

THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Abba Hagos Woldu
Hagosw@yahoo.com

I. SOCIAL HONESTY

The Modern era of Catholic social teaching begins with *Rerum Novarum*. With varying success, Catholic clergy and laity had attempted to apply the teaching of the Church to problems of poverty and justice in the nineteenth century world of industry and labour. When he was a papal diplomat in Belgium, the future Pope Leo XIII had seen the abject condition of working people, so often caught between exploitation by unbridled capitalism and the temptation to submit to the rising power of socialism, or revolutionary Marxism or anarchism. On a natural law foundation, Pope Leo XIII defends the rights of workers, the need for justice and solidarity, but at the same time he affirms the natural right to private property — a balance that will carry Catholic social teaching through the economic and social crises of the twentieth century and the rise and fall of communism.

In the midst of the great depression, in the age of dictators and ruthless totalitarian systems of the right and the left, Pope Pius XI celebrates the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. He reaffirms the principles set out by Leo XIII and applies them to the current situation. His teaching shows how Catholic social doctrine develops and becomes more specific, even as it maintains its great principles: peace and justice, solidarity, the common good, subsidiarity, the right to property, the right to associate and the fundamental role of the family in society. But by affirming human rights, *Quadragesimo Anno* paved the way this courageous Pope's attacks on Nazism (*Mit brennender sorge*, 1937) on Soviet communism (*Divini Redemptoris*, 1937), Italian fascism (*Non abbiamo bisogno*, 1938) and masonic anticlericalism in Mexico (*Nos es muy concida*, 1938).

Teaching on peace and war is an important recurring theme in the social magisterium of all the modern Popes. Several months before his death, in the midst of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII appeals for peace. He speaks in the year following the Cuban crisis, perhaps the most dangerous phase of the cold war, when a global nuclear holocaust was a real threat. This was also an era when colonial systems were being dismantled in many nations, at times with tragic strife, involving racism, tribalism, and the brutal application of Marxist ideology. To advance a peaceful social order, Pope John favours the participation of people in decisions affecting the common good, especially through democratic processes.

Pope Paul VI speaks on behalf of the millions of peoples of developing nations, the men and women of the third world. Confronting the ever-widening disparity between rich and poor nations, he affirms that justice is inseparable from development. The encyclical encouraged many Catholics to make a preferential option for the poor and to take up the cause of the helpless and the oppressed. *Populorum Progressio* also includes a rejection of population control, an unfashionable position to take in the years when demographic trends were still largely interpreted in an alarmist way.

1.1. DEFINITION

The entire teaching of the ecclesiastical Magisterium which applies revealed truth and Christian moral principles to the social order is called the social doctrine of the Church. It applies the Gospel message to social reality. The purpose of the Church's social teaching is to present to men God's plan for secular reality. It enlightens men's minds with truth and guides them in building up the earthly city according to the divine plan. We can distinguish two levels in the development of temporal activities. Sacred Scripture tells us that "God created man and left him in the hands of his own counsel. He gave him, besides, his commandments and precepts" (*Ecclus.* 15:14-16). On the one hand, God has given intelligence and freedom to man, thus opening the whole range of earthly realities to human opinions and options. This aspect of God's plan is what Vatican II called "the autonomy of earthly realities" (*Gaudium et Spes*--GS--36), or the autonomy of temporal affairs. This expression does not imply a gap in the divine plan; rather, this plan is to be fulfilled in the temporal sphere precisely by human initiative--the free play of opinions and options.

On the other hand, God has given to man "his commandments and precepts; that is, the natural law. This moral law, which man must fulfil, accompanies the autonomous sphere of temporal affairs--the ensemble of all those matters which fall outside the field of morality. These matters [occupy a very wide area. The social doctrine of the Church shows man the moral foundations of all these temporal realities. By divine vocation, the Christian faithful have the mission of sanctifying temporal realities (*Lumen Gentium*--LG--30). By fulfilling the plan of God they are led to infuse truth and morality into civil society and to defend its just autonomy, thus avoiding clericalism. on the one hand. and laicism or secularism on the other.

The Church's mission belongs to the supernatural order (QA 41; *Mater et Magistra*--MM--1-5)- it does not interfere with legitimate temporal options nor support specific political programs (QA 41, 96). Nevertheless, the Church has a strict right--also a duty--to teach the moral aspects of the secular order, whether this be in politics, economics. or social matters . Likewise, she pronounces moral judgments upon temporal questions (MM 42; GS 76) and forms consciences in regard to temporal activities (MM 195). The Church's social doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life (MM 222); it is founded upon revelation and the natural law (RN 12). Its contents are to be found mainly in the teachings of the popes and in other documents of the Church Magisterium. Among these, the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of Vatican II merits special mention. Since it applies Christian truth and morality to various historical situations in the secular world, the social doctrine commands the assent of the faithful as much as any other pronouncements of the Magisterium. Still, in order to interpret and apply that doctrine correctly, it is necessary to know the actual historical situation which a given document is evaluating. Its conclusions cannot be applied indiscriminately to different historical situations. Similar situations and facts warrant corresponding evaluations; somewhat different situations require appropriate modifications, even if they are described in the same terms.

The Church's social doctrine ought to be known and taught by all the faithful (MM 224), who must also strive to address social problems in conformity with it (MM 225). This doctrine should be part of the education of young people, who must also form themselves in accord with its principles (MM 227). Since the Magisterium's teaching does not exhaust all possible moral questions which could arise in a civil society rightly oriented to Christian principles, the faithful need not wait to act until the Magisterium's provides them with a specific moral solution, So long as there is no official teaching on a particular matter, it belongs to the well-formed consciences of the faithful to determine what is and what is not in accord with Christian morality (GS 43). Therefore, the faithful have an obligation to study and become duly formed according to each one's ability and social position.

1.2. SOCIETY AND ITS ORIGIN

Toward the end of the 18th century, a thesis which certain medieval jurists had expressed was more fully developed in the "social contract" theory. It became widespread in Europe and spread to areas of European influence. According to this theory, men are not social by nature, but began to exist as isolated individuals, each with a fullness of rights in himself. According to this theory, society arose later through a pact (a social contract), by which men agreed to come together in a political community. Through this pact, men are said to have yielded up to society some part of their original rights; together, these would constitute the power of society. As a consequence, this social pact would be the origin of social authority. It follows immediately from this theory that social authority did not have a divine origin, that it did not proceed from God, and that in principle the whole ordering of society was merely human. The social doctrine of the Church teaches, on the contrary, that God created man to live in society (RN 35; QA 83; MM 63; *Pacem in Terris*--PT--78), and that consequently God is the foundation of society itself. As man's Creator, God gave him the law of solidarity, which requires a social union that is both harmonious and organic (RN 13, 18; QA 90; MM 158, 159).

Man is ordained by this law of nature to live in society; only thus can he attain the full development of his personality (RN 35; QA 118; MM 60). Man naturally belongs to other men and is linked to them by a duty of love and solidarity. Even though historical forms of society also respond to cultural impulses of a human origin, their originating impulse is from nature and hence from God.

1.3. CIVIL AUTHORITY.

Since the human community has a divine origin (in natural law), and since any society implicitly requires authority, it follows that civil authority also takes its origin from the natural law, which is to say, from God (RN 251). Therefore, the theory that the people are the ultimate source of power in civil society is incorrect. The divine origin of civil power is revealed in several passages of Sacred Scripture, among them Rom. 13:1-4 "Let everyone be subject to the higher authorities, for there exists no authority except from God, and those who exist have been appointed by God. Therefore he who resists the authority resists the ordinance of God...." This does not mean that those who exercise this office receive their powers and faculties

immediately from God (the so-called "divine right" theory). It does mean that the very existence of authority derives from God's disposition of things; that is, from natural right. Thus the divine origin of authority is compatible with the thesis that those who exercise power receive their authority immediately from the political community, whose office it is to determine forms of government, the manner of transmitting power, and the persons who shall exercise authority (GS 74).

Obedience and respect is due to civil authorities by virtue of the natural law. This precept engenders a serious obligation in conscience Obedience to civil authorities has as its basis the responsibility of each person, and because it is part of the order intended by God, it is an act of reverence and homage to the Creator (PT 50). The duty of obedience to civil authority is not, however, unlimited, for authority itself is limited. These limits are determined by: a) the moral order and natural right; b) the common good; and c) the legitimately constituted legal order (GS 74).

We must especially bear in mind that when human power commands something clearly opposed to the divine will--that is, to divine right, both natural and positive--that command is void . In such a case, the just thing to do is not to obey it, for it is an evident abuse of power. The ultimate reason for authority is the common good on which rests the legitimacy of its exercise . Hence, if they deviate from the common good, the commands of those who exercise authority lose their obligatory force and constitute an abuse of power as well (SP 43; PT 47). This ultimate reason for authority further implies a duty to guarantee and protect the rights of all, especially of those who are least able to defend themselves (RN 27, 55). When public authority exceeds its competence and oppresses the citizens, they must not turn away from the objective requirements of the common good, which may require them to put up with some evils. Nevertheless, they are permitted to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against such abuses of authority, always within the bounds established by the natural law and the Gospel (GS 74).

1.4. THE COMMON GOOD.

Civil society or the political community is not a mere collection of men, but is a true society, an organic unity. Like every society, the political community has as the fundamental principle of its existence the end toward which all must work together. This common end requires from everyone--authorities and citizens alike--an attitude of active cooperation toward the end proper to the political community. Since this end is common to all, it is called the common good. The common good embraces the sum of those conditions of social life by which men are able to achieve the perfection proper to them with greater fullness and facility (DH 6). This means the totality of those conditions through which individuals, families, and associations are able to achieve their perfection more completely and more readily (GS 74). Above all, but not exclusively, the common good consists in respect for the rights and duties of the human person (DH 6).

In our times, the common good is considered to rest principally upon the defense of those rights and duties (PT 60). It is important to note that while the common good includes the production of goods and their protection, what is of principal concern to the common good is the just distribution of those goods among individuals, families, the various sectors of society, and other nations; see especially *Populorum Progressio*--PP--*passim*).

Material goods do not constitute the sole reason for the political community. While it is common!, held today that the purpose of civil society is confined to economic and social development, the Christian must be mindful that besides material goods, the common good also embraces the moral dimension of human life, and in a general way the needs of the spirit (PT 57-59). Among the different facets of the common good, the moral dimension holds first place (RN 25; MM 207, 208). Therefore, legislation which ignores moral considerations is profoundly opposed to the common good since it is degrading to society. Laws, then, must not only conform to morality, but also positively favour it. The historical dimension of the common good must also be kept in mind. The correct requirements of the common good are intimately related to the social conditions prevailing at various times. Since these conditions are subject to constant change, the requirements of the common good change with them (GS 78).

For example, the requirements of the common good are not the same in times of abundance and of scarcity. The purpose of public administration is to direct and ordain all activities pertaining to the common good, to promote it, and to choose the best means to attain it. Not only does the common good legitimize public power; it is also the supreme law concerning the exercise of that power. But the public sector is not the only agency that secures the common good; since this is the very purpose of the entire political community, it is also the task of all citizens (RN 25). Everyone must be conscious of his responsibility for the common good. To reawaken this consciousness in everyone is an urgent task. The responsibility of citizens for the common good has two aspects. One is the basic civic duty (it is binding in conscience) to take part in public life in accord with each one's possibilities (PT 74). The loss of this sense of duty is evident in apathy toward public affairs, nonvoting,

misappropriation of public funds, negative criticism of authority, and selfishness in holding onto one's privileges at the expense of the general interest (Pius XII,10). The other aspect is the citizen's responsibility, in so far as he is able, to make use of his goods--material and spiritual--and to act with social awareness, placing them at the service of the common good. This responsibility opens a wide range of cultural, beneficent, scientific, charitable, and sporting activities carried on with social awareness through the initiatives of citizens. This aspect is as much a duty as the previous one. The social doctrine of the Church has particularly stressed the social function of property, since this is so often forgotten. To the extent that private possessions surpass the owner's need for a decent standard of living, they must be disposed for the service of others; that is, for the common good. Otherwise, the owner is guilty of an unjust use of wealth. This principle, which is clearly rooted in the Gospel (the parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus), was especially emphasized by the Fathers of the Church and is a constant theme of Catholic writers.

1.5.THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY.

As we have just seen, the common good is a task for public and private sectors of society, each functioning according to its nature. Some things fall within the competence of the public organization (the government) of the political community-as, for example, making laws, administering justice, and providing for the common defense. Other matters belong to private individuals; for example, whatever pertains to the family. In addition, there is a broad range of activities in which both sectors, public and private, interact because the subject matter pertains to both for example, the production and distribution of goods, the promotion of scientific research and of the arts. Here the principle of the primacy of private initiative is to be strictly applied. In substance, this principle states that such activities belong in the first place to the individual person since they constitute part of his natural end. Consequently, they are the means by which a person perfects himself and cooperates in the perfecting of others.

The political community is ordained to the perfecting of persons; hence the public organization must not deprive persons of the means for their perfection and personal fulfilment. Far from restricting it, the government must assist them and empower them to act. The mission, of the state is to encourage, to assist, and when necessary to supplement the initiatives of its citizens. The social doctrine of the Church calls this the principle of subsidiarity (QA 80). The most well-known formulation of this principle was given by Pius XI: "That most weighty principle, which cannot be set aside or changed, remains fixed and unshaken in social philosophy: 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. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the social body, and never destroy or absorb them" (QA 79). Three other principles can be discerned within the principle of subsidiarity: First, persons and small communities must enjoy the autonomy necessary to attain the ends and to carry out the activities within their own competence. Second, larger communities must aid the initiatives of those who come under their authority, neither stifling nor absorbing them.

Third, the larger society must supply the deficiencies of persons and smaller communities when they are unable by themselves to promote the common good, and for so long as the deficiency should last. Two conditions must be met for this principle to be applied correctly: First, the private enterprise must have social significance; that is, it must be carried out with a consciousness of social responsibility. Second, the state must not act to the detriment of the defenseless (QA 78; MM 11), and it must guarantee and assist private enterprises.

1.6. LEGISLATION.

Laws are norms of obligatory action by which the organization of the political community is regulated and each of its members is assigned the role which belongs to him in terms of the common good. The fulfilment of the laws pertains to that part of justice which is called "legal justice." The fundamental structure of society and the basic principles of human conduct arise from the eternal law, which is the divine reason as it governs the entire universe (L 6). The eternal law is called natural law or natural right (L 6) in view of man's participation in it, as it has been impressed upon the hearts of all men (Rom. 2:14-15). Natural right is engraved in human nature (PT 63; it contains the dictates of man's reason which command him to do what is by nature good for him and prohibit him from doing what is bad. Although the terms are often used synonymously, "natural right" is that part of natural law which refers to human relationships. The precepts of the natural law are not simply a moral guide or an ideal which ought to be attained. They constitute the very core of the legal order, the standard by which the positive laws made by man are to be interpreted, and the norm of their validity in conscience. The natural law is the common patrimony of humanity and obliges everyone (L. 18). It is the universal law given to all men without any distinction. The natural law regulates only the moral centre of human life; besides God's commands and precepts, He has bestowed upon man the capacity for self-government. Therefore, society has the power (founded on the natural law) to make laws. These are called positive laws or positive right. The function of positive law is to regulate social relations, completing the social order in those matters about which nature is silent (Pius XII, *Il programma* 16). The same principles that apply to civil authority also apply to positive laws, since they are exercises of that power.

II:THE SOCIAL DUTY OR RESPONSABILITY

2.1.You shall not steal(Corruption)

The seventh commandment forbids unjustly taking or keeping the goods of one's neighbour and wronging him in any way with respect to his goods. It commands justice and charity in the care of earthly goods and the fruits of men's labour. For the sake of the common good, it requires respect for the universal destination of goods and respect for the right to private property. Christian life strives to order this world's goods to God and to fraternal charity.

2.2. RESPECT FOR PERSONS AND THEIR GOODS

In economic matters, respect for human dignity requires the practice of the virtue of temperance, so as to moderate attachment to this world's goods; the practice of the virtue of justice, to preserve our neighbour's rights and render him what is his due; and the practice of solidarity, in accordance with the golden rule and in keeping with the generosity of the Lord, who though he was rich, yet for your sake . . . became poor so that by his poverty, you might become rich.

2.3. Respect for the goods of others

The seventh commandment forbids theft, that is, usurping another's property against the reasonable will of the owner. There is no theft if consent can be presumed or if refusal is contrary to reason and the universal destination of goods. This is the case in obvious and urgent necessity when the only way to provide for immediate, essential needs (food, shelter, clothing . . .) is to put at one's disposal and use the property of others. Even if it does not contradict the provisions of civil law, any form of unjustly taking and keeping the property of others is against the seventh commandment: thus, deliberate retention of goods lent or of objects lost; business fraud; paying unjust wages; forcing up prices by taking advantage of the ignorance or hardship of another. The following are also morally illicit: speculation in which one contrives to manipulate the price of goods artificially in order to gain an advantage to the detriment of others; corruption in which one influences the judgment of those who must make decisions according to law; appropriation and use for private purposes of the common goods of an

enterprise; work poorly done; tax evasion; forgery of checks and invoices; excessive expenses and waste. Willfully damaging private or public property is contrary to the moral law and requires reparation.

Promises must be kept and contracts strictly observed to the extent that the commitments made in them are morally just. A significant part of economic and social life depends on the honouring of contracts between physical or moral persons - commercial contracts of purchase or sale, rental or labour contracts. All contracts must be agreed to and executed in good faith. Contracts are subject to commutative justice which regulates exchanges between persons in accordance with a strict respect for their rights. Commutative justice obliges strictly; it requires safeguarding property rights, paying debts, and fulfilling obligations freely contracted. Without commutative justice, no other form of justice is possible. One distinguishes commutative justice from legal justice which concerns what the citizen owes in fairness to the community, and from distributive justice which regulates what the community owes its citizens in proportion to their contributions and needs.

In virtue of commutative justice, reparation for injustice committed requires the restitution of stolen goods to their owner: Jesus blesses Zacchaeus for his pledge: "If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. Those who, directly or indirectly, have taken possession of the goods of another, are obliged to make restitution of them, or to return the equivalent in kind or in money, if the goods have disappeared, as well as the profit or advantages their owner would have legitimately obtained from them. Likewise, all who in some manner have taken part in a theft or who have knowingly benefited from it - for example, those who ordered it, assisted in it, or received the stolen goods - are obliged to make restitution in proportion to their responsibility and to their share of what was stolen.

Games of chance (card games, etc.) or wagers are not in themselves contrary to justice. They become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others. The passion for gambling risks becoming an enslavement. Unfair wagers and cheating at games constitute grave matter, unless the damage inflicted is so slight that the one who suffers it cannot reasonably consider it significant. The seventh commandment forbids acts or enterprises that for any reason - selfish or ideological, commercial, or totalitarian - lead to the enslavement of human beings, to their being bought, sold and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity. It is a sin against the dignity of persons and their fundamental rights to reduce them by violence to their productive value or to a source of profit. St. Paul directed a Christian master to treat his

Christian slave no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, . . . both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Respect for the integrity of creation. 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 neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. Animals are God's creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care.

By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory. Thus men owe them kindness. We should recall the gentleness with which saints like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Nero treated animals. God entrusted animals to the stewardship of those whom he created in his own image. Hence it is legitimate to use animals for food and clothing. They may be domesticated to help man in his work and leisure. Medical and scientific experimentation on animals is a morally acceptable practice, if it remains within reasonable limits and contributes to caring for or saving human lives. It is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly. It is likewise unworthy to spend money on them that should as a priority go to the relief of human misery. One can love animals; one should not direct to them the affection due only to persons.

2.4. THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

"Christian revelation . . . promotes deeper understanding of the laws of social living. The Church receives from the Gospel the full revelation of the truth about man. When she fulfils her mission of proclaiming the Gospel, she bears witness to man, in the name of Christ, 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. The Church makes a moral judgment about economic and social matters, when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it. In the moral order she bears a mission distinct from that of political authorities: the Church is concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, our ultimate end. She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships.

The social doctrine of the Church developed 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. 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. The Church's social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of the whole of what has been revealed by Jesus Christ. This teaching can be more easily accepted by men of good will, the more the faithful let themselves be guided by it.

The Church's social teaching proposes principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgment; it gives guidelines for action: Any system in which social relationships are determined entirely by economic factors is contrary to the nature of the human person and his acts. A theory that makes profit the exclusive norm and ultimate end of economic activity is morally unacceptable. The disordered desire for money cannot but produce perverse effects. It is one of the causes of the many conflicts which disturb the social order. A system that "subordinates the basic rights of individuals and of groups to the collective organization of production" is contrary to human dignity. Every practice that reduces persons to nothing more than a means of profit enslaves man, leads to idolizing money, and contributes to the spread of atheism. "You cannot serve God and mammon. 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 economic initiatives, in keeping with a just hierarchy of values and a view to the common good, is to be commended.

2.5.ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The development of economic activity and growth in production are meant to provide for the needs of human beings. Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of persons, of the whole man, and of the entire human community. Economic activity, conducted according to its own proper methods, is to be exercised within the limits of the moral order, in keeping with social justice

so as to correspond to God's plan for man. Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another. Hence work is a duty: "If anyone will not work, let him not eat." Work honours the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive.

By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish. Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ. In work, the person exercises and fulfils in part the potential inscribed in his nature. The primordial value of labour stems from man himself, its author and its beneficiary. Work is for man, not man for work. Everyone should be able to draw from work the means of providing for his life and that of his family, and of serving the human community. Everyone has the right of economic initiative; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all and to harvest the just fruits of his labour. He should seek to observe regulations issued by legitimate authority for the sake of the common good. Economic life brings into play different interests, often opposed to one another. This explains why the conflicts that characterize it arise.

Efforts should be made to reduce these conflicts by negotiation that respects the rights and duties of each social partner: those responsible for business enterprises, representatives of wage-earners (for example, trade unions), and public authorities when appropriate. 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.

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. Access to employment and to professions must be open to all without unjust discrimination: men and

women, healthy and disabled, natives and immigrants. For its part society should, according to circumstances, help citizens find work and employment.

A just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice. In determining fair pay both the needs and the contributions of each person must be taken 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 the 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. Recourse to a strike is morally legitimate when it cannot be avoided, or at least when it is necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit. 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. Unemployment almost always wounds its victim's dignity and threatens the equilibrium of his life. Besides the harm done to him personally, it entails many risks for his family.

2.6. JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY AMONG NATIONS

On the international level, inequality of resources and economic capability is such that it creates a real "gap" between nations. On the one side there are those nations possessing and developing the means of growth and, on the other, those accumulating debts. Various causes of a religious, political, economic, and financial nature today give "the social question a worldwide dimension. There must be solidarity among nations which are already politically interdependent. It is even more essential when it is a question of dismantling the "perverse mechanisms" that impede the development of the less advanced countries. In place of abusive if not usurious financial systems, iniquitous commercial relations among nations, and the arms race, there must be substituted a common effort to mobilize resources toward objectives of moral, cultural, and economic development, "redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values. 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.

Direct aid is an appropriate response to immediate, extraordinary needs caused by natural catastrophes, epidemics, and the like. But it does not suffice to repair the grave damage

resulting from destitution or to provide a lasting solution to a country's needs. It is also necessary to reform international economic and financial institutions so that they will better promote equitable relationships with less advanced countries. The efforts of poor countries working for growth and liberation must be supported. This doctrine must be applied especially in the area of agricultural labour. Peasants, especially in the Third World, form the overwhelming majority of the poor.

An increased sense of God and increased self-awareness are fundamental to any full development of human society. This development multiplies material goods and puts them at the service of the person and his freedom. It reduces dire poverty and economic exploitation. It makes for growth in respect for cultural identities and openness to the transcendent. 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. Social action can assume various concrete forms. It should always have the common good in view and be in conformity with the message of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. 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.

2.7. LOVE FOR THE POOR

God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them: "Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you"; "you received without pay, give without pay." It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. When "the poor have the good news preached to them," it is the sign of Christ's presence. "The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition." This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to "be able to give to those in need." It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty. Love for the poor is incompatible with immoderate love of riches or their selfish use: Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in

pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you.

St. John Chrysostom vigorously recalls this: "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." "The demands of justice must be satisfied first of all; that which is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity": 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. The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbour 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. But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you. 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?

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.

Beginning with the Old Testament, all kinds of juridical measures answer the exhortation of Deuteronomy: "For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in the land.'" Jesus makes these words his own: "The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." In so doing he does not soften the vehemence of former oracles against "buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals . . .," but invites us to recognize his own presence in the poor who are his brethren: When her mother reproached her for caring for the poor and

the sick at home, St. Rose of Lima said to her: "When we serve the poor and the sick, we serve Jesus. We must not fail to help our neighbours, because in them we serve Jesus.