluralism.⁴⁶ A society has different components, which are called to form a unified, harmonious whole, while preserving and developing their own characteristics and autonomy. Some types of societies are closely related to human nature (for instance the family, civil society and the Church). Others come about on a more voluntary basis, for instance businesses, associations, clubs, etc, and are important as they promote participation in social life.

The creation of voluntary associations and institutions must be encouraged 'on both national and international levels, which relate to economic and social goals, to cultural and recreational activities, to sport, to various professions, and to political affairs'.⁴⁷

Human beings freely form these societies for the sake of attaining objectives that exceed individual capacities. They develop their members' personal qualities, especially the sense of initiative and responsibility, and help guarantee rights.⁴⁸

4.1 The Purpose of Society

Societies can be organised in various ways and have various aims, depending on the free decisions of its members or their representatives. There is, however, an essential aim or

⁴³ CSDC, 142; Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 51.

⁴⁴ Ángel Rodríguez-Luño, *Ética General*, 4th ed., (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2001). On the common good, see Ch 2.

⁴⁵ CCC, 1880.

⁴⁶ CSDC, 151. We'll return to this in Chapter 5 on the political community.

⁴⁷ CSDC, 151.

⁴⁸ CSDC, 151. See the principles of Subsidiarity and Participation in Chapter 2.

purpose that goes to the very nature of society. The main purpose of society is to promote the common good, that is, to create conditions that allow each member to achieve their perfection, as individuals and as a society. To do this, societies must correspond to the natural moral law, which should be reflected in their juridical, political and economic systems. We will look at this further in Chapter 2.

4.2 Civil Society

The civil society is the grouping of persons and families which can acquire sufficiently the goods which they need, with their own authority. Civil society is the most perfect community in the natural order, for it is ordered to the natural common good of human beings in all its extension, and at the same time it has all the means in order to achieve it, unlike the family, for instance, which must look outside itself and cooperate with others to achieve its end.

Civil society is a natural society; its end responds to a natural human inclination. As long as there have been human beings, there have been societies, although throughout history civil societies have been organized in different ways (tribes, peoples, empires, etc.). Nowadays it is commonly established as a State, in one form or another.

Civil societies contain associations which seek a more particular common good. People freely unite with one another to achieve particular ends. Since the particular goods and ends are subordinated to the general good of man, particular associations are subordinated to the civil society and to its legitimate rulers. In their turn, they are co-ordinated with one another in accordance with how the order of their ends demands it.

Civil societies establish mutual relations, forming the international order, which is habitually ruled by treaties between States, forming a body of international law. These laws, as with all laws, must conform to the natural law and be consistent with the true nature and end of human beings and the correct relations among individuals and social groups.⁴⁹

4.3 The Unity of Society

The unity of society can be defined as a unity of order. A society is not just a collection of self-sufficient individuals or a collective like a flock of sheep in which no individual matters, but an organic unity. What unites a society is its nature and end. The members of society share a common task, that of establishing a system of harmonious co-existence which makes it easier for them to flourish. Aquinas says of this order that, firstly, humans are oriented to God, and secondarily, 'to help one another mutually to come to God'⁵⁰.

The unity of civil society is a unity in plurality and diversity. The many social groups and associations express the richness of human ingenuity. They have their own spheres of freedom and responsibility which must be respected, as they contribute in their own ways to the obtaining of the total good.⁵¹

The social reality, therefore, doesn't respond to the atomist conception of society, which understands society as a mere collection of independent subjects. This would reduce social life to be exclusively the relations between two end points, state authority and singular persons. Experience itself presents us with a much more complex and at the same time much richer pattern: the activities of families, of cultural, professional, educational associations, etc., the

⁴⁹ The principles in Chapter 2 indicate these.

⁵⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *In Sententiae II*, d. 1, q. 2, a. 3.

⁵¹ This value is reflected in the principle of subsidiarity. See Chapter 2.

interests of which are not only fully legitimate, but which constitute an essential part of the common good of society.

4.4 Authority

Every human community needs an authority to govern it. The foundation of such authority lies in human nature. It is necessary for the unity of the state. The role of authority is to ensure, as far as possible, the common good of the society.⁵² For a well-ordered, functioning society, we need some people invested with legitimate 'authority' to take responsibility for preserving its institutions and working to promote the good of all.⁵³ Authority is the quality by virtue of which persons or institutions make laws and give orders in the society, and expect obedience.⁵⁴

Ultimately authority belongs to the order established by God and comes from God,⁵⁵ but the choice of the political regime and the appointment of rulers are left to the free decision of the citizens.⁵⁶ Authority is exercised legitimately' only when it seeks the common good of the group concerned and if it employs morally licit means to attain it.⁵⁷

Civil authorities have a duty to exercise authority as a service, and to consider themselves as stewards of God's gifts.⁵⁸ They cannot command or establish what is contrary to human dignity and the natural law.⁵⁹ They should promote and practice justice 'taking account of the needs and contribution of each, with a view to harmony and peace'.⁶⁰ They should not set personal interests against those of the community.⁶¹ Citizens have a duty to respect and obey legitimate authority.⁶² Their attitude should be one of 'loyal collaboration' which includes the right, and at times the duty, to voice just criticisms of that which seems harmful to the dignity of persons and to the good of the community.⁶³

⁵² CCC, 1898.

⁵³ CCC, 1897.

⁵⁴ CCC, 1897.

⁵⁵ "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment." CCC, 1899.

⁵⁶ CCC, 1901.

⁵⁷ CCC, 1903.

⁵⁸ CCC, 2235, 'Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. '; CCC, 2238.

⁵⁹ CCC, 2235.

⁶⁰ CCC, 2236.

⁶¹ CCC, 2237.

⁶² CCC, 1900; 2238 "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution... Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God."

⁶³ CCC, 2242. 'The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. "When citizens are under the oppression of a public authority which oversteps its competence, they should still not refuse to give or to do what is objectively demanded of them by the common good; but it is legitimate for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against the abuse of this authority within the limits of the natural law and the Law of the Gospel." Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 74.

Citizens have a duty to contribute to the good of society, along with civil authorities, 'in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom'.⁶⁴ Submission to legitimate authorities and service of the common good require citizens to fulfill their roles in the life of the political community.

The love and service of one's country follow from the duty of gratitude and belong to the order of charity. This is the virtue of patriotism. More than a sentiment, it leads to generous efforts to contribute to the needs of one's country. Nationalism, on the other hand, is not a virtue but a disordered affection for one's own country. It makes the nation the supreme value, fosters contempt for persons from other countries, promotes hostility and erodes solidarity.

We will study the Church's social doctrine in relation to the political community in Chapter 5.

5. Why does the Church have Social Doctrine?

The social doctrine of the church is based on natural law and Divine Revelation. In proclaiming the Gospel, the Church proclaims the full truth about man and promotes a deeper understanding of human dignity, the vocation to communion, and the laws of social living.⁶⁵ It teaches us about justice and peace in accord with divine wisdom.⁶⁶

For this reason, the Church makes moral judgments about economic and social matters, when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it."⁶⁷ The Church concerns itself with the common good in temporal affairs 'because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, our ultimate end'.⁶⁸ For this reason it strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships.

Helping man on the path of salvation is the primary and sole purpose of the Church's social doctrine. There is no intention to usurp or invade the duties of others or to neglect her own; nor is there any thought of pursuing objectives that are foreign to her mission. This mission serves to give an overall shape to the Church's right and at the same time her duty to develop a social doctrine of her own and to influence society and societal structures with it by means of the responsibility and tasks to which it gives rise.⁶⁹

When the Church proclaims its social doctrine it is not 'playing politics', but living its mission of proclaiming the Gospel, showing its relevance in all times and places. Its mission is distinct from that of political authorities. Political authorities are responsible for developing policies, laws and institutions, to order society towards the temporal common good. The Church does not mandate 'Catholic solutions'.

It is not the role of the Pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political structuring and organization of social life. This task is part of the vocation of the lay faithful, acting on their own initiative with their fellow citizens ... It is the role of the laity "to animate temporal realities with Christian commitment, by which they show that they are witnesses and agents of peace and justice."⁷⁰

⁶⁴ CCC, 2239.

⁶⁵ CCC, 2419.

⁶⁶ CCC, 2419.

⁶⁷ CSDC, 71.

⁶⁸ CCC, 2420, 2458.

⁶⁹ CSDC, 69.

⁷⁰ CCC, 2442.

The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that, for the laity, this is also a path to holiness.⁷¹ The Church's social doctrine is a gift which helps us fulfil this vocation, providing us with 'principles for reflection, the criteria for judgment and the directives for action which are the starting point for the promotion of an integral and solidary humanism'.⁷² We will look at some key principles of the Church's social teaching in Chapter 2.

The goal of the Church is not an earthly Utopia⁷³ – there will always be some form of poverty, material or otherwise. For this we must wait for the New Heaven and New Earth. Pope Benedict said,

The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument, and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply.⁷⁴

The social doctrine of the Church developed in the nineteenth century when the Gospel encountered the radical social changes brought about by the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution in Europe: new models for work and the production of goods, new ideas about society, the state and authority.⁷⁵ Pope Leo XIII observed with growing concern misconceptions about human nature, freedom, the purpose of society, goods and the economy, and offences against justice and human dignity that affected countless people. He wrote what is considered the first social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (1891). In it, the Pope said, 'it must not be supposed that the Church so concentrates her energies on caring for souls as to overlook things which pertain to mortal and earthly life'.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 21.11.1964, 40; See also Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God* (Sydney: Little Hills Press, 1995), 165.

⁷² *CSDC*, 7.

⁷³ This is one of the errors of liberation theology. See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, 6.8.1984.

⁷⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, 25.12.2005, 28.

⁷⁵ *CCC*, 2421.

⁷⁶ Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*, 15.5.1891, 42.

List of Some Major Documents on Catholic Social Teaching.⁷⁷

Pope Leo XIII

Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (On Capital and Labor), 1891.

Pope Pius XI

Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (On Reconstruction of the Social Order), 1931.

Pope John XXIII

Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (On Christianity and Social Progress), 1961.

Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), Pope John XXIII, 1963.

Vatican Council II

Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World), 1965.

Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* (On Religious Freedom), 1965.

Pope Paul VI

- Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples), 1967.

- Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (On the 80th Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*), 1971.

- Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World), 1975.

Pope John Paul II

- Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work), 1981.

- Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On the 20th Anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*), 1987.

- Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (On the 100th Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*), 1991.

- Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life), 1995.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

- *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, 2002.

Pope Benedict XVI

- Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (On Christian Love), 2005.

- Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth), 2009.

Pope Francis

- Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (On Love in the Family), 2016.

- Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (On Care for Our Common Home), 2015.

- Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship), 2020.

⁷⁷ This is not a complete list; for instance, Popes Pius XI and Pius XII wrote and delivered radio broadcasts during the Interwar period and World War II on topics like the rise of totalitarian ideologies, war and peace, and principles for reconstructing the international order. Many other magisterial documents also contain social teachings although they are primarily about other things, for instance Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 1979, Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 10.11.1994, and Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013.

Rerum Novarum was

above all a heartfelt defence of the inalienable dignity of workers, connected with the importance of the right to property, the principle of cooperation among the social classes, the rights of the weak and the poor, the obligations of workers and employers and the right to form associations.⁷⁸

Since then, the Church's social doctrine has continued to develop, attesting 'the permanent value of the Church's teaching at the same time as it attests the true meaning of her Tradition, always living and active.'⁷⁹ The most recent social encyclical, Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti* (2020) on fraternity and social friendship, continues to apply the Church's perennial teachings to the times, drawing particularly on the teachings of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.⁸⁰

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is rich with references to the Church's social doctrine. The main ideas that run through the Magisterial documents are synthesised in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Each encyclical is worth reading in its own historical context, and in continuity with the others.

5.1 Social Doctrine and the Laity

The *Compendium* dedicates a whole section to the mission of the laity in relation to the social doctrine of the Church.⁸¹ Vatican Council II identified the particular mission of the laity in temporal affairs:

The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.⁸²

The Church respects (and expects) the freedom, responsibility, diversity and creativity of the laity in fulfilling their mission in the world. Lay people need to be well-formed, with a deep and accurate knowledge of social doctrine. In particular, lay people should know the Church's social doctrine as it pertains to the family, and areas relevant to their professional work, so their actions and solutions to temporal problems are consistent with the Gospel message and the truth about the human person. Making the social doctrine of the Church known,

aims at the formation of men and women who, in their respect for the moral order, are lovers of true freedom, people who "will form their own judgments in the light of truth, direct their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive for what is true

⁷⁸ CSDC, 268.

⁷⁹ CCC, 2421.

⁸⁰ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 3.10.2020.

⁸¹ CSDC, Chapter 12, Part II.

⁸² Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 31.

and just in willing cooperation with others".⁸³ ...The Church's social doctrine must be the basis of an intense and constant work of formation, especially of the lay faithful. Such a formation should take into account their obligations in civil society.

"It belongs to the layman, without waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live".⁸⁴

The first level of the formation of lay Christians should be to help them to become capable of meeting their daily activities effectively in the cultural, social, economic and political spheres and to develop in them a sense of duty that is at the service of the common good. A second level concerns the formation of a political conscience in order to prepare lay Christians to exercise political power. "Those with a talent for the difficult yet noble art of politics, or whose talents in this matter can be developed, should prepare themselves for it, and forgetting their own convenience and material interests, they should engage in political activity".⁸⁵

5.2 Social Doctrine of the Church and the Spirit of Opus Dei

Everything we have said above shows the importance for a good grasp of, and love for, the social doctrine of the Church for the faithful of Opus Dei who sanctify themselves and others in their professional work and daily activities in the middle of the world, aiming to put Christ at the summit of all human activities. He identified three manifestations of the 'lay mentality' proper to the laity and particularly people seeking holiness in accord with the spirit of Opus Dei.

"Three manifestations of lay mentality:

- Be sufficiently honest, so as to shoulder one's own personal responsibility
- Be sufficiently Christian, so as to respect those brothers in the Faith who, in matters of free discussion, propose solutions which differ from those which each one of us maintains; and
- Be sufficiently Catholic so as not to use our Mother the Church, involving her in human factions."⁸⁶

6. Fundamental Values of Social Life

Besides principles that guide the building of a society worthy of man, the Church's social doctrine also indicates fundamental social values. Social values refer to aspects of moral good that the principles aim to foster: truth, justice, freedom, love. These values are reference points for structuring an ordered society and living in it well. For these values to be made reality, the fundamental principles must be practiced (we will study these in Chapter 2), as well as the personal exercise of virtue. A society does not become a place for human flourishing without both of these.⁸⁷

⁸³ Vatican Council II, Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, 7.12.1965, 8.

⁸⁴ Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 26.3.1967, 81.

⁸⁵ *CSDC*, 530-531. See also Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, Chapter 5.

⁸⁶ Josemaría Escrivá, *Conversations with Saint Josemaría Escrivá*, (New York: Scepter Publishers, 2007), 117.

⁸⁷ *CSDC*, 197.

The values of truth, justice, freedom and love foster authentic human development. Public authorities must respect and promote these values in relation to economic, political, cultural, and technological affairs.

Respect for the legitimate autonomy of earthly realities prompts the Church not to claim specific competence of a technical or temporal order, but it does not prevent her from intervening to show how, in the different choices made by men and women, these values are either affirmed or denied.⁸⁸

6.1 Truth

A commitment to the truth is always important but assumes a special significance in social relationships.

In fact, when the coexistence of human beings within a community is founded on truth, it is ordered and fruitful, and it corresponds to their dignity as persons. The more people and social groups strive to resolve social problems according to the truth, the more they distance themselves from abuses and act in accordance with the objective demands of morality.⁸⁹

Modern times call for an intensive educational effort and a corresponding commitment on the part of all to the quest for truth. We need to have a clear understanding of the nature of truth and of opinion. In recent decades relativistic ethical theories and scepticism have claimed (paradoxically) that there is no such thing as truth, and, if there were, it could not be known, reducing truth claims to assertions of power and dominance to impose one opinion in preference to another. Those who engage in the world of communications need to practice honesty and integrity, and responsibility for what they say. In the past this applied most to publishers, broadcasters, etc, however the power of social media today means that every person must express their value for truth in the information and views they share, and in assessing the information they receive. The eighth commandment provides strong moral guidelines in relation to the sharing of information about other people.

We need to pursue the truth if we want to discover the good. Our capacity for self-reflection and dialogue helps us discern when we are ignorant, have reasoned poorly or been unduly influenced by strong emotions in our judgments. Relativists, who deny the existence of truth, also deny the existence of 'good': what we call 'good' is simply a subjective expression of personal preference or opinion. If we cannot know what is good, then it is impossible to talk about the common good. The truth about our shared human nature does give us access to truth, in the form of the natural moral law, and tells us about what human beings need in order to live truly human lives. When this common foundation is lost, then pluralistic societies run the danger of fracturing – if all people have is a collection of different opinions, there is no point in reflecting or dialoguing about whether there is anything that might be good for all. The disappearance of the notion of good from some contemporary western thought means that the most societies can hope for from their authorities and democratic processes is fair procedure. Fair procedure is important, but it isn't much use if it doesn't promote the good.

Knowledge of what is true and good enables us to judge what is just.

⁸⁸ *CSDC*, 195.

⁸⁹ *CSDC*, 198.

6.2 Justice

Justice is both a value and a moral virtue. The classical definition of justice is “the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour”. Just behaviour is ‘based on the will to recognize the other as a person’. Justice is ‘the decisive criteria of morality in the intersubjective and social sphere’.⁹⁰

There are various forms of justice based on the identity of the parties and their relationships:

- commutative, (justice in the way people dealing with one another)
- distributive (regulates what the community owes its citizens in proportion their contributions and needs)⁹¹
- legal (what the citizen owes to the community)⁹²

The Church also uses the term ‘social justice’. Social justice regulates social relationships. It recognises the dignity of each person and enables them to receive their due.⁹³ It concerns the social, political, and economic aspects of society, and especially the ways in which such structures cause or contribute to problems and seeks solutions.⁹⁴

According to the Catechism, ‘society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority⁹⁵ and can only be present when there is respect for human dignity, as the person represents the ultimate end of society.’⁹⁶

Justice is particularly important in the present-day context, where the individual value of the person, his dignity and his rights — despite proclaimed intentions — are seriously threatened by the widespread tendency to make exclusive use of criteria of utility and ownership. Justice too, on the basis of these criteria, is considered in a reductionist manner, whereas it acquires a fuller and more authentic meaning in Christian anthropology. Justice, in fact, is not merely a simple human convention, because what is “just” is not first determined by the law but by the profound identity of the human being.⁹⁷

The full truth about man makes it possible to move beyond a contractual vision of justice, which is a reductionist vision, and to open up also for justice the new horizon of solidarity and love. “By itself, justice is not enough. Indeed, it can even betray itself, unless it is open to that deeper power which is love”.

For this reason, the Church's social doctrine ‘places alongside the value of justice that of solidarity, in that it is the privileged way of peace. If peace is the fruit of justice, “today one

⁹⁰ CSDC, 201. See also Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, 29.6.2009 on the link between justice and charity.

⁹¹ CCC, 2411.

⁹² CCC, 2411.

⁹³ ‘Society ensures social justice by providing the conditions that allow associations and individuals to obtain their due’. CCC, 1943.

⁹⁴ CSDC, 201.

⁹⁵ CCC, 1928.

⁹⁶ CCC, 1929.

⁹⁷ CSDC, 202.

could say, with the same exactness: ... peace as the fruit of solidarity". The goal of peace, in fact, "will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of the virtues which favour togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity, so as to build in unity, by giving and receiving, a new society and a better world".⁹⁸

6.3 Freedom

In relation to value of freedom, the *Compendium* says the following:

Freedom is the highest sign in man of his being made in the divine image and, consequently, is a sign of the sublime dignity of every human person. Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person".

The meaning of freedom must not be restricted, considering it from a purely individualistic perspective and reducing it to the arbitrary and uncontrolled exercise of one's own personal autonomy: "Far from being achieved in total self-sufficiency and the absence of relationships, freedom only truly exists where reciprocal bonds, governed by truth and justice, link people to one another".

The understanding of freedom becomes deeper and broader when it is defended, even at the social level, in all of its various dimensions.⁹⁹

The value of freedom is respected,

when every member of society is permitted to fulfil his personal vocation; to seek the truth and profess his religious, cultural and political ideas; to express his opinions; to choose his state of life and, as far as possible, his line of work; to pursue initiatives of an economic, social or political nature. This must take place within a "strong juridical framework", within the limits imposed by the common good and public order, and, in every case, in a manner characterized by responsibility.¹⁰⁰

Freedom must also be expressed as the capacity to refuse what is morally negative, as 'the capacity to distance oneself effectively from everything that could hinder personal, family or social growth. The fullness of freedom consists in the capacity to be in possession of oneself in view of the genuine good, within the context of the universal common good'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ CSDC, 203.

⁹⁹ CSDS, 199.

¹⁰⁰ CSDS, 200.

¹⁰¹ CSDS, 200.

6.4 Love¹⁰²

The last section of the *Compendium* is dedicated to building the 'civilization of love'.¹⁰³ In relation to love as a value to be attained in society by practicing the principles and living the virtues, it says the following:

Love, often restricted to relationships of physical closeness or limited to merely subjective aspects of action on behalf of others, must be reconsidered in its authentic value as the highest and universal criterion of the whole of social ethics. Among all paths, even those sought and taken in order to respond to the ever-new forms of current social questions, the "more excellent way" is that marked out by love.¹⁰⁴

It is from the inner wellspring of love that the values of truth, freedom and justice are born and grow. Human life in society is ordered, bears fruits of goodness and responds to human dignity when it is founded on truth; when it is lived in justice, that is, in the effective respect of rights and in the faithful carrying out of corresponding duties; when it is animated by selflessness, which makes the needs and requirements of others seem as one's own and intensifies the communion of spiritual values and the concern for material necessities; when it is brought about in the freedom that befits the dignity of men and women, prompted by their rational nature to accept responsibility for their actions. These values constitute the pillars which give strength and consistency to the edifice of life and deeds: they are values that determine the quality of every social action and institution.¹⁰⁵

Love presupposes and transcends justice, which "must find its fulfilment in charity".¹⁰⁶ If justice is "in itself suitable for 'arbitration' between people concerning the reciprocal distribution of objective goods in an equitable manner, love and only love (including that kindly love that we call 'mercy') is capable of restoring man to himself". Human relationships cannot be governed solely by the measure of justice: "The experience of the past and of our own time demonstrates that justice alone is not enough, that it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself ... In fact, "in every sphere of interpersonal relationships justice must, so to speak, be 'corrected' to a considerable extent by that love which, as St. Paul proclaims, 'is patient and kind' or, in other words, possesses the characteristics of that merciful love which is so much of the essence of the Gospel and Christianity".¹⁰⁷

No legislation, no system of rules or negotiation will ever succeed in persuading men and peoples to live in unity, brotherhood and peace; no line of reasoning will ever be able to surpass the appeal of love. ... In order that all this may take place, however, it is necessary that care be taken to show love not only in its role of prompting individual deeds but also as a force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today's world, of profoundly renewing structures, social organizations, legal systems from within. In this perspective love takes on the characteristic style of social and political charity: "Social charity makes us love the common good", it makes us

¹⁰² Two important encyclicals in this area are Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*; and Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*. These were written after the publication of the *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*.

¹⁰³ *CSDS*, 582.

¹⁰⁴ *CSDS*, 204.

¹⁰⁵ *CSDS*, 205.

¹⁰⁶ On the relationship between charity and justice, see Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*.

¹⁰⁷ *CSDC*, 206.

effectively seek the good of all people, considered not only as individuals or private persons but also in the social dimension that unites them.¹⁰⁸

Social and political charity is not exhausted in relationships between individuals but spreads into the network formed by these relationships, which is precisely the social and political community; it intervenes in this context seeking the greatest good for the community in its entirety. In so many aspects the neighbour to be loved is found "in society", such that to love him concretely, assist him in his needs or in his indigence may mean something different than it means on the mere level of relationships between individuals. To love him on the social level means, depending on the situations, to make use of social mediations to improve his life or to remove social factors that cause his indigence. It is undoubtedly an act of love, the work of mercy by which one responds here and now to a real and impelling need of one's neighbour, but it is an equally indispensable act of love to strive to organize and structure society so that one's neighbour will not find himself in poverty, above all when this becomes a situation within which an immense number of people and entire populations must struggle, and when it takes on the proportions of a true worldwide social issue.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ *CSDS*, 207.

¹⁰⁹ *CSDC*, 208; See also Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*.

Chapter 2: Principles of the Social Doctrine of the Church

Summary: Ten Major Themes from Catholic Social Teaching

Human Flourishing Principles and Major Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

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The following summary highlights ten major themes from Catholic Social Teaching (CST) of the last century or more. It's informed by various publications including documents by popes, bishops and synods. These principles are not exclusive to the Catholic Church of course but are common to many religious traditions and humanist approaches to full human development. They have come to be known as the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching because they are articulated and enshrined in many of the official documents of the Church.

Dignity of the Human Person

Belief in the intrinsic dignity of the human person is the basis of all Catholic social teaching. Human life is sacred and the dignity of the human person is the starting point for an ethical vision of society. This principle is grounded in the idea that the person is made in the image of God. The dignity of the human person is not diminished by age, ability, ethnicity, economic status or any other factor. Human dignity belongs to all people at all times simply by virtue of their being human.

Common Good and Community

The human person is both holy and social. Humans realise their dignity and human rights in relationship with others, in community. Human beings grow and achieve completion in community. Human dignity can only be realised and protected in the context of relationships with the wider society. How we arrange our society – in economics and politics, in law and policy – directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The obligation to 'love our neighbour' has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social obligation. Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society, to the common good.

Preferential Option for the Poor

The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor. The 'preferential option for the poor' is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. The option for the poor is an essential part of society's effort to achieve the common good. A healthy community can be achieved only if its members give special consideration to those with special needs, to those who are poor or on the margins of society.

Subsidiarity

The State has a positive moral function. It is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights and build the common good. All people have a right and a responsibility to participate in political institutions so that government can achieve its proper goals. The

principle of subsidiarity holds that the functions of government should be performed at the lowest level possible (that is, at the level closest to those people who are affected by decisions and policies) as long as they can be performed adequately. When the needs in question cannot be adequately met at the lower level, then it is not only necessary but crucial that higher levels of government intervene. In other words, the Principle of Subsidiarity holds that no responsibility should accrue to a higher body that can rightly and satisfactorily be undertaken by a lesser body.

The Universal Purpose of Goods

The goods of Earth are for all people to share. People have the right to own private property, however, this right comes with a caveat: we may not accumulate excess wealth for ourselves alone. Justice demands that all people should have access to the goods of society and that these must be equally shared in order to allow all to flourish.

Stewardship of Creation

The goods of Earth are gifts from God and they are intended for the benefit of everyone. There is a 'social mortgage' that guides our use of the world's goods, and we have a responsibility to care for those goods as stewards and trustees, not as mere consumers and users. How we treat the environment is a measure of our stewardship, not only for the present but for generations yet to come. Earth is home not only to the human family but to a wide diversity of plant and animal life as well. Stewardship means safeguarding the diversity of all life and recognising the interdependence of all life forms on the planet.

Promotion of Peace

Christian values promote peace as a positive, action-oriented concept. In the words of Pope John Paul II, 'peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements.' There is a close relationship between peace and justice. Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings. The common good is able to flourish more readily in a peaceful context.

Participation

All people have a right to participate in the economic, political and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured of a minimum level of participation in the community. It is wrong for a person to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society.

Global Solidarity

We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice. Authentic development must be fully human development. It must respect and promote personal, social, economic and political rights, including the rights of nations and of peoples. It must avoid extremes of underdevelopment on the one hand and 'super development' on the other. Accumulating material goods and technical resources will be unsatisfactory and debasing if there is no respect for the moral, cultural and spiritual dimensions of the human person.

Purpose and Unity of the Principles

The Church has enunciated some principles that, when practiced, promote human flourishing and allow us to reach our end, as individuals and together. The key principles of the Church's social teaching are Human Dignity, the Common Good, Subsidiarity and Solidarity.¹¹⁰ In this course we will also study the principles of Participation, the Universal Destination of Goods, the Preferential Option for the Poor, Promotion of Peace, Stewardship of Creation.

The principles form a whole: they are interrelated and complementary, and must be appreciated in their unity, not taken partially or in isolation.¹¹¹

Foundation

The principles are based on natural law and Divine Law. The dignity of the human person, discussed in Chapter 1, is the foundation of all the other principles. The other foundational principle, the common good, responds to our inherently social nature and call to communion. The true meaning and value of both these principles have been obscured in recent times in post-Enlightenment and post-Industrial Western societies, with negative consequences, and there is a great need for formation in these areas. Together with the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, they are at the heart of Catholic social teaching.¹¹²

Because they are based on human nature, the truth about the human person and divine law, the principles are permanent and apply to everyone (universal). They apply to all forms of society, from the family to larger communities, the State, and relations between nations.¹¹³

Purpose

The principles reflect the Church's message of the whole truth about man, known by faith and reason. Over time, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the Church's provides an 'ever more accurate foundation' to these principles, and a richer explanation, 'in the attempt to respond coherently to the demands of the times and to the continuous developments of social life.'¹¹⁴ 'They indicate the paths possible for building a good, authentic and renewed social life.'¹¹⁵ They relate to the foundation and ultimate purpose of society.¹¹⁶

The Church presents the principles as 'the primary and fundamental parameters of reference for interpreting and evaluating social phenomena, which is the necessary source for working out the criteria for the discernment and orientation of social interactions in every area.'¹¹⁷

The principles relate to the deepest questions regarding freedom and the meaning of life in society we all experience as social beings. They refer to the foundations of life in society and its ultimate purpose.

¹¹⁰ CSDC, 162.

¹¹¹ CSDC, 162.

¹¹² CSDC, 160.

¹¹³ CSDC, 161.

¹¹⁴ CSDC, 160.

¹¹⁵ CSDC, 162.

¹¹⁶ CSDC, 163.

¹¹⁷ CSDC, 161. For instance, politics, economics. law, social and community structures, international relations.

In their entirety, reflecting the whole truth about the human person, the principles of social doctrine present truth to society, and challenge every person to respond in conscience, and taking responsibility, as individuals and together. Institutions, because of their capacity to influence and condition the choices of many people over a long period of time, are also affected.¹¹⁸

The principles, then, are a call to freedom and responsibility. The origins of societies are found in the interconnectedness of the freedoms of all the persons who interact within it, contributing by means of their choices, either to build it up or to impoverish it.¹¹⁹

Principle 1: Dignity of the Human Person

'The root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God.'¹²⁰

The principle of dignity of the human person is about recognising the inherent worth and value of every human being. It is based what was covered in Chapter 1 about the origin and supernatural vocation of every human being, made in the image and likeness of God (*imago dei*).

The root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin man is already invited to converse with God. For man would not exist were he not created by God's love and constantly preserved by it; and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to His Creator.¹²¹

The dignity of every person before God is the basis of the dignity of each person in front of others¹²² It calls us to treat every human life as precious and to honour the truth of the human person as free, etc, allowing people what they need to flourish and fulfil their vocation. The principle enjoins us to defend human life from conception to natural death, to uphold human rights, and to ensure that all people have the opportunity to live in a way that reflects their intrinsic worth as persons.¹²³

Its chief characteristics are that it is *inherent* and *universal*. Moreover, it is the foundation of human equality and of human rights.

¹¹⁸ CSDC, 163.

¹¹⁹ See Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* on the vocation of the laity. The Church does not do the practical application, although it can point out when something is incompatible with the principles. It is up to the professional expertise of Catholics to put it into practice. The details of economics, civil engineering, technological development, etc are not the role or expertise of the Church.

¹²⁰ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 19.

¹²¹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 19.

¹²² CSDC, 144.

¹²³ This is paraphrased from somewhere.

1. Inherent Dignity¹²⁴

Dignity is inherent. Every human being has human nature and is a person, with the same supernatural origin and vocation. This is what gives a person dignity. No one needs to achieve, have or be anything else in order to 'qualify' for it, nor can it be acquired or lost (*inalienable*).¹²⁵ It comes with being human.

1.1 Inherent Dignity and Subjective Dignity

A true appreciation of one's inherent dignity helps us to appreciate our worth. In contemporary culture it is common to speak about dignity in other senses: as a person's perception of their own worth or value (dignity as a sense of self-worth), or as what others perceive and judge a person to be worth on the basis of their moral behaviour. Dignity, understood in either of these ways, is neither inherent nor inalienable, meaning that not everyone has the worth of a person, and that people can lose their worth.

This understanding of 'dignity' is what moves many supporters of euthanasia today: a person's value is the value he or she subjectively places on his or her own life. A sense of self-worth is certainly important and to be promoted, but without a foundation on the ultimate basis for our dignity, it is precarious. It also makes us highly vulnerable, because otherwise self-worth can be influenced by the perceptions of others as seen, for instance, in the results of discrimination, violence, constant criticism, bullying, neglect and abuse, especially of children, etc. Demeaning a person or violating their rights can lead a person to form a distorted view of their own dignity and worth. Losing sight of the inherent nature of dignity can mean that people become worth what other people make them believe they are worth, and that they deserve to be treated the way others make them think they deserve to be treated. Inherent dignity gives us an objective, permanent, and universal measure on which to base the way we see and treat ourselves, our interactions with others, and what we expect of society.

Conversely, when we treat people with love and respect, responding to their inherent dignity, it can help them learn to appreciate or rediscover their dignity and worth. Occasionally a person can lose their sense of self-worth as a result of their immoral actions or behaviour. In these cases, encountering others who value them and recognise their dignity can be critical in helping them to rediscover it for themselves, with a result that they find the hope and impetus to change their lives.

1.2 The Problem of 'Moral Status'

Some philosophers today, starting from an atheistic foundation, deny that dignity is inherent as they deny that human beings are created in the image of God or have any transcendent dimension. To claim that every human being has dignity simply because they are human is nothing more than 'speciesism', an unjustified privileging of the human species over other species. Beings must qualify for dignity: only persons have dignity, and not all human beings qualify as persons. In addition, some non-humans may qualify as person. It is persons, not human beings, who have rights. The criteria for determining 'personhood' and hence 'moral

¹²⁴ 'These rights are "universal, inviolable, inalienable". *Universal* because they are present in all human beings, without exception of time, place or subject. *Inviolable* insofar as "they are inherent in the human person and in human dignity", and because "it would be vain to proclaim rights, if at the same time everything were not done to ensure the duty of respecting them by all people, everywhere, and for all people". *Inalienable* insofar as "no one can legitimately deprive another person, whoever they may be, of these rights, since this would do violence to their nature". *CSDC*, 153.

¹²⁵ *CSDC*, 153.

statuses vary between thinkers, but generally they focus on elements like consciousness and the ability to form desires or preferences. Ultimately this lends an arbitrary, relative and potentially biased aspect to the question of who gets to be recognised as a person and who has rights. Certainly, human beings who are unborn or new-born, severely intellectually disabled, unconscious or suffering from dementia or Alzheimer, are excluded. The Church has spoken fearlessly about the right to life, defending the inherent, equal dignity of every human being.

1.3 Multidimensional

The principle of dignity calls for respect for the person in all his or her wholeness. If an aspect of a person's nature is denied or ignored, then they are not being afforded what is due to their dignity as a person. We see this occur, for instance, in societies where there is material prosperity, but religious freedom is denied, or where people live in material situations of dire poverty that prevent them from working or having or raising a family; etc. When human dignity is respected persons have an opportunity to flourish in all the dimensions of their humanity.

2. Universal

Because dignity is inherent, it is also *universal*. It is for this reason we can talk about human equality and human rights.

2.1 Equality

The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it: Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design.¹²⁶

Human beings have a radical equality based on their inherent dignity. Once inherent dignity is denied, the claim for human equality loses its foundation, as seen above.

Equality is not uniformity. The *Catechism* notes a natural diversity and inequality among human beings in terms of the gifts and talents they receive. This is an aspect of our social nature and interdependence and moves us to solidarity and cooperation.

"On coming into the world, man is not equipped with everything he needs for developing his bodily and spiritual life. He needs others. Differences appear tied to age, physical abilities, intellectual or moral aptitudes, the benefits derived from social commerce, and the distribution of wealth. The "talents" are not distributed equally."¹²⁷

"These differences belong to God's plan, who wills that each receive what he needs from others, and that those endowed with particular "talents" share the benefits with those who need them. These differences encourage and often oblige persons to practice generosity, kindness, and sharing of goods; they foster the mutual enrichment of cultures"¹²⁸

¹²⁶ CCC, 1935; CSDC, 144-8.

¹²⁷ CCC, 1936.

¹²⁸ CCC, 1937.

We also perceive inequality in the world that is the result of sin and effects millions of people.

These are in open contradiction of the Gospel: Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. 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, as well as social and international peace.¹²⁹

Recognition of our radical equality should move us to work to ensure that all people are able to live in conditions that accord with their dignity as persons.

2.1.1 Equal Dignity of Men and Women

The Church teaches that men and women have equal dignity as persons before God, sharing the same origin and supernatural vocation.¹³⁰ Once again, equality does not mean uniformity. Men and women are different, and in their differences they mutually complement and complete one another, and enrich society. The Church offers us

a more penetrating and accurate consideration of the anthropological foundation for masculinity and femininity with the intent of clarifying woman's personal identity in relation to man, that is, a diversity yet mutual complementarity, not only as it concerns roles to be held and functions to be performed, but also, and more deeply, as it concerns her make-up and meaning as a person".¹³¹

3. Human Rights and Duties

Inherent dignity is also the basis for human rights.¹³² As seen above, if the principle of the inherent dignity of human beings is lost, then the reasons for defending the universality of rights is also lost.

Dignity brings with it *natural* rights and duties. Human rights are based on the natural law and are necessary for upholding dignity and the truth about the human person.¹³³ Human rights are about much more than the basics required for survival. They encompass those things we need in order to live in accord with our dignity and vocation.¹³⁴

Human rights are not granted by a society or the State; rather society discerns and protects them.¹³⁵ The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) recognised this. It did not purport to grant rights to anyone; rather it recognised a number of rights as rooted in human nature,

¹²⁹ CCC, 1938.

¹³⁰ CCC, 2334.

¹³¹ CSDC, 146.

¹³² CSDC, 152-4; CCC, 1929-33.

¹³³ CSDC, 153.

¹³⁴ CCC, 1930. Not every right is a fundamental human right. There are other sorts of rights like civil and political rights that are not universal, flowing, for instance, from membership of a particular community or being a citizen of a State.

¹³⁵ Concept of positivism is the idea that a law gives you a right.

and therefore universal and inviolable, following the atrocities of the Second World War.¹³⁶ Similarly, legislation does not confer or create human rights, but recognizes and upholds them.

Human rights are the basis of the moral legitimacy of every authority: by flouting them, or refusing to recognize them in its legislation, a society undermines its own moral legitimacy.¹³⁷

Human rights are to be defended not only individually but also as a whole:

protecting them only partially would imply a kind of failure to recognize them. They correspond to the demands of human dignity and entail, in the first place, the fulfilment of the essential needs of the person in the material and spiritual spheres. "These rights apply to every stage of life and to every political, social, economic and cultural situation. Together they form a single whole, directed unambiguously towards the promotion of every aspect of the good of both the person and society ... The integral promotion of every category of human rights is the true guarantee of full respect for each individual right.

The universality and indivisibility of human rights are 'two guiding principles which at the same time demand that human rights be rooted in each culture and that their juridical profile be strengthened so as to ensure that they are fully observed'.¹³⁸

It is the Church's role to remind humankind of these rights and to distinguish them from unwarranted or false claims.¹³⁹

3.1 The Specification of Rights

Pope John Paul II drew up a list of fundamental human rights in the Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*:

- the right to life, an integral part of which is the right of the child to develop in the mother's womb from the moment of conception;
- the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality;
- the right to develop one's intelligence and freedom in seeking and knowing the truth;
- the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth's material resources, and to derive from that work the means to support oneself and one's dependents; and
- the right freely to establish a family, to have and to rear children through the responsible exercise of one's sexuality.
- In a certain sense, the source and synthesis of these rights is religious freedom, understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person".¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Pope John Paul II called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 'a true milestone on the path of humanity's moral progress'. *CSDC*, 152; Pope John Paul II, *Address to the 34th General Assembly of the United Nations*, 2.10.1979, 7. For Pope John Paul II, this *Declaration* "remains one of the highest expressions of the human conscience of our time". Pope John Paul II, *Address to the 50th General Assembly of the United Nations*, 5.10.1995, 2.

¹³⁷ *CCC*, 1930.

¹³⁸ *CSDC*, 154.

¹³⁹ *CCC*, 1930.

¹⁴⁰ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Centesimus Annus*, 47.

The right to life, from conception to its natural end, is the condition for the exercise of all other rights. It implies the illicitness of abortion and of euthanasia.¹⁴¹

Especially important is the right to religious freedom. Everyone should be immune from coercion by

individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits. The respect of this right is an indicative sign of "man's authentic progress in any regime, in any society, system or milieu."¹⁴²

3.2 *Rights and duties*

Inextricably connected to the topic of rights is the issue of the duties. Rights and duties are complementary; indissolubly linked in the human person who possesses them.¹⁴³ This connection has a social dimension: we are called to recognise in others 'another self'. "In human society to one man's right there corresponds a duty in all other persons: the duty, namely, of acknowledging and respecting the right in question".¹⁴⁴

The Magisterium observes the contradiction in affirming rights without acknowledging corresponding responsibilities. "Those, therefore, who claim their own rights, yet altogether forget or neglect to carry out their respective duties, are people who build with one hand and destroy with the other".¹⁴⁵

Treating others with the justice and respect due to their humanity is not only the responsibility of the State, but a *duty* of each member of society.

Respect for the human person proceeds by way of respect for the principle that "everyone should look upon his neighbour (without any exception) as 'another self,' above all bearing in mind his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity." No legislation could by itself do away with the fears, prejudices, and attitudes of pride and selfishness which obstruct the establishment of truly fraternal societies. Such behaviour will cease only through the charity that finds in every man a "neighbour," a brother.¹⁴⁶

The *Catechism* speaks of the duty of being a neighbour to others.¹⁴⁷ This extends to those who think or act differently from us.¹⁴⁸

The teaching of Christ goes so far as to require the forgiveness of offenses. He extends the commandment of love, which is that of the New Law, to all enemies. Liberation in

¹⁴¹ CSDC, 155.

¹⁴² CSDC, 155.

¹⁴³ CSDC, 156. See also Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*; Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

¹⁴⁴ CSDC, 156.

¹⁴⁵ CSDC, 156.

¹⁴⁶ CCC, 1931.

¹⁴⁷ CCC, 1932.

¹⁴⁸ CCC, 1933.

the spirit of the Gospel is incompatible with hatred of one's enemy as a person, but not with hatred of the evil that he does as an enemy.¹⁴⁹

3.3 Implications

A just society can become a reality only when it is based on the respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person.

This transcendent dignity means that people are more important than things, and that they are never to be reduced to or used as, an object or means.¹⁵⁰ 'In no case ... is the human person to be manipulated for ends that are foreign to his own development, which can find complete fulfilment only in God and his plan of salvation'.¹⁵¹

The person represents the ultimate end of society, "Hence, the social order and its development must work to the benefit of the human person. Every political, economic, social, scientific and cultural programme must be inspired by the awareness of the primacy of each human being over society."¹⁵²

Authentic social changes, however, are effective and lasting

only to the extent that they are based on resolute changes in personal conduct. An authentic moralization of social life will never be possible unless it starts with people and has people as its point of reference: indeed, living a moral life bears witness to the dignity of the person. It is obviously the task of people to develop those moral attitudes that are fundamental for any society that truly wishes to be human (justice, honesty, truthfulness, etc.), and which in no way can simply be expected of others or delegated to institutions. It is the task of everyone.¹⁵³

Principle 2: The Common Good

The Common Good is defined as "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily."¹⁵⁴

The principle of the common good stems from the dignity, equality and unity of all people, and a recognition of our social nature and interrelatedness.¹⁵⁵ It is called the common good because it belongs to everyone and concerns the life of all, and because we can only attain and improve it together.¹⁵⁶ The common good is the social

¹⁴⁹ CCC, 1933.

¹⁵⁰ CSDC, 132.

¹⁵¹ CSDC, 133.

¹⁵² CSDC, 132.

¹⁵³ CSDC, 134.

¹⁵⁴ CCC 1906; Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 26; CSDC, 164.

¹⁵⁵ CSDC, 164.

¹⁵⁶ CSDC, 164.

and community dimension of the moral good.¹⁵⁷ It is the special responsibility of those in authority to serve and promote it.¹⁵⁸

The common good has a number of elements:

Respect for the person

The common good takes into account all people and the whole person.¹⁵⁹

- It is essential for the common good that each person be respected in *all the dimensions* of their humanity. The common good is not occurring if human flourishing is being inhibited in some way, or if people are unable to fulfil their vocation, even if a society is economically successful and its people affluent.¹⁶⁰
- The common good includes *every* person. The common good is not the same thing as the 'greatest good for the greatest number'.¹⁶¹ If people are sacrificed, marginalized or excluded in a way that contravenes their dignity, then the common good is not occurring. This applies to all types of society, from the family to the global community.

Flourishing as a Community

Every society has a common good. In keeping with the social nature of man and our interrelatedness, the good of each individual is necessarily related to the common good, which in turn can be defined only in reference to the human person.¹⁶² Pope Benedict XVI explained it as follows:

Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of "all of us", made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. It is a good that is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it.¹⁶³

The common good requires the social well-being and development of the group itself. The role of authorities is to find ways to make accessible to each what is needed: food,

¹⁵⁷ *CSDC*, 164.

¹⁵⁸ *CCC*, 1906.

¹⁵⁹ *CSDC*, 165.

¹⁶⁰ *CCC*, 1907. 'God is the ultimate end of his creatures and for no reason may the common good be deprived of its transcendent dimension ... A purely historical and materialistic vision would end up transforming the common good into a simple socio-economic well-being, without any transcendental goal, that is, without its most intimate reason for existing.' *CSDC*, 170.

¹⁶¹ Neither is the 'greater good' the same thing as the common good, as it focuses on achieving the greatest quantity of happiness, or greatest amount of 'good', losing sight of the essential elements of the 'common' good which is shared, is the work of all, and which takes everyone into account. Utilitarianism is an ethical theory with several varieties, according to which the moral test for deciding how to act is generally to determine what will produce the best overall outcome, usually in a quantitative way. The morality of an action is determined by the outcome. This means that no action is ever necessarily wrong (eg abortion, torture, infidelity, etc). Similarly, it may be permissible to sacrifice some people if (and because) doing so maximizes benefits for the rest.

¹⁶² *CCC*, 1905.

¹⁶³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 7.

clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, etc.¹⁶⁴

The common good is very different to collectivism or communism and has different anthropological foundations. Collectivism and communism reduce individual people to mere cogs or molecules, whose value lies only in their contribution to the collective or State.¹⁶⁵ The common good, however, is person-centred, acknowledging the dignity and social nature of human beings and our vocation. The common good is not for the sake of the authority or the State; rather, the State, laws and institutions exist for the sake of the common good of persons.¹⁶⁶

Authorities also have a responsibility to 'arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but ... should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life.'¹⁶⁷

Peace and Stability

The common good requires peace, stability and the security of a just order. It presupposes that authorities should ensure by morally acceptable means the security of society and its members. It is the basis of the right to legitimate personal and collective defence.¹⁶⁸

1. Everyone is Responsible for the Common Good

As we are interrelated, the things we do as individuals affect the common good. We all have a right to share in its benefits, and a corresponding duty to contribute according to our possibilities. We have a responsibility to contribute to the common good of the societies of which we are part, beginning with the family. Individualism has taught us to think of ourselves as self-made and self-sufficient, however our communities have played a large part in giving us opportunities and values, and forming our identities. We can think about how activities that we may perceive as 'private' contribute to the common good, and, with this awareness, orient them to the service of society and others. Study, for instance, is not just something private, about following one's interests and preparing to make money or pursue a career. Studying is also a contribution to the common good, as one prepares to become a competent professional who can serve society and others. The government, taxpayers and families contribute to students having the opportunity to study, and they, along with the rest of society, have an interest in students who will help to improve the life of all. A good nursing graduate, for instance, will have acquired the technical knowledge and skills to look after patients, can promote the dignity of each patient, provide access to quality healthcare, advocate for patients, administer resources responsibly, etc. Work

¹⁶⁴ CCC, 1908. Also, 'a sound juridical system, the protection of the environment, and the provision of essential services to all ... transportation, basic health care, the freedom of communication and expression, and the protection of religious freedom'. *CSDC*, 166.

¹⁶⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 13.

¹⁶⁶ CCC, 1912.

¹⁶⁷ CCC, 1908. The Second Vatican Council stated that 'every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family'. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

¹⁶⁸ CCC, 1909.

is never purely private: it has a family and social dimension.¹⁶⁹ Educating children about the common good can open up horizons of service and of improving society through their professional work.

As the Second Vatican Council taught,

It is imperative that no one...indulge in a merely individualistic morality. The best way to fulfill one's obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one's means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life.¹⁷⁰

We can also think about ways we contribute to the common good in our ordinary activities, rather than seeing it as the sole responsibility of the government. Water, for instance, is a precious resource, and responsibility for its management falls at many levels. Governments must make laws and policies for its conservation, use and equitable distribution, as well as oversee large projects like dams, etc. Companies may be responsible for purifying water, repairing pipes, monitoring consumption, etc. Individuals are responsible for using water wisely, avoiding waste etc. and can come up with their own initiatives for improving water conservation and use. Awareness of the common good leads us to make common concerns our own and act accordingly, like picking up rubbish at the beach even if it doesn't belong to us, looking after library books and public resources, leaving a public restroom or barbecue clean, because public resources belong to us and to everyone; or hanging up fallen clothes in a department store even if we didn't drop them, etc. because waste and ruin matters to us all.

On a broader level,

Individual citizens and intermediate groups are obliged to make their specific contributions to the common welfare. One of the chief consequences of this is that they must bring their own interests into harmony with the needs of the community, and must contribute their goods and their services as civil authorities have prescribed, in accord with the norms of justice and within the limits of their competence.¹⁷¹

Our rights and freedoms always exist within the context of the common good.

This also means we should be ready to sacrifice some of our *interests* for the sake of others' *needs*. Pope Paul VI taught that 'the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others'.¹⁷² Sacrificing our own needs does not attain the common good, as someone's needs (ours) are still not met, although Christian charity inspires many people to do so. Sacrificing some of our interests, however, for the sake of those in need, is, as we shall see, a duty of justice.

¹⁶⁹ Pope Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 6.

¹⁷⁰ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 30.

¹⁷¹ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 53.

¹⁷² Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Letter, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 14.5.1971, 23.

The common good is challenging 'because it requires the constant ability and effort to seek the good of others as though it were one's own good.'¹⁷³ Christians have the help of grace and the example and teachings of Jesus Christ to help us.

Only if we are aware of our calling, as individuals and as a community, to be part of God's family as his sons and daughters, will we be able to generate a new vision and muster new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism... Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity. Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life — structures, institutions, culture and *ethos* — without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment. Awareness of God's undying love sustains us in our laborious and stimulating work for justice and the development of peoples, amid successes and failures, in the ceaseless pursuit of a just ordering of human affairs. *God's love calls us to move beyond the limited and the ephemeral, it gives us the courage to continue seeking and working for the benefit of all*, even if this cannot be achieved immediately and if what we are able to achieve, alongside political authorities and those working in the field of economics, is always less than we might wish. God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for love of the common good, because he is our All, our greatest hope.¹⁷⁴

2. The Global Common Good

The principle of the common good also applies at the global level. The huge disparity between the 'few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered propertyless, must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good.'¹⁷⁵ This teaching of Pope Pius XI is still relevant today, and recent Popes have continued proclaiming 'the contribution that every nation is required in duty to make towards a true worldwide cooperation for the common good of the whole of humanity and for future generations'.¹⁷⁶

The *Catechism* teaches,

The unity of the human family, embracing people who enjoy equal natural dignity, implies a universal common good. This good calls for an organization of the community of nations able to "provide for the different needs of men; this will involve the sphere of social life to which belong questions of food, hygiene, education, . . . and certain situations arising here and there, as for example . . . alleviating the miseries of refugees dispersed throughout the world, and assisting migrants and their families."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ CSDC, 167.

¹⁷⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 78.

¹⁷⁵ Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 15.5.1931, 58.

¹⁷⁶ CSDC, 166.

¹⁷⁷ CCC, 1911.

This Church teaching has been restated most recently in relation to the contemporary global situation, in the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

3. Civil Authority and the Common Good

'The whole reason for the existence of civil authorities is the realization of the common good.'¹⁷⁸ The Compendium summarises the tasks of civil authorities, or the political community:

The responsibility for attaining the common good, besides falling to individual persons, belongs also to the State, since the common good is the reason that the political authority exists. The State, in fact, must guarantee the coherency, unity and organization of the civil society of which it is an expression, in order that the common good may be attained with the contribution of every citizen. The individual person, the family or intermediate groups are not able to achieve their full development by themselves for living a truly human life. Hence the necessity of political institutions, the purpose of which is to make available to persons the necessary material, cultural, moral and spiritual goods. The goal of life in society is in fact the historically attainable common good.¹⁷⁹

To ensure the common good, the government of each country has the specific duty to harmonize the different sectoral interests with the requirements of justice. The proper reconciling of the particular goods of groups and those of individuals is, in fact, one of the most delicate tasks of public authority. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that in the democratic State, where decisions are usually made by the majority of representatives elected by the people, those responsible for government are required to interpret the common good of their country not only according to the guidelines of the majority but also according to the effective good of all the members of the community, including the minority.¹⁸⁰

Principle 3: Solidarity

A firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.¹⁸¹

Solidarity is a response to our common humanity and interdependence. It is, first and foremost, a sense of responsibility on the part of everyone with regard to everyone.¹⁸² 'The

¹⁷⁸ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 54.

¹⁷⁹ *CSDC*, 168.

¹⁸⁰ *CSDC*, 169.

¹⁸¹ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38.

¹⁸² Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 38. See also John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38.

principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of "friendship" or "social charity," is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood'.¹⁸³

Rooted in humanity and the gospel, the practice of solidarity is a necessary component of our faith. As Popes Benedict and Francis write,

Love of neighbour...consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, even affecting my feelings" and "that closing our eyes to our neighbour also blinds us to God."¹⁸⁴

"We cannot believe in God the Father without seeing a brother or sister in every person, and we cannot follow Jesus without giving our lives for those for whom he died on the cross".¹⁸⁵

Everybody is our brother and sister. Everybody matters. Solidarity is about seeing others as our brothers and sisters and being truly concerned for them. based on our interconnectedness, but ultimately also on our vocation to love, and as a response to seeing the dignity of others as children of God with intrinsic worth and a supernatural end.¹⁸⁶ We benefit from solidarity and it is also a duty. It applies to the sharing of material and, even more importantly, spiritual goods.

In the light of faith, solidarity seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimensions of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. One's neighbour is then not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit. One's neighbour must therefore be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her; and for that person's sake one must be ready for sacrifice, even the ultimate one: to lay down one's life for the brethren (cf. 1 Jn 3:16).¹⁸⁷

On this basis, the principle of solidarity applies between individuals, between social groups, and in the international sphere.

1. The Virtue of Solidarity

Solidarity is also a virtue, part of the virtue of justice.¹⁸⁸ Solidarity

is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination

¹⁸³ CCC, 1939. Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* is dedicated to this topic. Pope Benedict XVI also addresses it in *Caritas in Veritate*.

¹⁸⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 16-18.

¹⁸⁵ CSDC, 196; 'Our model is Jesus who became one with humankind even to death on the Cross (*Phil 2:8*). He takes on our weaknesses, accompanies us and saves us.'

¹⁸⁶ On the eve of World War II, Pope Pius XII founded solidarity on 'our common origin and ... the equality in rational nature of all men, whatever nation they belong to. This law is sealed by the sacrifice of redemption offered by Jesus Christ on the altar of the Cross to his heavenly Father, on behalf of sinful humanity.'" Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Summi Pontificatus*, 20.10.1939, 35.

¹⁸⁷ CSDC, 196.

¹⁸⁸ CSDC, 193.

to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.¹⁸⁹

In societies that foster self-centredness and individualism, solidarity is forgotten. It

runs the risk of being deleted from the dictionary because it is a word that bothers us. It bothers us, why? Because it requires you to look at another and give yourself to another with love.¹⁹⁰

They also affect the way we organize and structure our society and institutions.

On the basis of this principle the “*structures of sin*” that dominate relationships between individuals and peoples must be overcome. They must be purified and transformed into *structures of solidarity* through the creation or appropriate modification of laws, market regulations, and juridical systems.¹⁹¹

2. Global Solidarity

Solidarity has global dimensions. World peace itself, depends in part on international solidarity.¹⁹²

the common good ... today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family.¹⁹³

It is a very important duty of the advanced nations to help the developing nations... While it is proper that a nation be the first to enjoy the God-given fruits of its own labour, no nation may dare to hoard its riches for its own use alone. Each and every nation must produce more and better goods and products, so that all its citizens may live truly human lives and so that it may contribute to the common development of the human race. Considering the mounting indigence of less developed countries, it is only fitting that a prosperous nation set aside some of the goods it has produced in order to alleviate their needs; and that it trains educators, engineers, technicians and scholars who will contribute their knowledge and their skill to these less fortunate countries.¹⁹⁴

Paul VI told world leaders,

your task is to draw your communities into closer ties of solidarity with all men, and to convince them that they must accept the necessary taxes on their luxuries and their wasteful expenditures in order to promote the development of nations and the preservation of peace.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38. Pope Francis also emphasises that genuine solidarity is expressed in deeds: “I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt” Francis, *Lenten Message 2014*, 26.12.2013.

¹⁹⁰ Pope Francis, *Address on the pastoral visit to Cagliari, meeting with the poor and prison inmates*, 22.9.2013.

¹⁹¹ *CSDC*, 193.

¹⁹² *CCC*, 1941.

¹⁹³ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 26.

¹⁹⁴ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 48.

¹⁹⁵ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 62.

He identified racism and nationalism as two obstacles to solidarity and the development of a more just social order, and spoke of the duty of welcoming strangers as a requirement of solidarity.

Today, new technology and means of communication offer exciting opportunities for fostering global solidarity.

The very rapid expansion in ways and means of communication “in real time”, such as those offered by information technology, the extraordinary advances in computer technology, the increased volume of commerce and information exchange all bear witness to the fact that, for the first time since the beginning of human history, it is now possible — at least technically — to establish relationships between people who are separated by great distances and are unknown to each other. ...The acceleration of interdependence between persons and peoples needs to be accompanied by equally intense efforts on the ethical-social plane, in order to avoid the dangerous consequences of perpetrating injustice on a global scale. This would have very negative repercussions even in the very countries that are presently more advantaged.¹⁹⁶

Global solidarity is not just for governments and world leaders. Our interconnectedness can work for good or evil depending upon what we choose to make of it. Decisions, for instance, about our purchases, affect others. With our greater access to information comes a corresponding responsibility to ensure that we are not participating in perpetrating injustice through ignorance or indifference. It also means that it is easier to know what is happening in distant places and contribute in our own way to making a difference to the lives of our brothers and sisters.¹⁹⁷

3. Intergenerational Solidarity

Solidarity involves recognising the fact that we have all received and that we are all debtors in some way. As we have received great gifts, we should be open to sharing them with others, with an interest in the common growth of humankind.¹⁹⁸

We can't only think about ourselves and the people around today. Pope John XXIII, writing about peace and the arms race in the context of the Cold War, emphasised responsibility for future generations. Paul VI wrote

¹⁹⁶ *CSDC*, 192.

¹⁹⁷ Pope Pius XII, *Discourse*, 1.6.1941, quoted in *CCC*, 1942.

¹⁹⁸ ‘The principle of solidarity requires that men and women of our day cultivate a greater awareness that they are debtors of the society of which they have become part. They are debtors because of those conditions that make human existence liveable, and because of the indivisible and indispensable legacy constituted by culture, scientific and technical knowledge, material and immaterial goods and by all that the human condition has produced. A similar debt must be recognized in the various forms of social interaction, so that humanity's journey will not be interrupted but remain open to present and future generations, all of them called together to share the same gift in solidarity.’ *CSDC*, 195.

We have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries: for this reason we have obligations towards all, and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us to enlarge the human family.¹⁹⁹

Pope Francis drew on this in reference to solidarity with future generations in our care for our common home.²⁰⁰

4. Manifestations of solidarity

We solve things by working together, with a firm commitment to the good of all and of each individual. This work involves individuals, institutions, associations and political bodies in fostering justice and care for the poor, and initiatives to make social, political, and economic structures more just and fraternal.

Some political movements and ideologies promote and opposition, conflict and suspicion in their approach to resolving social problems. The Church, on the other hand, promotes cooperation, solidarity and charity as the means to a genuine and lasting solution.

Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all the forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, of workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business, solidarity among nations and peoples.

The commitment to this goal is translated into the positive contribution of seeing that nothing is lacking in the common cause and also of seeking points of possible agreement where attitudes of separation and fragmentation prevail.²⁰¹

Principle 4: Subsidiarity

A community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.²⁰²

'*Subsidium*' means help, aid or assistance.

Subsidiarity is first and foremost a form of assistance to the human person via the autonomy of intermediate bodies. Such assistance is offered when individuals or groups are unable to accomplish something on their own, and it is always designed to achieve their emancipation, because it fosters freedom and participation through assumption of responsibility. Subsidiarity

¹⁹⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 17. We are the heirs of earlier generations, and we reap benefits from the efforts of our contemporaries; we are under obligation to all men. Therefore we cannot disregard the welfare of those who will come after us to increase the human family. The reality of human solidarity brings us not only benefits but also obligations.

²⁰⁰ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 159.

²⁰¹ *CSDC*, 194.

²⁰² Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 48; *CCC*, 1883 The term first appeared in Catholic social teaching and was soon adopted by sociology, political science, and economics. It now appears in many national and federal constitutions around the world.

respects personal dignity by recognizing in the person a subject who is always capable of giving something to others.²⁰³

The principle recognises that our interrelationships occur at different levels, that we belong to different types of societies, and that the relationships between these social bodies need to be ordered for the sake of the common good. It means that the help and support persons need in accord with their human dignity should be provided by societies at the lowest possible level (e.g.: the family, local community, associations), and that a higher body should not do for a lesser one things the lesser one can do for itself.²⁰⁴ When activities for the sake of the common good cannot realistically be undertaken by a lesser society, then the higher society has the responsibility of assisting the lower body, or if this is not sufficient, of bringing it about itself. We will break the principle down and examine its parts.

1. *The help and support persons need in accord with their human dignity should be provided by societies at the lowest possible level.*

Pope Francis observed that subsidiarity 'grants freedom to develop the capabilities present at every level of society, while also demanding a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power'.²⁰⁵ The principle is about helping people flourish through intermediate bodies acting on their own initiative and responsibility. The principle also protects and promotes dignity by fostering participation, creativity and responsibility, recognizing that everyone is entitled not just to receive help, but that every person, family and intermediate group has something to contribute to the community.²⁰⁶

Certain societies, such as the family and the state, correspond more directly to the nature of man; they are necessary to him. To promote the participation of the greatest number in the life of a society, the creation of voluntary associations and institutions must be encouraged "on both national and international levels, which relate to economic and social goals, to cultural and recreational activities, to sport, to various professions, and to political affairs." This "*socialization*" also expresses the natural tendency for human beings to associate with one another for the sake of attaining objectives that exceed individual capacities. It develops the qualities of the person, especially the sense of initiative and responsibility, and helps guarantee his rights.²⁰⁷

The presence of these sorts of intermediate bodies in civil society can contribute much to human flourishing and the common good. Networks of individuals and social groups strengthen the social fabric and 'constitute the basis of a true community of persons, making possible the recognition of higher forms of social activity'.²⁰⁸ In fact,

²⁰³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 57.

²⁰⁴ CCC, 1884. God ... entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its own nature. This mode of governance ought to be followed in social life. The way God acts in governing the world, which bears witness to such great regard for human freedom, should inspire the wisdom of those who govern human communities. They should behave as ministers of divine providence.

²⁰⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 196.

²⁰⁶ CSDC, 187.

²⁰⁷ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 25. The right to form associations and for people to associate for activities in favour of human flourishing that contribute to the common good, or freedom of association is a right recognized in the Church's social doctrine.

²⁰⁸ CSDC, 185.

It is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities; in short, for that aggregate of economic, social, cultural, sports-oriented, recreational, professional and political expressions to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth.²⁰⁹

Societies like families, do many things themselves or together with others. A family cannot, however, meet all its own needs, and requires help (*subsidium*) to achieve them. Parents, for instance, can care for their children, but they cannot provide hospital services, maintain local sporting facilities or determine speed limits on their local streets: all things that are important for a child's safety and development

The principle, then, indicates when and how higher bodies should get involved.

2. The Role of Higher Bodies

1. What a higher body should do is help

On the basis of this principle, all societies of a superior order must adopt attitudes of *subsidium* (help, support, promotion, development) with respect to lower-order societies to help them fulfil their duties. In this way lower societies can perform the functions that fall to them without being required to hand them over unjustly to other social entities of a higher level, by which they would end up being absorbed and substituted, denied their dignity and essential place. This can be economic, institutional or juridical assistance.²¹⁰

2. What a higher body should not do

No higher body should substitute itself for the initiative and responsibility of individuals and intermediary bodies.²¹¹ Initiative, freedom and responsibility must not be supplanted.²¹²

The principle is about helping, not absorbing or destroying. The principle is not respected where there is excessive intervention or control by a State, which threatens personal freedom

²⁰⁹ CSDC 185.

²¹⁰ 'Every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them'. On the basis of this principle, all societies of a superior order must adopt attitudes of help ("*subsidium*") — therefore of support, promotion, development — with respect to lower-order societies. In this way, intermediate social entities can properly perform the functions that fall to them without being required to hand them over unjustly to other social entities of a higher level, by which they would end up being absorbed and substituted, in the end seeing themselves denied their dignity and essential place. Subsidiarity, understood in the positive sense [is] economic, institutional or juridical assistance offered to lesser social entities'. CSDC, 186.

²¹¹ 'In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, neither the state nor any larger society should substitute itself for the initiative and responsibility of individuals and intermediary bodies'. CCC, 1894.

²¹² 'Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. ... Subsidiarity 'entails a corresponding series of *negative* implications that require the State to refrain from anything that would de facto restrict the existential space of the smaller essential cells of society. Their initiative, freedom and responsibility must not be supplanted'. CSDC, 186.

and initiative and leads to a loss of responsibility.²¹³ For this reason, the principle is also opposed to collectivism.²¹⁴

3. When a higher body should intervene

Subsidiarity does not mean that higher authorities should never intervene. It is essential to the existence and stability of a society that there be an authority whose role it is to serve the common good. There are tasks that naturally fall to this authority, and, in civil society, to the state or national bodies, that cannot realistically be undertaken by a lesser body. A family may decide who may use their driveway; a local council might be best placed to make decisions about the placement and funding of speedbumps, for the local area, with input from local residents. A public transport system, however, affects a whole city and needs to be coordinated by a higher authority, albeit with the participation and representation of lesser communities in the decision-making process. The same would apply to massive infrastructure projects that serve the whole community, to a fair tax system, and to policies regarding matters like crime or immigration, where it serves the common good to have consistent laws rather than each local government making and enforcing its own laws on matters that really transcend the interests of that particular community to affect a larger one.

Sometimes the state can intervene to supply some functions for the sake of the common good, but only when necessary, and for as long as necessary.

Various circumstances may make it advisable that the State step in to supply certain functions. One may think, for example, of situations in which it is necessary for the State itself to stimulate the economy because it is impossible for civil society to support initiatives on its own. One may also envision the reality of serious social imbalance or injustice where only the intervention of the public authority can create conditions of greater equality, justice and peace. In light of the principle of subsidiarity, however, this institutional substitution must not continue any longer than is absolutely necessary, since justification for such intervention is found only in the *exceptional nature* of the situation. In any case, the common good correctly understood, the demands of which will never in any way be contrary to the defence and promotion of the primacy of the person and the way this is expressed in society, must remain the criteria for making decisions concerning the application of the principle of subsidiarity.²¹⁵

Subsidiarity is an important consideration in economic life and in education, as both are important areas for the exercise of freedom, but the conduct of which is important for justice and the stability and prosperity of the country, and hence also of interest to the state. There are covered in Chapters 3 and 4.

4. What the principle is not about:

The principle of subsidiarity is not about setting smaller communities and the State in conflict or seeing their interests as opposed, nor about abolishing the State, but 'aims at harmonizing the relationships between individuals and societies'²¹⁶ for the sake of the common good, at the heart of which is always the dignity of each person.

²¹³ CCC, 1883.

²¹⁴ CCC, 1885.

²¹⁵ CSDC, 188.

²¹⁶ CCC, 1885.

Subsidiarity is not just the wanton abolishment of the State, nor a rigid political ideology of small government for its own sake, but rather a constant discernment of the right and proper place of all decision-making bodies and organisations. It's about tempering them by making sure there is no way we could meet the needs they address in more locally specific, connected and more responsive ways that allow people to make more decisions for themselves. This process, however complex or simple, is to be guided by our belief in a commitment to the common good.²¹⁷

3. Subsidiarity and Solidarity

The social doctrine of the church forms a unity, and the principle of subsidiarity cannot genuinely promote the common good if it is invoked in isolation from the other principles. Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI and Francis have pointed out that the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, in particular, need to work together to attain the common good.

In relation to economic life, for instance, Pope John Paul II said, the solution was not for the State to control the means of production, nor to exclude itself from economic affairs. Rather,

the State must contribute to the achievement of these goals both directly and indirectly. Indirectly and according to the *principle of subsidiarity*, by creating favourable conditions for the free exercise of economic activity, which will lead to abundant opportunities for employment and sources of wealth. Directly and according to the *principle of solidarity*, by defending the weakest, by placing certain limits on the autonomy of the parties who determine working conditions, and by ensuring in every case the necessary minimum support for the unemployed worker.²¹⁸

Pope Benedict warned of the consequences of separating them:

The principle of subsidiarity must remain closely linked to the principle of solidarity and vice versa, since the former without the latter gives way to social privatism, while the latter without the former gives way to paternalist social assistance that is demeaning to those in need.²¹⁹

In practice.²²⁰

Exercising our personal freedom and responsibility in the family and other associations enriches society, promoting human flourishing for ourselves and those around us, in harmony with the wider society and the common good of all. Freedom is association, by which people come together to pursue common ends, is a right defended by the Church.

The state should offer assistance to lesser societies, especially the family, when they need it to attain ends that they cannot obtain for themselves. There are various ways of providing

²¹⁷ *Catholic Social Teaching in a Nutshell*, Archdiocese of Sydney, Office for Justice and Peace, 2010.

²¹⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 15.

²¹⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 58.

²²⁰ Subsidiarity requires that we not only hold governments at all levels accountable for their decisions. But more importantly, that we take up civic roles and getting involved in our communities in ways that set clear and healthy boundaries for governments and other authorities about what decisions they get to make on our behalf. Passivity gives states a worryingly large portion of power, but it also decimates our sense of belonging to, and being beholden to the human family.

this help. Subsidies for education, for instance, can assist families to educate their children while allowing them to choose a school, rather than mandating State-run schools for all. The assistance should not be tied to control in a way that takes away legitimate freedom.²²¹

Our involvement in civil society does not end at the ballot-box. Active participation, representation, responsibility and personal initiative help to keep lesser societies vibrant and able to fulfil their role, and also position us to keep governments accountable and prevent them from taking on more than is their due. If we want subsidiarity we also need to step up and fulfil the responsibilities, and be active with freedom and initiative.

When we are part of a higher body we should be careful not to unjustly infringe on the freedom and initiative of lesser bodies, even if we think our way is the best way. Pluralism is a value.²²²

The principle of subsidiarity requires:

- respect and effective promotion of the human person and the family
- appreciation of associations and intermediate organizations
- the encouragement of private initiative so that every social entity remains at the service of the common good, each with its own distinctive characteristics
- the presence of pluralism in society and due representation of its vital components
- safeguards for human rights and the rights of minorities
- decentralized bureaucracy and administration
- balance between the public and private spheres, with the resulting recognition of the *social* function of the private sphere
- appropriate methods for making citizens more responsible in actively "being a part" of the political and social reality of their country.

Principle 5: Participation

"Participation" is the voluntary and generous engagement of a person in social interchange. It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person.²²³

Participation is closely related to subsidiarity. It is important for human flourishing – for individuals, and for the community. It is a right and a duty. We have a right to shape and enrich our communities and society, and we have a right to share in its benefits. We also have

²²¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 58. 'This general rule must also be taken broadly into consideration when addressing issues concerning *international development aid*. Such aid, whatever the donors' intentions, can sometimes lock people into a state of dependence and even foster situations of localized oppression and exploitation in the receiving country. Economic aid, in order to be true to its purpose, must not pursue secondary objectives. It must be distributed with the involvement not only of the governments of receiving countries, but also local economic agents and the bearers of culture within civil society, including local Churches.'

²²² *CSDC*, 187.

²²³ *CCC*, 1913.

a duty to contribute to the common good through our active, responsible participation in social life.²²⁴

We participate in social life as individuals and in association with others, directly or through representation, to contribute to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the communities to which we belong.²²⁵

1. The Right to Participate

Participation is part of our human dignity.²²⁶ We need to participate in order to flourish, and we all have something to offer. Everyone has a right to participate in social, economic, political and cultural life.²²⁷

It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. Conversely, it is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society. ... "The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were non-members of the human race. To treat people this way is effectively to say they simply do not count as human beings.

The right to participate includes the right to share in the benefits of social life. This includes but is not limited to material goods like access to healthcare, education and housing. People

should share their knowledge, be able to exercise their rights and fulfill their obligations, be inspired to seek spiritual values, mutually derive genuine pleasure from the beautiful of whatever order it be, always be readily disposed to pass on to others the best of their own cultural heritage and eagerly strive to make their own the spiritual achievements of others. These benefits not only influence, but at the same time give aim and scope to all that has bearing on cultural expressions, economic and social institutions, political movements and forms, laws, and all other structures by which society is outwardly established and constantly developed.²²⁸

We are not simply talking about ensuring nourishment or a "dignified sustenance" for all people, but also their "general temporal welfare and prosperity". This means education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labour that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives.²²⁹

We also have a right to participate to shape and improve our society – to use our freedom, ingenuity, etc for the common good. This way we contribute to our own flourishing and help create conditions that allow others to do so too. There is plenty of scope for freedom in ways we can participate. The *Catechism* suggests the place to start:

²²⁴ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 65. "Citizens ... should remember that it is their right and duty ... to contribute to the true progress of their own community according to their ability."

²²⁵ *CSDC*, 189.

²²⁶ *CCC*, 1913.

²²⁷ 'The very nature of the common good requires that all members of the state be entitled to share in it, although in different ways according to each one's tasks, merits and circumstances. For this reason, every civil authority must take pains to promote the common good of all, without preference for any single citizen or civic group.' Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 56.

²²⁸ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 36.

²²⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 192.

Participation is achieved first of all by taking charge of the areas for which one assumes personal responsibility: by the care taken for the education of his family, by conscientious work, and so forth, man participates in the good of others and of society.²³⁰

2. The Duty to Participate

We have a duty to contribute to the common good of the societies of which we are a part.²³¹ We do this through participating according to our abilities.²³²

Some behaviours are attempts to avoid responsibilities in society. For example 'attempts by certain citizens to "make deals" with institutions in order to obtain more advantageous conditions for themselves, as though these institutions were at the service of their selfish needs'.²³³ Fraud, tax evasion, evading legal obligations, etc are sins against justice, as, by failing to participate honestly in carrying the burdens of society, we fail to render to others what is due to them.²³⁴

The principle is not just about participating, but about how we participate; not selfishly or individualistically, but with a voluntary and generous commitment to the common good.²³⁵

3. Facilitating Participation

The principle of participation rejects marginalisation, and forms of exclusion like racism, sexism, and religious prejudice, among others, that, officially or unofficially, bar or make it difficult for people to have a voice or to participate in social life and its goods.

4. Social Structures, Policies & Institutions

Social structures can unjustly limit opportunities for people to participate in society due to poverty, disability, language, etc. The Church's social teaching reflects its perennial concern for the poor, and recent Popes have emphasized the participation of women²³⁶ and migrants, among others.²³⁷ The Church's social teaching calls on us to eradicate barriers to exclusion and to look for ways to foster the participation of all people.

The social doctrine of the Church does not dictate the forms that participation should take; this can vary between countries, cultures and times.²³⁸

There are many ways of participating, and social life should always be organized so that everyone can recognise their responsibility for it, and take part in some way in the decisions that shape it. The social doctrine acknowledges the system in some

²³⁰ CCC, 1914; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 43.

²³¹ CCC, 1913.

²³² Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 65.

²³³ CSDC, 191.

²³⁴ CCC, 1916. As with any ethical obligation, the participation of all in realizing the common good calls for a continually renewed conversion of the social partners. Fraud and other subterfuges, by which some people evade the constraints of the law and the prescriptions of societal obligation, must be firmly condemned because they are incompatible with the requirements of justice. Much care should be taken to promote institutions that improve the conditions of human life.

²³⁵ CCC, 1913.

²³⁶ 'At present women are involved in nearly all spheres of life: they ought to be permitted to play their part fully in ways suited to their nature. It is up to everyone to see to it that women's specific and necessary participation in cultural life be acknowledged and developed.' Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 60; CSDC, 189.

²³⁷ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*. Pope Francis added 'solace of migrants' to the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

²³⁸ CCC, 1915.

nations by which the majority of citizens can participate with genuine freedom in public affairs.²³⁹

As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life. the manner of this participation may vary from one country or culture to another. "One must pay tribute to those nations whose systems permit the largest possible number of the citizens to take part in public life in a climate of genuine freedom."²⁴⁰

5. Participation and democracy

Participation in community life is not only one of the greatest aspirations of the citizen... but is also one of the pillars of all democratic orders and one of the major guarantees of the permanence of the democratic system. Democratic government, in fact, is defined first of all by the assignment of powers and functions on the part of the people, exercised in their name, in their regard and on their behalf. It is therefore clearly evident that every democracy must be participative. This means that the different subjects of civil community at every level must be informed, listened to and involved in the exercise of the carried-out functions.²⁴¹

Paul VI said the Christian has the duty to take part in the organization and life of political society.²⁴² It is a responsibility of citizens to vote in an informed and responsible way, but this responsibility doesn't end with voting. Citizens have a duty to use their vote to further the common good.²⁴³ Pope Francis has also reminded us that politics, properly approached, can be a 'lofty vocation',²⁴⁴ and of the right and duty to participate in political life: a good Catholic meddles in politics, offering the best of oneself, so that those who govern can govern.' There are many ways we can get involved, for instance by joining a political party, contacting our local member about issues, involvement in local government, and advocacy.

In Totalitarian or dictatorial regimes, the fundamental right to participate in public life is denied at its origin, since it is considered a threat to the State itself. In some countries this right is only formally proclaimed while in reality it cannot be concretely exercised while, in other countries the burgeoning bureaucracy *de facto* denies citizens the possibility of taking active part in social and political life.²⁴⁵

6. Motivation

A problem that can afflict society is a lack of participation by some of its members due to apathy or distrust. Motivation requires confidence and trust. Where there is no trust in others or especially in public authorities, it is hard to stimulate participation. It is important for a

²³⁹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 31. the Vatican Council II recognize that nations whose systems permit the largest possible number of the citizens to take part in public life in a climate of genuine freedom deserve particular recognition.

²⁴⁰ CCC, 1915.

²⁴¹ CSDC, 190.

²⁴² Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, 14.5.1971, 124.

²⁴³ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 75.

²⁴⁴ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 205. The Second Vatican Council called on those who are suited to prepare themselves for this difficult but at the same time very noble art of politics, and should seek to practice this art without regard for their own interests, or for material advantages with integrity and wisdom, they must take action against any form of injustice and tyranny against arbitrary domination by an individual or political party, and any intolerance. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 75.

²⁴⁵ CSDC, 190.

society to stimulate a desire to participate in common undertakings.²⁴⁶ Those in authority need to reaffirm the values that engender trust in the members of the social group and stimulate them to put themselves at the service of their neighbours.²⁴⁷

7. Culture and Education

Culture and education play a role in promoting participation.²⁴⁸ Educational, sporting, political, religious, and cultural bodies, allow people to get involved in society in their own way.²⁴⁹ In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity these associations should be fostered and supported, insofar as they contribute to the common good.

8. Participation and the Christian Mission

The principle of participation reflects our human and Christian vocation, and the mission of the baptized in the world, the mission received at Creation to engage in family and social life and to participate in the exercise of God's providence in the world through our work and ordinary activities.

We children of God, who are citizens with the same standing as any others, have to take part fearlessly in all honest human activities and organizations, so that Christ may be present in them. Our Lord will ask a strict account of each one of us if through neglect or love of comfort we do not freely strive to play a part in the human developments and decisions on which the present and future of society depend.²⁵⁰

The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society ... is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good. The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility.²⁵¹

Freely, according to your own interests and talents, you have to take an active, effective part in the wholesome public or private associations of your country, in a way that is full of the Christian spirit. Such organizations never fail to make some difference to people's temporal or eternal good.²⁵²

Principle 6: Private Property and the Universal Destination of Goods

God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind... This principle is based on the fact that the original

²⁴⁶ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 31.

²⁴⁷ CCC, 1917. It is incumbent on those who exercise authority to strengthen the values that inspire the confidence of the members of the group and encourage them to put themselves at the service of others.

²⁴⁸ CCC, 1917. Participation begins with education and culture. "One is entitled to think that the future of humanity is in the hands of those who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for life and optimism."

²⁴⁹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 31; CCC, 1914.

²⁵⁰ Josemaría Escrivá, *Forge*, 715.

²⁵¹ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 29.

²⁵² Josemaría Escrivá, *Forge*, 717.

source of all that is good is the very act of God, who created both the earth and man, and who gave the earth to man so that he might have dominion over it by his work and enjoy its fruits (*Gen 1:28-29*).²⁵³

God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone.²⁵⁴ This is the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's goods. The seventh commandment 'requires respect for the universal destination of goods and respect for the right to private property' for the sake of the common good.²⁵⁵ When we understand the origin and purpose of goods, we can order them to God and others.²⁵⁶

The goods of the earth are essential for human beings to be able to meet their needs: to eat, grow, communicate, associate with others and attain their higher purpose.²⁵⁷ Each person must have access to the level of well-being necessary for his full development'.²⁵⁸ Pope John Paul II called the right to the common use of goods the "first principle of the whole ethical and social order."²⁵⁹

1. The Right to Private Property

This universal right to use the goods of the earth is the basis of the right to private property. Pope Leo XIII defended the natural right to private property in *Rerum Novarum*. The right is to possess some of the earth's goods sufficient for oneself and one's family.²⁶⁰ This safeguards freedom and dignity.

Private property and other forms of private ownership of goods "assure a person a highly necessary sphere for the exercise of his personal and family autonomy and ought to be considered as an extension of human freedom ... stimulating exercise of responsibility, it constitutes one of the conditions for civil liberty". Private property is an essential element of an authentically social and democratic economic policy, and it is the guarantee of a correct social order.²⁶¹

We can say, then, that there is a natural right to private property, but it is a right that sits within the framework of the universal destination of goods. It is a right, but not an absolute right.

While Creation was God's gift to everyone and everyone has a right to private property sufficient to the needs of themselves and their families, economic goods and opportunities are, in fact, distributed unequally. Some countries have a wealth of natural resources while

²⁵³ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

²⁵⁴ *CSDC*, 171.

²⁵⁵ *CCC*, 2401; *CSDC*, 171.

²⁵⁶ *CCC*, 2401.

²⁵⁷ *CSDC*, 171.

²⁵⁸ *CSDC*, 172.

²⁵⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Laborem Exercens*, 14.9.1981, 19.

²⁶⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

²⁶¹ *CSDC*, 176; cf. *CCC*, 2402. 'Individual property is not the only legitimate form of ownership. The ancient form of community property also has a particular importance; though it can be found in economically advanced countries, it is particularly characteristic of the social structure of many indigenous peoples. This is a form of property that has such a profound impact on the economic, cultural and political life of those peoples that it constitutes a fundamental element of their survival and well-being. ... however, ... If actions were taken only to preserve its present form, there would be the risk of tying it to the past and in this way compromising it. *CSDC*, 180.

others have few; there are rich and poor people, and people whose education and connections enable them to access economic goods and opportunities while others do not. For many people the usual way to access the goods we need for life is through paid employment or a profession, which is why we can speak of a right to work. However some people cannot obtain dignified work that will provide for them and their families due to a lack of education, knowledge, or connections, etc, physical or intellectual incapacity, sickness or simply because there is insufficient work available. In these cases, it is necessary to find solutions to these problems, for instance through providing education and training, giving aid, offering scholarships or pensions, etc to those who are unable to access what they need.²⁶²

The principle does not mean that everyone has a right to an equal amount of goods, but rather to what they need to live a dignified life. The fact that private property is a natural right of all men does not mean that all men have the same titles to property. It rather means that all men are entitled to use their natural abilities and professional skills to attain the actual exercise of that right. And since individuals and families are naturally different from each other, and each carries out his work under different circumstances and with different degrees of dedication, it follows that the distribution of property must reflect such differences—insofar as these are natural and just. An egalitarian division of property among all citizens would not solve the problem of unequal distribution. This would mean a separation of property and work, since the criteria for such a distribution would ignore work, effort, and natural talents. This is another reason why we should work to overcome social structures and problems that are barriers to people accessing education, training and dignified work.

2. Private property has a Social Dimension.

Man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others.²⁶³

The right to possess, use and dispose of our goods is subordinated to the universal destination of goods in light of their purpose.

Whatever the forms of property may be ... attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others.²⁶⁴

John Paul II explained the relationship between the universal destination of goods and private property by saying that private property is subject to a 'social mortgage'.

It is necessary to state once more the characteristic principle of Christian social doctrine: the goods of this world are originally meant for all. The right to private property is valid and necessary, but it does not nullify the value of this principle. Private property, in fact, is under a "social mortgage," which means that it has an intrinsically social function, based upon and justified precisely by the principle of the universal destination of goods.²⁶⁵

²⁶² John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 33.

²⁶³ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 69; cf. CCC, 2404.

²⁶⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 69. 'Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute and untouchable'. *CSDC*, 177.

²⁶⁵ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42.

This has implications for the way we regard and use private property. Imagine, for instance, a person with a valuable resource, eg an art collection, who claimed the right to waste or destroy it, arguing that it was hers to do with as she liked. Or a landholder with vast estates who lets the land lie unused while others have no land to grow food to support themselves. Is there a right to waste or destroy property or to keep property without using it when it could be used by someone else?²⁶⁶

Radical liberalism says that private property is an absolute right, and a person can do, or not do, anything they like, short of harming others or breaking the law.

Socialism says that private property is the origin of all social evil and must be abolished.

The Church, on the other hand, considers that private property has both a personal and social function, to help everyone live a truly human life.²⁶⁷

A practical implication of this social function of property is that with the right to private property comes the responsibility to make it fruitful, in a way that facilitates access to the universal destination of goods for others.

Goods of production - material or immaterial - such as land, factories, practical or artistic skills, oblige their possessors to employ them in ways that will benefit the greatest number. Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick and the poor.²⁶⁸

The Social Doctrine of the Church reminds us that disordered or selfish use of riches is incompatible with love for the poor, which is the Church's constant tradition.²⁶⁹ Those who possess goods should use or consume them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, the sick and the poor.²⁷⁰

3. Private property and the Poor

The Church Fathers set a demanding standard, teaching that we are obliged to help the poor, and not just with our superfluous goods.²⁷¹ St. John Chrysostom taught the early Christians that, "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs."²⁷² Pope St Gregory the Great said that the poor have a right to a share of our goods: "When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice."²⁷³

²⁶⁶ The *Catechism* identifies waste as a sin against the 7th commandment. See CCC, 2409.

²⁶⁷ CCC, 2402.

²⁶⁸ CCC, 2405.

²⁶⁹ CCC, 2443-5; *CSDC*, 182-4.

²⁷⁰ CCC, 2405.

²⁷¹ CCC, 2446-7.

²⁷² St. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Lazaro* 2, 5: PG 48, 992.

²⁷³ St. Gregory the Great, *Regula Pastoralis*. 3, 21: PL 77, 87.

Pope Leo XIII said in *Rerum Novarum*,

No one, certainly, is obliged to assist others out of what is required for his own necessary use or for that of his family ... But when the demands of necessity and propriety have been met, it is a duty to give to the poor out of that which remains.²⁷⁴

And John Paul II said the principle means that the *needs* of others prevail over our personal comforts, interests and advantages, and sometimes even over secondary necessities.²⁷⁵

The Church reminds us that these teachings are applicable to the faithful today, including them in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.²⁷⁶

In relation to cases of extreme poverty, 'If one is in extreme necessity, he has the right to procure for himself what he needs out of the riches of others'.²⁷⁷ In this case, taking from another isn't theft, because the right to property cedes to the right to life that requires the common use of goods. It does, however, need to be case of extreme necessity. In practice, we need to work hard to resolve problems that contribute to such extreme situations. This includes improving social structures and institutions that might give rise to or maintain situations of inequality and poverty

4. Regulation of Private Property

Political authorities have the right and duty to protect the right to private property and a responsibility to regulate it, to make sure that it is exercised legitimately, in view of the common good.²⁷⁸

It follows from what We have termed the individual and at the same time social character of ownership, that men must consider in this matter not only their own advantage but also the common good. To define these duties in detail when necessity requires and the natural law has not done so, is the function of those in charge of the State. Therefore, public authority, under the guiding light always of the natural and divine law, can determine more accurately upon consideration of the true requirements of the common good, what is permitted and what is not permitted to owners in the use of their property.²⁷⁹

The state has the right to impose taxes upon citizens in order to fund programs that benefit others who are less fortunate. Sometimes tensions can arise when a party claiming rights with respect to property which seem to conflict with the common good. In this case civil authorities are responsible for resolving the situation, with the active participation of people, social groups and other stakeholders.²⁸⁰ The state may, in exceptional circumstances, resolve them by expropriation, when the common good requires it, for a just price.²⁸¹

²⁷⁴ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 35-6.

²⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Homily for Farmers in Recife, Brazil*, 7.7.1980, 4. One effect of materialism and consumerism is that they divert us from our true purpose and so make it difficult to discern what we actually need.

²⁷⁶ CCC, 2446. Pope Francis has also strongly reminded Catholics of this teaching in *Fratelli Tutti*.

²⁷⁷ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

²⁷⁸ CCC, 2406.

²⁷⁹ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 49.

²⁸⁰ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 24; Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 71.

²⁸¹ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 23-24.

The state may also, in exceptional circumstances, nationalise some means of production or essential resources. This is not, however, normally required, and in fact, in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, private companies contribute to managing these resources, contributing to the common good. When there is no need for something to be under government control, then there is scope for lesser bodies like private companies, to become involved. Subsidiarity would also mean that where a lesser body cannot meet a need for the common good, even with assistance, then the state has a duty to provide it. Reasons why something might be run by the state for the common good include, for instance, national security, or where incentives are insufficient to motivate private companies to efficiently provide necessary services (eg health and telecommunications in remote areas, etc).²⁸²

In summary,

The principle of the universal destination of goods is an invitation to develop an economic vision inspired by moral values that permit people not to lose sight of the origin or purpose of these goods, so as to bring about a world of fairness and solidarity, in which the creation of wealth can take on a positive function'.²⁸³

Principle 7: The Preferential Option for the Poor

Catholic teaching proclaims that a basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt. 25) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.²⁸⁴

If someone who has the riches of this world sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 Jn 3:17).

The principle of the preferential option for the poor is a special love and attention for the poor and vulnerable. It is:

- Based on Sacred Scripture, especially the life of Christ²⁸⁵
- A constant presence in the Church's Tradition²⁸⁶
- A response to human dignity
- A requirement of the common good²⁸⁷
- A consequence of the universal destination of goods and of solidarity²⁸⁸
- Part of love and justice²⁸⁹
- Not just about giving aid but about changing structures, customs and institutions that cause or perpetuate poverty and suffering²⁹⁰

²⁸² Furthermore, it is the right of public authority to prevent anyone from abusing his private property to the detriment of the common good. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 71.

²⁸³ *CSDC*, 174.

²⁸⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 20.

²⁸⁵ *CCC*, 2444. See also Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 19.8.2020.

²⁸⁶ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 23; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 57.

²⁸⁷ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 158.

²⁸⁸ *CSDC*, 182.

²⁸⁹ *CCC*, 2447.

²⁹⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 58.

The principle asks that, when making decisions, particularly in a position of authority, we first consider their impact on the poor and vulnerable.

The *Catechism* says,

The principle of the preferential option for the poor reflects Christ's love for the poor and the important place He assigns to care for the poor in the lives of every Christian. The church's love for the poor is essential for the church, and a constant part of our tradition. This love is born from the Gospels, especially the Beatitudes, and the poverty of Jesus Himself and His abiding concern and love for the poor around him. This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor.²⁹¹

In its various forms - material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illness and death - human misery is the obvious sign of the inherited condition of frailty and need for salvation in which man finds himself as a consequence of original sin. This misery elicited the compassion of Christ the Savior, who willingly took it upon himself and identified himself with the least of his brethren. Hence, those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere.²⁹²

The principle "is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty."²⁹³ Jesus' parable of the Last Judgment (Mt 25) reveals that actively living this principle is a sign of a true disciple of Christ.

Jesus' followers recognise themselves by their closeness to the poor, the little ones, the sick and the imprisoned, the excluded and the forgotten, those without food and clothing. We can read that famous protocol by which we will all be judged, we will all be judged. It is Matthew, chapter 25. This is a key criterion of Christian authenticity.²⁹⁴

Matthew 25:31-46 recounts the parable of the Law Judgment, in which

Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Love of God and love of neighbour have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God.²⁹⁵

To close our eyes to the reality of poverty around us is to be like the rich man in Jesus' parable who ignored the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate (Lk 16:19-31) and was condemned, not for his wealth, but for not coming to Lazarus' aid.²⁹⁶

²⁹¹ CCC, 2444.

²⁹² CCC, 2448.

²⁹³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 198, quoting Pope Benedict XVI, *Address*, 13.5.2007, 3.

²⁹⁴ Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 19.8.2020; cf. *Gal 2:10*; *Evangelii Gaudium*, 195.

²⁹⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 15.

²⁹⁶ Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 18.5.2016.

The Gospel asks for deeds, a 'concrete life commitment' to discovering and serving Christ in the poor.²⁹⁷ It extends to our social responsibilities and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods.²⁹⁸ Genuine communion and solidarity with the poor are expressed in our lifestyle, priorities, words and actions.²⁹⁹

This is an important part of Christian witness, by which people see the effect of the Gospel message in our lives.³⁰⁰ 'Without the preferential option for the poor, "the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today's society of mass communications"'.³⁰¹

1. Who Are the Poor?

The principle is not limited to material poverty but extends to 'numerous forms of cultural and religious poverty'.³⁰² The principle also asks us to protect the vulnerable, for instance the elderly, the sick and children.

'In the countries of the West, different forms of poverty are being experienced by groups which live on the margins of society, by the elderly and the sick, by the victims of consumerism, and even more immediately by so many refugees and migrants.'³⁰³

'This love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and, above all, those without hope of a better future.'³⁰⁴

2. Not an Ideological or Political Option

The preferential option for the poor 'is not a political option; nor is it an ideological option, a party option... no. The preferential option for the poor is at the centre of the Gospel. And the first to do this was Jesus ... since He was rich, He made Himself poor to enrich us. He made Himself one of us and for this reason, at the centre of the Gospel, there is this option, at the centre of Jesus' proclamation.'³⁰⁵

To love and defend the poor and work for their benefit, is part of Christian life. Certain ideologies distort this ideal with a materialism that loses sight of the transcendent human vocation, or by preaching violence that is incompatible with the Gospel.

Christian realism, while appreciating on the one hand the praiseworthy efforts being made to defeat poverty, is cautious on the other hand regarding ideological positions and Messianistic beliefs that sustain the illusion that it is possible to eliminate the problem of poverty completely from this world. This will happen only upon Christ's

²⁹⁷ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 57.

²⁹⁸ *CSDC*, 182; Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 15.

²⁹⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in America*, 22.1.1999, 58.

³⁰⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 57.

³⁰¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 199, quoting John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 6.1.2001, 50.

³⁰² *CSDC*, 184.

³⁰³ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 57; see also Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*.

³⁰⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42.

³⁰⁵ Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 19.8.20.

return, when he will be with us once more, for ever. In the meantime, the poor remain entrusted to us and it is this responsibility upon which we shall be judged at the end of time (cf. Mt 25:31-46): "Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren"³⁰⁶

Certain forms of Liberation Theology, faced with the urgency of situations of poverty and injustice, emphasize,

unilaterally, the liberation from servitude of an earthly and temporal kind. They ... seem to put liberation from sin in second place, and so fail to give it the primary importance it is due. Thus, their very presentation of the problems is confused and ambiguous. Others, in an effort to learn more precisely what are the causes of the slavery which they want to end, make use of different concepts without sufficient critical caution. It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to purify these borrowed concepts of an ideological inspiration which is compatible with Christian faith and the ethical requirements which flow from it.³⁰⁷

Some forms use, 'in an insufficiently critical manner, concepts borrowed from various currents of Marxist thought.'³⁰⁸

3. Charity and Justice

Dignity and Love

The preferential option for the poor 'demands before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers'.³⁰⁹ 'Within the community of believers there can never be room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life.'³¹⁰ The poor person, when loved, "is esteemed as of great value," and this is what makes the authentic option for the poor differ from any other ideology, from any attempt to exploit the poor for one's own personal or political interest'.³¹¹

The appropriate response to a person's dignity is love. 'In loving the poor we imitate the attitude of Jesus, who during his earthly life devoted himself with special compassion to those in spiritual and material need'.³¹²

Part of Justice

³⁰⁶ CSDC, 183.

³⁰⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, 6.8.1984.

³⁰⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, 6.8.1984. Where Marxism promotes class struggle and violence, the preferential option for the poor promotes solidarity and communion.

³⁰⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 158.

³¹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 20.

³¹¹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 199.

³¹² Pope Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in America*, 58.

Love for others, and especially for the poor, 'is made concrete in the promotion of justice.³¹³ As we have seen, the goods of the earth are created by God to benefit every person. If some people have more of these goods, they should look upon the goods as given in trust by God, and share them. In the parable of the Talents Jesus tells us that God demands more from those who have received more.

'In her teaching the Church constantly returns to this relationship between charity and justice: "When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice."³¹⁴ 'Giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God".³¹⁵ It is not an act of charity to lessen poverty, but our obligation.³¹⁶ We are entitled to partake in creation, to the point that we can live a simple and dignified life. We are not *entitled* to take more than we need, or indulge in a love of riches, and we are absolutely not entitled to take more at the cost of others.

Quoting Sacred Scripture, the *Catechism* declares immoderate use of riches or their selfish use as incompatible with love for the poor.³¹⁷ The Church Father St John Chrysostom condemned Christians who bought expensive silver chamber-pots to defecate in while others went hungry.³¹⁸

Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice. Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment. Only such an awareness can give the courage needed to face the risk and the change involved in every authentic attempt to come to the aid of another.³¹⁹

Pope Benedict wrote extensively about charity and the relationship between charity and justice. Marxism, he noted, rejects charity, seeing it as a way the wealthy salve their conscience and avoid giving what is due in justice. They argue that justice must replace charity to build a just social order. Benedict XVI acknowledged that this error, like most errors, contains an element of truth, however justice and charity are both needed for a truly human society.³²⁰ Even the most just society needs love.

There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. There will always be suffering which cries out for consolation and help. There will always be loneliness. There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbour is indispensable. The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person - every person - needs: namely, loving personal concern.³²¹

³¹³ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 58.

³¹⁴ *CSDC*, 184. See also *CCC*, 2446.

³¹⁵ *CSDC*, 184

³¹⁶ *CCC*, 2452; Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

³¹⁷ *CCC*, 2445.

³¹⁸

³¹⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 58.

³²⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 26.

³²¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* 28.

4. The Works of Mercy

The corporal and spiritual works of mercy are some ways in which the Church and its members attend to the poor and vulnerable, out of charity and justice. They are

charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. the corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God: 'He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise. ... If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?'³²²

5. Aid, Integral Development and Social Justice

'The practice of charity is not limited to alms-giving but implies addressing the social and political dimensions of the problem of poverty'.³²³ The principle of the preferential option for the poor involves identifying the causes of poverty and suffering, including structures, policies, customs and institutions in society that cause or perpetuate poverty and suffering, and working to eradicate or improve them. This can include things like market structures, international trade relations, taxation policies, access to health, employment, provisions for the elderly, etc. As Pope Francis put it, 'if there are unhealthy social structures that prevent them from dreaming of the future, we must work together to heal them, to change them'.³²⁴

It is not merely a matter of "giving from one's surplus", but of helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development.³²⁵

It requires

a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies. Nor is it a matter of eliminating instruments of social organization which have proved useful, but rather of orienting them according to an adequate notion of the common good in relation to the whole human family.³²⁶

Changing these structures, policies, etc requires a personal commitment. Pope Paul VI asked,

Let each one examine his conscience, a conscience that conveys a new message for our times. Is he prepared to support out of his own pocket works and undertaking organized in favor of the most destitute? Is he ready to pay higher taxes so that the public authorities can intensify their efforts in favor of development? Is he ready to

³²² CCC, 2447.

³²³ CSDC, 184.

³²⁴ Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 19.8.2020.

³²⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 58.

³²⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 58.

pay a higher price for imported goods so that the producer may be more justly rewarded?³²⁷

Pope Francis explained this dimension of the preferential option for the poor in terms of promoting integral human development.

We can nurture an economy of the integral development of the poor, and not of providing assistance. By this I do not wish to condemn assistance: aid is important ... but we must go beyond this, to resolve the problems that lead us to provide aid. An economy that does not resort to remedies that in fact poison society, such as profits not linked to the creation of dignified jobs. This type of profit is dissociated from the real economy, that which should bring benefits to the common people, and in addition is at times indifferent to the damage inflicted to our common home. The preferential option for the poor, this ethical-social need that comes from God's love, inspires us to conceive of and design an economy where people, and especially the poorest, are at the centre.³²⁸

In bringing about these changes in favour of the poor and for integral human development, the State has a responsibility, but the Church also has a role, and each person can and should contribute, according to the principle of subsidiarity.³²⁹ In fact, it is a 'direct duty' of the lay faithful 'to work for a just ordering of society.'³³⁰

'The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics.... [but] We do not need a State which regulates and controls everything, but a State which, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need.'³³¹

6. Decision-Making

When it comes to making decisions in view of the common good, the principle asks us to first think about how they will affect the poor and vulnerable.³³² This is particularly important for those in public office or who work with public policy, and people in decision-making positions in organisations whose actions affect society. For instance, when considering ways to fund improvements in roads or public transport, realising that an increase in a fare or toll may be barely noticeable for some people, but have a significant impact on the poor. The same could apply for health: the cost of medication is insignificant for many people, but for the

³²⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 48.

³²⁸ Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 19.8.2020.

³²⁹ 'The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply'. Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 28. Furthermore, 'the Church's charitable organizations ... constitute an *opus proprium* ... in which she ... acts as a subject with direct responsibility, doing what corresponds to her nature. The Church can never be exempted from practising charity as an organized activity of believers.' *Deus Caritas Est*, 29.

³³⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 29.

³³¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 28.

³³² Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 58.

chronically ill, the elderly, people with disabilities and their families, the cost of unsubsidized medication could be prohibitive. When deciding to close shop fronts for banks or public services, thought needs to be taken for people with little familiarity with, or access to, technology, to ensure that they can still access them and manage in society. It is necessary to ensure that our decisions do not cause or perpetuate poverty, or inhibit participation of the poor and vulnerable in society, and to find ways to increase their participation and integral development as persons.

7. *The International Community*

Jesus taught us that the concept of “neighbour” extends to everyone, ‘yet it remains concrete. It is not reduced to a generic, abstract and undemanding expression of love, but calls for my own practical commitment here and now’.³³³ The principle of the preferential option for the poor also operates in the international community. The *Catechism* teaches:

Rich nations have a grave moral responsibility toward those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves or have been prevented from doing so by tragic historical events. It is a duty in solidarity and charity; it is also an obligation in justice if the prosperity of the rich nations has come from resources that have not been paid for fairly.³³⁴

8. *Advocacy*

Another way of serving the poor is through advocacy. Advocacy is about standing by someone’s side and speaking on their behalf: being a voice for the voiceless. There are many people who need this help, including the elderly, refugees and asylum seekers, and the unborn. Beyond this, an important way of serving the poor and vulnerable is helping them, where possible, to reach a position where they can speak for themselves.

³³³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 15.

³³⁴ CCC, 2439. See also CSDC, 182; Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 49.

Principle 8: Promotion of Peace

Peace is "the tranquillity of order." Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.³³⁵

Peace is a Christian value, characteristic of the children of God, receiving Jesus' special blessing in the Beatitudes (Mt 5:9).³³⁶ Peace is a part of God's plan, disrupted as a consequence of original sin and personal sins.³³⁷ Peace results from that harmony built into human society by its divine founder, and actualized by Christians exercising their vocation in the world and working for justice.³³⁸ Peace is a gift of God and its fruits are 'This peace produces fruitfulness (*Is* 48:19), well-being (cf. *Is* 48:18), prosperity (cf. *Is* 54:13), absence of fear (cf. *Lev* 26:6) and profound joy (cf. *Pr* 12:20)'.³³⁹

The *Catechism* outlines the principle of Promotion of Peace

Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is "the tranquillity of order." Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity.³⁴⁰

We can break down the elements in this point of the *Catechism*.

- Peace is positive, not just an absence of violence.
- Peace is the fruit of activity, not a passive state.
- Peace involves openness: collaborating and trusting others
- Peace is important for human flourishing and for the common good. It is important for integral development and for freedom.
- There is a close relationship between peace and justice.

'Peace is the fruit of justice' (*Is* 32:17), it is 'tranquillity in order'. Popes Paul VI said, 'If you want peace, work for justice'.³⁴¹ The Magisterium, following Christ's teachings, adds that peace is also the work of love, which surpasses anything that justice can do alone.³⁴²

St Josemaría proclaimed the Christian mission to be 'sowers of peace and joy'.³⁴³ The Church offers us models like St Francis of Assisi, and itself has played an important role in resolving disputes and promoting harmony among peoples throughout the centuries.

³³⁵ CCC, 2304.

³³⁶ CCC, 2305.

³³⁷ CSDC, 488.

³³⁸ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 78.

³³⁹ CSDC, 489.

³⁴⁰ CCC, 2304.

³⁴¹ Paul VI, *Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI for the Celebration of the Day of Peace*, 1.1.1972.

³⁴² Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 78; CCC, 2304.

³⁴³ Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, 120.

1. Challenges to Peace

Genuine peace must be a just peace, not one where people are suppressed or where power is used to silence the weak by violent, bureaucratic, diplomatic or other channels. Nor can 'peace' be used as a pretext to establish or maintain an unjust situation. In such cases there is still no peace; injustice continues, resentments and frustrations rankle, and the common good is sacrificed to maintain the status quo.

Peace in society cannot be understood as pacification or the mere absence of violence resulting from the domination of one part of society over others. Nor does true peace act as a pretext for justifying a social structure which silences or appeases the poor, so that the more affluent can placidly support their lifestyle while others have to make do as they can. Demands involving the distribution of wealth, concern for the poor and human rights cannot be suppressed under the guise of creating a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority. The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges.³⁴⁴

Neither is peace guaranteed simply by giving people material things. Other injustices also threaten peace: 'excessive economic, social and cultural inequalities among peoples arouse tensions and conflicts, and are a danger to peace.'³⁴⁵ The *Catechism* adds envy, distrust and pride.³⁴⁶

2. Promoting Peace

To promote peace, Pope Paul VI urged Christians to 'wage war on misery', work for justice, for the human and spiritual progress of everyone and therefore the common good of humanity.³⁴⁷ The *Catechism* specifies 'safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity.'³⁴⁸

2.1 Peace is a fruit of Solidarity³⁴⁹

The path towards peace begins with a change in the human heart, 'as we regard the entire world and those tasks which we can perform in unison for the betterment of our race'.³⁵⁰ It does 'no good to work for peace as long as feelings of hostility, contempt and distrust, as well as racial hatred and unbending ideologies, continue to divide men and place them in opposing camps.'³⁵¹

World peace is inconceivable unless the world's leaders come to recognize that interdependence in itself demands the abandonment of the politics of blocs, the

³⁴⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelium Vitae*, 218.

³⁴⁵ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 76.

³⁴⁶ CCC, 2317.

³⁴⁷ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 76.

³⁴⁸ CCC, 2304.

³⁴⁹ See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 39.

³⁵⁰ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 82.

³⁵¹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 82.

sacrifice of all forms of economic, military or political imperialism, and the transformation of mutual distrust into collaboration.³⁵²

To prevent conflicts and violence, it is absolutely necessary that peace begin to take root as a value rooted deep within the heart of every person. In this way it can spread to families and to the different associations within society until the whole of the political community is involved. In a climate permeated with harmony and respect for justice, an authentic culture of peace can grow and can even pervade the entire international community.³⁵³

3. War

The fifth commandment forbids the intentional destruction of human life. Because of the evils and injustices that accompany all war, the Church insistently urges everyone to prayer and to action so that the divine Goodness may free us from the ancient bondage of war.³⁵⁴

3.1 Just War

There is a grave obligation on all governments and citizens to work to avoid war.³⁵⁵ The question arises, 'is it ever licit to go to war, and, if so, when?' The Magisterium of the Church provides us with longstanding criteria for what can be called a 'just war'.³⁵⁶

The decision to declare war falls to the authority in a society, usually governments, who are responsible for the common good.³⁵⁷ There are strict conditions that need to be met for a war to be considered just. Authorities have a grave responsibility to be sure that these have been met, and they need to consider the impact, not only on their own society but on other combatants and non-combatants, particularly civilian populations³⁵⁸. The *Catechism* summarises these principles.

'As long as the danger of war persists and there is no international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defence, once all peace efforts have failed.'³⁵⁹

"The strict conditions for legitimate defence by military force require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time:

- the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain;
- all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
- there must be serious prospects of success;

³⁵² John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 39.

³⁵³ *CSDC*, 495.

³⁵⁴ *CCC*, 2307.

³⁵⁵ *CCC*, 2308.

³⁵⁶ See also Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 255-262.

³⁵⁷ On civil unrest, armed resistance, and terrorism, see *CSDC*, 513-515; *CCC*, 2243.

³⁵⁸ *CSDC*, 504.

³⁵⁹ *CCC*, 2308. 'Engaging in a preventive war without clear proof that an attack is imminent cannot fail to raise serious moral and juridical questions.' *CSDC*, 502.

- the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. the power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition...

The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good.³⁶⁰

All of these conditions must be met if a war is to be considered just. When they have been met, and when there are no other alternatives, the use of force is justifiable.³⁶¹ The moral law, however, never ceases to apply. The moral law is not suspended during war, nor is anything in war an excuse for violating it. There is an obligation to abide by international conventions regarding the wounded and prisoners of war. Abuses are impermissible, and civilian populations, or 'non-combatants' must be treated humanely.

Non-combatants, wounded soldiers, and prisoners must be respected and treated humanely. Actions deliberately contrary to the law of nations and to its universal principles are crimes, as are the orders that command such actions. Blind obedience does not suffice to excuse those who carry them out. Thus the extermination of a people, nation, or ethnic minority must be condemned as a mortal sin. One is morally bound to resist orders that command genocide.³⁶²

This responsibility extends to people displaced by war. "Concern for refugees must lead us to reaffirm and highlight universally recognized human rights, and to ask that the effective recognition of these rights be guaranteed to refugees".³⁶³

4. Weapons and Mass Destruction

The power of military forces and weapons is such that there is a duty to ensure that their destructive effects are not disproportionate to the original injustice. When this occurs, their use is no longer legitimate defence.³⁶⁴

Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation." A danger of modern warfare is that it provides the opportunity to those who possess modern scientific weapons especially atomic, biological, or chemical weapons - to commit such crimes.³⁶⁵

The arms race does not ensure peace. Far from eliminating the causes of war, it risks aggravating them. Spending enormous sums to produce ever new types of weapons impedes efforts to aid needy populations; it thwarts the development of peoples. Over-armament multiplies reasons for conflict and increases the danger of escalation.³⁶⁶

The production and the sale of arms affect the common good of nations and of the international community. Hence public authorities have the right and duty to regulate

³⁶⁰ CCC, 2309.

³⁶¹ CCC, 2308, 2312.

³⁶² CCC, 2313.

³⁶³ CSDC, 505.

³⁶⁴ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 80. On the use of sanctions, see CSDC, 507.

³⁶⁵ CCC, 2314.

³⁶⁶ CCC, 2315.

them. The short-term pursuit of private or collective interests cannot legitimate undertakings that promote violence and conflict among nations and compromise the international juridical order.³⁶⁷

5. *Non-Violence and Conscientious Objection*

'Those who renounce violence and bloodshed and, in order to safeguard human rights, make use of those means of defence available to the weakest, bear witness to evangelical charity, provided they do so without harming the rights and obligations of other men and societies. They bear legitimate witness to the gravity of the physical and moral risks of recourse to violence, with all its destruction and death'.³⁶⁸

'Public authorities, in this case, have the right and duty to impose on citizens the obligations necessary for national defence.³⁶⁹ They 'should make equitable provision for those who for reasons of conscience refuse to bear arms; these are nonetheless obliged to serve the human community in some other way'.³⁷⁰

6. *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

"Peace is fostered by personal sacrifice, clemency, mercy and love".³⁷¹

True peace is made possible only through forgiveness and reconciliation. It is not easy to forgive when faced with the consequences of war and conflict because violence ... leaves behind a heavy burden of pain. This pain can only be eased by a deep, faithful and courageous reflection on the part of all parties, a reflection capable of facing present difficulties with an attitude that has been purified by repentance. The weight of the past, which cannot be forgotten, can be accepted only when mutual forgiveness is offered and received; this is a long and difficult process, but one that is not impossible.³⁷²

Mutual forgiveness does not eliminate the need for justice; still less does it block the path that leads to truth. Justice and truth are requisites for reconciliation. International judicial bodies that are universally recognised and follow procedures that respect the rights of all, contribute to ascertaining the truth about crimes that occur during armed conflicts.³⁷³

However, in order to re-establish relationships of mutual acceptance between divided peoples in the name of reconciliation, it is necessary to go beyond the determination of criminal behaviour, both of commission and omission, and the procedures for seeking reparation. It is necessary, moreover, to promote respect for *the right to peace*. This right "encourages the building of a society in which structures of power give way to structures of cooperation, with a view to the common good".³⁷⁴

³⁶⁷ CCC, 2316.

³⁶⁸ CCC, 2306.

³⁶⁹ CCC, 2310.

³⁷⁰ CCC, 2311.

³⁷¹ CSDC, 520.

³⁷² CSDC, 517.

³⁷³ CSDC, 518.

³⁷⁴ CSDC, 518.

The Church has frequently spoken against unjust war and in favour of peace, however' it is chiefly through prayer that the Church engages in the battle for peace. Prayer opens the heart not only to a deep relationship with God but also to an encounter with others marked by respect, understanding, esteem and love'.³⁷⁵ Catholics pray frequently for peace in the liturgy, and invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary as 'Queen of Peace'.

Principle 9: Respect for the Integrity of Creation

The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.³⁷⁶

The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity. Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.³⁷⁷

The Church speaks on care for the environment as part of its social doctrine.³⁷⁸ The points in the *Catechism* that relate to respect for creation are included in the section on respect for persons and their goods. As we shall see, respect for the integrity of creation and respect for persons are interrelated.

1. Creation is a Gift from God

Three texts from the Book of Genesis tell us about the relationship between humankind and the world in the Divine plan.

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good' (Gen 1:31).

God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. (Gen 1:28)

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. (Gen 2:15)

The world is good, though not yet perfect. God entrusted it to our first parents as a gift and a responsibility: to enjoy the fruits of the world He had made, and to cooperate with His Providence in caring for it.

³⁷⁵ CSDC, 519.

³⁷⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 48.

³⁷⁷ CCC, 2415. On the treatment of animals, see also CCC, 2416-8.

³⁷⁸ Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 21; Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 52; Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 51; Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*; CSDC, 451-487.

With original sin came a rupture in the original harmony between God and Adam and Eve, between Adam and Eve, and between humankind and the world. One of the consequences of original sin and personal sin is a mistaken understanding of our relationship with the world, and this is seen especially in our interpretation of the term 'dominion'.

2. Dominion

The word dominion comes from the Latin word 'domus' (house). It refers to the rights and responsibilities a householder has for his or her home. This is not an attitude of domination or an absolute right to misuse or abuse things. Rather, it is an attitude of a homeowner towards his or her home, or of 'stewardship': the attitude of one trusted to administer a property on behalf of its owner. As Pope Benedict XVI put it, 'to men and women, the crown of the entire process of creation, the Creator entrusts the care of the earth (cf. *Gn* 2:15)'.³⁷⁹

Adam and Eve were tempted with the desire to 'be like gods' (*Gn* 3:5) to have absolute dominion, without having to submit as creatures to the will of the Creator.³⁸⁰ Pope John Paul II related this attitude to an anthropological error he saw at the heart of environmental problems.³⁸¹

At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day. Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him.³⁸²

Exercising 'dominion' requires understanding and respecting the order and purpose of things, reflecting God's wisdom and love for His Creation.³⁸³

3. Creation and the Common Good

God's gifts are for all people. The principle of respect for the integrity of creation is closely related to the principle of the universal destination of goods.

The Bible, from the first page on, teaches us that the whole of creation is for humanity, that it is men and women's responsibility to develop it by intelligent effort and by means of their labor to perfect it, so to speak, for their use. If the world is made to furnish each individual with the means of livelihood and the instruments for growth and progress, all people have therefore the right to find in the world what is necessary for them.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Ecclesia in America*, 25.

³⁸⁰ *CSDC*, 256.

³⁸¹ *CSDC*, 461.

³⁸² Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 37.

³⁸³ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 52.

³⁸⁴ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 22.

No one should be excluded from access to what is necessary, for instance water, clean air or food, and the earth's other natural resources, which are distributed unevenly across the earth, should serve the common good of all.

The world is our common home, and many of the principles converge in relation to our care of it and the people who share it: the universal destination of goods, human dignity, and the preferential option for the poor; solidarity, subsidiarity and participation. Abuse and unequal use of resources can become sources of tension between nations. Living this principle helps us to promote peace and avoid conflict. The ecological question is a global issue and governments and other bodies must work on it together, with a spirit of solidarity, for the common good. The common good has an intergenerational dimension, so the needs of future generations must also be taken into account.³⁸⁵

4. Everyone is Responsible

'The Church has a responsibility towards Creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere'.³⁸⁶ Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and most recently, Pope Francis, have contributed to the Church's teaching on the environment.³⁸⁷

Governments are responsible for promoting the common good globally and at a national level in relation to the natural environment. Companies, too, have a responsibility for the common good, especially in relation to the ecological impact of their activities, as economic activities have a moral dimension and impact on human lives.

As everyone is responsible for the common good, everyone is responsible for caring for creation. Each person can find ways to exercise initiative and creativity to do this, beginning with little things like reducing waste, using leftovers, wearing warmer clothing or closing blinds to reduce heating and air-conditioning, etc, and teaching children to appreciate the natural world. We can also advocate for changes in our local area or at a national or global level.

Pope Francis offers us an example of how the principles can influence the way we work together to promote the common good in relation to the environment.

A consensus should always be reached between the different stakeholders, who can offer a variety of approaches, solutions and alternatives. The local population should have a special place at the table; they are concerned about their own future and that of their children, and can consider goals transcending immediate economic interest. We need to stop thinking in terms of "interventions" to save the environment in favour of policies developed and debated by all interested parties. The participation of the latter also entails being fully informed about such projects and their different risks and possibilities; this includes not just preliminary decisions but also various follow-up activities and continued monitoring. Honesty and truth are needed in scientific and political discussions; these should not be limited to the issue of whether or not a particular project is permitted by law.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 159. See also Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 37; Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 48.

³⁸⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 51.

³⁸⁷ See, for instance, Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* and *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for the 43rd World Day of Peace*, 2010 and *Caritas in Veritate*; Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*.

³⁸⁸ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 183.

As the world is our common home, international solidarity is essential for caring for it.³⁸⁹

5. Environmental Ecology and 'Human Ecology'

As we have seen, Pope John Paul II saw a close connection between ecological questions and anthropological questions.³⁹⁰ The way we understand ourselves is reflected in the way we treat the environment. When we lose sight of God, we fail to grasp the whole truth about man. When we lose sight of God, we misunderstand the created world and our relationship with it. Being closed to transcendence,

has led to the rejection of the concept of creation and to the attribution of a completely independent existence to man and nature. The bonds that unite the world to God have thus been broken. This rupture has also resulted in separating man from the world and, more radically, has impoverished man's very identity. Human beings find themselves thinking that they are foreign to the environmental context in which they live. The consequences resulting from this are all too clear: "it is the relationship man has with God that determines his relationship with his fellow men and with his environment. This is why Christian culture has always recognized the creatures that surround man as also gifts of God to be nurtured and safeguarded with a sense of gratitude to the Creator, ... fostering in him an attitude of respect for every reality of the surrounding world". There is a need to place ever greater emphasis on the intimate connection between environmental ecology and "human ecology".³⁹¹

Pope Benedict explained the connection.

When "human ecology" is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits. Just as human virtues are interrelated, such that the weakening of one places others at risk, so the ecological system is based on respect for a plan that affects both the health of society and its good relationship with nature ... Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today: one which demeans the person, disrupts the environment and damages society.³⁹²

Seeing the world as God's Creation helps us see this connection. If not, 'we end up either considering nature an untouchable taboo or, on the contrary, abusing it. Neither attitude is consonant with the Christian vision of nature as the fruit of God's creation'.³⁹³ Failing to respect the connection between environmental and human ecology sets them in opposition; fearing that caring for the environment means neglecting or demeaning people, or that privileging human dignity means undervaluing and plundering the environment. On the one hand, environmental concerns can be rejected as disguised threats to human dignity and rights. On

³⁸⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, 1990; Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for the 43rd World Day of Peace*, 2010; Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 14.

³⁹⁰ He also saw it manifested in the problem of consumerism, while Pope Francis recognises it in today's 'throwaway culture' that affects people as well things. See Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 37; Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 43.

³⁹¹ *CSDC*, 464.

³⁹² Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 51.

³⁹³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 48.

the other, it can lead to a reaction of 'biocentrism', a divinizing or absolutizing of nature that reduces the status of the human person to that of any other organism. Either way, regarding love and responsibility for humanity as opposed to, or incompatible with, love and respect for the created world is mistaken.³⁹⁴ They are deeply interrelated and need to be integrated. There is a bond between 'concern for nature, justice for the poor commitment to the society and interior peace'.³⁹⁵

6. Contemplating Creation

Understanding and appreciating creation can play in bringing people to God. The beauty of nature and the abundance and variety of creation, give glory to God, as does each of God's creatures, and they reflect the Creator's power, goodness and perfection. Contemplating nature fosters a sense of awe and wonder that can lead humankind to knowledge of the existence of God and of some of His attributes. St Thomas Aquinas used the order and beauty of the world to demonstrate the existence of God.³⁹⁶ Contemplating Creation also enriches the interior life of believers. Drawing on the experience of the saints, Pope Francis notes,

Saint John of the Cross taught that all the goodness present in the realities and experiences of this world "is present in God eminently and infinitely, or more properly, in each of these sublime realities is God".³⁹⁷ This is not because the finite things of this world are really divine, but because the mystic experiences the intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feels that "all things are God".³⁹⁸ Standing awestruck before a mountain, he or she cannot separate this experience from God, and perceives that the interior awe being lived has to be entrusted to the Lord: "Mountains have heights and they are plentiful, vast, beautiful, graceful, bright and fragrant. These mountains are what my Beloved is to me. Lonely valleys are quiet, pleasant, cool, shady and flowing with fresh water; in the variety of their groves and in the sweet song of the birds, they afford abundant recreation and delight to the senses, and in their solitude and silence, they refresh us and give rest. These valleys are what my Beloved is to me".³⁹⁹

'Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise'.⁴⁰⁰ If we think about how God looked at the world when He created it, and about what it tells us about Him, we will look at it differently and take loving care for it as His stewards.⁴⁰¹

The attitude that must characterize the way man acts in relation to creation is essentially one of gratitude and appreciation; the world, in fact, reveals the mystery of God who created and sustains it. If the relationship with God is placed aside, nature is stripped of its profound meaning and impoverished. If on the other hand, nature is rediscovered in its creaturely dimension, channels of communication with it can be established, its rich and symbolic meaning can be understood, allowing us to enter into its realm of mystery. This realm opens the path of man to God, Creator of heaven

³⁹⁴ CSDC, 463.

³⁹⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 91.

³⁹⁶ St Thomas Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 2, a. 2.

³⁹⁷ St John of the Cross, *Cántico Espiritual*, XIV, 5, quoted in Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 234.

³⁹⁸ St John of the Cross, *Cántico Espiritual*, XIV, 5, quoted in Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 234.

³⁹⁹ St John of the Cross, *Cántico Espiritual*, XIV, 6-7, quoted in Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 234.

⁴⁰⁰ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 12.

⁴⁰¹ The Church offers us examples of saints who delighted in creation, for instance saints Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure, Philip Neri, Kateri Tikka, John of the Cross and Hildegard of Bingen.

and earth. The world presents itself before man's eyes as evidence of God, the place where his creative, providential and redemptive power unfolds.⁴⁰²

7. Respect for the Integrity of Creation and Work

Pope John Paul II related an appreciation of Creation to finding meaning in our work. 'The knowledge that by means of work man shares in the work of creation constitutes the most profound motive for undertaking it'. He encouraged us to 'learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation, and its orientation to the praise of God' and 'assist one another to live holier lives' in our daily activities. In this way, 'the world will be permeated by the spirit of Christ and more effectively achieve its purpose in justice, charity and peace'.⁴⁰³

We must never forget that our 'capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world' through our work, 'is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are'.⁴⁰⁴ If we 'intervene in nature without abusing it or damaging it', we intervene 'not in order to modify nature but to foster its development in its own life, that of the creation that God intended'.⁴⁰⁵ In the end, 'it is God himself who offers to men and women the honour of cooperating with the full force of their intelligence in the work of creation'.⁴⁰⁶ This applies to all kinds of work, from manual activities to science and technology.

Pope Francis encouraged us joyfully in putting this principle into practice,

let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life. the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰² CSDC, 487.

⁴⁰³ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 25.

⁴⁰⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 37.

⁴⁰⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Address to the 35th General Assembly of the World Medical Association*, 29.10.1983.

⁴⁰⁶ CSDC, 460.

⁴⁰⁷ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 91.

Chapter 3: The Family

We now turn to one of the most important topics in the Church's social teaching, that of the family. The family is based on marriage, which comes from God and has its own, unalterable characteristics. The family, according to God's plan, images the communion of love that is the Trinity. The family is the first natural society, and the basic cell of civil society. It is the original place where we learn what it means to love and be loved. The family creates the 'human ecology' in which we learn what it means to be a person, where we flourish as individuals and in community, where we discover our dignity and learn the meaning of the common good, and where we acquire the social virtues to become responsible citizens. The family is prior to society and essential to its wellbeing. Society should protect and foster the family and assist families, according to the principle of subsidiarity.

Today it is common in some circles to speak of the family as a 'social construct'. However, we shall see in this chapter that while the family is a social institution, it is not a social construct. It is a reality deeply rooted in human nature and in God's creative plan for humankind. A good understanding of marriage and family requires a solid anthropology. Anthropological errors about human beings lead to errors about the family and vice versa. Divine Revelation reveals the 'full truth' about human beings,⁴⁰⁸ and adds a new dimension to our understanding of marriage and family. How we understand the family has serious ethical and practical implications for human flourishing and the common good, so the Church speaks clearly to defend the institutions of marriage and family. Flourishing families are essential for flourishing individuals and flourishing societies.

1. The Family: The First Natural Society

1.1. Origin of the family

We can use the word in various senses, however the family is, essentially, the first natural society. It's 'natural' because we did not invent it ourselves, rather it springs from our nature. We find its origins in the Book of Genesis, in the narrative of Creation.⁴⁰⁹ Marriage and family are instituted in the God's blessing to Adam and Eve. God declares 'it is not good that the man should be alone' (*Gen 2:18*). The first couple, Adam and Eve, form the first communion between persons. As Genesis tells us ... "one flesh" (*Gen 2:24, Mt 19:5-6*). Our first parents receive a participation in God's creative power that is a gift and a mission, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (*Gen 1:28*).

The family is presented in God's plan as the cradle of life and love, and the first and most important place for humanisation for the person and society. It is the first place in which we experience interpersonal relationships, through which we are introduced into the human family and into the family of God, the Church.⁴¹⁰ The family is at the heart of social life.

1.1 The Basic Cell of Society

The Magisterium has used the analogy of the body to express the reality and importance of the family and society. Pope Pius XII called the family 'the vital cell of society'.⁴¹¹ John XXIII

⁴⁰⁸ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

⁴⁰⁹ *Gen 1-2*. See also see CCC, 2207-2213.

⁴¹⁰ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, 22.11.1991, 3.

⁴¹¹ CSDC, Part II, Chapter 5; Vatican Council II, Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 18.11.1965, 11.

called it 'the first natural seed of human societies.'⁴¹² Vatican II said 'the family has received from God the mission to be the first and vital cell of society'.⁴¹³ And that it is the foundation of society.⁴¹⁴ The Catechism calls the family 'the original cell of social life'.⁴¹⁵ Just as the body is composed of cells, and each part of the body works together for the growth and health of the body and its parts, so too in society families facilitate the growth of society with new members and contribute to its health and development with their existence and activity.

8. 1.3 Importance of the Family for the Person

The Church uses the term 'human ecology' to refer to the type of environment best suited for the growth and flourishing of human beings, and for their development as persons.⁴¹⁶ The best place for a person to be born and grow is in the cradle of life and love. Human beings are interdependent, not just for the sake of satisfying material needs, but because we are made for real connection with others, communion, which is about giving and receiving not just things, but oneself. The mutual self-giving of the spouses united in marriage creates an environment of life in which this is learned from the earliest moment. The family is an environment in which children 'develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny'⁴¹⁷ In the family we receive our first ideas about truth and goodness and about what it means to love and be loved and that it means to be a person.⁴¹⁸ In the family we learn about dignity, as it is where we are loved for our own sake, for who we are, not for what we have or do. It is where we learn responsibility and the virtues. 'The family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs.'⁴¹⁹

In the family the spouses, too,

render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions. Through this union they experience the meaning of their oneness and attain to it with growing perfection day by day.⁴²⁰

In the family, 'the various generations come together to help one another and grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements for social life'.⁴²¹ This is the foundation of society.

9. 1.4 Importance of the family for society

There are many values and virtues acquired in family life that are later on manifested in social life.

Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honour God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.⁴²²

⁴¹²Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, n. 16.

⁴¹³Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11.

⁴¹⁴ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 52.

⁴¹⁵ CCC, 2207.

⁴¹⁶ CSDC, 213; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 39.

⁴¹⁷CSDC, 212.

⁴¹⁸Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 39.

⁴¹⁹Vatican Council II, Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 28.10.1965, 3.

⁴²⁰Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

⁴²¹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 52.

⁴²² CCC, 2207.

A society built on a family scale is the best guarantee against drifting off course into individualism or collectivism, because within the family the person is always at the centre of attention as an end and never as a means.⁴²³ In the family a person first transcends the 'I' to know oneself also as part of a community of persons, a 'we', and learns what this means. The way the family does this makes a unique contribution to the good of society, that nothing else can replace.

The health of the family, the good of persons and the good of society are therefore interconnected. John Paul II said 'the future of humanity passes by way of the family'.⁴²⁴ Strong, stable families are important for supporting people and for supporting strong, stable societies. The moral, spiritual and cultural values that are taught in the family shape society. A sense of responsibility, solidarity and commitment to the common good are learned in the family.⁴²⁵

The family precedes society and the State. The family is based in human nature and does not owe its creation or existence to the State. As such the family has rights which are inviolable. The family does not exist for society or the State, but the State and society exist for the family.⁴²⁶ This means that a society that aims at the common good must respect the central role of the family. A society that wants to look after people must look after the family. The principle of subsidiarity is especially important in the relationship between the family and the State. Public authorities must not take away from the family tasks it can accomplish well itself or in association with others; and authorities have the duty to foster the family, ensuring that it has the assistance it needs to properly fulfill its mission/responsibilities.⁴²⁷

2. Foundation of the Family: Marriage

Marriage is the foundation of the family in the Creator's plan. The Magisterium has a lot to say about marriage, and here the Social Doctrine of the Church overlaps with other areas of moral theology, bioethics, sacramental theology, etc. We can't go into detail with all of this, so mention the areas and add references directing to more detailed information.

The first point is about the nature of marriage. Like the family, it is not a human 'construct', nor can it be redefined at will. Nor do the parties make their own arrangements as though they were drawing up a private contract, negotiating their mutual rights and duties. Marriage has its own characteristics that no one has the right to modify or abolish, as they are rooted in the natural law and the Divine law.⁴²⁸

Matrimony was not instituted or restored by man but by God; not by man were the laws made to strengthen and confirm and elevate it but by God, the Author of nature, and by Christ our

⁴²³ CSDC, 213. Individualism sees the individual as the basis of society. Society is just a group of individuals with personal interests that may, or may not, coincide with others' self-interest. The family is not the vital cell of society but an optional extra one might choose to further one's personal satisfaction.

⁴²⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 86.

⁴²⁵ CSDC, 213.

⁴²⁶ CSDC, 214.

⁴²⁷ CSDC, 214.

⁴²⁸ Society cannot undermine or change or abolish marriage. It can't change the marriage bond but can regulate its civil effects. CSDC 216.

Lord by Whom nature was redeemed, and hence these laws cannot be subject to any human decrees or to any contrary pact even of the spouses themselves'.⁴²⁹

Marriage is founded on the free choice of the spouses. They make a free gift of themselves to each other, in love and in the gift of life.⁴³⁰

The characteristics of marriage are:

Totality: the spouses give themselves to each other in every aspect of their person.

Unity: makes them one flesh (*Gen 2:24*)

Indissolubility: fidelity which is part of the definitive mutual self-giving. The mutual gift of the persons forms an intimate union that is unbreakable. This is also for the good of the children. And it is for the good of the spouses in God's plan.⁴³¹

Fruitfulness: mutual total self-giving naturally opens itself to this. Marriage is ordered to the procreation and education of children (*Gen 1:28*). Children are a fruit of the mutual gift of love and self-giving, and children are a gift for the parents, the family and society.⁴³²

It's in natural law, but not always easy to discern. Human reason can see the point of this in God's plan, however there is the 'hardness of heart' (*Mt 19:8, Mk 10:5*), and obscurity of reason, emotional closeness, in breaking the original harmony of God's plan. We see this especially in the break in original harmony between Adam and Eve that comes with original sin.⁴³³

Polygamy doesn't fit in God's plan because it doesn't recognise the equal dignity of men and women – the love on the part of the man is not total, because it's not unique or exclusive.

2.1 The Sacrament of Marriage

Marriage is a natural institution. Marriage is elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized.⁴³⁴ The sacrament of marriage is not an extrinsic addition to the natural bond, but the same bond, assumed and purified by the order of grace, and transformed into an image of the indivisible union between Christ and his Church. The natural institution is prior to the sacrament of matrimony. While the institution of matrimony derives from human nature, and its ethical and social demands apply to everybody, the sacrament of marriage is the way of entering into marriage between the baptized.

The sacrament of marriage takes up the human reality of conjugal love and gives Christian couples and parents a power and a commitment to live their vocation as lay people and therefore to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.

⁴²⁹ Pius XI, Encyclical Letter, *Casti Connubi*, 31.12.1930, 5.

⁴³⁰ CCC, 2207.

⁴³¹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

⁴³² CSDC, 218. Nonetheless, marriage was not instituted for the sole reason of procreation. Its indissoluble character and its value of communion remain even when children, although greatly desired, do not arrive to complete conjugal life. In this case, the spouses "can give expression to their generosity by adopting abandoned children or performing demanding services for others"

⁴³³ CSDC, 217.

⁴³⁴ Code of Canon Law, Canon 1055 § 1; Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

Through the sacrament of marriage, the Christian family becomes a 'domestic Church', called "to be a sign of unity for the world ... bearing witness to the Kingdom and peace of Christ".⁴³⁵

In Christian marriage,

the natural dimension of their love is constantly purified, strengthened and elevated by sacramental grace. In this manner, besides offering each other mutual help on the path to holiness, Christian spouses become a sign and an instrument of Christ's love in the world. By their very lives they are called to bear witness to and proclaim the religious meaning of marriage, which modern society has ever greater difficulty recognizing, especially as it accepts relativistic perspectives of the natural foundation itself of the institution of marriage.⁴³⁶

3. The Family Society

10.3.1 The family as a society – love and formation of a community of persons

The family society is one that is formed from love and mutual self-giving. In the family one is loved and respected for one's dignity as a person. Growing up this way teaches what it means to be human and where happiness lies.

Love causes man to find fulfilment through the sincere gift of self. To love means to give and to receive something which can be neither bought nor sold, but only given freely and mutually

This is so important in societies that are increasingly individualistic. Families living in love, respect and self-giving

expose the failings and contradictions of a society that is for the most part, even if not exclusively, based on efficiency and functionality. ... The family is instead 'the first and irreplaceable school of social life, and example and stimulus for the broader community relationships marked by respect, justice, dialogue and love'.⁴³⁷

Families teach us that there is a place for everyone. Generous attention to elderly people living in families benefits the whole of society.

Not only do they show that there are aspects of life — human, cultural, moral and social values — which cannot be judged in terms of economic efficiency, but they can also make an effective contribution in the work-place and in leadership roles. In short, it is not just a question of doing something for older people, but also of accepting them in a realistic way as partners in shared projects — at the level of thought, dialogue and action"⁴³⁸... "The elderly constitute an important school of life, capable of transmitting values and traditions, and of fostering the growth of younger generations, who thus learn to seek not only their own good but also that of others. If the elderly are in situations where they experience suffering and dependence, not only do they

⁴³⁵ CSDC, 220.

⁴³⁶ CSDC, 220.

⁴³⁷ CSDC, 221.

⁴³⁸ CSDC, 222; Pope John Paul II, *Message to the Second World Assembly on Ageing*, 3.4.2002. See also Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 113-114.

need health care services and appropriate assistance, but — and above all — they need to be treated with love.⁴³⁹

We are made for love and cannot flourish without love. When it is manifested as the total gift of two persons in their complementarities, love cannot be reduced to emotions or feelings, much less to mere sexual expression. Based on the complementarity between men and women in God's original plan, full and total mutual self-giving in conjugal fidelity, is a source of joy. When a society tends to relativise and trivialise love and sexuality, we begin to focus on fleeting gratification, losing sight of the fundamental truths that underlie conjugal love and sexuality where there is a full and total gift of persons in unity and fidelity. We become sceptical, close off, and lose an important source of joy, hope and life.

Closed to the possibility of such an ideal, individuals and societies develop other arrangements and practices and try to give them equal validity and value as marriage. However, because they are not based on the deepest truths about the human person, while they are genuine attempts to seek personal happiness and fulfilment, they don't adequately contribute to human happiness and the common good in the same way. What we end up with are practices that are not merely private arrangements – they reduce the family to one social construct among many and the role of the family in society is no longer respected or defended. When a society ceases to care for and nourish the very cells that give it life and growth, its members and the whole social body will eventually be affected.

Other arrangements may provide people with a certain love and stability, however

only the exclusive and indissoluble union between a man and a woman has a plenary role to play in society as a stable commitment that bears fruit in new life. We need to acknowledge the great variety of family situations that can offer a certain stability, but *de facto* or same-sex unions, for example, may not simply be equated with marriage. No union that is temporary or closed to the transmission of life can ensure the future of society.⁴⁴⁰

Contemporary gender ideology constitutes a very real threat to the family as it eliminates the sexual difference that is the basis for the complementarity between men and women in marriage. It is a fruit of a culture that has given up on the possibility of the type of genuine conjugal love mentioned above. Pope John Paul II went deeply into the meaning and value of sexual difference in his teachings known as the 'theology of the body', and Popes Benedict and Francis have analysed the phenomenon of gender ideology and its appeal to contemporary culture.

Pope Benedict said that in this relativistic philosophy,

man and woman as created realities, as the nature of the human being, no longer exist. Man calls his nature into question, "which also calls into question the nature of the family". ... 'the defence of the family is about man himself. And it becomes clear that when God is denied, human dignity also disappears.'⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁹ See also Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, 19.3.2016, 191-193. On rights and duties in the family, see *CSDC*, 222, 244; *CCC*, 2222, 2228, 2214-20, 2208.

⁴⁴⁰ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 19.3.2016, 52.

⁴⁴¹ Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*, 21.12.2012.

Ultimately, for Popes Benedict and Francis, it is a rejection of the Creator, and of our status as creatures, a rejection of God's wisdom.

Gender is not purely subjective. While not the same thing as biological sex, it is inseparably related to it.⁴⁴² Human beings are corporeo-spiritual beings and the process of maturity involves integrating all the dimensions of our life, the physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual in a personal identity. 'God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him: male & female he created them (*Gen 1:27*). Sexual difference is willed by God, and part of being created in the image and likeness of God. According to the *Catechism*,

God has created human beings as male & female, equal in personal dignity and has called them to a vocation of love and of communion. Everyone should accept his or her identity as male or female, recognising its importance for the whole of the person, its specificity & complementarity.⁴⁴³

Reflecting on the appeal of gender ideology to so many people today, Pope Francis observed

I ask myself, if the so-called gender theory is not, at the same time, an expression of frustration and resignation, which seeks to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it.⁴⁴⁴

As with most errors, people find it attractive because it contains an element of truth. People look at the mess of some human relationships, the effect of original sin and personal sins that wound the original harmony between men and women, violence, infidelity, etc. and are overwhelmed by it.⁴⁴⁵ The solution seems to be to do away with sexual difference altogether. They see it only as a setting for opposition, domination and resistance, and a struggle for self-sufficiency. Pope Francis reminds us that we are made for communion, that sexual difference involves complementarity, and its purpose is communion and life, and that we fulfill ourselves in mutual self-giving.

The complementarity of man and woman, summit of divine creation, is being questioned by the so-called gender ideology, in the name of a more free and just society. The differences between man and woman are not for opposition or subordination, but for communion and generation, always in the 'image and likeness' of God.⁴⁴⁶

Physical, moral and spiritual difference and complementarities are oriented towards the good of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depends, in part, on the way in which the complementarities, needs and mutual support

⁴⁴² Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 56. "Biological sex and the socio-cultural role of sex (gender) can be distinguished but not separated."

⁴⁴³ CCC, 487. See also CCC 2331-2336, 2392-2393.

⁴⁴⁴ Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 15.4.2015.

⁴⁴⁵ Even more so when God is left out of a relationship (they do not have the help of grace) or the couple do not have the help of others in society to support their family. As Pope Francis asks, 'nowadays, who is making an effort to strengthen marriages, to help married couples overcome their problems, to assist them in the work of raising children and, in general, to encourage the stability of the marriage bond?' Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 52. This is an important apostolate.

⁴⁴⁶ Pope Francis, *Address to Bishops of Puerto Rica*, 8.6.2015.

between the sexes are lived out".⁴⁴⁷ Gender ideology eliminates the anthropological basis of the family.⁴⁴⁸

Pope Francis concludes,

It is one thing to be understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life, and another to accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality. Let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator. We are creatures, and not omnipotent. Creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.⁴⁴⁹

The stability of family life and love is important for the stability of the lives of its members and of society as a whole. This is reflected in and protected by the indissolubility of marriage. This stability requires social and legal recognition of the institution of the family, to protect and foster it. Legislation and cultures need to do this. The family is a gift and a responsibility of the whole community. A society made up of itinerant relationships is not good for anyone.

Divorce

Jesus Christ Himself explains the radical indissolubility of marriage (*Mt* 19:6; *Lk* 16:18). This is not a requirement of the sacrament alone, but comes from the nature of marriage. No civil law has the power to break the bond, which God has established as indissoluble by its own nature.

Being rooted in the personal and total self-giving of the couple, and being required by the good of the children, the indissolubility of marriage finds its ultimate truth in the plan that God has manifested in His revelation: He wills and He communicates the indissolubility of marriage as a fruit, a sign and a requirement of the absolutely faithful love that God has for man and that the Lord Jesus has for the Church.⁴⁵⁰

Divorce is a cultural reality unquestioned in our society today. It is supported on the pretext of freedom and resolving difficult situations but is generally now accepted as being a simple personal preference and a guarantee of personal autonomy. It is also part of a cultural framework where we see commitment as a limitation on freedom. A culture of divorce gives rise to grave social damage for various reasons. It diminishes the social recognition of marriage and fidelity, and no longer esteems their value. As such incentives to foster and support them disappear. Many families break up that could otherwise have been strengthened and helped through difficult situations if they had received support and been equipped to face challenges with sacrifice and generosity. The rights and education of children are easily disrupted, and parties can be left in unjust situations economically, emotionally, spiritually and socially, even when legal frameworks try to protect them.⁴⁵¹

Living-Together & De Facto Relationships

Today this is a very common arrangement where we find ignorance combined with the reluctance to disturb comfortable living arrangements or complicate their lives or finances.

⁴⁴⁷ CSDC, 224.

⁴⁴⁸ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 56.

⁴⁴⁹ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 56.

⁴⁵⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 20. See also Pius XI, *Casti Connubi*, 33.

⁴⁵¹ See CSDC, 226 on the Church's care for divorced people.

There are lots of ways of trying to organize ourselves when we flee commitment yet fear loneliness. It is one thing for people to be free to live the way they want, and another to claim that such arrangements make the same contribution to society as the institution of marriage, characterised by total, faithful, fruitful love.⁴⁵²

At the heart of many of the problems that afflict the family is an erroneous concept of freedom,

Conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, ..., for one's own selfish well-being.⁴⁵³

These sorts of relationships do not correspond to God's plan for human love; they do not image the Trinity like the family does. These relationships also fail to live up to our dignity as persons. The equal dignity asks for a mutual self-giving that is total – this means exclusive, and also temporal – forever, not just until circumstances or my feelings change. True love is loving the person for their own sake, as someone unique and irreplaceable. All too often people find themselves living in relationships where this is not the case – what they love is the feelings that the relationship produces in them. These can be found elsewhere or from someone else. I can find someone funnier, prettier, more romantic, richer, etc. but no one else can be you. People are often in relationships which are more about mutual egos – both take from the relationship and both enjoy it, but when that changes, the relationship is over. Today also it is so common to find people cohabiting mostly because they are afraid of being alone or they lack role models that show that something more/better is possible. Pope Francis also talks about the affective immaturity of many people today which contributes to making relationships fragile and fleeting.⁴⁵⁴

Marriage cannot be equated to a simple agreement to live together. To claim this is to consider marriage and family in an individualistic way. When legislation compares such relationships to marriage, it contributes to the destruction of the concept of the family. It fails to recognise the social importance of the institution of marriage and diminishes its support for it. It denies that it makes any difference for a child to be born into, and nurtured, in a stable cradle of life and love by a father and a mother. Such a culture diminishes the value of fidelity, and privileges self-centredness in the most intimate relationships that educate us for social life. Marriage is, by nature, not precarious, but a permanent and stable relationship.

Connected with de facto unions is the problem of the legal recognition of same-sex unions as marriage. Only an anthropology corresponding to the full truth of the human person can give an appropriate response to this problem.

The light of such anthropology reveals "how incongruous is the demand to accord 'marital' status to unions between persons of the same sex. It is opposed, first of all, by the objective impossibility of making the partnership fruitful through the transmission of life according to the plan inscribed by God in the very structure of the human being. Another obstacle is the absence of the conditions for that interpersonal complementarity between male and female willed by the Creator at both the physical-biological and the eminently psychological levels. It is only in the union of two sexually

⁴⁵² Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Humanae Vitae*, 25.7.1968.

⁴⁵³ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 6.

⁴⁵⁴ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*.

different persons that the individual can achieve perfection in a synthesis of unity and mutual psychophysical completion".⁴⁵⁵

*Homosexual persons are to be fully respected in their human dignity and encouraged to follow God's plan with particular attention in the exercise of chastity.*⁴⁵⁶ This duty calling for respect does not justify the legitimization of behaviour that is not consistent with moral law, even less does it justify the recognition of a right to marriage between persons of the same sex and its being considered equivalent to the family. "If, from the legal standpoint, marriage between a man and a woman were to be considered just one possible form of marriage, the concept of marriage would undergo a radical transformation, with grave detriment to the common good. By putting homosexual unions on a legal plane analogous to that of marriage and the family, the State acts arbitrarily and in contradiction with its duties".⁴⁵⁷

The solidity of the family nucleus is a decisive resource for the quality of life in society, therefore the civil community cannot remain indifferent to the destabilizing tendencies that threaten its foundations at their very roots. Although legislation may sometimes tolerate morally unacceptable behaviour, it must never weaken the recognition of indissoluble monogamous marriage as the only authentic form of the family.⁴⁵⁸

The family constitutes, much more than a mere juridical, social and economic unit, a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society.⁴⁵⁹

There is a need to identify situations in society and culture that destabilise or devalue the family to promote the natural institution of the family. This is not only about 'bioethical' issues, but also economic and other arrangements that impact on families. For example, arrangements where families are separated when foreign workers are unable to bring their families and are forced to be separated for long periods, sometimes years, leaving their children in the care of others so as to be able to provide for them.

4. Rights and Duties of the Family

The nature of marriage and family and their mission in society and the Church imply a number of responsibilities. Families have rights and duties that need to be considered by society. Families have duties in relation to the procreation and the education of children, and the right to be able to fulfill them and to the support from society needed to fulfill them in light of the principle of subsidiarity.

⁴⁵⁵ CSDC, 228.

⁴⁵⁶ CSDC, 228.

⁴⁵⁷ CSDC, 228; Also see Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, 3.6.2003; 8. Robert P. George, Sherif Girgis and Ryan T. Anderson, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defence* (NY: Encounter Books, 2020).

⁴⁵⁸ CSDC, 229.

⁴⁵⁹ CSDC, 229.

11.4.1 The Family is the 'Sanctuary of Life'⁴⁶⁰

Following Sacred Scripture (*Gen 1:28*) and Tradition, the Church teaches that

The fundamental task of the family is to serve life, to actualize in history the original blessing of the Creator- that of transmitting by procreation the divine image from person to person.⁴⁶¹

This is a mission with a high moral value. In transmitting life and educating children, parents

Should realise that they are thereby cooperators with the love of God the creator and are, so to speak, the interpreters of that love.⁴⁶²

Conjugal love is by nature open to the acceptance of life. The family is the place where the gift of life is welcomed, protected and nurtured, from conception to natural death.⁴⁶³

The *Compendium* refers to the duty of responsible parenthood. This is not 'a justification for being selfishly closed', but a responsibility that must 'guide the decisions of the spouses in a generous acceptance of life'.⁴⁶⁴ The Church commends married couples who 'after prudent reflection and common decision courageously undertake the proper upbringing of a large number of children'.⁴⁶⁵

There is an 'inseparable connection, established by God, which many on his own cannot break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act'.⁴⁶⁶ This means that 'whatever matrimonial act should be open to the transmission of life'.⁴⁶⁷ 'each and every marriage act must remain open 'per se' to the transmission of life',⁴⁶⁸ and

Every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible, is intrinsically evil'.⁴⁶⁹

The unitive and procreative ends of marriage go together and cannot be separated without harm. In recent decades,

the technological revolution in the field of human procreation has introduced the ability to manipulate the reproductive act, making it independent of the sexual relationship

⁴⁶⁰ *CSDC*, 213.

⁴⁶¹ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 28.

⁴⁶² Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 50.

⁴⁶³ *CSDC*, 231.

⁴⁶⁴ "In relation to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised both in the duly pondered and generous decision to have a large family, and in the decision, made for serious reasons and in respect of the moral law, to avoid for a time or even indeterminately a new birth". Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, 25.7.1968, 10. The motivations that should guide the couple in exercising responsible motherhood and fatherhood originate in the full recognition of their duties towards God, towards themselves, towards the family and towards society in a proper hierarchy of values. In relation to natural spacing of births for a serious reason, see *CSDC*, 233-234.

⁴⁶⁵ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 50.

⁴⁶⁶ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 12; CCC, 2366.

⁴⁶⁷ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 11; CCC, 2366.

⁴⁶⁸ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 11; CCC, 2366.

⁴⁶⁹ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 14; CCC, 2370.

between a man and a woman. In this way, human life and parenthood have become modular and separable realities, subject mainly to the wishes of individuals or couples.

Abortion, a 'horrendous crime'⁴⁷⁰ that contributes spreading the 'culture of death' contraception and sterilization,⁴⁷¹ and reproductive technologies like IVF,⁴⁷² are all part of this process of separating the unitive and procreative ends of marriage.

Attempts by governments or public authorities to limit the freedom of couples in relation to having children is a grave offence against dignity and justice.⁴⁷³ Any coerced contraception, or worse still, sterilization or abortion, is condemned. Also gravely unjust are cases where, in international relations, economic help is made conditional on programs or contraception, sterilization or abortion.⁴⁷⁴

People frequently claim the 'right to a child'. There is no such right. The desire to be a mother or a father does not justify any right to children.⁴⁷⁵ One cannot claim a 'right' to a person. Children are not commodities to satisfy our desires or complete our lifestyles. On the other hand, children, including unborn children, have rights.⁴⁷⁶ 'The unborn child must be guaranteed the best possible conditions of existence through the stability of a family founded on marriage, through the complementarities of the two persons, father and mother'.⁴⁷⁷

The Compendium also reminds us that parenthood is not only physical but spiritual. In procreation parents receive a child from God and undertake to lead the child back to God.⁴⁷⁸ Parents are responsible for introducing the child into the supernatural life of a child of God in baptism in the first weeks of life.⁴⁷⁹

In welcoming life families contribute to the common good and are an irreplaceable and essential support for the development of society. For this reason, families have the right to assistance by society in the bearing and rearing of children. Married couples who have a large family have a right to adequate aid and should not be subjected to discrimination.⁴⁸⁰

12.4.2 The Education of Children

Parents' cooperation with God does not end with bringing a child into the world but includes educating them⁴⁸¹. This is a personal, inalienable duty.⁴⁸² Parents can draw on the help of others and institutions like schools, but the overall responsibility remains theirs, and this cannot be taken away from them.

The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational

⁴⁷⁰ CSDC, 233.

⁴⁷¹ CSDC, 233; Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 10, 14.

⁴⁷² CSDC, 235-6; CCC, 2376-9; Pius XI, *Casti Connubi*, 7.

⁴⁷³ CSDC, 234.

⁴⁷⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 30; CSDC, 234.

⁴⁷⁵ CSDC, 235.

⁴⁷⁶ CSDC, 235.

⁴⁷⁷ CSDC, 235.

⁴⁷⁸ CSDC, 237.

⁴⁷⁹ *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 867 § 1.

⁴⁸⁰ CSDC, 237.

⁴⁸¹ CCC, 2221.

⁴⁸² Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 36.

role of others on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.⁴⁸³

Education begins in the 'human ecology' of the home, with the example and care of the parents, which have repercussion for society as a whole.

The family is the first and fundamental school of social living; as a community of love, it finds in self-giving the law that guides it and makes it grow. The self-giving that inspires the love of husband and wife for each other is the model and norm for self-giving that must be practiced in the relationships between brothers and sisters and the different generations living together in the family. And the communion and sharing that are part of everyday life in the home at times of joy and at times of difficulty are the most concrete and effective pedagogy for the active, responsible and fruitful inclusion of the children in the wider horizon of society.⁴⁸⁴

Both father and mother are responsible for their children's education and play an active part.⁴⁸⁵ This role is so important and irreplaceable that the Magisterium refers to parents as the 'primary and principal educators'.⁴⁸⁶

Education is not simply about information or professional training. In its document on education the Second Vatican Council said

true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.⁴⁸⁷

The family forms a person in all his or her dimensions, including the social. As we said before, it teaches what it means to be a person, about dignity and freedom, and about the virtues required for social beings who contribute to and enrich their communities. It teaches all the important values that are essential for development and good of family and society. Children are helped to acquire the virtues, using reason and freedom well, and therefore learn to grow in freedom. They learn to develop trust, necessary for authentic relationships. Parents help them with wise counsel in their choice of profession and state in life, at the same time respecting their freedom.⁴⁸⁸ They equip their children for life, and for discovering and freely living out their human and supernatural vocation. Parents do this first by

creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the "material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones." Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children. By knowing how to acknowledge

⁴⁸³ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 3.

⁴⁸⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 37.

⁴⁸⁵ *CSDC*, 242.

⁴⁸⁶ Vatican Council II, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 3.

⁴⁸⁷ Vatican Council II, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 1.

⁴⁸⁸ *CCC*, 2226, 2223, 2228, 2229, 2230.

their own failings to their children, parents will be better able to guide and correct them.⁴⁸⁹

Example is fundamental. As St Josemaría observed,

Parents teach their children mainly through their own conduct. What a son or daughter looks for in a father or mother is not only a certain amount of knowledge or some more or less effective advice, but primarily something more important: a proof of the value and meaning of life, shown through the life of a specific person, and confirmed in the different situations and circumstances that occur over a period of time.⁴⁹⁰

The Magisterium recognises the inalienable right to education.⁴⁹¹ This right is broadly recognised in international declarations of human rights and in national constitutions in the world, however it doesn't always happen or happen effectively, whether for ideological reasons, inequitable distribution of material resources, or the poor formation of educators. It is an important area for the principle of participation. When people participate in education, they are equipped to participate in society, enriching it and themselves, contributing to the common good. An effective exercise of the right to education requires solidarity, in each country and globally. We can aim to equip people at the highest level according to their possibilities and the situation and resources available, in the extension and quality of education, so people can advance materially and integrally, and participate in professional, cultural and social life. A lack of education is a significant barrier to effective participation.

Along these lines, this should also shape attitudes on the way we see education and the way we present it to children. It is not something that is purely private or about planning personal career goals, etc. Education is not just a private benefit, for me, but equips me for relationships, for contribution, and for self-giving. Education is not just for me; it has broad horizons. It is important that children develop a vision of contributing to the common good with their education.

Parents are the first educators, but they not the only ones. The saying 'it takes a village to raise a child' makes sense, because preparing a citizen needs the involvement in and of society. Society needs to assist them in the task. Society also has an interest in the formation of its citizens as it is essential for human flourishing and the common good. This means that society should help families ensure children are well educated following the principle of subsidiarity, giving the help and support they need. This starts with families and family associations, also institutions like schools and other educational establishments.

School is

designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. Between pupils of different talents and backgrounds it promotes friendly relations and fosters a spirit of mutual understanding; and it establishes as it were a centre whose work and progress must be shared together by families, teachers, associations of various types that foster

⁴⁸⁹ CCC, 2223.

⁴⁹⁰ St Josemaría Escriva, *Christ Is Passing By*, n. 28.

⁴⁹¹ Vatican Council II, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 1.

cultural, civic, and religious life, as well as by civil society and the entire human community.⁴⁹²

Schools support, but cannot substitute, the educational responsibilities of parents. Therefore, schools should be in close contact with parents and rely on them a lot. Parents, directly or through associations, have to follow the whole work of education at school, especially in moral and religious matters.

The Church

The Church, as a mother, is obliged to educate its children to fill their life with the spirit of Christ and promote the good of society.⁴⁹³ It does this through its members and through educational institutions. The Church has been the first institution in society that concerned itself with educating in society. In the Middle Ages, schools and universities grew up and then from the 16th Century, many religious congregations dedicated themselves to education as a specific mission in the Church. In recent decades, lay faithful, sometimes with non-Catholics, promoted educational institutions that are not officially Church institutions but are committed to the objectives of Catholic education. The Church as a right to educate through its educational institutions, Catholic schools and universities, and also to give Catholic instruction to Catholics in public institutions. This is recognised in many countries and is a right that must be claimed and defended in society.

Civil Society and the State

Civil society also has certain rights and obligations in relation to education as civil authority is responsible for the temporal common good, for which the education of its citizens is essential.

It is the task of the state to see to it that all citizens are able to come to a suitable share in culture and are properly prepared to exercise their civic duties and rights. Therefore, the state must protect the right of children to an adequate school education, check on the ability of teachers and the excellence of their training, look after the health of the pupils and in general promote the whole school project.⁴⁹⁴

Subsidiarity and Freedom of Choice in Schooling

In accord with the principle of solidarity, the state must guarantee the right to education, and access to it for everyone, however this cannot be achieved by denying initiative, creativity and responsibility of its members. The principle of subsidiarity requires recognition of the freedom of parents in choosing a school for their child. Against ideological claims that the state has a right to monopolise education, the Church teaches that 'Parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools'.⁴⁹⁵ A State monopoly on schooling

⁴⁹² Vatican Council II, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 5.

⁴⁹³ Vatican Council II, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 3.

⁴⁹⁴ Vatican Council II, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 6.

⁴⁹⁵ Vatican Council II, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 6.

is opposed to the native rights of the human person, to the development and spread of culture, to the peaceful association of citizens and to the pluralism that exists today in ever so many countries.⁴⁹⁶

The common good involves promoting universal, equal access to education and supporting the educational initiatives of social groups that help attain this end. The state

must see to it, in its concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children.⁴⁹⁷

Educating in Human Love

Human beings have a vocation to love, which can be realized in matrimony and in virginity. In human beings, sex is not just biology, but concerns the innermost being of a person, oriented to mutual self-giving in love.⁴⁹⁸ Education about human sexuality, then, always needs to be presented in this framework if its meaning is not to be disfigured and misrepresented. Reducing education in human love to information about biology trivialises it and separates it from its meaning of self-giving and procreation.⁴⁹⁹

Sexuality needs to be integrated in development and maturity and must therefore be presented gradually and prudently as children advance in age, including the human and moral values connected with it. As with all education, education on human sexuality is principally the responsibility of the family, and parents are responsible for integral education in this area.⁵⁰⁰

13.4.3 Dignity and Rights of Children

The Church defends the dignity and rights of children. The personal dignity of each child must be esteemed in the family, and their rights must be protected by the law, beginning with the right to “be born in a real family”, a right that has not always been respected and that today is subject to new violations because of developments in genetic technology.⁵⁰¹

Despite the existence of laws and institutions for their protection, and the presence of international treaties, millions of children live in situations that hinder their integral development.

These are conditions connected with the lack of health care, or adequate food supply, little or no possibility of receiving a minimum of academic formation or inadequate

⁴⁹⁶ Vatican Council II, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 6.

⁴⁹⁷ Vatican Council II, *Gravissimus Educationis*, 6. In this regard, see *CSDC*, 241. Parents have the right to found and support educational institutions. Public authorities must see to it that “public subsidies are so allocated that parents are truly free to exercise this right without incurring unjust burdens. Parents should not have to sustain, directly or indirectly, extra charges which would deny or unjustly limit the exercise of this freedom”. The refusal to provide public economic support to non-public schools that need assistance and that render a service to civil society is to be considered an injustice. “Whenever the State lays claim to an educational monopoly, it oversteps its rights and offends justice ... The State cannot without injustice merely tolerate so-called private schools. Such schools render a public service and therefore have a right to financial assistance”.

⁴⁹⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 11.

⁴⁹⁹ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love: Outlines for Sex Education*, 1.11.1983.

⁵⁰⁰ *CSDC*, 243. “Parents have the obligation to inquire about the methods used for sexual education in educational institutions in order to verify that such an important and delicate topic is dealt with properly.

⁵⁰¹ *CSDC*, 244.

shelter. Moreover, some serious problems remain unsolved: trafficking in children, child labour, the phenomenon of "street children", the use of children in armed conflicts, child marriage, the use of children for commerce in pornographic material, also in the use of the most modern and sophisticated instruments of social communication. It is essential to engage in a battle, at the national and international levels, against the violations of the dignity of boys and girls caused by sexual exploitation, by those caught up in paedophilia, and by every kind of violence directed against these most defenceless of human creatures. These are criminal acts that must be effectively fought with adequate preventive and penal measures by the determined action of the different authorities involved.⁵⁰²

5. The Family as an Active Participant in Social Life

The Family and Solidarity

Because family life involves living in love, it is a natural school for solidarity, and prepares us for participation in social and political life where we can love others and be alert and open to their needs, respect their place in and appreciate their contribution to, society.

Families 'can and must become active' in social and political life, working 'to see that the laws and institutions of the State not only do not offend but support and positively defend the rights and duties of the family'.⁵⁰³ 'Families should grow in awareness of being 'protagonists' of what is known as 'family politics' and assume responsibility for transforming society'.⁵⁰⁴ "Families have the right to form associations with other families and institutions, in order to fulfil the family's role suitably and effectively, as well as to protect the rights, foster the good and represent the interests of the family. On the economic, social, juridical and cultural levels, the rightful role of families and family associations must be recognized in the planning and development of programmes which touch on family life"

14.5.1 Society at the Service of the Family

The importance of the family for the life and well-being of society entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and the family.⁵⁰⁵

Firstly, civil authorities have

a grave duty to acknowledge the true nature of marriage and the family, to protect and foster them, to safeguard public morality, and promote domestic prosperity.⁵⁰⁶

Recognising the priority of the family over the state, civil authorities should ensure political and legislative action

to safeguard family values, from the promotion of intimacy and harmony within families to the respect for unborn life and to the effective freedom of choice in educating children. ... Neither society nor the State may absorb, substitute or reduce

⁵⁰² CSDC, 245.

⁵⁰³ CSDC, 247.

⁵⁰⁴ CSDC, n. 559

⁵⁰⁵ CCC, 2210.

⁵⁰⁶ *Gaudium et Spes*, 52; CCC, 2210.

the social dimension of the family; rather, they must honour it, recognize it, respect it and promote it according to the principle of subsidiarity.⁵⁰⁷

Policies should recognise and promote the rights of the family. This begins with the recognition (protecting, appreciating and promoting) the identity of the family as the natural society founded on marriage. This recognition represents a clear line of demarcation between the family, understood correctly, and all other forms of cohabitation.⁵⁰⁸

Drawing on its social doctrine, the Holy See published a *Charter on the Rights of the Family* in 1983.⁵⁰⁹ These rights are summarised in *Familiaris Consortio* and the *Catechism*⁵¹⁰

- the right to exist and progress as a family, that is to say, the right of every human being, even if he or she is poor, to found a family and to have adequate means to support it;
- the right to exercise its responsibility regarding the transmission of life and to educate children; family life;
- the right to the intimacy of conjugal and family life;
- the right to the stability of the bond and of the institution of marriage;
- the right to believe in and profess one's faith and to propagate it;
- the right to bring up children in accordance with the family's own traditions and religious and cultural values, with the necessary instruments, means and institutions;
- the right, especially of the poor and the sick, to obtain physical, social, political and economic security;
- the right to housing suitable for living family life in a proper way;
- the right to expression and to representation, either directly or through associations, before the economic, social and cultural public authorities and lower authorities;
- the right to form associations with other families and institutions, in order to fulfill the family's role suitably and expeditiously;
- the right to protect minors by adequate institutions and legislation from harmful drugs, pornography, alcoholism, etc.;
- the right to wholesome recreation of a kind that also fosters family values;
- the right of the elderly to a worthy life and a worthy death;
- the right to emigrate as a family in search of a better life.⁵¹¹

The recognition on the part of civil society and the State of the priority of the family over every other community, and even over the reality of the State, means overcoming merely individualistic conceptions and accepting the family dimension as the indispensable cultural and political perspective in the consideration of persons. This is not offered as an alternative, but rather as a support and defence of the very rights that people have as individuals. This perspective makes it possible to draw up normative criteria for a correct solution to different social problems, because people must not be considered only as individuals but also in relation to the family nucleus to

⁵⁰⁷ CSDC, 252.

⁵⁰⁸ CSDC, 253.

⁵⁰⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Charter on the Rights of the Family*, 22.10. 1983.

⁵¹⁰ CCC, 2211.

⁵¹¹ *Familiaris Consortio*, 46. On family, economic life and work, see next chapter. Also CSDC, 248-51.

which they belong, the specific values and needs of which must be taken into due account.⁵¹²

⁵¹² CSDC, 254

Chapter 4: Work and Economic Life

The Church does not have technical solutions to offer in the fields of economics and politics, nor does it claim to be an expert in these fields. But it is an expert in humanity. When it sees programmes/activities/ideologies based on an incorrect anthropology, it says so, because policies built on incorrect anthropology are not suited to helping people attain their end or perfection. The Church proclaims the truth, in every time, 'for a society that is attuned to man, to his dignity, to his vocation'.⁵¹³ The world of work is one of the areas the Church sees as particularly relevant. Work is 'the "essential key" to the whole social question and is the condition not only for economic development but also for the cultural and moral development of persons, the family, society and the entire human race'.⁵¹⁴ The world of work and economic life, and the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution were the stimulus for the development of the Church's social doctrine.

1. Some Historical Background: the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution, which began in Europe in the late eighteenth century, demonstrates the powerful potential of human initiative and creativity. Instead of waiting for crops to grow, people discovered ways to make new things, and to produce them on a scale that had never been seen before. Inventions like the steam engine made mass production and transportation possible and saw the creation of factories. Large urban populations of wage earners, unpropertied and without traditional ties ('the masses'), grew up around these new sources of employment, creating new social structures and relationships. There were elements to this, however, that obscured the dignity of the human being and fundamental rights and equality.

Thinkers like Adam Smith (1723-1790) correctly saw the value of personal freedom and initiative in economic matters as they generated ideas, products and profits, values that today are reflected in the principle of subsidiarity.⁵¹⁵ However Smith went a step further. This process could be valued exclusively in relation to individual gain, and the pursuit of self-interest was itself supposed to result in progress and advancement. For him, pursuing self-interest was morally sufficient in economic life. This is not the case.

As with every error, there is an element of truth here. The dynamism of people wishing to advance themselves and provide for their families is natural and positive, however we can never lose sight of promoting the dignity of persons and the common good. Mere pursuit of self-interest is not compatible with this responsibility, nor is it consistent with our nature as social beings and our inter-relatedness. As we shall see in this chapter, the economy is a human institution and needs to be directed towards its purpose which is the integral development of humankind. The approach of Smith and others was essentially a road to individualism, a denial of responsibility, loss of solidarity and injustice, and the origins of what we think of today as the 'trickle-down' economy, where a person discharges their social responsibility simply by being selfish. As we have seen, subsidiarity does not exist as a value alone, but only works with the other principles like solidarity and dignity, care for creation,

⁵¹³ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 9; cf. CCC, 2421.

⁵¹⁴ CSDC, 269.

⁵¹⁵ Smith's best-known work is *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776).

the universal purpose of goods that set us in a framework of interrelationships and responsibilities, where we flourish as individuals and together.

Smith argued that the 'invisible hand' of the market, that grew out of everyone pursuing self-interest, needed no other direction or moral orientation to result in public prosperity. What the market did simply reflected how things were 'meant to be'. In practice, this meant that that truly inhuman situations were justified, even if they resulted from acting on one's own self-interest.

The ideas contributed to the emergence of liberalism in the nineteenth century. Liberal philosophy combined economic thought with Enlightenment ideas about freedom and autonomy, where freedom became an absence of restrictions, independence from God, and a divorce of faith and reason. It held that the role of government was to protect and increase freedoms, promoting a 'laissez-faire' economy. Liberals argued that the State should only intervene in economic or social affairs to remove restrictions to freedom; beyond this, the common good was not the State's concern.

In practice, this meant that people and resources could be endlessly exploited on the basis of freedom of contract, with no one to protect or represent the weak in any way. During the nineteenth century masses of poor, uneducated people, who had little power to negotiate regarding any aspects of their lives, lived in terrible housing, with terrible pay and unsafe conditions, with no economic security, and widespread child labour, while others, pursuing their self-interest, became rich and acknowledged no responsibility to do anything differently, as governments looked on. Huge economic and social inequalities emerged, with masses of people suffering at the bottom, while others profited from them.

On top of this, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was misapplied to offer deterministic justifications for the social situation, viewed in terms of survival of the fittest and natural selection.

Socialism was a response to this situation and ideological justifications. Writers like Karl Marx, spoke with truth when they denounced the injustices they saw, however socialism has its own deep anthropological errors that meant that the solutions it proposed would also be terrible.⁵¹⁶ By the late nineteenth century, these two strong forces were in play, and society seemed divided between rich and poor, generally capital and labour in industrialised economies, which were increasingly antagonistic. To many of the suffering poor, socialism was presented as the only possible solution.

Seeing all this with deep concern, Pope Leo XIII was moved to speak out. Liberal capitalism and Marxism were not the only options, just as they are not today. Seeing the deficiencies in one did not mean uncritically embracing the other. The Pope did not propose a 'third way' or a 'Catholic' solution, but spoke clearly about the truth of human beings in the light of natural law and divine revelation, and called on people to find solutions that corresponded to this truth and served humankind, restoring the correct order between people and things. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, affirmed 'universally valid and perennially relevant principles in support of workers and their rights'.⁵¹⁷ *Rerum Novarum* was a response to the 'worker question' of the time, that is

⁵¹⁶ Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris*, 19.3.1937, 15-16.

⁵¹⁷ *CSDC*, 267.

the problem of the exploitation of workers brought about by the new industrial organization of labour, capitalistically oriented, and the problem, no less serious, of ideological manipulation — socialist and communist — of the just claims advanced by the world of labour.⁵¹⁸

It addressed the dignity and rights of workers; rights to property, to associate and to rest, the duties of employers, workers and the State, along with other social problems connected to the Industrial Revolution.⁵¹⁹

The encyclical and later Catholic social teaching had far-reaching impact in the twentieth century. This influence is evident in the numerous reforms which were introduced in the areas of social security, pensions, health insurance and worker's compensation, and an increased respect for workers' rights.⁵²⁰

15.1.1 'New things' today

Work and the economy are important for life still today, and the Magisterium continues proclaiming fundamental guidelines which 'need to be addressed in the context of dialogue with all those seriously concerned for humanity and for the world in which we live'.⁵²¹ These guidelines give us criteria to evaluate and respond to new challenges like globalization and developments in bioethics, and to cooperate with God in shaping our world according to His plan. Human nature has not changed, nor has our vocation. The Church invites us to use its perennial principles to apply to these 'new things' of our times.⁵²² The Church's social doctrine reminds us not to have a deterministic attitude to developments, as they are shaped by free human decisions with moral, ethical and social implications. Our cultures, institutions, laws and structures are the product of human choices and attitudes. As we said in the Introduction, the Second Vatican Council confirmed that it falls to the laity especially, to transform these and order them to the kingdom of Christ.

Professionals have a particular mission and responsibility to know how the Church's social teachings relate to their industry or profession. We are called to be creative and responsible in directing things towards the growth of the person, family and whole of society.⁵²³

Men and women of science and culture are called to make their particular contribution to solving the vast and complex problems connected with work, which in some areas take on dramatic proportions. This contribution is very important for coming up with the proper solutions. This is a responsibility that requires that they identify the occasions and risks present in the changes taking place, and above all that they suggest lines of action for guiding change in a way that will be most beneficial to the development of the entire human family. To these men and women falls the important task of reading and interpreting the social phenomena with wisdom and with love of truth, leaving behind concerns imposed by special or personal interests. Their

⁵¹⁸ CSDC, 267.

⁵¹⁹ CSDC, 268.

⁵²⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 15.

⁵²¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 27.

⁵²² Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*; Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*; CSDC, 310-316.

⁵²³ CSDC, 317.

contribution, precisely because it is of a theoretical nature, becomes an essential point of reference for the concrete action prescribed by economic policies.⁵²⁴

16.1.2 Socialism, Marxism and Communism

In 1937, during the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe, Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, offered a systematic criticism of atheistic communism, describing it as “*intrinsically wrong*”.⁵²⁵ Economic solutions were not sufficient to combat it because the problems went much deeper.

Socialism is built on two fundamental errors that mean that it can never work as a just system. The first is anthropological error, that is, it is based on an incorrect understanding of human nature, and so the solutions it offers are deficient. Pope John Paul II summarised this error in *Centesimus Annus* (1991), written soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall. John Paul II had experienced communism first-hand in his native Poland, and the encyclical includes a detailed critique of socialist ideology.

Socialism considers the individual person simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socio-economic mechanism. Socialism likewise maintains that the good of the individual can be realized without reference to his free choice, to the unique and exclusive responsibility which he exercises in the face of good or evil.⁵²⁶

The second fundamental error is atheism. Socialism is inherently atheistic and incompatible with Christianity. Popes Pius XI and John XXIII emphasized the fundamental opposition between Communism and Christianity and made it clear that no Catholic could subscribe even to moderate Socialism.⁵²⁷

An ideology with atheistic foundations fails to grasp the supernatural origin and vocation of human beings and indeed the meaning of life. Without God, human beings no longer understand themselves or their place in the world, what it means to be a creature, their destiny, nor human dignity which is the basis for equality and human rights.⁵²⁸ A society based on such an ideology is harmful to individuals and society.

So, what are some of the tenets of Communism? In its classic form from the *Communist Manifesto* (1848):

1. *Atheistic materialism*: a reductive vision of human beings that denies any spiritual, transcendent dimension to life. Human beings are just material, and so are their needs.⁵²⁹
 - a. The human being is *homo faber*. Humans are beings whose nature is work. They are means of production, which is the meaning and end of life.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁴ CSDC, 320.

⁵²⁵ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, 58.

⁵²⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 13.

⁵²⁷ Pope John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*, 15.5.1961, 34.

⁵²⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*.

⁵²⁹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’, in *Selected Works*, Vol. I, trans. Samuel Moore and Frederick Engels, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), pp. 98-137. See also Pope Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, 8-11.

⁵³⁰ Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 40.

- b. Religion was invented to pacify the poor. No religious freedom.
2. *Private property* is the root of all evil. Remedy: abolition of private property and collectivization.⁵³¹
3. '*Collective' good rather than the common good.* The individual exists only as part of a collective, like a cog. The individual exists for the sake of the collective and is subordinated to it. Priority of the State in all aspects of life, excluding personal dignity and freedom, subsidiarity and association in smaller associations.⁵³²
4. *Marriage and Family*: social constructs that oppress people. Remedy: abolition of the family
5. *Revolution, Conflict and Struggle*: progress comes through conflict. A basic tenet of socialism is conflict and opposition. For Communists this meant violent class struggle and revolution. This paradigm of oppression and resistance continues in many cultural movements, for instance radical feminism, gender ideology and critical race theory. Social problems may be correctly identified but the desire for justice degenerates into hatred and opposition.⁵³³

Terminology

Communism: An ideological school with different variations, exemplified in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) published by Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), the principal tenets of which are outlined above. Vladimir Lenin and others promoted Communism in Russia, culminating in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and establishment of a totalitarian Communist state.

Marxism: The social, economic and political theories promoted by Karl Marx.

Socialism has the same ideological values and goals as communism, which grew out of it, but rejects violent revolution. Some models allow limited scope for private ownership of industry.

Christian Socialism: attempts to reconcile Christianity and Marxism. Rejected as incompatible by both the Church and by Marx.⁵³⁴

⁵³¹ Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 4 -15. According to *CSD*, private property is a right, though not an absolute right, being subject to the meaning and hierarchy of goods and their universal destination. Property is important for family, safety, stability, incentive, etc. If all that is put in the hands of state, it has harmful effects in stifling incentive, creativity and all the things subsidiarity safeguards. No property, no subsidiarity.

⁵³² It takes it all into the hands of the state. The individual person has no intrinsic personal dignity and end but exists for the sake of the collective. Everything must be subordinated to and subject to the state. Rather than the common good, it seeks the good of the collective (the difference). This does not take account of the worth, value and rights of each of its members, but values the health/prosperity of the collective in isolation from the flourishing of its members. You shouldn't have interests that don't serve the collective – no 'lesser allegiances' like associations, family, etc.

⁵³³ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 19. The Church rejects the idea that violence is necessary and proposes a model of solidarity and cooperation for the common good.

⁵³⁴ Marx decried it as 'the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat'. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', Ch. 3. See also *CCC*, 2425: The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times with "communism" or "socialism." She has likewise refused to accept, in the practice of "capitalism," individualism and the absolute primacy of the law of the marketplace over human labour. Regulating the economy solely by centralized planning perverts the basis of social bonds; regulating it solely by the law of the marketplace fails social justice, for "there are many human needs which cannot be satisfied by the market." Reasonable regulation of the marketplace and

Liberation Theology: attempting to blend Christian theology with Marxism, it makes the goal of Christianity the material liberation of the poor and oppressed through conflict and struggle.⁵³⁵

2. Work

Work is of fundamental importance to the fulfillment of the human being and to the development of society. Thus, it must always be organized and carried out with full respect for human dignity and must always serve the common good. At the same time, it is indispensable that people do not allow themselves to be enslaved by work or to idolise it, claiming to find in it the ultimate and definitive meaning of life.⁵³⁶

17.2.1 The Divine Origin of Work

God is the Creator. The Book of Genesis describes Creation as 'work'. Human beings, made in the image and likeness of God, are given a share God's creative power participate in his stewardship of Creation (*Gen 2:5-6*). They participate in the world to bring it to perfection. A mission and a dignity that precedes the fall. With the fall comes the rupture in the original harmony between us and the world, and also the wounds to our nature and loss of preternatural gifts. After the fall work is difficult, and we don't always get the results we desire. But work precedes the fall. It is not a punishment or curse, but remains a mission and dignity, to freely cooperate with God in the world. The call to cultivate and care for the world remains.⁵³⁷

So work has a special dignity and honour in human life and activity. It's also important to us in many ways according to the dimensions of our being (physical and social needs, etc). But work is not our purpose or end in life. Work is essential but it is God, not work, who is our final goal and purpose. God reminds us of this order with the command for Sabbath rest. Rest, as we shall see, opens us to full development and orients us towards our true goal and freedom in Heaven. It reminds us of the true order and value of things and the meaning of our lives.⁵³⁸

Jesus Himself worked, becoming like us in all things (*Mt 13:55, Mk 6:3*). In his parables he praises the servants who trade with their talents, condemns the lazy servant who hid in the ground instead of using it (*Mt 25:14-30*), and the faithful steward the master finds working at his duties (*Mt 24:46*). He teaches us that work is not the purpose of our life, but finds its proper place and meaning only if it is oriented to 'one thing' necessary (*Lk 10:40-42*)

Human work is a participation not only in creation but also in redemption.

Those who put up with the difficult rigours of work in union with Jesus cooperate, in a certain sense, with the Son of God in his work of redemption and show that

economic initiatives, in keeping with a just hierarchy of values and a view to the common good, is to be commended.

⁵³⁵ See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"*, 6.8.1984; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, 22.3.1986.

⁵³⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 22.2.2007, 74.

⁵³⁷ CSDC, 256.

⁵³⁸ CSDC, 258.

they are disciples of Christ bearing his cross, every day, in the activity they are called to do. In this perspective, work can be considered a means of sanctification and an enlivening of earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ. Understood in this way, work is an expression of man's full humanity, in his historical condition and his eschatological orientation.⁵³⁹

18.2.2 The Duty to Work

Although not the purpose of life, work is an integral part of the human condition. 'No Christian, in light of the fact that he belongs to a united and fraternal community, should feel that he has the right not to work and to live at the expense of others'. While ancient Greek culture, for instance, regarded work as 'servile', work was honourable in Judeo-Christian culture. St Paul exhorted Christians to work, rather than living at the expense or effort of others, and to contribute from it, sharing the fruits of their labour with those in need, and the Church Fathers also honoured work. 'Every worker', St Ambrose said, 'is the hand of Christ that continues to create and to do good'.⁵⁴⁰

When we work as beings made in the image of God and according to His plan, we make the world, which is originally oriented to Him, more beautiful. We give glory to God as we use His gifts. We increase the common good and benefit the neediest. When our work is inspired by love for God and others, with charity, it becomes prayer. 'The connection between work and religion reflects the mysterious but real alliance, which intervenes between human action and the providential action of God'.

19.2.3 The Purpose of Work

Work has the following ends:

- Sanctifying ourselves and others, glorifying God and confirming our identity as children of God created in his image, in the way we work to care for the world He entrusted to us.⁵⁴¹
- obtaining our needs and that of our family, which affect different dimensions of our humanity, the physical but also cultural, educational, family, etc. The things we need to flourish and reach our end. Also, for the needs of the poor.
- Transforming or tending the environment in which we live, for ourselves and others. Work is supposed to improve the world. This means taking into account the effects of our work on the world, including the natural environment.
- We perfect ourselves through work, acquiring habits, knowledge, social enrichment, skills, etc (subjective value)

So work is not a purely private affair, nor can it be reduced to just earning money so you can have time to 'not work'. It runs through interrelationship between us and others and God. Neither is it simply about our output or work product.

⁵³⁹ CSDC, 263.

⁵⁴⁰ Saint Ambrose, *De Obitu Valentiniani Consolatio*, 62: PL 16, 1438; CSDC, 265.

⁵⁴¹ CSDC, 275.

20.2.4 The Dignity of Work

When Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* wrote about the dignity of work, he explained that work has two dimensions, which he called 'objective' and 'subjective'.

Objective

'The sum of activities, resources, instruments and technologies used by men and women to produce goods and services, to exercise dominion over the earth.' It is the changeable aspect of human activity, that varies due to technological, cultural, social and political conditions of any given time and place.

Subjective

The subjective meaning of work is about the person who performs the work and how work corresponds to the dignity and personal vocation of each human being who, as the image of God, is capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself, and a capacity for self-realisation.⁵⁴² Work in this sense represents its stable dimension, since it does not depend on what people produce or on the type of activity they undertake, but only on their dignity as human beings.

This distinction is critical for understanding that the ultimate foundation for the value and dignity of work is, and the basis for respecting human rights at work – for there being work rights that correspond to dignity of human beings.⁵⁴³ Because of this all work has dignity; all work is human work and never simply to be valued in terms of the commodity produced, etc. A worker is never to be reduced to the status of a 'resource', even though they are resourceful and productive. That is to overlook the meaning of work. Work is an expression of the person, a human act.⁵⁴⁴ The human person is the measure of the dignity of work.

Work is not a commodity but always personal. The subjective value of work is more important and can never be overlooked. When it is, it is an offence against dignity, diminishing a person to an instrument whose value is in its usefulness.

Work is valuable for what it produces, but more valuable for what it does to the person. 'Work is for man, and not man for work.'⁵⁴⁵ It is always man who is the purpose of work, whatever work it is that is done by man – even if the common scale of values rates it as the merest 'service', as the most monotonous, even the most alienating work'.⁵⁴⁶

Work is not only about meeting our own needs. Given our interdependence, work also has an intrinsic social dimension. We work with others and for others, and the value of work can only be assessed by taking its social dimension into account.⁵⁴⁷ This includes the intergenerational dimension – we are heirs of the work of past generations and shape the future of those who will come after us.⁵⁴⁸ We have an obligation to contribute to our society and the people around us through our work.⁵⁴⁹ In work we unite with others to cooperate and achieve the common good.

⁵⁴² CSDC, 270; Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 14.9.1981, 6.

⁵⁴³ CSDC, 270.

⁵⁴⁴ CSDC, 271.

⁵⁴⁵ CSDC, 2428.

⁵⁴⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 6.

⁵⁴⁷ CSDC, 273.

⁵⁴⁸ CSDC, 274.

⁵⁴⁹ CSDC, 274.

Work allows us to develop as persons⁵⁵⁰ due to the free use of our capacities, intellect and will. It allows us to develop our personality, virtues,⁵⁵¹ social and practical skills. It provides a bond of union with others and a way to contribute to society, living our vocation to work. Also, for a Christian, it is place for union/encounter with God and to coredeem.⁵⁵²

2.4.1 Labour and Capital

The Magisterium condemned the attitude that treated workers as resources to be exploited, valuing the production of things or profit over the people involved in producing them. In the past this occurred within the context of tensions between 'capital' and 'labour' who often seemed set in antagonism where they needed to cooperate and work together with solidarity, when 'Capital' sought to extract maximum profit from employees for the lowest possible wages. In many parts of the world the economic models has changed and there are new models of exploitation and use arising from new technologies and globalization which, while sources of development and progress, expose workers to risks of exploitation. Old forms of exploitation persist (underpaid work child labour, etc.) but there are subtler forms to be aware of: over-working, careerism, work demands and arrangements that destabilise family life, and work relationships marked by destructive competitiveness and isolation. All of these lose sight of the primacy of the dignity of the worker as a person, and the meaning and value of life. The Catechism reminds us of the need for solidarity between capital and labour. 'Right relations between employers and employees, between those who govern and citizens, presuppose a natural good will in keeping with the dignity of human persons concerned for justice and fraternity'.

2.4.2 Right to participate

The principle of participation also applies to work. First of all, the right to work, which we'll talk about later, but then also a right and duty to participate in work life and work community. The Magisterium highlights the personal and practical value of promoting participation of workers in work decisions, profit-sharing arrangements and other forms of cooperation that offer incentive and opportunities for people to live according to their dignity, exercising their right to contribute with their initiative, responsibility, etc. Rather than being treated like a cog, to participate more fully and freely, in line with mission and meaning of work.

As St John Paul II said,

Workers not only want fair pay, they also want to share in the responsibility and creativity of the very work process. They want to feel that they are working for themselves — an awareness that is smothered in a bureaucratic system where they only feel themselves to be "cogs" in a huge machine moved from above.

2.4.3 Labour & property

As we said earlier, the right to private property sits within the broader context of the universal destination of goods. The Magisterium teaches that it is wrong to own something that can give people work (e.g.: land, a factory, etc.) and leave it idle for the sake of profit, etc. Similarly, it is wrong to prevent others from working for the sake of profit, for instance, buying

⁵⁵⁰ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 35.

⁵⁵¹ Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, 72.

⁵⁵² Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 259; CCC, 2427.

a competitor's business simply to shut it down with the resulting loss of jobs, or receiving subsidies to not make something productive. There is a duty to make what we own productive, in the service of humankind and with a view to the common good. This also applies to technology and not just physical things.⁵⁵³

21.2.5 Rest

Sunday rest reminds us of the order of things. It protects us from becoming slaves to work, whether voluntarily or by force. Rest is a right. God 'rested' after the sixth day of Creation (*Gen 2:2*), and human beings, created in the image of God, rest as well as work. There is a right to sufficient rest and free time to tend to family, cultural, social and religious life. It makes sense, as these things are also duties, and we need to be able to tend to them.

Today the 'weekend' mentality is pervasive, where the weekend is simply about not being at work. For a Christian, it has a purpose. Sunday, in particular, is a day of rest to allow participation in the worship of God. It is a day set aside for joyful celebration of the Lord's day, for the works of mercy, for family life, and relaxation of mind and body. Catholics have a duty to refrain from work activities that prevent them from living Sunday rest (and holy days of obligation).⁵⁵⁴ Family needs and service are legitimate reasons to work on a Sunday, however it cannot create habits prejudicial to religion, family life or health.⁵⁵⁵ We are also called to attend to the needy and people who have the same rights and needs as us yet cannot rest from work due to poverty.⁵⁵⁶ Sunday is also a time for Christians to reflect and study to mature in their interior life. Christians should give Christian example in the sorts of entertainments they choose in their rest time and the way they behave in them.⁵⁵⁷ It is good to think about how we direct our Sundays to the ends for which God intended them.

Public authorities have the duty to ensure that citizens are not denied this right to rest and divine worship for the sake of economic productivity. Employers have a similar obligation in relation to their employees. Christians, for religious freedom and the common good of all, should seek to have Sundays and holy days of obligation recognized as legal holidays. Every Christian should avoid making unnecessary demands on others that would hinder them from observing the Lord's day.⁵⁵⁸

22.2.6 The Right to Work

From the things we have said above, we can say that work is a right. Work is so important for personal and social life that the Church calls unemployment a 'social disaster', especially for young people.⁵⁵⁹ Full employment is a goal for every society to work towards, for justice and the common good. Excluding people or denying them the right to work is profoundly damaging and an obstacle to civil peace.⁵⁶⁰ The *Compendium* refers in particular to the plight of young

⁵⁵³ *CSDC*, 282-3.

⁵⁵⁴ *CSDC*, 284.

⁵⁵⁵ *CSDC*, 284.

⁵⁵⁶ *CCC*, 2186.

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. *CCC*, 2187; *CSDC*, 285.

⁵⁵⁸ *CSDC*, 286; *CCC*, 2187.

⁵⁵⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 18; *CSDC*, 287.

⁵⁶⁰ *CSDC*, 289.; *CCC* 2436.

people, women,⁵⁶¹ unskilled workers, people with disabilities, immigrants,⁵⁶² ex-prisoners, the illiterate who risk marginalization, discrimination and social exclusion together with the consequences of being denied the opportunities for personal development and self-realization through work. This is a question of social justice.

Promoting the right to work

All people and institutions in positions to direct policies concerning work and the economy, nationally or internationally, have a responsibility to promote employment opportunities and access to employment for all. As gaining and maintaining employment increasingly depends on a person's professional capacities, training and education, it is important to ensure that these opportunities are available and that everyone has the opportunity to access them, whether for people entering work for the first time or those needing to re-train or to re-enter the workforce.⁵⁶³ Young people need to be formed to take initiative and responsibility to prepare themselves for work, and we all need to be responsible for maintaining our expertise and flexibility with professional development.

The state has a duty to promote active employment policies, that is, fostering the creation of employment opportunities. This does not mean that the state needs to take responsibility for employing everyone to guarantee full employment, although public works initiatives, etc might be necessary in some moments. Rather, consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, it will usually be by supporting initiatives that create employment and foster the participation of everyone, if necessary by providing incentives or subsidies that enable organisations to provide dignified work opportunities. 'sustain business activities by creating conditions which will ensure job opportunities, by stimulating those activities where they are lacking or by supporting them in moments of crisis'.⁵⁶⁴

Given the global dimension of financial markets and economic systems today, international cooperation is also required to safeguard the right to work. Apart from the States, international organisations and labour unions also have a role. Together they should work to create 'an ever more tightly knit fabric of juridical norms that protect the work of men, women and youth, ensuring its proper remuneration'.⁵⁶⁵

Promoting the right to work should be an open process that allows room for personal organization and initiative and cooperation, drawing on the energies inherent in subsidiarity and solidarity.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶¹ *CSDC*, 295.

⁵⁶² *CSDC*, 297-8. 'Institutions in host countries must keep careful watch to prevent the spread of the temptation to exploit foreign labourers, denying them the same rights enjoyed by nationals, rights that are to be guaranteed to all without discrimination. Regulating immigration according to criteria of equity and balance is one of the indispensable conditions for ensuring that immigrants are integrated into society with the guarantees required by recognition of their human dignity. Immigrants are to be received as persons and helped, together with their families, to become a part of societal life. In this context, the right of reuniting families should be respected and promoted.'

⁵⁶³ *CSDC*, 290.

⁵⁶⁴ *CSDC*, 291; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 48.

⁵⁶⁵ *CSDC*, 292; Pope Paul VI, *Address to the International Labour Organization*, 10.6.1969, 21. See also Pope John Paul II, *Address to the International Labour Organization*, 15.6.1982, 13.

⁵⁶⁶ The *Compendium* has particular considerations in relation to the world of agriculture and work, 'to restore to agriculture – and to rural people – their just value as the basis for a healthy economy, within the social community's development as a whole'. 299. See also Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 21. See also Pope

23.2.7 Work and the Family

Work is a foundation for family life as it ensures the family's subsistence and supports the raising of children. Family and work are both natural realities for human beings, and are so closely related that they need to be understood together.⁵⁶⁷ Businesses, professional bodies, unions and the State always need to keep this in mind and promote policies that, from an employment point of view, do not penalize the family but rather support it. The family is not purely a worker's private affair, nor is work just about the economy, and family and work life affect each other. Some work situations mean that workers are unable to devote sufficient time to their families (e.g.: affordable housing within reach of work, working multiple jobs, fatigue, work situations that oblige workers to leave their families, sometimes for long periods, particularly foreign workers). Unemployment affects the whole family, while family tensions and crises impact on attitudes and productivity at work.

In the relationship between family and work special attention must be given to the contribution of women to the family and to the work of the home. Men also have a responsibility in this work; however it has a special place for mothers as it is a service 'directed and devoted to the quality of life, constitutes as type of activity that is eminently personal and personalising. For this reason, its value must be recognised, including by economic compensation commensurate with other types of work. The Magisterium also teaches that 'care must be taken to eliminate all obstacles that prevent a husband and wife from making free decisions concerning their procreative responsibilities and, in particular, those that do not allow women to carry out their maternal role fully. Women must be allowed to participate fully in work without any form of discrimination. This should not have to be at the cost of them having to sacrifice their irreplaceable role in the family.'⁵⁶⁸

24.2.8 Rights and Duties of Workers

The rights of workers, like all other rights, are based on the nature and dignity of the human person. The Magisterium lists some of these rights, which should be reflected in societies' legal systems: the right to

- a just wage
- rest
- a working environment and processes that are not harmful to physical health or moral integrity
- to work without affront to conscience or personal dignity
- subsidies necessary for subsistence of unemployed workers and their families, pension and insurance for old age, sickness and in case of work-related accidents; social security connected with maternity
- to assemble and form associations

Pope Benedict defined what was necessary for work to be considered 'decent'.

Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 23; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Towards a Better Distribution of Land. The Challenge of Agrarian Reform*, 23.11.1997.

⁵⁶⁷ CSDC, 249.

⁵⁶⁸ CSDC, 251. True advancement ... requires that labour should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them'. Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 19.

work that expresses the essential dignity of every man and woman in the context of their particular society: work that is freely chosen, effectively associating workers, both men and women, with the development of their community; work that enables the worker to be respected and free from any form of discrimination; work that makes it possible for families to meet their needs and provide schooling for their children, without the children themselves being forced into labour; work that permits the workers to organize themselves freely, and to make their voices heard; work that leaves enough room for rediscovering one's roots at a personal, familial and spiritual level; work that guarantees those who have retired a decent standard of living.⁵⁶⁹

These rights are often infringed, confirmed by the fact that many workers are underpaid and without adequate protection or representation. Frequently work conditions, especially in developing countries, are so inhumane that they are an offence to their dignity and compromise their health.

The Right to Fair Remuneration

Remuneration is the most important means for achieving justice in work relationships. The concept of the 'just wage' has been developed by the Magisterium and found its way into the legal and economic systems of many countries. The just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. Based on Sacred Scripture, the Church's teaching always been that delaying a worker's wages or underpaying wages is theft.⁵⁷⁰ This includes provisions for worker's compensation, sick leave, and superannuation contributions in states that use this system to make provisions for workers in old age.

The Magisterium addressed the question of what constituted a just wage. In determining fair pay, both the contributions and needs of the person must be considered. Those needs include what is required to support a family with dignity, and a just wage must take this into account.

Remuneration for work should guarantee man the opportunity to provide a dignified livelihood for himself and his family on the material, social, cultural and spiritual level, taking into account the role and productivity of each, the state of the business and the common good. Agreement between the parties is not sufficient to justify morally the amount to be received in wages.⁵⁷¹

Natural justice precedes and is above freedom of contract.⁵⁷²

The relationship between work and family is so close that the Magisterium also refers to this as the 'family wage',

a wage sufficient to maintain a family and allow it to live decently. Such a wage must also allow for savings that will permit the acquisition of property as a guarantee of freedom. The right to property is closely connected with the existence of families,

⁵⁶⁹ Pope XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 63.

⁵⁷⁰ *Lev* 19:13; *Dt* 24:14-15; *Jas* 5:4.

⁵⁷¹ *CSDC*, 2434. the remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful. It must be determined in accordance with justice and equity; which means that workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations in a worthy manner. Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 71.

⁵⁷² *CSDC*, 302.

which protect themselves from need thanks also to savings and to the building up of family property.⁵⁷³

There are several different ways to make a family wage a concrete reality.⁵⁷⁴

Various forms of important social provisions can help to bring it about, for example, family subsidies and other contributions for dependent family members, and also remuneration for the domestic work done in the home by one of the parents.⁵⁷⁵

Income Distribution

As seen above, some of the ways in which societies can achieve a just wage can involve various forms of subsidies or income distribution. A country's economic well-being is not measured exclusively by its GDP, but also by taking into account the way it is produced and the level of equity in the distribution of income, which should allow everyone access to what is necessary for their personal development and perfection.⁵⁷⁶ This is achieved not only by citizens giving each other what is due (commutative justice), but also by means of 'suitable social policies for the redistribution of income which, taking general conditions into account, look at merit as well as the need of each citizen.'⁵⁷⁷ Societies can organise themselves in a great variety of ways to promote this end.

The right to strike

Strikes were a topic of concern in the context of the writing of *Rerum Novarum*, at a time when Communism promoted a response of violent opposition to exploitation and injustices promoted by liberal capitalism from which individual workers, on their own, had no protection. Liberal philosophy saw little role for government beyond promoting freedoms, hence there were no real protections for workers in relation to safety, workers compensation, wages, etc. An important part of the 'worker question', then, was the legitimacy of workers organising into trade unions, and strikes.

Striking is defined as 'the collective and concerted refusal on the part of workers to continue rendering their services, for the purpose of obtaining by means of such pressure exerted on their employers, the State or on public opinion either better working conditions or an improvement in their social status.'⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷³ CSDC 250. Cf. Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 105; Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 193-194.

⁵⁷⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 205. "It is vital that government leaders and financial leaders take heed and broaden their horizons, working to ensure that all citizens have dignified work, education and healthcare. Why not turn to God and ask him to inspire their plans? I am firmly convinced that openness to the transcendent can bring about a new political and economic mindset which would help to break down the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society."

⁵⁷⁵ CSDC, 250. See also Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 19, 625- 629; Holy See, *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, a. 10. Such arrangements imply forms of taxation that share the concern and support for families across society. 'it is an intolerable abuse, and to be abolished at all cost, for mothers on account of the father's low wage to be forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the home to the neglect of their proper cares and duties, especially the training of children. Every effort must therefore be made [so] that fathers of families receive a wage large enough to meet ordinary family needs adequately.'

⁵⁷⁶ CSDC, 303.

⁵⁷⁷ CSDC, 303.

⁵⁷⁸ CSDC, 304.

The Church's social doctrine recognises the legitimacy of striking (as defined above), 'when it cannot be avoided, or at least when it is necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit, when every other method for the resolution of disputes has been ineffectual.'⁵⁷⁹ Striking must always be a peaceful method of making demands and fighting for rights. 'It becomes morally unacceptable when accompanied by violence, or when objectives are included that are not directly linked to working conditions or are contrary to the common good.'⁵⁸⁰

Solidarity among workers: Trade unions

Pope Leo XIII recognised the importance of trade unions, and the Magisterium recognises that their 'fundamental role' is connected to the right to associate to defend workers' vital interests. They have a purpose in relation to the common good, 'are a positive influence for social order and solidarity and are therefore an indispensable element of social life'. Specifically, their role is 'to secure the just rights of workers within the framework of the common good of the whole of society.'⁵⁸¹ The recognition of worker's rights has always been a difficult problem and genuine solidarity among workers is valuable. Relations in the world of work, however, should be marked by cooperation rather than hatred or attempt to eliminate an enemy. Unions are not all about 'class struggle' as promoted by socialist ideologies. 'Properly speaking, unions are promoters of the struggle for social justice, for the rights of workers on their particular professions'.⁵⁸² Unions should be instruments of solidarity and justice, and their struggle should be for the common good'.⁵⁸³ Unions 'have the duty to exercise influence in the political arena, making it duly sensitive to labour problems and helping it to work so that workers' rights are respected.

The changing context of work and the global economy require new forms of solidarity, for unions to act in new ways and to widen their scope to workers in new, precarious work situations, and to international levels, and to update the 'norms and systems of social security that have traditionally protected workers and guaranteed their fundamental rights.'⁵⁸⁴

25. Conclusion: The Mission of the Laity

The Church's Magisterium proclaims the transcendent dignity of work and its place in the human vocation, especially of the laity as they exercise the mission entrusted to them in Genesis, to make Christ known around them, and to direct the world to Christ. So we can love our work and it becomes a place where we find God, our sanctification, sanctification of others and of the world. Awareness that, in any honest work we do, we are always working in our Father's vineyard.

Lord, give us your grace. Open the door to the workshop in Nazareth so that we may learn to contemplate you, together with your holy Mother Mary and the holy Patriarch St Joseph, whom I love and revere so dearly, the three of you dedicated to a life of work made holy. Then, Lord, our poor hearts will be enkindled, we shall seek you and

⁵⁷⁹ CSDC, 304. See also CCC, 2435.

⁵⁸⁰ CSDC, 304.

⁵⁸¹ CSDC, 307; Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 20.

⁵⁸² CSDC, 306.

⁵⁸³ CSDC, 306.

⁵⁸⁴ CSDC, 309.

find you in our daily work, which you want us to convert into a work of God, a labour of Love.⁵⁸⁵

By their work people share in God's creating activity. Awareness that our work is a sharing in God's work ought to permeate even the most ordinary daily activities. By our labour we are unfolding the Creator's work and contributing to the realization of God's plan on earth. The Christian message does not stop us from building the world or make us neglect our fellow human beings. On the contrary it binds us more firmly to do just that.⁵⁸⁶

Vatican II proclaimed that the laity,

By their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.⁵⁸⁷

By their competence in secular training and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them vigorously contribute their effort, so that created goods may be perfected by human labour, technical skill and civic culture for the benefit of all men according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word. ... In this manner, through the members of the Church, will Christ progressively illumine the whole of human society with His saving light. Moreover, let the laity also by their combined efforts remedy the customs and conditions of the world, ... so that they all may be conformed to the norms of justice and may favour the practice of virtue rather than hinder it. By so doing they will imbue culture and human activity with genuine moral values.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁵ Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*, 72.

⁵⁸⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 25.

⁵⁸⁷ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 31.

⁵⁸⁸ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 36.

3. Economic Activity

Economic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of commercial logic. This needs to be directed towards the pursuit of the common good, for which the political community, in particular must also take responsibility.⁵⁸⁹

Man is the source, the centre, and the purpose of all economic and social life.⁵⁹⁰

The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies.⁵⁹¹

26.3.1 The Value of Wealth & Poverty

Drawing on Sacred Scripture, the Church teaches us that goods are necessary and a blessing. God sees the world is good and entrusts it to humankind to use and care for. Goods are necessary and it correspond to our nature to have them. The right to private property originates here.

Economic activity is part of our divine vocation, preceding the fall. Developing wealth is a positive thing, provided it is gained and used in accordance with God's plan.

It is important to consider these truths to form our own attitudes toward goods:

Their value is relative. We need to see them in the correct order of value in God's plan. We can't put our heart in them – the disorder that comes from original sin inclines us to make them an end in themselves and elevate attainment and possession above other values like people or creation. Their possession and use is always in this broader context of God's plan and gives it a social dimension.

Having what we need is good, but Jesus puts forward poverty of spirit as a path to happiness and holiness (*Mt 5*). Being poor is a state that shows us who we are before God. Benedict XVI talks about the attitude of gift – the starting point that everything we have is a gift. When we have this attitude, we approach things differently. He talks about the problematic attitude to goods that comes when we think we have done it all for ourselves, we become self-sufficient.

Wealth exists to be shared. The Church draws some conclusions from this on what is good use or misuse of wealth:

- For proper attitudes to wealth, one needs formation of conscience and also the virtues. The Social Doctrine of the Church gives us pointers for forming our conscience in this area.
- Improper accumulation/hoarding is immoral. It needs to fulfil its purpose. Think of the parable of the talents (*Mt 25:14–30*).
- Wasting resources is immoral. Our consciences can be blunted by our intensely consumerist environment when so many live without the essentials for a dignified life. The Church speaks to recall us to the correct order of things and reminds us of God's plan. In

⁵⁸⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 36.

⁵⁹⁰ *CSDC*, 331; Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 63.

⁵⁹¹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 19.3.2018, 203.

fact, without God we forget all that and it becomes hard as individuals and society to even see justice, much less live it.

- On the other hand, see the great things that people can do who have or generate wealth and administer it as God's stewards. It is a privileged way of being able to cooperate with God's Providence. Positive attitude to wealth and generating wealth when it is done and used according to its purpose, according to God's order and plan.

So, it's not a question of having or not having – what makes a difference is the human attitude and use of them.

27.3.2 Consumerism

The Popes of this century have all pointed out the moral and cultural consequences of the phenomenon of consumerism, and that consumerism is itself a reflection the value and meaning people see in their own lives. Consumerism is not simply an economic phenomenon but reflects and compounds the moral and cultural crisis in many societies.

According to Pope John Paul II, consumer cultures prioritise 'having' over 'being' and makes enjoyment the purpose of life. From this, people lose the ability to discern what really satisfies the human heart from other apparent needs and remain immature.⁵⁹²

A given culture reveals its overall understanding of life through the choices it makes in production and consumption. It is here that *the phenomenon of consumerism* arises. In singling out new needs and new means to meet them, one must be guided by a comprehensive picture of man which respects all the dimensions of his being and which subordinates his material and instinctive dimensions to his interior and spiritual ones. If, on the contrary, a direct appeal is made to his instincts — while ignoring in various ways the reality of the person as intelligent and free — then *consumer attitudes and lifestyles* can be created which are objectively improper and often damaging to his physical and spiritual health. Of itself, an economic system does not possess criteria for correctly distinguishing new and higher forms of satisfying human needs from artificial new needs which hinder the formation of a mature personality. ... It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards "having" rather than "being", and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself.

Speaking in the USA, Pope Benedict said,

For an affluent society, a further obstacle to an encounter with the living God lies in the subtle influence of materialism. ... People today need to be reminded of the ultimate purpose of their lives. They need to recognize that implanted within them is a deep thirst for God. They need to be given opportunities to drink from the wells of his infinite love. It is easy to be entranced by the almost unlimited possibilities that science and technology place before us; it is easy to make the mistake of thinking we can obtain by our own efforts the fulfillment of our deepest needs. ... Without God, ... our lives are ultimately empty.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹² CSDC, 360; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 36.

⁵⁹³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to US Bishops*, 16.4.2008.

Pope Francis has also warned of the harmful consequences of consumerism and its 'throwaway' culture, which moves from a desire to possess things to an attitude that 'consumes' people. Relationships are for the purpose of desire satisfaction, and others, valuable to the extent to which they meet this need, and are easily replaceable. Humanly speaking, even if we have many things, live in poverty, fearing commitment and lonely.

Today consumerism determines what is important. Consuming relationships, consuming friendships, consuming religions, consuming, consuming... Whatever the cost or consequences. A consumption which does not favour bonding, a consumption which has little to do with human relationships. Social bonds are a mere 'means' for the satisfaction of 'my needs.' The important thing is no longer our neighbour, with his or her familiar face, story and personality.

The result is a culture which discards everything that is no longer 'useful' or 'satisfying' for the tastes of the consumer. We have turned our society into a huge multicultural showcase tied only to the tastes of certain 'consumers', while so many others only 'eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table'. This causes great harm. I would say that at the root of so many contemporary situations is a kind of impoverishment born of a widespread and radical sense of loneliness. ... Loneliness with fear of commitment in a limitless effort to feel recognized.⁵⁹⁴

Consumerism is a virus that tarnishes faith at its root, because it makes you believe that life depends solely on what you have, and so you forget God who approaches you and who is beside you. The Lord comes, but you prefer to follow the longing you feel; your brother knocks at your door, but he is a nuisance to you because he upsets your plans — and this is the attitude of consumerism. The true danger ... is what anaesthetizes the heart: it is dependence on consumption, it is letting things burden and dissipate the heart (cf. *Lk* 21:34). ...When we live for things, things are never enough, greed increases and others get in the way and people end up feeling threatened and, as they are ever dissatisfied and angry, the level of hatred rises, "I want more, I want more, I want more...". We see this today wherever consumerism holds sway: how much violence there is, even if it is only verbal, what anger ...

Today it is our task to watch, to keep watch: to overcome the temptation of thinking that life means accumulating — this is a temptation, the meaning of life is not to accumulate, it is up to us to unmask the deception that we are happy when we have many things, to resist the dazzling lights of consumerism ... and to believe that prayer and charity are not time wasted but rather the greatest of treasures.⁵⁹⁵

Given that consumerism is a cultural and moral problem, there is a need for cultural and moral solutions; a change in the way we live our lives, and so, a need for cultural and moral formation. It is necessary to 'create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments.'⁵⁹⁶ We need to recall what it means to be human, addressing all our dimensions, including the religious and ethical, not limiting ourselves to the

⁵⁹⁴ Pope Francis, *Address to Bishops at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary*, Philadelphia, 28.9.2015.

⁵⁹⁵ Pope Francis, *Homily*, 1 December 2019.

⁵⁹⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 36; *CSDC*, 359.

material. "An increased sense of God and increased self-awareness are fundamental to any full development of human society".⁵⁹⁷

We need to recognise that, when we participate in the economy as consumers, we have a right and a responsibility to direct it towards its proper purpose, so it truly serves humankind.

A great deal of educational and cultural work is urgently needed, including the education of consumers in the responsible use of their power of choice, the formation of a strong sense of responsibility among producers and among people in the mass media in particular, as well as the necessary intervention by public authorities.⁵⁹⁸

The possibility to influence the choices made within the economic sector is in the hands of those who must decide where to place their financial resources ... Purchasing power must be used in the context of the moral demands of justice and solidarity, and in that of precise social responsibilities. ... This responsibility gives to consumers the possibility, thanks to the wider circulation of information, of directing the behaviour of producers, through preferences — individual and collective — given to the products of certain companies rather than to those of others, taking into account not only the price and quality of what is being purchased but also the presence of correct working conditions in the company as well as the level of protection of the natural environment in which it operates.⁵⁹⁹

We also need to have solidarity with future generations who will need to live with the consequences of excessive and irresponsible consumerism.⁶⁰⁰ To sum up, deciding where to put our money, "is always a moral and cultural choice".⁶⁰¹

28.3.3 Private and Business Initiatives

If the economy, directed well, is a positive thing, so too does the Church acknowledge the positive role of business. Pope Francis has said,

Business is a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world. It can be a fruitful source of prosperity for the areas in which it operates, especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good.⁶⁰²

The Church defends and promotes economic initiative as part of human freedom, the right and responsibility to make legitimate use of our 'talents', to contribute to what benefits everyone, and to share in the fruits. Experience shows that where entrepreneurship and creativity in free and responsible economic initiative is repressed, society and the economy itself, suffers. The State should only impose strict limitations where an initiative, or the way it is undertaken, is incompatible with the common good.⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁷ CCC, 2441.

⁵⁹⁸ CSDC, 376; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 36.

⁵⁹⁹ CSDC, 359.

⁶⁰⁰ CSDC, 359; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 37. All the Popes of this century have expressed concern about the ecological impact of the anthropological errors at the heart of consumerism.

⁶⁰¹ CSDC, 358; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 36.

⁶⁰² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 24.5.2015, 129.

⁶⁰³ CSDC, 336-7; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 16.

The principal purpose of business

What is the principal purpose of business? One school of thought is that the purpose of business is to maximise profits for shareholders; that all other considerations are subordinate to this, and that maximizing profits should be the sole criteria of managers and directors. Many other people today, however, recognise the insufficiency of this approach and maintain that businesses, like other citizens, have responsibilities towards the societies in which they operate.⁶⁰⁴

The Church proposes a nobler purpose and scope for business. Businesses don't just make profits but serve the common good through the production of useful goods and services.⁶⁰⁵ When they do this efficiently and satisfying the interests of the different parties involved, they create wealth not just for the owners, but for everyone involved in the activity and for the whole society. Their function is not only economic but social: a business is a society of persons, and businesses create opportunities people to meet, cooperate and enhance their abilities. Businesses, then, have economic, social and moral goals, which are all pursued together.

Society is not just a market or a source of resources for a business to exploit. In the past it was easier for a business to identify its community and cooperate with partners for the common good. New forms of business organisation today, where perhaps there is no fixed geographical location, where production may be outsourced to contractors around the globe, and where business relationships are increasingly exclusively online, can make it easier to overlook this responsibility which, however, remains.⁶⁰⁶

Profit is perhaps the first indicator that a business is functioning well, but a business may show a profit while not serving society. This happens, for instance, when the people in a company are not respected, when workers' rights are violated, when social responsibilities are neglected, e.g.: pollution, when products are defective or harmful. The pursuit of profit is legitimate, but never at the expense of the rights and dignity of any person in the business.

Just as the Church speaks of creating a 'human ecology' in relation to the family, so it speaks of creating a 'social ecology' in a business, a community of solidarity itself, where the good of each person matters, that contributes to the common good.⁶⁰⁷

Responsibilities of Business Owners and Managers⁶⁰⁸

To be virtuous: Economic initiative is a human activity and an expression of human intelligence. The word 'competition' comes from the Latin '*cumpetere*', meaning to seeking solutions together. This requires creativity and cooperation. For businesses to fulfil their function, and for people to fulfil themselves in business, human virtues needed for personal growth are required, and also the social virtues towards the community. Diligence,

⁶⁰⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*.

⁶⁰⁵ CSDC, 338.

⁶⁰⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*.

⁶⁰⁷ CSDC, 340.

⁶⁰⁸ CSDC, 2432 Those responsible for business enterprises are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations. They have an obligation to consider the good of persons and not only the increase of profits. Profits are necessary, however. They make possible the investments that ensure the future of a business and they guarantee employment.

industriousness, prudence in taking reasonable risks, reliability, fidelity in relationships, courage in acting on difficult decisions, are important qualities.⁶⁰⁹

To reflect on the personal choices: As owners and managers make many of the important decisions, they have a responsibility not only to stay up to date on technical and commercial aspects of the business, but to reflect constantly on the 'moral motivations that should guide the personal choices of those to whom these tasks fall'. Reflection can be difficult when things are fast-paced, and it's not a quality society fosters, but it is important so can keep actions in touch/consistent with the ultimate purpose and truths. Need reflection on things to keep grounded.⁶¹⁰

Towards workers: Owners and managers are not only responsible for the economic objectives of the company. Owners and managers have a duty towards the people who work in the company, to respect their dignity in concrete ways. They need to recognise that, as persons, they are the most valuable, and their needs are decisive in making decisions about production, etc. You have to take care of employees and others with work arrangements with the company, not treat them as one more resource. It's really important to protect employment, for instance; jobs are not just one cost factor like any other, because behind this expense lies a person and a family, and all the meaning of work that we talked about in the last chapter. People have to be an important consideration in decision-making, not just financial or strategic decisions.

The Compendium lists these other responsibilities of business owners and managers:

- structure work in such a way as to promote the family, especially for mothers
- in light of an integral vision of man and development, ensure the
 - quality of the goods and/or services
 - quality of the environment and of life in general
- invest, when economic and political stability make it possible, in places and sectors that offer individuals and peoples an opportunity to make good use of their own labour.⁶¹¹

29.3.4 Economic Institutions at the Service of Man

We have already said that man is the source, the centre, and the purpose of all economic and social life⁶¹². There are various roles/sectors that have roles to play and duties with respect to the common good. John Paul II identified three mayor sectors: the free market, the State, and 'intermediate social bodies' that are neither specifically private or public.

Capitalism and the Free Market

The free market is a positive thing, and offers many advantages. In many circumstances 'the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs.'⁶¹³ We have already said some of the good things about it above in terms of freedom, creativity, cooperation, etc. Freedom in the market is important for justice, and healthy

⁶⁰⁹ CSDC, 343

⁶¹⁰ CSDC, 344; Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 40.

⁶¹¹ CSDC, 345; Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 19; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 36.

⁶¹² CSDC, 331; Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 63.

⁶¹³ CSDC, 347; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 34.

competition promotes efficiency, rewards innovation, and gives people the ability to compare and choose.⁶¹⁴

But, as we have said, the free market is not an end in itself. It has a purpose, and it needs to be judged in light of this and of the values it transmits in society. It must be directed towards achieving its purpose, integral development and the common good. It is fruitful when it does this but can be very detrimental to individuals and society when it is misdirected and abused, or when people pretend that the market can direct itself.

Everyone who participates in economic life is responsible for this in their own way, particularly business owners and managers, but also investors and consumers. The State, too, has a role to play in regulating the market to support stability, transparency and justice, to protect dignity and the common good and in particular the family.

The Church's social doctrine tells us that the test for morally evaluating a market economy is the extent to which it promotes its true end.

If by 'capitalism' is meant an economic system which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector, then the answer is certainly in the affirmative, even though it would perhaps be more appropriate to speak of a 'business economy', 'market economy' or simply 'free economy'. But if by 'capitalism' is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality, and which sees it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious, then the reply is certainly negative". In this way a Christian perspective is defined regarding social and political conditions of economic activity, not only its rules but also its moral quality and its meaning.⁶¹⁵

So, market is great, but only if it has its proper purpose in mind and is directed to serve. We should also remember that the market is never going to meet all our needs, without a reductionist vision of man and society.

On a positive note, recognising the social function of the market in contemporary society, it is important to 'identify its most positive potentials and to create the conditions that allow them to be put concretely into effect'.⁶¹⁶

*The State*⁶¹⁷

The State plays a role in regulating the market as said above, so it genuinely serves freedom and the common good. The important point of this section is that it be guided by the principles

⁶¹⁴ CSDC, 347.

⁶¹⁵ 335; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 42.

⁶¹⁶ CSDC, 350.

⁶¹⁷ CCC, 2432, 2431. The responsibility of the state. "Economic activity, especially the activity of a market economy, cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical, or political vacuum. On the contrary, it presupposes sure guarantees of individual freedom and private property, as well as a stable currency and efficient public services. Hence the principal task of the state is to guarantee this security, so that those who work and produce can enjoy the fruits of their labours and thus feel encouraged to work efficiently and honestly.... Another task of the state is that of overseeing and directing the exercise of human rights in the economic sector. However, primary responsibility in this area belongs not to the state but to individuals and to the various groups and associations which make up society."

of both subsidiarity and solidarity.⁶¹⁸ Subsidiarity respects and promotes free activity that befits human nature and fosters individual and social development. Solidarity, recognising our social nature and common humanity, looks to protect and include the vulnerable. An appeal to 'subsidiarity' without solidarity encourages 'self-centred localism', while a 'solidarity' that repressed subsidiarity stifles initiative and freedom and 'can easily degenerate into a "Welfare State", depriving citizens of responsibility and the growth of agencies guided by more bureaucratic logic more than the needs of the person.⁶¹⁹ State intervention or non-intervention in the economy should not be ideologically driven, but commensurate with society's real needs. There is the need for an equilibrium between private freedom and public action.

Duties of the State

Economic activity cannot be conducted in an institutional, juridical or political vacuum. The State's fundamental task in economic matters is determining an appropriate judicial framework for regulating economic affairs in order to safeguard a free economy which presupposes a certain equality between the parties. For instance, it needs laws, policies and institutions that guarantee individual freedom and private property, a stable currency, efficient public services.⁶²⁰

The free market can only benefit society when the State is organised in such a way that it defines and gives direction to economic development, promoting the observation of fair and transparent rules.

The state should intervene directly in the market, when, and only when, 'the market is not able to obtain the desired efficiency and when it is a question of putting the principle of redistribution onto effect.⁶²¹ At times the market is unable to guarantee an equitable distribution of essential goods and services, and in such cases the market and the State should work together to overcome the problem for the benefit of the citizens.⁶²²

The State should promote economic policies that foster the common good by encouraging citizens and businesses to participate in economic life, making policies that will foster participation.⁶²³

Try to keep a balance between private freedom and public action which can be support or direct intervention.

Taxation and public spending

Tax revenue and public spending are crucial to every civil and political community. The goal to be sought is public financing that is itself capable of becoming an instrument for development and solidarity. When public financing is just, efficient and effective, it can be enormously positive for the economy as it encourages employment growth, sustains businesses and non-profits, gives the State credibility, and secures social assistance and protection to protect the weakest members of society.

⁶¹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*.

⁶¹⁹ *CSDC*, 351; *CSDC*, 354.

⁶²⁰ *CSDC*, 352.

⁶²¹ *CSDC*, 353.

⁶²² *CSDC*, 353.

⁶²³ *CSDC*, 354.

For public financing to promote the common good, some fundamental principles are needed:

- A duty to pay taxes. This is part of solidarity.⁶²⁴
- Reasonable and fair application of taxation
- Those in charge of administering and distributing public funds and resources need to
 - act with precision and integrity
 - upholding 'the principles of solidarity, equality, and making use of talents'
 - pay special attention to families and their needs⁶²⁵

*Savings and consumer goods*⁶²⁶

Today there is a growing awareness of the ethical implications of the way we invest our savings.⁶²⁷ We cannot be indifferent to the uses to which our money is put. We should evaluate our investment options, not only on the basis of risk and return, but also by making a value judgment of the projects that those resources would finance."⁶²⁸ John Paul II and Benedict XVI remind us that investment '*always has moral, as well as economic significance.*⁶²⁹

The decision to invest in one place rather than another ... is always *a moral and cultural choice*. ... The decision to invest, that is, to offer people an opportunity to make good use of their own labour, is also determined by an attitude of human sympathy and trust in Providence, which reveal the human quality of the person making such decisions⁶³⁰

4. The “New Things” in the Economic Sector

30.4.1 Globalization: opportunities and risks

Globalism presents tremendous opportunities and risks. In itself it is neither good nor bad, it depends on how we act. We are interrelated now, more than ever. What happens in one corner of the world can affect others within moments. We do need to take a global perspective on what might in the past have been choices with more local implications. The fact that today most of our products come from far away, for instance, doesn't make the way they were produced or the dignity of the workers producing it, less important. This needs an attitude of global solidarity, without marginalization. The Church, which is a mother to the whole world, really urges this. We can't be global individualists, caring only for ourselves and interacting with other peoples only in the pursuit of self-interest.

The free market is great but is not itself sufficient to close the vast gap between developing and advanced countries. Solidarity cannot be content to wait for benefits to 'trickle-down' to others while we pursue our self-interest, not will the trickle of material benefits ever suffice the full development and dignity of humankind.⁶³¹ It requires a conscious determination.

⁶²⁴ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 30.

⁶²⁵ *CSDC*, 355.

⁶²⁶ On finance see Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 65.

⁶²⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 65.

⁶²⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 36.

⁶²⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* 40; John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 36.

⁶³⁰ *CSDC*, 358; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 36.

⁶³¹ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 168.

There are ethical criteria for the conduct of international economic relations:

- Pursuit of the common good and the universal destination of goods
- Equity in trade relationships
- Attention to the rights and needs of the poor
- Defence of human rights'
- Free Trade must be fair, taking place within a context of justice and respect for human rights.
- Respect for local cultures and diversity, including religious beliefs and practices
- Intergenerational solidarity

Solidarity between generations requires that global planning take place according to the principle of the universal destination of goods, which makes it morally illicit and economically counterproductive to burden future generations with the costs involved: morally illicit because it would mean avoiding one's own responsibilities; economically counterproductive because correcting failures is more expensive than preventing them. This principle is to be applied above all — although not only — to the earth's resources and to safeguarding creation, the latter of which becomes a particularly delicate issue because of globalization, involving as it does the entire planet understood as a single ecosystem.⁶³²

31.

4.2 Role of the international community in an era of a global economy

An important consequence of globalization is that nation-states are now less effective in directing the dynamics of their national economic-financial systems. We are more interdependent than ever, and states no longer have much control over their own economic systems. This means that we need to find new ways of regulating these processes and directing them towards the common good of the human family. This is a task of the states, and of the international community. There need to be appropriate political and juridical instruments that achieve this. Left to itself, more people will suffer want, especially the weakest.⁶³³ As with economics, politics also needs to look beyond national spheres: 'the basic goal is to guide economic processes by ensuring that the dignity of man and his complete development as a person are respected, in the context of the common good.'⁶³⁴ Economic development, in fact, 'will be lasting only to the extent that it takes places with a clear and defined normative context and within a broad plan for the moral, civil and cultural growth of the entire human family'⁶³⁵ For workers in a globalized economy need 'a globalization of safeguards, ... essential rights and equity'.⁶³⁶

What is needed is 'integral development in solidarity', that is, 'to promote the good of every person and of the whole person.'⁶³⁷ Present generations 'have direct experience of the need for solidarity and are concretely aware of the necessity to move beyond an individualistic culture.'⁶³⁸ We need new models of development that see not only to raise all people 'to the level currently enjoyed by the richest countries, but rather of building up a more decent life

⁶³² CSDC, 367.

⁶³³ CSDC, 371; Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 168. On the international community see *Fratelli Tutti*, 170-175 and CSDC, 370-376. The encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* is all about fraternity and social friendship in a globalised world.

⁶³⁴ CSDC, 372; Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 43-44.

⁶³⁵ CSDC, 372.

⁶³⁶ CSDC, 310. On the effects of globalization on work, see CSDC, 310-322.

⁶³⁷ CSDC, 373; Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*; Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 14.

⁶³⁸ CSDC, 373. See also Pope John Paul II, *Message for the 2000 World Day of Peace*, 13-14.

through united labour, of concretely enhancing every individual's dignity and creativity, as well as his capacity to respond to his personal vocation and this to God's call.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁹ CSDC, 373; Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 29; Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 40-42.

Chapter 5: The Political Community

The notes in this chapter are extracted from the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, nn. 377-427.

1. Biblical Aspects

1.1 God's dominion

377. At the beginning of its history, the people of Israel are unlike other peoples in that they have no king, for they recognize the dominion of Yahweh alone. It is God who intervenes on Israel's behalf through charismatic individuals, as recorded in the Book of Judges. The people approach the last of these individuals, Samuel, prophet and judge, to ask for a king (cf. *1 Sam* 8:5; 10:18-19). Samuel warns the Israelites about the consequences of a despotic exercise of kingship (cf. *1 Sam* 8:11-18). However, the authority of the king can also be experienced as a gift of Yahweh who comes to the assistance of his people (cf. *1 Sam* 9:16). In the end, Saul is anointed king (cf. *1 Sam* 10:1-2). These events show the tension that brought Israel to understand kingship in a different way than it was understood by neighbouring peoples. The king, chosen by Yahweh (cf. *Dt* 17:15; *1 Sam* 9:16) and consecrated by him (cf. *1 Sam* 16:12-13), is seen as God's son (cf. *Ps* 2:7) and is to make God's dominion and plan of salvation visible (cf. *Ps* 72). The king, then, is to be the defender of the weak and the guarantor of justice for the people. The denunciations of the prophets focus precisely on the kings' failure to fulfil these functions (cf. *1 Kg* 21; *Is* 10:1-4; *Am* 2:6-8, 8:4-8; *Mic* 3:1-4).

378. The prototype of the king chosen by Yahweh is David, whose humble origins are a favourite topic of the biblical account (cf. *1 Sam* 16:1-13). David is the recipient of the promise (cf. *2 Sam* 7:13-16; *Ps* 89:2-38, 132:11-18), which places him at the beginning of a special kingly tradition, the "messianic" tradition. Notwithstanding all the sins and infidelities of David and his successors, this tradition culminates in Jesus Christ, who is par excellence "Yahweh's anointed" (that is, "the Lord's consecrated one", cf. *1 Sam* 2:35, 24:7,11, 26:9,16; *Ex* 30:22-32), the son of David (cf. *Mt* 1:1-17; *Lk* 3:23-38; *Rom* 1:3).

The failure of kingship on the historical level does not lead to the disappearance of the ideal of a king who, in fidelity to Yahweh, will govern with wisdom and act in justice. This hope reappears time and again in the Psalms (cf. *Ps* 2, 18, 20, 21, 72). In the messianic oracles, the figure of a king endowed with the Lord's Spirit, full of wisdom and capable of rendering justice to the poor, is awaited in eschatological times (cf. *Is* 11:2-5; *Jer* 23:5-6). As true shepherd of the people of Israel (cf. *Ezek* 34:23-24, 37:24), he will bring peace to the nations (cf. *Zech* 9:9-10). In Wisdom Literature, the king is presented as the one who renders just judgments and abhors iniquity (cf. *Prov* 16:12), who judges the poor with equity (cf. *Prov* 29:14) and is a friend to those with a pure heart (cf. *Prov* 22:11). There is a gradual unfolding of the proclamation of what the Gospels and other New Testament writings see fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, the definitive incarnation of what the Old Testament foretold about the figure of the king.

1.2 Jesus and political authority

379. Jesus refuses the oppressive and despotic power wielded by the rulers of the nations (cf. *Mk* 10:42) and rejects their pretension in having themselves called benefactors (cf. *Lk* 22:25), but he does not directly oppose the authorities of his time. In his pronouncement on the paying of taxes to Caesar (cf. *Mk* 12:13-17; *Mt* 22:15-22; *Lk* 20:20-

26), he affirms that we must give to God what is God's, implicitly condemning every attempt at making temporal power divine or absolute: God alone can demand everything from man. At the same time, temporal power has the right to its due: Jesus does not consider it unjust to pay taxes to Caesar.

Jesus, the promised Messiah, fought against and overcame the temptation of a political messianism, characterized by the subjection of the nations (cf. Mt 4:8-11; Lk 4:5-8). He is the Son of Man who came "to serve, and to give his life" (Mk 10:45; cf. Mt 20:24-28; Lk 22:24-27). As his disciples are discussing with one another who is the greatest, Jesus teaches them that they must make themselves least and the servants of all (cf. Mk 9:33-35), showing to the sons of Zebedee, James and John, who wish to sit at His right hand, the path of the cross (cf. Mk 10:35-40; Mt 20:20-23).

1.3 The early Christian communities

380. Submission, not passive but "for the sake of conscience" (Rom 13:5), to legitimate authority responds to the order established by God. Saint Paul defines the relationships and duties that a Christian is to have towards the authorities (cf. Rom 13:1-7). He insists on the civic duty to pay taxes: "Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, fear to whom fear is due, respect to who respect is due" (Rom 13:7). The Apostle certainly does not intend to legitimize every authority so much as to help Christians to "take thought for what is noble in the sight of all" (Rom 12:17), including their relations with the authorities, insofar as the authorities are at the service of God for the good of the person (cf. Rom 13:4; 1 Tim 2:1-2; Tit 3:1) and "to execute [God's] wrath on the wrongdoer" (Rom 13:4).

Saint Peter exhorts Christians to "be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution" (1 Pet 2:13). The king and his governors have the duty "to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right" (1 Pet 2:14). This authority of theirs must be "honoured" (1 Pet 2:17), that is, recognized, because God demands correct behaviour that will "silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Pet 2:15). Freedom must not be used as a pretext for evil but to serve God (cf. 1 Pet 2:16). It concerns free and responsible obedience to an authority that causes justice to be respected, ensuring the common good.

381. Praying for rulers, which Saint Paul recommended even as he was being persecuted, implicitly indicates what political authority ought to guarantee: a calm and tranquil life led with piety and dignity (cf. 1 Tim 2:1-2). Christians must "be ready for any honest work" (Tit 3:1), showing "perfect courtesy towards all" (Tit 3:2), in the awareness that they are saved not by their own deeds but by God's mercy. Without "the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit 3:5-6), all people are "foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing [their] days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another" (Tit 3:3). We must not forget the miserable state of the human condition marred by sin, but redeemed by God's love.

382. When human authority goes beyond the limits willed by God, it makes itself a deity and demands absolute submission; it becomes the Beast of the Apocalypse, an image of the power of the imperial persecutor "drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev 17:6). The Beast is served by the "false prophet" (Rev 19:20), who, with beguiling signs, induces people to adore it. This vision is a prophetic indication of the snares used by Satan to rule men, stealing his way into their spirit with lies. But Christ is the Victorious Lamb who, down the course of human history, overcomes every power that would make it absolute.

Before such a power, Saint John suggests the resistance of the martyrs; in this way, believers bear witness that corrupt and satanic power is defeated, because it no longer has any authority over them.

383. The Church proclaims that Christ, the conqueror of death, reigns over the universe that he himself has redeemed. His kingdom includes even the present times and will end only when everything is handed over to the Father and human history is brought to completion in the final judgment (cf. *1 Cor* 15:20-28). Christ reveals to human authority, always tempted by the desire to dominate, its authentic and complete meaning as service. God is the one Father, and Christ the one Teacher, of all mankind, and all people are brothers and sisters. Sovereignty belongs to God. The Lord, however, "has not willed to reserve to himself all exercise of power. He entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its own nature. This mode of governance ought to be followed in social life. The way God acts in governing the world, which bears witness to such great regard for human freedom, should inspire the wisdom of those who govern human communities. They should behave as ministers of divine providence".⁶⁴⁰

The biblical message provides endless inspiration for Christian reflection on political power, recalling that it comes from God and is an integral part of the order that he created. This order is perceived by the human conscience and, in social life, finds its fulfilment in the truth, justice, freedom and solidarity that bring peace.⁶⁴¹

2. Foundation and Purpose of the Political Community

2.1 Political community, the human person and a people

384. The human person is the foundation and purpose of political life.⁶⁴² Endowed with a rational nature, the human person is responsible for his own choices and able to pursue projects that give meaning to life at the individual and social level. Being open both to the Transcendent and to others is his characteristic and distinguishing trait. Only in relation to the Transcendent and to others does the human person reach the total and complete fulfilment of himself. This means that for the human person, a naturally social and political being, "social life is not something added on"⁶⁴³ but is part of an essential and indelible dimension.

The political community originates in the nature of persons, whose conscience "reveals to them and enjoins them to obey"⁶⁴⁴ the order which God has imprinted in all his creatures: "a moral and religious order; and it is this order — and not considerations of a purely extraneous, material order — which has the greatest validity in the solution of problems relating to their lives as individuals and as members of society, and problems concerning individual States and their interrelations".⁶⁴⁵ This order must be gradually discovered and developed by humanity. The political community, a reality inherent in mankind, exists to achieve an end otherwise unobtainable: the full growth of each of its members, called to

⁶⁴⁰ CCC, 1884.

⁶⁴¹ See Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 266-267; Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 39.

⁶⁴² See Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 25; CCC, 1881; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, 24.11.2002.

⁶⁴³ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 25.

⁶⁴⁴ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 258.

⁶⁴⁵ Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 450.

cooperate steadfastly for the attainment of the common good,⁶⁴⁶ under the impulse of their natural inclinations towards what is true and good.

385. The political community finds its authentic dimension in its reference to people: "it is and should in practice be the organic and organizing unity of a real people".⁶⁴⁷ The term "a people" does not mean a shapeless multitude, an inert mass to be manipulated and exploited, but a group of persons, each of whom — "at his proper place and in his own way"⁶⁴⁸ — is able to form its own opinion on public matters and has the freedom to express its own political sentiments and to bring them to bear positively on the common good. A people "exists in the fullness of the lives of the men and women by whom it is made up, each of whom ... is a person aware of his own responsibilities and convictions".⁶⁴⁹ Those who belong to a political community, although *organically* united among themselves as a people, maintain an irrepressible *autonomy* at the level of personal existence and of the goals to be pursued.

386. The primary characteristic of a people is the sharing of life and values, which is the source of communion on the spiritual and moral level. "Human society must primarily be considered something pertaining to the spiritual. Through it, in the bright light of truth men should share their knowledge, be able to exercise their rights and fulfil their obligations, be inspired to seek spiritual values, mutually derive genuine pleasure from beauty of whatever order it be, always be readily disposed to pass on to others the best of their own cultural heritage and eagerly strive to make their own the spiritual achievements of others. These benefits not only influence but at the same time give aim and scope to all that has bearing on cultural expressions, economic and social institutions, political movements and forms, laws, and all other structures by which society is outwardly established and constantly developed".⁶⁵⁰

387. For every people there is in general a corresponding nation, but for various reasons national boundaries do not always coincide with ethnic boundaries.⁶⁵¹ Thus the question of minorities arises, which has historically been the cause of more than just a few conflicts. The Magisterium affirms that minorities constitute groups with precise rights and duties, most of all, the right to exist, which "can be ignored in many ways, including such extreme cases as its denial through overt or indirect forms of genocide".⁶⁵² Moreover, minorities have the right to maintain their culture, including their language, and to maintain their religious beliefs, including worship services. In the legitimate quest to have their rights respected, minorities may be driven to seek greater autonomy or even independence; in such delicate circumstances, dialogue and negotiation are the path for attaining peace. In every case, recourse to terrorism is unjustifiable and damages the cause that is being sought. Minorities are also bound by duties, among which, above all, is working for the common good of the State in which they live. In particular, "a minority group has the duty to promote the freedom and dignity of each one of its members and to respect the decisions of each one, even if someone were to decide to adopt the majority culture".⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁶ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 74.

⁶⁴⁷ Pope Pius XII, *Christmas Radio Message*, 24.12.1944.

⁶⁴⁸ Pope Pius XII, *Christmas Radio Message*, 24.12.1944.

⁶⁴⁹ Pope Pius XII, *Christmas Radio Message*, 24.12.1944.

⁶⁵⁰ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 266.

⁶⁵¹ Cf. Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 283.

⁶⁵² Pope John Paul II, *Message for the 1989 World Day of Peace*, 5.

⁶⁵³ Pope John Paul II, *Message for the 1989 World Day of Peace*, 11.

2.2 Defending and promoting human rights

388. Considering the human person as the foundation and purpose of the political community means in the first place working to recognize and respect human dignity through defending and promoting fundamental and inalienable human rights: "In our time the common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained".⁶⁵⁴ The rights and duties of the person contain a concise summary of the principal moral and juridical requirements that must preside over the construction of the political community. These requirements constitute an objective norm on which positive law is based and which cannot be ignored by the political community, because both in existential being and in final purpose the human person precedes the political community. Positive law must guarantee that fundamental human needs are met.

389. The political community pursues the common good when it seeks to create a human environment that offers citizens the possibility of truly exercising their human rights and of fulfilling completely their corresponding duties. "Experience has taught us that, unless these authorities take suitable action with regard to economic, political and cultural matters, inequalities between citizens tend to become more and more widespread, especially in the modern world, and as a result human rights are rendered totally ineffective and the fulfilment of duties is compromised".⁶⁵⁵

The full attainment of the common good requires that the political community develop a twofold and complementary action that defends and promotes human rights. "It should not happen that certain individuals or social groups derive special advantage from the fact that their rights have received preferential protection. Nor should it happen that governments in seeking to protect these rights, become obstacles to their full expression and free use".⁶⁵⁶

2.3 Social life based on civil friendship⁶⁵⁷

390. The profound meaning of civil and political life does not arise immediately from the list of personal rights and duties. Life in society takes on all its significance when it is based on civil friendship and on fraternity.⁶⁵⁸ The sphere of rights, in fact, is that of safeguarded interests, external respect, the protection of material goods and their distribution according to established rules. The sphere of friendship, on the other hand, is that selflessness, detachment from material goods, giving freely and inner acceptance of the needs of others.⁶⁵⁹ *Civil friendship*⁶⁶⁰ understood in this way is the most genuine actualization of the principle of fraternity, which is inseparable from that of freedom and equality.⁶⁶¹ In large part, this principle has not been put into practice in the concrete circumstances of modern political society, above all because of the influence of individualistic and collectivistic ideologies.

⁶⁵⁴ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 273; cf. CCC, 2237; Pope John Paul II, *Message for the 2000 World Day of Peace*, 362; Pope John Paul II, *Address to the 50th General Assembly of the United Nations*, 5.10.1995, 3.

⁶⁵⁵ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 274.

⁶⁵⁶ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 275.

⁶⁵⁷ See also Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 2020, on social friendship and fraternity.

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Sententiae Octavi Libri Ethicorum*, VIII, lect. 1: Ed. Leon. 47, 443.

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. CCC, 2212-2213.

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno. Ad Regem Cypri*, I, 10: Ed. Leon. 42, 461.

⁶⁶¹ "Liberty, equality, fraternity" was the motto of the French Revolution. "In the final analysis, these are Christian ideas", John Paul II affirmed during his first visit to France. Pope John Paul II, *Homily at Le Bourget*, 1.6.1980, 5.

391. A community has solid foundations when it tends toward the integral promotion of the person and of the common good. In such cases, law is defined, respected and lived according to the manner of solidarity and dedication towards one's neighbour. Justice requires that everyone should be able to enjoy their own goods and rights; this can be considered the minimum measure of love.⁶⁶² Social life becomes more human the more it is characterized by efforts to bring about a more mature awareness of the ideal towards which it should be oriented, which is the "civilization of love".⁶⁶³

The human being is a person, not just an individual.⁶⁶⁴ The term "person" indicates "a nature endowed with intelligence and free will";⁶⁶⁵ he is therefore a reality that is far superior to that of a subject defined by the needs arising solely from his material dimension. The human person, in fact, although participating actively in projects designed to satisfy his needs within the family and within civil and political society, does not find complete self-fulfilment until he moves beyond the mentality of needs and enters into that of gratuitousness and gift, which fully corresponds to his essence and community vocation.

392. The gospel precept of charity enlightens Christians as to the deepest meaning of political life. In order to make it truly human, "no better way exists ... than by fostering an inner sense of justice, benevolence and service for the common good, and by strengthening basic beliefs about the true nature of the political community and about the proper exercise and limits of public authority".⁶⁶⁶ The goal which believers must put before themselves is that of *establishing community relationships among people*. The Christian vision of political society places paramount importance on the value of *community*, both as a model for organizing life in society and as a style of everyday living.

3. Political Authority

3.1 The foundation of political authority

393. The Church has always considered different ways of understanding authority, taking care to defend and propose a model of authority that is founded on the social nature of the person. "Since God made men social by nature, and since no society can hold together unless some one be over all, directing all to strive earnestly for the common good, every civilized community must have a ruling authority, and this authority, no less than society itself, has its source in nature, and has, consequently, God for its author".⁶⁶⁷ *Political authority is therefore necessary*⁶⁶⁸[800] *because of the responsibilities assigned to it. Political authority is and must be a positive and irreplaceable component of civil life.*⁶⁶⁹

394. Political authority must guarantee an ordered and upright community life without usurping the free activity of individuals and groups but disciplining and orienting this freedom, by respecting and defending the independence of the individual and social subjects, for the attainment of the common good. Political authority is an instrument of coordination and

⁶⁶² Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 99: Ed. Leon. 7, 199- 205; St Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, II-II, q. 23, ad 1um: Ed. Leon. 8, 168.

⁶⁶³ Pope Paul VI, *Message for the 1977 World Day of Peace*.

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. CCC, 2212.

⁶⁶⁵ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 259.

⁶⁶⁶ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 73.

⁶⁶⁷ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 269; Pope Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Immortale Dei*, 1.11.1885.

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. CCC, 1898; St Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno. Ad Regem Cypri*, I, 1: Ed. Leon. 42, 450.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. CCC, 1897; Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 279.

direction by means of which the many individuals and intermediate bodies must move towards an order in which relationships, institutions and procedures are put at the service of integral human growth. Political authority, in fact, "whether in the community as such or in institutions representing the State, must always be exercised within the limits of morality and on behalf of the dynamically conceived common good, according to a juridical order enjoying legal status. When such is the case citizens are conscience-bound to obey".⁶⁷⁰

395. The subject of political authority is the people considered in its entirety as those who have sovereignty. In various forms, this people transfers the exercise of sovereignty to those whom it freely elects as its representatives, but it preserves the prerogative to assert this sovereignty in evaluating the work of those charged with governing and also in replacing them when they do not fulfil their functions satisfactorily. Although this right is operative in every State and in every kind of political regime, a democratic form of government, due to its procedures for verification, allows and guarantees its fullest application.⁶⁷¹ The mere consent of the people is not, however, sufficient for considering "just" the ways in which political authority is exercised.

3.2 Authority as moral force

396. Authority must be guided by the moral law. All of its dignity derives from its being exercised within the context of the moral order,⁶⁷² "which in turn has God for its first source and final end".⁶⁷³ Because of its necessary reference to the moral order, which precedes it and is its basis, and because of its purpose and the people to whom it is directed, authority cannot be understood as a power determined by criteria of a solely sociological or historical character. "There are some indeed who go so far as to deny the existence of a moral order which is transcendent, absolute, universal and equally binding upon all. And where the same law of justice is not adhered to by all, men cannot hope to come to open and full agreement on vital issues"⁶⁷⁴ This order "has no existence except in God; cut off from God it must necessarily disintegrate".⁶⁷⁵ It is from the moral order that authority derives its power to impose obligations⁶⁷⁶ and its moral legitimacy,⁶⁷⁷ not from some arbitrary will or from the thirst for power,⁶⁷⁸ and it is to translate this order into concrete actions to achieve the common good.⁶⁷⁹

397. Authority must recognize, respect and promote essential human and moral values. These are innate and "flow from the very truth of the human being and express and safeguard the dignity of the person; values which no individual, no majority and no State can ever create, modify or destroy".⁶⁸⁰ These values do not have their foundation in provisional and changeable "majority" opinions, but must simply be recognized, respected and promoted as elements of an objective moral law, the natural law written in the human heart (cf. *Rom* 2:15), and as the normative point of reference for civil law itself.⁶⁸¹ If, as a result of the tragic clouding of the

⁶⁷⁰ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 74.

⁶⁷¹ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 46; Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 271.

⁶⁷² Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 74.

⁶⁷³ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 270; cf. Pope Pius XII, *Christmas Radio Message* (24.12.1944); CCC, 2235.

⁶⁷⁴ Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 449-450.

⁶⁷⁵ Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, 450.

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 269-270.

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. CCC, 1902.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 258-259.

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. Pope Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus*, 20.10.1939.

⁶⁸⁰ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 71.

⁶⁸¹ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 70; Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 258-259, 279-280.

collective conscience, scepticism were to succeed in casting doubt on the basic principles of the moral law,⁶⁸² the legal structure of the State itself would be shaken to its very foundations, being reduced to nothing more than a mechanism for the pragmatic regulation of different and opposing interests.⁶⁸³

398. Authority must enact just laws, that is, laws that correspond to the dignity of the human person and to what is required by right reason. "Human law is law insofar as it corresponds to right reason and therefore is derived from the eternal law. When, however, a law is contrary to reason, it is called an unjust law; in such a case it ceases to be law and becomes instead an act of violence".⁶⁸⁴ Authority that governs according to reason places citizens in a relationship not so much of subjection to another person as of obedience to the moral order and, therefore, to God himself who is its ultimate source.⁶⁸⁵ Whoever refuses to obey an authority that is acting in accordance with the moral order "resists what God has appointed" (*Rom* 13:2).⁶⁸⁶ Analogously, whenever public authority — which has its foundation in human nature and belongs to the order pre-ordained by God⁶⁸⁷ — fails to seek the common good, it abandons its proper purpose and so delegitimizes itself.

3.3 The right to conscientious objection

399. Citizens are not obligated in conscience to follow the prescriptions of civil authorities if their precepts are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or to the teachings of the Gospel.⁶⁸⁸ Unjust laws pose dramatic problems of conscience for morally upright people: when they are called to cooperate in morally evil acts they must refuse.⁶⁸⁹ Besides being a moral duty, such a refusal is also a basic human right which, precisely as such, civil law itself is obliged to recognize and protect. "Those who have recourse to conscientious objection must be protected not only from legal penalties but also from any negative effects on the legal, disciplinary, financial and professional plane".⁶⁹⁰

It is a grave duty of conscience not to cooperate, not even formally, in practices which, although permitted by civil legislation, are contrary to the Law of God. Such cooperation in fact can never be justified, not by invoking respect for the freedom of others nor by appealing to the fact that it is foreseen and required by civil law. No one can escape the moral responsibility for actions taken, and all will be judged by God himself based on this responsibility (cf. *Rom* 2:6; 14:12).

3.4 The right to resist

400. Recognizing that natural law is the basis for and places limits on positive law means admitting that it is legitimate to resist authority should it violate in a serious or repeated manner the essential principles of natural law. Saint Thomas Aquinas writes that "one is

⁶⁸² Cf. Pope Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus*, 423.

⁶⁸³ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 70; Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 97, 99; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, 5-6.

⁶⁸⁴ St Thomas Aquinas, *S.Th.*, I-II, q. 93, a. 3, ad 2um: Ed. Leon. 7, 164.

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 270.

⁶⁸⁶ Cf. CCC, 1899-1900.

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 74; CCC, 1901.

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. CCC, 2242.

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 73.

⁶⁹⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 74.

obliged to obey ... insofar as it is required by the order of justice".⁶⁹¹ Natural law is therefore the basis of the right to resistance.

There can be many different concrete ways this right may be exercised; there are also many different *ends* that may be pursued. Resistance to authority is meant to attest to the validity of a different way of looking at things, whether the intent is to achieve partial change, for example, modifying certain laws, or to fight for a radical change in the situation.

401. *The Church's social doctrine indicates the criteria for exercising the right to resistance:* "Armed resistance to oppression by political authority is not legitimate, unless all the following conditions are met:

- 1) there is certain, grave and prolonged violation of fundamental rights,
- 2) all other means of redress have been exhausted,
- 3) such resistance will not provoke worse disorders,
- 4) there is well-founded hope of success; and
- 5) it is impossible reasonably to foresee any better solution".⁶⁹²

Recourse to arms is seen as an extreme remedy for putting an end to a "manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country".⁶⁹³ The gravity of the danger that recourse to violence entails today makes it preferable in any case that *passive resistance* be practised, which is "a way more conformable to moral principles and having no less prospects for success".⁶⁹⁴[826]

3.5 Inflicting punishment

402. In order to protect the common good, the lawful public authority must exercise the right and the duty to inflict punishments according to the seriousness of the crimes committed⁶⁹⁵. The State has the twofold responsibility to discourage behaviour that is harmful to human rights and the fundamental norms of civil life, and to repair, through the penal system, the disorder created by criminal activity. In a State ruled by law the power to inflict punishment is correctly entrusted to the Courts: "In defining the proper relationships between the legislative, executive and judicial powers, the Constitutions of modern States guarantee the judicial power the necessary independence in the realm of law".⁶⁹⁶

403. Punishment does not serve merely the purpose of defending the public order and guaranteeing the safety of persons; it becomes as well an instrument for the correction of the offender, a correction that also takes on the moral value of expiation when the guilty party voluntarily accepts his punishment.⁶⁹⁷ There is a twofold purpose here. On the one hand, encouraging the re-insertion of the condemned person into society; on the other, fostering a justice that reconciles, a justice capable of restoring harmony in social relationships disrupted by the criminal act committed.

⁶⁹¹ St Thomas Aquinas, *S. Th.*, II-II, q. 104, a. 6, ad 3um: Ed. Leon. 9, 392.

⁶⁹² CCC, 2243.

⁶⁹³ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 31.

⁶⁹⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Conscientia*, 22.3.1986, 79.

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. CCC, 2266.

⁶⁹⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Address to the Italian Association of Judges*, 31.3.2000, 4.

⁶⁹⁷ Cf. CCC, 2266.

In this regard, the activity that prison chaplains are called to undertake is important, not only in the specifically religious dimension of this activity but also in defence of the dignity of those detained. Unfortunately, the conditions under which prisoners serve their time do not always foster respect for their dignity; and often, prisons become places where new crimes are committed. Nonetheless, the environment of penal institutions offers a privileged forum for bearing witness once more to Christian concern for social issues: "I was ... in prison and you came to me" (*Mt* 25:35-36).

404. The activity of offices charged with establishing criminal responsibility, which is always personal in character, must strive to be a meticulous search for truth and must be conducted in full respect for the dignity and rights of the human person; this means guaranteeing the rights of the guilty as well as those of the innocent. The juridical principle by which punishment cannot be inflicted if a crime has not first been proven must be borne in mind.

In carrying out investigations, the regulation against the use of torture, even in the case of serious crimes, must be strictly observed: "Christ's disciple refuses every recourse to such methods, which nothing could justify and in which the dignity of man is as much debased in his torturer as in the torturer's victim".⁶⁹⁸ International juridical instruments concerning human rights correctly indicate a prohibition against torture as a principle which cannot be contravened under any circumstances.

Likewise ruled out is "the use of detention for the sole purpose of trying to obtain significant information for the trial".⁶⁹⁹ Moreover, it must be ensured that "trials are conducted swiftly: their excessive length is becoming intolerable for citizens and results in a real injustice".⁷⁰⁰

Officials of the court are especially called to exercise due discretion in their investigations so as not to violate the rights of the accused to confidentiality and in order not to undermine the principle of the presumption of innocence. Since even judges can make mistakes, it is proper that the law provide for suitable compensation for victims of judicial errors.

405. The Church sees as a sign of hope "a growing public opposition to the death penalty, even when such a penalty is seen as a kind of 'legitimate defence' on the part of society. Modern society in fact has the means of effectively suppressing crime by rendering criminals harmless without definitively denying them the chance to reform".⁷⁰¹ Whereas, presuming the full ascertainment of the identity and responsibility of the guilty party, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude the death penalty "when this is the only practicable way to defend the lives of human beings effectively against the aggressor".⁷⁰² Bloodless methods of deterrence and punishment are preferred as "they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person".⁷⁰³ The growing number of countries adopting provisions to abolish the death penalty or suspend its application is also proof of the fact that cases in which it is absolutely necessary to execute the offender "are very rare, if not practically non-existent".⁷⁰⁴ The growing aversion of public opinion towards the death penalty and the various provisions aimed at abolishing it

⁶⁹⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Address to the International Committee of the Red Cross*, (15.6.1982), 5.

⁶⁹⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Address to the Italian Association of Judges* (31.3.2000), 4.

⁷⁰⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Address to the Italian Association of Judges* (31.3.2000), 4.

⁷⁰¹ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 27.

⁷⁰² CCC, 2267.

⁷⁰³ CCC, 2267.

⁷⁰⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 56; cf. also John Paul II, *Message for the 2001 World Day of Peace*, 19, where recourse to the death penalty is described as "unnecessary".

or suspending its application constitute visible manifestations of a heightened moral awareness.

4. The Democratic System

406. The Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* contains an explicit and articulate judgment with regard to democracy: "The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate. Thus she cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for individual interests or for ideological ends. Authentic democracy is possible only in a State ruled by law, and on the basis of a correct conception of the human person. It requires that the necessary conditions be present for the advancement both of the individual through education and formation in true ideals, and of the 'subjectivity' of society through the creation of structures of participation and shared responsibility".⁷⁰⁵

4.1 Values and democracy

407. An authentic democracy is not merely the result of a formal observation of a set of rules but is the fruit of a convinced acceptance of the values that inspire democratic procedures: the dignity of every human person, the respect of human rights, commitment to the common good as the purpose and guiding criterion for political life. If there is no general consensus on these values, the deepest meaning of democracy is lost and its stability is compromised.

The Church's social doctrine sees ethical relativism, which maintains that there are no objective or universal criteria for establishing the foundations of a correct hierarchy of values, as one of the greatest threats to modern-day democracies. "Nowadays there is a tendency to claim that agnosticism and skeptical relativism are the philosophy and the basic attitude which correspond to democratic forms of political life. Those who are convinced that they know the truth and firmly adhere to it are considered unreliable from a democratic point of view, since they do not accept that truth is determined by the majority, or that it is subject to variation according to different political trends. It must be observed in this regard that if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political action, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism".⁷⁰⁶ Democracy is fundamentally "a 'system' and as such is a means and not an end. Its 'moral' value is not automatic, but depends on conformity to the moral law to which it, like every other form of human behaviour, must be subject: in other words, its morality depends on the morality of the ends which it pursues and of the means which it employs".⁷⁰⁷

4.2 Institutions and democracy

408. The Magisterium recognizes the validity of the principle concerning the division of powers in a State: "it is preferable that each power be balanced by other powers and by other

⁷⁰⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 46.

⁷⁰⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 46.

⁷⁰⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 70.

spheres of responsibility which keep it within proper bounds. This is the principle of the 'rule of law', in which the law is sovereign, and not the arbitrary will of individuals".⁷⁰⁸

In the democratic system, political authority is accountable to the people. Representative bodies must be subjected to effective social control. This control can be carried out above all in free elections which allow the selection and change of representatives. The obligation on the part of those elected to give an accounting of their work — which is guaranteed by respecting electoral terms — is a constitutive element of democratic representation.

409. In their specific areas (drafting laws, governing, setting up systems of checks and balances), elected officials must strive to seek and attain that which will contribute to making civil life proceed well in its overall course.⁷⁰⁹

Those who govern have the obligation to answer to those governed, but this does not in the least imply that representatives are merely passive agents of the electors. The control exercised by the citizens does not in fact exclude the freedom that elected officials must enjoy in order to fulfil their mandate with respect to the objectives to be pursued. These do not depend exclusively on special interests, but in a much greater part on the function of synthesis and mediation that serve the common good, one of the essential and indispensable goals of political authority.

4.3 Moral components of political representation

410. Those with political responsibilities must not forget or underestimate the moral dimension of political representation, which consists in the commitment to share fully in the destiny of the people and to seek solutions to social problems. In this perspective, responsible authority also means authority exercised with those virtues that make it possible to *put power into practice as service*⁷¹⁰ (patience, modesty, moderation, charity, efforts to share), an authority exercised by persons who are able to accept the common good, and not prestige or the gaining of personal advantages, as the true goal of their work.

411. Among the deformities of the democratic system, political corruption is one of the most serious⁷¹¹ because it betrays at one and the same time both moral principles and the norms of social justice. It compromises the correct functioning of the State, having a negative influence on the relationship between those who govern and the governed. It causes a growing distrust with respect to public institutions, bringing about a progressive disaffection in the citizens with regard to politics and its representatives, with a resulting weakening of institutions. Corruption radically distorts the role of representative institutions, because they become an arena for political bartering between clients' requests and governmental services. In this way political choices favour the narrow objectives of those who possess the means to influence these choices and are an obstacle to bringing about the common good of all citizens.

412. As an instrument of the State, public administration at any level — national, regional, community — is oriented towards the service of citizens: "Being at the service of its citizens, the State is the steward of the people's resources, which it must administer with a view to the

⁷⁰⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 44.

⁷⁰⁹ Cf. CCC, 2236.

⁷¹⁰ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 30.12.1988, 42.

⁷¹¹ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 44; John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 48; John Paul II, *Message for the 1999 World Day of Peace*, 6.

common good".⁷¹² Excessive bureaucratization is contrary to this vision and arises when "institutions become complex in their organization and pretend to manage every area at hand. In the end they lose their effectiveness as a result of an impersonal functionalism, an overgrown bureaucracy, unjust private interests and an all-too-easy and generalized disengagement from a sense of duty".⁷¹³ The role of those working in public administration is not to be conceived as impersonal or bureaucratic, but rather as an act of generous assistance for citizens, undertaken with a spirit of service.

4.4 Instruments for political participation

413. Political parties have the task of fostering widespread participation and making public responsibilities accessible to all. Political parties are called to interpret the aspirations of civil society, orienting them towards the common good,⁷¹⁴ offering citizens the effective possibility of contributing to the formulation of political choices. They must be democratic in their internal structure, and capable of political synthesis and planning.

Another instrument of political participation is the referendum, whereby a form of direct access to political decisions is practised. The institution of representation in fact does not exclude the possibility of asking citizens directly about the decisions of great importance for social life.

4.5 Information and democracy

414. Information is among the principal instruments of democratic participation. Participation without an understanding of the situation of the political community, the facts and the proposed solutions to problems is unthinkable. It is necessary to guarantee a real pluralism in this delicate area of social life, ensuring that there are many forms and instruments of information and communications. It is likewise necessary to facilitate conditions of equality in the possession and use of these instruments by means of appropriate laws. Among the obstacles that hinder the full exercise of the right to objectivity in information,⁷¹⁵ special attention must be given to the phenomenon of the news media being controlled by just a few people or groups. This has dangerous effects for the entire democratic system when this phenomenon is accompanied by ever closer ties between governmental activity and the financial and information establishments.

415. The media must be used to build up and sustain the human community in its different sectors: economic, political, cultural, educational and religious.⁷¹⁶ "The information provided by the media is at the service of the common good. Society has a right to information based on truth, freedom, justice and solidarity".⁷¹⁷

The essential question is whether the current information system is contributing to the betterment of the human person; that is, does it make people more spiritually mature, more

⁷¹² Pope John Paul II, *Message for the 1998 World Day of Peace*, 5.

⁷¹³ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, 30.12.1988, 41.

⁷¹⁴ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 75.

⁷¹⁵ Cf. Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 260.

⁷¹⁶ Cf. Vatican Council II, Decree *Inter Mirifica*, 4.12.1963, 3; Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8.12.1975, 45; Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, 7.12.1990, 37; Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Communio et Progressio*, 126-134; Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Aetatis Novae*, 11; Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Advertising*, 22.2.1997, 4-8.

⁷¹⁷ CCC, 2494; cf. Vatican Council II, *Inter Mirifica*, 11.

aware of the dignity of their humanity, more responsible or more open to others, in particular to the neediest and the weakest. A further aspect of great importance is the requisite that new technologies respect legitimate cultural differences.

416. In the world of the media the intrinsic difficulties of communications are often exacerbated by ideology, the desire for profit and political control, rivalry and conflicts between groups, and other social evils. Moral values and principles apply also to the media. "The ethical dimension relates not just to the content of communication (the message) and the process of communication (how the communicating is done) but to fundamental structural and systemic issues, often involving large questions of policy bearing upon the distribution of sophisticated technology and product (who shall be information rich and who shall be information poor?)."⁷¹⁸

In all three areas — the message, the process and structural issues — one fundamental moral principle always applies: the human person and the human community are the end and measure of the use of the media. A second principle is complementary to the first: the good of human beings cannot be attained independently of the common good of the community to which they belong.⁷¹⁹ It is necessary that citizens participate in the decision-making process concerning media policies. This participation, which is to be public, has to be genuinely representative and not skewed in favour of special interest groups when the media are a money-making venture.⁷²⁰

6. The Political Community at the Service of Civil Society

6.1 Value of civil society

417. The political community is established to be of service to civil society, from which it originates. The Church has contributed to the distinction between the political community and civil society above all by her vision of man, understood as an autonomous, relational being who is open to the Transcendent. This vision is challenged by political ideologies of an individualistic nature and those of a totalitarian character, which tend to absorb civil society into the sphere of the State. The Church's commitment on behalf of social pluralism aims at bringing about a more fitting attainment of the common good and democracy itself, according to the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and justice.

Civil society is the sum of relationships and resources, cultural and associative, that are relatively independent from the political sphere and the economic sector. "The purpose of civil society is universal, since it concerns the common good, to which each and every citizen has a right in due proportion".⁷²¹ This is marked by a planning capacity that aims at fostering a freer and more just social life, in which the various groups of citizens can form associations, working to develop and express their preferences, in order to meet their fundamental needs and defend their legitimate interests.

6.2 Priority of civil society

418. The political community and civil society, although mutually connected and interdependent, are not equal in the hierarchy of ends. The political community is essentially

⁷¹⁸ Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Communications*, 4.6.2000, 20.

⁷¹⁹ Cf. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Communications*, 22.

⁷²⁰ Cf. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Communications*, 24.

⁷²¹ Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 11.

at the service of civil society and, in the final analysis, the persons and groups of which civil society is composed.⁷²² Civil society, therefore, cannot be considered an extension or a changing component of the political community; rather, it has priority because it is in civil society itself that the political community finds its justification.

The State must provide an adequate legal framework for social subjects to engage freely in their different activities and it must be ready to intervene, when necessary and with respect for the principle of subsidiarity, so that the interplay between free associations and democratic life may be directed to the common good. Civil society is in fact multifaceted and irregular; it does not lack its ambiguities and contradictions. It is also the arena where different interests clash with one another, with the risk that the stronger will prevail over the weaker.

6.3 Application of the principle of subsidiarity

419. The political community is responsible for regulating its relations with civil society according to the principle of subsidiarity.⁷²³ It is essential that the growth of democratic life begin within the fabric of society. The activities of civil society — above all volunteer organizations and cooperative endeavours in the private-social sector, all of which are succinctly known as the “third sector”, to distinguish from the State and the market — represent the most appropriate ways to develop the social dimension of the person, who finds in these activities the necessary space to express himself fully. The progressive expansion of social initiatives beyond the State- controlled sphere creates new areas for the active presence and direct action of citizens, integrating the functions of the State. This important phenomenon has often come about largely through informal means and has given rise to new and positive ways of exercising personal rights, which have brought about a qualitative enrichment of democratic life.

420. Cooperation, even in its less structured forms, shows itself to be one of the most effective responses to a mentality of conflict and unlimited competition that seems so prevalent today. The relationships that are established in a climate of cooperation and solidarity overcome ideological divisions, prompting people to seek out what unites them rather than what divides them.

Many experiences of volunteer work are examples of great value that call people to look upon civil society as a place where it is possible to rebuild a public ethic based on solidarity, concrete cooperation and fraternal dialogue. All are called to look with confidence to the potentialities that thus present themselves and to lend their own personal efforts for the good of the community in general and, in particular, for the good of the weakest and the neediest. In this way, the principle of the “subjectivity of society” is also affirmed.⁷²⁴

7. The State and Religious Communities

7.1 Religious Freedom, A Fundamental Human Right

421. The Second Vatican Council committed the Catholic Church to the promotion of religious freedom. The Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* explains in its subtitle that it intends to proclaim “the right of the person and of communities to social and civil freedom in religious matters”.

⁷²² Cf. CCC, 1910.

⁷²³ Cf. Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, 203; CCC, 1883-1885.

⁷²⁴ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 49.

In order that this freedom, willed by God and inscribed in human nature, may be exercised, no obstacle should be placed in its way, since “the truth cannot be imposed except by virtue of its own truth”.⁷²⁵ The dignity of the person and the very nature of the quest for God require that all men and women should be free from every constraint in the area of religion.⁷²⁶ Society and the State must not force a person to act against his conscience or prevent him from acting in conformity with it.⁷²⁷ Religious freedom is not a moral licence to adhere to error, nor as an implicit right to error.⁷²⁸

422. Freedom of conscience and religion “concerns man both individually and socially”.⁷²⁹ The right to religious freedom must be recognized in the juridical order and sanctioned as a civil right;⁷³⁰ nonetheless, it is not of itself an unlimited right. The *just limits* of the exercise of religious freedom must be determined in each social situation with political prudence, according to the requirements of the common good, and ratified by the civil authority through legal norms consistent with the objective moral order. Such norms are required by “the need for the effective safeguarding of the rights of all citizens and for the peaceful settlement of conflicts of rights, also by the need for an adequate care of genuine public peace, which comes about when men live together in good order and in true justice, and finally by the need for a proper guardianship of public morality”.⁷³¹

423. Because of its historical and cultural ties to a nation, a religious community might be given special recognition on the part of the State. Such recognition must in no way create discrimination within the civil or social order for other religious groups.⁷³² The vision of the relations between States and religious organizations promoted by the Second Vatican Council corresponds to the requirements of a State ruled by law and to the norms of international law.⁷³³ The Church is well aware that this vision is not shared by all; the right to religious freedom, unfortunately, “is being violated by many States, even to the point that imparting catechesis, having it imparted, and receiving it become punishable offences”.⁷³⁴

7.2 The Catholic Church and the Political Community

Autonomy and independence

424. Although the Church and the political community both manifest themselves in visible organizational structures, they are by nature different because of their configuration and because of the ends they pursue. The Second Vatican Council solemnly reaffirmed that, “in their proper spheres, the political community and the Church are mutually independent and self-governing”.⁷³⁵ The Church is organized in ways that are suitable to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful, while the different political communities give rise to relationships and institutions that are at the service of everything that is part of the temporal common good.

⁷²⁵ Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1.

⁷²⁶ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2.

⁷²⁷ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 3.

⁷²⁸ Cf. CCC, 2108.

⁷²⁹ CCC, 2105.

⁷³⁰ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2; CCC, 2108.

⁷³¹ Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 7; CCC, 2109.

⁷³² Cf. Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 6; CCC, 2107.

⁷³³ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Message for the 1999 World Day of Peace*, 5.

⁷³⁴ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 16.10.1979, 14.

⁷³⁵ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 76; cf. CCC, 2245.

The autonomy and independence of these two realities is particularly evident with regards to their ends.

The duty to respect religious freedom requires that the political community guarantee the Church the space needed to carry out her mission. For her part, the Church has no particular area of competence concerning the structures of the political community: "The Church respects the *legitimate autonomy of the democratic order* and is not entitled to express preferences for this or that institutional or constitutional solution",⁷³⁶ nor does it belong to her to enter into questions of the merit of political programmes, except as concerns their religious or moral implications.

Cooperation

425. The mutual autonomy of the Church and the political community does not entail a separation that excludes cooperation. Both of them, although by different titles, serve the personal and social vocation of the same human beings. The Church and the political community, in fact, express themselves in organized structures that are not ends in themselves but are intended for the service of man, to help him to exercise his rights fully, those inherent in his reality as a citizen and a Christian, and to fulfil correctly his corresponding duties. The Church and the political community can more effectively render this service "for the good of all if each works better for wholesome mutual cooperation in a way suitable to the circumstances of time and place".⁷³⁷

426. The Church has the right to the legal recognition of her proper identity. Precisely because her mission embraces all of human reality, the Church, sensing that she is "truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history",⁷³⁸ claims the freedom to express her moral judgment on this reality, whenever it may be required to defend the fundamental rights of the person or for the salvation of souls.⁷³⁹

The Church therefore seeks: freedom of expression, teaching and evangelization; freedom of public worship; freedom of organization and of her own internal government; freedom of selecting, educating, naming and transferring her ministers; freedom for constructing religious buildings; freedom to acquire and possess sufficient goods for her activity; and freedom to form associations not only for religious purposes but also for educational, cultural, health care and charitable purposes.⁷⁴⁰

427. In order to prevent or attenuate possible conflicts between the Church and the political community, the juridical experience of the Church and the State have variously defined stable forms of contact and suitable instruments for guaranteeing harmonious relations. This experience is an essential reference point for all cases in which the State has the presumption to invade the Church's area of action, impairing the freedom of her activity to the point of openly persecuting her or, vice versa, for cases in which church organizations do not act properly with respect to the State.

⁷³⁶ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 47.

⁷³⁷ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 76.

⁷³⁸ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1.

⁷³⁹ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 747, § 2; CCC, 2246.

⁷⁴⁰ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Letter to the Heads of State Signing the Final Helsinki Act*, 1.9.1980, 4.