

Among Ourselves

Telling The Story Of The God Of Love In Asia A New Light For Our Steps Into The 21st Century?

The Best Kept Secrets To Be Proclaimed On The Rooftops?

Towards A Civilisation of Love in the 21st Century

One of the key elements of the First Asian Mission Congress organised by the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences in October 2006 was the growing 'consciousness of the need for a renewed passion for our evangelizing mission. We are fully aware that to tell the story of Jesus in the context of Asia calls us for the deepening of the Social Doctrine of the Church and living this out in the context of our personal and communitarian lives.

More than ever before, we are being faced with radically new challenges today that are affecting the lives of the vast majority of our peoples. With the increasing new challenges that are confronting the people of Asia that is torn apart by both dehumanising poverty and insane violence. We also see the emergence of new forms of individualism, materialism and hedonism that is not only affecting our socio-political and socio-economic lives but the very cultural foundations of our nation and peoples. We see around us the gradual and the hidden phenomenon of God being privatised or made to seem irrelevant.

It is these new times that urges us to take seriously the demands posed by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (No.37), where he reminds us of the "modern areopagus" where we need to bring to this new emerging world, creative ways of making the Good News relevant to the people of today. This is possible when we are ready to move beyond our traditional definition of "mission territories" to one not just defined by our current geographical, cultural and social boundaries. It is therefore evident that we need to face up to where the essence of the Gospel of Jesus can be planted as the yeast of renewal and revitalisation. These include the new world of information technology, of consumerism of migrants and refugees, of People with HIV/AIDS and many other urgent human needs. All these call for new creative interventions on the part of the Church in Asia.

Our renewed commitment to evangelisation is thus an invitation to make the means of social communication and our involvement in the social transformation through the promotion of justice and peace seems vital. The area of mission inevitably demands of us a new commitment to the use of information technology, to peace and the promotion of human dignity and protection of human rights, especially those of minorities, of women and of children. It goes without saying that the promotion of social justice and the integrity of creation is only possible when these are illumined with the light of the Gospel.

The New Light for our common path into the 21st century is the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. This has been the work of many prophets in the Church and especially Pope John Paul II and his collaborators in the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace who have brought this new message for the whole of humanity. We believe that the time is at hand for us in the Church to take seriously the call to tell the Story of the God of Love in Asia. This is indeed our way to bring about a civilisation of love in the 21st century.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) has made a serious commitment to work with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace to see to the communication of the message and the formation of all the People of God in Asia. We begin this journey with the Asian Presentation of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of Church to be held in Thailand in January.

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without saying that the promotion of social justice and the integrity of creation is only possible when these are illumined with the light of the Gospel.

1. Unity of Faith and Life and Faith and Reason

One of the greatest challenges for the Church today is to relate the faith that we believe with the drastic contradictions that we face in the world today. The Church cannot remain indifferent as a community and as an institution to the growing global hegemony and its consequence of global poverty. It is obvious that this goes against the fundamental Christian principle of the universal destination of all goods and the inherent dignity. This is only possible when we bridge the gap between our understanding of the Scriptures, our acts of private and communitarian worship, our popular religiosities, private and corporate lifestyles and most important witness as an open and welcome community that is seen as united in mind and heart for the well being of the whole human family.

The Church also has to address domestic problems related to the issue of participation especially of the young and women, minorities and the marginalised its formal structures that exercise power and authority. The Church has to seek more earnestly to be truly at the service of others both in internal workings and in its outreach and relationship with the people of the world at large.

2. Engagement in Civil Society and Promotion of Democracy

It has become clearer to the Church that the laity as a result of the immersion and formation in their Christian beliefs have an important role in civil society. This is an integral part of their vocation as Christians. It is their citizenship in society that gives them the right to create a space for citizens to discuss, debate and organize. It is traditionally a mediating institution between family and state but has emerged as a significant institution as well, in international politics. Civil society is important for strengthening democratic participation and making the voices of the poor heard. Engagement in civil society and promotion of democracy is in line with *Gaudium et Spes*' stress on the subject, agency, freedom and fidelity to conscience.

Committed Christians can contribute to creating or strengthening civil society through collaboration with other groups. The issue of minority rights (a concern of many Asian Christians) require the mediation of civil society to be heard. Christian engagement in civil society can help break isolation of many Christian communities in Asia and renew the public image of Asian Church which had been tied up with colonialism and imperialism. To once again call the Church to a self- introspection, we ask, where do

Asian Churches stand in the widespread yearning for democracy and participation? Can they become signs of democracy to the civil society? How can we make ecclesial structures and ministerial functions more participatory?

3. To be a Learning Church

Gaudium et Spes is imbued with a strong spirit of dialogue and learning from other disciplines, faiths and movements. It moved away from triumphalism when it admitted that the Church does not possess the solution to all problems of humanity. Following the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church must be open to learn from the findings of other disciplines in understanding the signs of the times, as well as, Christianity. Christianity must be studied from a historical, sociological and phenomenological perspective, in intense conversation with the broader society as well as peoples of other faiths. There is also a lot of learning we can get from the way peoples of other faiths interpret our Scripture and theologies (multifaith hermeneutics).

The Church must also tap the treasures of Asian popular religiosity and great religious traditions towards forming a Church with an Asian face. But how open really are we to a critique of our traditions and to a reformulation of the language of theology and rituals that draws from Asian spiritual resources? There is the danger of inculturation ending up just as a "one-way process".

We can likewise learn from the questions posed by the youth, who in their exposure to a plurality of cultures via the internet, cable, etc. are becoming more reflexive about their identities. The youth of today subject traditions to interrogation. In post modernity, traditions (including religious traditions) continue to exist, but now, they are contemplated, defended, sifted through, in relation to the awareness that there exists a variety of other ways of doing things.

4. Inter-religious Dialogues

The Church should engage or initiate inter-religious dialogues on all levels – formal (on the level of heads of religious groups with or without government officials) and informal (diocesan, parish and neighbourhood community levels). Inter-religious dialogues in Asia are not just about doctrines but are dialogues of life. They involve joint activities to promote a culture of peace. Social justice must be the fundamental basis for this active cooperation and collaboration among different groups. It is particularly important for the Catholic community in Asia to strengthen its bonds with Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus and even non-believers. A mature rational critique of modernity can lead to the emergence of a shared perspective on the challenges confronting contemporary Asia – a perspective inspired by our shared humanity.

There is also a need to develop an Asian theology of religions that is critical of any theological position based on

a “dogma of intolerance”. The Church should adopt a principled position against fundamentalist or extremist thinking within the religion. In the process, it should demonstrate its firm commitment to social justice.

5. Global Solidarity and New Creativity in Charity

Instantaneous global communication and mass transportation have been utilized as well by civil society including the Church and various liberation movements to make themselves heard. This shows that globalization is no longer just a one-way imperialist process. There is always the interaction between the global, local and the personal. Global connectivity is also empowering those struggling against global hegemony. The increased consciousness of pluralities of ways of thinking has created a space for local narratives from the perspectives of women, the poor, the indigenous groups, etc. to come to the fore. We see that vast changes have taken place in the world since *Gaudium et Spes* which demands reiteration of many of the principles the document laid down.

The Compendium Of The Social Doctrine Of The Church In The Context Of Asia

The Second Vatican Council was about the Renewal of the Identity and Mission of the Church in the Modern World. Forty years after the Council, the Church in Asia is ever more convinced that this renewed understanding of Church as Communion for Mission is the origin of our faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus. We are thus fully aware that the transformation of the world today has to begin with the renewal of the inner being of persons. This restoration of the image of God as reflected in the human being, living with human dignity and with the freedom to exercise human rights is what will result in the common good of humanity. As Church in Asia, we recognise the urgent task to build a new Spirituality of Communion that will lead us to redefine the meaning of the fundamental task of the Church to be at the service of the Reign of God.

The urgency to promote the Social Doctrine of the Church has thus grown from our convictions that all the Council documents, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, Presents before us the challenge of bringing about a new culture of solidarity that will ensure that human nature is kept intact. We, therefore, need new forms of nurture that are life-giving and our structures of society will embody them. If these values and principles are lived out in life they will become path to “Living Cultures Anew”. The greatest challenge in the 21st century is to focus on our understanding of how cultures change and how we can change cultures.

We thus see the need for the following:

1. To deepen our understanding of the theological foundations of the content of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. The focus will be on the need for an *Integral and Solidary Humanism and God's Plan of Love for Humanity*.
2. To outline the basic some principles of reflection that

would enable the Church in Asia to determine the criteria for judgement and directive for action in the context of Asia in general, and for each country and territory, in particular. It is imperative that we focus on the *Church's Mission and Social Doctrine- The Human Person and Human Rights based on the principles of the Church's Social Doctrine*.

3. To focus on some general pastoral orientations and directive for actions in the area of pastoral initiatives and involvement in public affairs in the world of Asia. This has to be in reference to the implications for Family, Human Work, Economic Life, and The Political Community.
4. To identify the role of the Church in the world of Asia in the International Community, Safeguarding the Environment and in the promotion of Peace.
5. To articulate the specific Ecclesial Actions related to the Social Doctrine of the Church and to identify Pastoral Action in the Social Field and the relationship between the Social Doctrine and the Commitment of the Lay Faithful.
6. To draft some possible plans for action in the World of Work, Civil Society and in the World of Politics, Economics and Culture

This is possible with our growing awareness of the importance of the Social Doctrine of the Church in our evangelising mission in the context of Asia. In order to address the underlying issues related to poverty, growing inequalities and violence and wars it is inevitable that the Church in Asia has the responsibility to articulate a clear path ahead. What appears before us to be urgent and immediate is the promotion of direct services to the poor and forms of social development that place emphasis on the need for community participation and cooperation. With this greater unity for integral human development we see the possibilities for the gradual introduction for radical policy changes through education of the people and of policy makers.

The artificial dichotomy between faith and life is one of the central problems of our day. This gives us an opportunity to take a step back and discern in depth the essential consciousness between both religious people and non-religious people alike. There is the basic the tendency we have to separate not just church and state on an institutional level, but to separate our faith from our daily living and choices. Thus the same disruption shows up in Catholics' daily lives. Many Catholics seem able to support one set of values at church on Sunday morning and an entirely different set during their ordinary lives during the week. When we ‘separate what we believe and how we live, it doesn't take long for our lives to become the opposite of what we profess. *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us that a radically new vision of life is needed to bridge the gap between the profession of faith and the daily lives of Catholics.

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The Church's Mission For An Integral Humanism In Solidarity

Cardinal Renato Martino

President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Introduction

The Compendium of the Church's Social Doctrine, written by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace at behest of Pope John Paul II, was presented to the press on 25 October 2004. This document — long-awaited, since its publication was initially foreseen for shortly after the Jubilee Year, and the result of a long process of work, because of the complex problems involved in its conceptual precision and in drawing up its material content — has been welcomed with great interest.

On the basis of the very process that generated it, however, this is a document destined to sow its seeds very extensively, to fertilize the soil of the building of society over long periods of time, to motivate and guide the presence of Catholics in history, and not merely in some extemporaneous manner. The destiny of the Compendium will be measured by the conviction with which it is received and by the use that is made of it for the relaunching of general pastoral activity in society and, above all, in bringing about a reflective, aware, coherent and community presence of lay Catholics involved in society and in politics. If today we witness a warm reception given to the Compendium, it is tomorrow that will determine whether the spirit and purpose that guided its birth have been respected.

Structure and Purpose of the Compendium

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church offers a complete summary of the fundamental framework of the doctrinal corpus of Catholic social teaching. Faithful to the authoritative recommendation made by the Holy Father John Paul II in No. 54 of the postsynodal apostolic exhortation "Ecclesia in America," the document presents "in a complete and systematic manner, even if by means of an overview, the Church's social teaching, which is the fruit of careful magisterial reflection and an expression of the Church's constant commitment in fidelity to the grace of salvation wrought in Christ and in loving concern for humanity's destiny" (Compendium, 8).

The Compendium has a simple and straightforward structure. After an Introduction, there follow three parts: the first, composed of four chapters, deals with the

fundamental presuppositions of social doctrine — God's plan of love for humanity and for society, the Church's mission and the nature of social doctrine, the human person and human rights, the principles and values of social doctrine; the second part, composed of seven chapters, deals with the contents and classical themes of social doctrine — the family, human work, economic life, the political community, the international community, the environment and peace; the third part, which is quite brief, being composed of one sole chapter, contains a series of indications for the use of social doctrine in the pastoral praxis of the Church and in the life of Christians, above all the lay faithful. The Conclusion, entitled "For a Civilization of Love," is an expression of the underlying purpose of the entire document.

The Compendium has a specific purpose and is characterized by certain objectives that are well spelled out in the Introduction. In fact, the document "is presented as an instrument for the moral and pastoral discernment of the complex events that mark our time; as a guide to inspire, at the individual and community levels, attitudes and choices that will permit all people to look to the future with greater trust and hope; as an aid for the faithful concerning the Church's teaching in the area of social morality."

It is moreover an instrument put together for the precise purpose of promoting "new strategies suited to the demands of our time and in keeping with human needs and resources. But above all there can arise the motivation to rediscover the vocation proper to the different charisms within the Church that are destined to the evangelization of the social order, because 'all the members of the Church are sharers in this secular dimension'" (Compendium, 10).

A fact that we do well to emphasize, because it is found in various parts of the document, is the following: The text is presented as an instrument for fostering ecumenical and interreligious dialogue on the part of Catholics with all who sincerely seek the good of mankind. In fact, the statement is made in No. 12 that the document "is proposed also to the brethren of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, to the followers of other religions, as well as to all people of good will who are committed to serving the common good."

Social doctrine, indeed, is intended for a universal audience, in addition to those to whom it is primarily and

specifically addressed, the sons and daughters of the Church. The light of the Gospel, which social doctrine brings to shine on society, illuminates every person: Every conscience and every intellect is able to grasp the human depths of meaning and values expressed in this doctrine, as well as the outpouring of humanity and humanization contained in its norms for action.

Obviously, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church concerns Catholics first of all, for “the first recipient of the Church’s social doctrine is the Church community in its entire membership, because everyone has social responsibilities that must be fulfilled and in the tasks of evangelization, that is to say, of teaching, catechesis and formation that the Church’s social doctrine inspires, it is addressed to every Christian, each according to the competence, charisms, office and mission of proclamation that is proper to each one” (Compendium, 83).

Social doctrine also implies responsibility regarding the construction, organization and functioning of society: political, economic and administrative duties, that is to say, duties of a secular nature, that belong to the lay faithful in a particular way because of the secular nature of their state of life and because of the secular character of their vocation. By means of this responsibility, the laity put social doctrine into practice and fulfil the Church’s secular mission.

The Compendium and the Church’s Mission

The Compendium places the Church’s social doctrine at the heart of the Church’s mission. It shows, above all in Chapter Two, the ecclesiological aspect of this social doctrine, that is, how this doctrine is intimately connected with the mission of the Church, with evangelization and the proclamation of Christian salvation in temporal realities. In fact, among the instruments of the Church’s particular mission of service to the world, which consists in being a sign of the unity of all the human race and a sacrament of salvation, there is found also her social doctrine.

The Christian mysteries of the Resurrection and the Incarnation of the Word attest that the message of salvation, reaching its climax at Easter, concerns all people and every dimension of what is human, since Christ’s redemptive work, “while essentially concerned with the salvation of mankind, includes also the renewal of the whole temporal order.”

The Church, existing in the world and for the world, although not of the world, cannot neglect her proper mission of instilling within the world a Christian spirit: The Church “has an authentic secular dimension, inherent to her inner nature and mission, which is deeply rooted in the mystery of the Word Incarnate.” When the Church becomes involved in human promotion, when she

proclaims the rules of a new coexistence in peace and justice, when she works, together with all people of good will, for establishing relations and institutions that are more human, it is then that the Church “teaches the way which man must follow in this world in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Her teaching therefore extends to the whole moral order, and notably to the justice which must regulate human relations. This is part of the preaching of the Gospel.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains that when the Church “fulfills 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.” It is good to emphasize the words “proclaiming the Gospel” and “mission” in this passage, as they indicate the life and action of the Church, her very purpose according to the will of her Founder. This means when she puts forth her social doctrine the Church is doing nothing other than fulfilling her innermost mission: “to teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church’s evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message.”

It has thus been possible to understand the Church’s social doctrine in the context of the mystery of creation, of the redemption of Christ and of the salvation — which is integral in character — that he brings: “Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person and all mankind, and opens up the wondrous prospect of divine filiation.” It has been possible to place it better within the relation that exists between evangelization and human promotion, which are intimately connected but must not be confused: “Between evangelization and human advancement — development and liberation — there are ... profound links.” It has been possible to consider it as closely connected to the entire Christian life insofar as it is itself “an integral part of the Christian conception of life,” according to the memorable expression found in “*Mater et Magister*.”

The fact that the Compendium places social doctrine within the mission proper to the Church prompts us on the one hand not to consider it as something added or peripheral to the Christian life and, on the other hand, helps us to understand it as belonging to a community subject. In fact, the only subject properly suited to the nature of social doctrine is the entire ecclesial community.

The Compendium, in No. 79, states: “Social doctrine belongs to the Church because the Church is the subject that formulates it, disseminates it and teaches it. It is not a prerogative of a certain component of the ecclesial body but of the entire community: it is the expression of the way that the Church understands society and of her position regarding social structures and changes. The whole of the Church community — priests, religious and laity — participates in the formulation of this social doctrine, each

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according to the different tasks, charisms and ministries found within her.”

The Church is one body with many members who, “though many, are one body” (1 Corinthians 12:12). The action of the Church is likewise one, it is the action of a sole subject, but it is carried out according to a variety of gifts through which the whole richness of the entire body passes. “The entire Christian community” is called to an adequate discernment aimed at “scrutinizing the ‘signs of the times’ and interpreting reality in the light of the Gospel message,” but “each individual person” is also called to this same task. “Everyone for their part” and “each individual person”: service to the world, so that it may know the ways of the Lord, is brought about through the specific — and at the same time all-encompassing — commitment of every component of the ecclesial community. In this perspective, I wish to offer a reflection concerning the contribution of these different ecclesial components.

Bishops and the Compendium

The Compendium is put into the hands of bishops. The conciliar decree “Christus Dominus,” in paragraph 12, offers some points of interest regarding the bishop’s function, precisely as teacher of the faith, in formulating, teaching and applying the Church’s social doctrine. An integral part of this function of teaching, the decree states, is showing that “earthly goods and human institutions according to the plan of God the Creator are also disposed for man’s salvation and therefore can contribute much to the building up of the body of Christ” (No. 12).

The bishop is also called to “teach, according to the doctrine of the Church, the great value of these things: the human person with his freedom and bodily life, the family and its unity and stability, the procreation and education of children, civil society with its laws and professions, labor and leisure, the arts and technical inventions, poverty and affluence” (ibid.). Finally, he also has the duty of setting forth “the ways by which are to be answered the

most serious questions concerning the ownership, increase, and just distribution of material goods, peace and war, and brotherly relations among all countries” (ibid.).

This intimate relation between social doctrine and the bishop as teacher of the faith ultimately arises from the indissoluble bond existing between social doctrine and evangelization, a bond spoken of many times in the Compendium. The bishop is the pre-eminent teacher of the faith in a particular community that has the specific task of discerning historical events in the light of social doctrine. It is the task of the particular Christian community — as stated in the famous fourth paragraph of “Octogesima Adveniens” — “to analyze with objectivity the situation,” “to shed on it the light of the Gospel’s unalterable words” and “to discern the options and commitments which are called for.” This is a task that belongs to the community and is to be undertaken “with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the Bishops who hold responsibility and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all people of good will” (ibid.) so that the proclamation of the social Gospel may be incarnated in the minds and hearts of concrete men and women who share the same concerns and the same hopes.

The bishop, as the first servant of his community, will find in the Compendium the help needed for fulfilling this duty of discernment. The Compendium will be a kind of reference point for working out the Church’s social doctrine in his diocese, taking into account the papal social magisterium as well as Scripture and Tradition, and keeping careful watch also over how this doctrine is taught and embodied. The Compendium will help the bishop, insofar as he is responsible for spreading social doctrine in his diocese, constantly to remind all ecclesial subjects of their social responsibility. Nor will the bishop consider the application of this same social doctrine in his diocese as foreign to his office of teacher of the faith. Of course, putting its principles into concrete action in situations of politics, the economy and work will belong to other subjects, and in a particular way to Christian associations of the laity and to individual laymen and women. Nonetheless, the bishop is called to maintain an important role of overseeing this application so as to reawaken, even in a prophetic manner, consciences which have fallen asleep, to condemn distortions and errors in its application, to indicate — without getting involved in empirical questions — basic criteria and dynamic guidelines for resolving the human and social problems that call into play the word and actions of believers.

Priests and the Compendium

The Compendium is put into the hands of priests. The priest, “by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the Sacrament of Orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is configured

in a special way as Head and Shepherd of his people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world.” Priestly service to the world takes place according to the specific character proper to the priest. He is a missionary, but not independently of his liturgical service, of his making Christ present in his preaching and in his very life, of his being a shepherd to his flock, of his value as an instrument of dialogue among Christians and between Christians and all men and women.

The priest serves the Church’s social doctrine not when he becomes involved directly in social or economic activities, but by preaching the social Gospel from the altar, by proclaiming in his preaching the freedom of Christ and condemning the denial of human rights and the disregard for the dignity of the person, by showing the uncontainable force of the love and justice that issue forth from the Word, teaching the social value of the Christian faith, by promoting a catechesis — especially among young people and adults — that draws its inspiration also from social doctrine, by prompting the Christian community and the laity, both as individuals and in associations, to open their minds and hearts to the human needs found in their own territory as well as to the needs of the larger world community.

Moreover, to the priest belongs the mission of promoting the “different roles, charisms and ministries present within the ecclesial community,” in relation also to the assimilation and proclamation of the Church’s social doctrine. He has the first responsibility, within his community, of fostering and strengthening the awareness that all subjects of the community must have concerning their role in the evangelization of society: parents and families, the laity, the world of school and education, associations, movements, and so on.

Consecrated Life and the Compendium

The Compendium is put into the hands of men and women religious. Those who have responded to Christ’s call to a form of life that already in this world can anticipate the perfection of the Kingdom of God have a special place in the Christian community and, by virtue of their charism, have a unique role in the evangelization of society. Theirs is not a detachment from the world, it is a different way of being within the world. It is a particularly profound and non-evasive way, in that those in consecrated life see social relationships and economic questions not only as they are, but also and above all as they will be and therefore as they should be.

Men and women religious leave everything behind (cf. Luke 14:33; 18:29) in order to open their hearts to a greater fullness and to live more completely an undivided love for the Lord (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:34), and thus to show prophetically to men and women new forms of relations

with the things of creation and with one’s brothers and sisters: relations oriented towards sharing, built on the freedom of God’s children, relations that accept rather than possess, relations of human promotion rather than oppression.

Consecrated life focuses its gaze prophetically on the Resurrection, when men and women will be “like angles in heaven” (Matthew 22:30), and, already in the present time that we live here and now, it is an anticipation of that mysterious state of perfection that the merits of Christ make possible: All of us, already, are in fact “one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). By their witness to the Gospel beatitudes in their personal and community lives and by their total openness — with their vows of obedience, poverty and chastity — to living with the Lord for the salvation of the world, consecrated persons imbue social, political and economic relations with the radicality of the Gospel.

Consecrated life offers a Gospel-based model of coexistence based on gift and keeps alive the ability of the entire Christian community and of all people to discern in the “already” the “not yet,” to seek communion and charity, in order to provide human relations with a heart even in today’s society.

The Laity and the Compendium

The Compendium is put above all into the hands of the laity. By virtue of their baptism, the laity are placed within the mystery of God’s love for the world that Christ has revealed and of which the Church is the memory and continuation in history. Therefore, the laity share in the mystery, communion and mission that characterize the Church, but they do so according to a particular nature, their secular nature. The lives of the laity are directly involved in the organization of secular life, in the areas of the economy, of politics, of work, of social communication, of law, of the organization of institutions in which are made the decisions and choices that become social structures affecting civil life.

The laity are not in the world more so than other ecclesial subjects, they are in the world in a different way: They deal directly with secular matters, constructing the architecture of relations between members of social and political communities, leaving the mark of their work on the course of world events, determining the organizational and structural aspects of these events.

The Christian lay faithful, with their professional competence and their life experience, serve the evangelization of society as they follow their vocation to “seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.” They bring to the Christian community their passion for human needs and their openness to learn from others, since God is at work also beyond the official confines of the Church. They bring to the world their Christian knowledge that

orders things according to God's plan and their keen desire to serve the ecclesial community that by means of their hands and their work reaches into the recesses of society where people concretely live.

The Christian laity — with their competence and professional capabilities, and by taking on the responsibility to work in a particular context — in a certain way complete the Church's social doctrine on the practical level and mediate its necessary impact on concrete realities. Evangelization is the proclamation of a new life; the evangelization of society is not an abstract ideological proposal but the incarnation of new criteria of behavior in the work of men and women.

Thus, social doctrine is not mere theoretical knowledge, rather it is meant "for action"; it is oriented towards life, it is to be applied with creativity and is to be incarnated. The laity have a very particular, although not exclusive, role in this area. Since social doctrine is the encounter between the truth of the Gospel and human problems, the laity must guide this social doctrine's directives for action towards concrete and effective operative results, even if these results are only partial.

The laity are men and women who are willing to take risks and who also concretely experience this doctrine. Drawing up historical, concrete solutions to humanity's problems, they are not, so to speak, an appendix to the Church's social doctrine, but the very heart of this doctrine, since it has a profound "experiential" character.

The laity must not be abandoned in this work of opening new frontiers and of working out new responses. The entire Christian community shall sustain them and encourage them so that they know that, although on the one hand their choices can only be attributed to themselves without involving the entire community, on the other hand their efforts are felt by the community to be the efforts of the community itself; their hard work and expectations are appreciated and valued. Nor shall the Christian community refrain from engaging in a collective effort in temporal realities, lest the community be compromised and suffer internal divisions.

Responsibility for working at the forefront and for making this doctrine a lived experience cannot be relegated solely to the laity as individuals. If the ultimate decisions regarding the economic and political spheres are to be made by the laity in autonomous responsibility, the fundamental orientational decisions and even the creation of places for the concrete experience of this doctrine and for dialogue must be the undertaking of the entire community.

The Christian laity are intermediaries between, on the one hand, the principles of reflection, the criteria of judgment and the directives for action found in the Church's social doctrine and, on the other hand, the concrete and unique situations in which the lay faithful must act and make decisions. But mediation does not mean a lack of courage, a tendency to weaken or to compromise.

If lay Christians are to be salt, light and leaven, they must strive to make ever more clearly seen all that is authentically human in social relations, fearlessly and with openness and hope towards the future. In this, they are assisted by the presence of the ecclesial community, by the encouragement of priests and men and women in consecrated life, by their participation in sacramental and liturgical life, and by the indications that come to them from places of community discernment of the signs of the times.

Witness and Planning

In concluding these reflections on the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, I would like to emphasize the twofold dimension of the presence of Christians in society, a twofold inspiration that comes to us from the Church's social doctrine itself and that in the future will need to be lived more and more as two realities that together form a single whole. I am referring to the need for personal witness, on the one hand, and, on the other, the need for new planning for an integral humanism in solidarity that involves social structures.

These two dimensions, the personal and the structural, must never be separated. It is my fervent hope that the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church will contribute to the development of mature men and women who are authentic believers and will inspire them to be credible witnesses, capable of changing the mechanisms of modern society by their thought and action. This explains the need for witnesses, martyrs and saints in the area of society as well. These are people who have lived their presence in society as a "witness to Christ the Savior"; Popes have repeatedly made reference to such individuals.

We are speaking here of those whom "Rerum Novarum" considered "worthy of all praise" for their commitment to improve the conditions of workers. Those who, in the words of "Centesimus Annus," have "succeeded time after time in finding effective ways of bearing witness to the truth." Those who, "spurred on by the social magisterium, have sought to make that teaching the inspiration for their involvement in the world. Acting either as individuals or joined together in various groups, associations and organizations, these people represent a great movement for the defense of the human person and the safeguarding of human dignity."

There are many such Christians, many of whom are members of the laity, who "attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life." Personal witness, the fruit of an adult Christian life, that is, one that is profound and mature, cannot fail to be firmly rooted also in the building of a new civilization, the civilization of love.

Source: http://www.catholic.net/global_catholic_news/print.phtml?news_id=76309

The Clarion Call To Catholic Action: The Compendium Of The Social Doctrine Of The Church

Deacon Keith Fournier

“And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?” St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 14:8

The “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,” released this past March in the United States, is a bugle blast that should be heard throughout the entire Church, and, through her sons and daughters, throughout the whole world. Far from an indistinct sound, it is one that rings out with crystal clarity. This magnificent volume presents the treasury of the Church’s social teaching in one place. It is waiting to now be implemented and give form to a new Catholic Action. Never before has the distilled wisdom of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church been so beautifully organized, brilliantly articulated or thoroughly researched.

The Compendium is tenderly dedicated to “His Holiness John Paul II Master of Social Doctrine and Evangelical Witness to Justice and Peace.” The timing of its release is nothing short of prophetic, coming as it does in the wake of the passing to the Father of John Paul the Great and the elevation of Pope Benedict to the Chair of Peter. The time has come for an informed, educated, genuinely converted and courageously dedicated global movement of the lay faithful, a new Catholic Action, which will take this treasure into the world of the Third Christian Millennium and build a new culture of life, family, authentic freedom and solidarity; a civilization of love.

What the Compendium does is to give Catholics, other Christians, other people of faith and all people of good will a complete sourcebook for the Social teaching. In this one volume we find all the references needed to study the Social Teaching and then to go “right to the source” by turning to the back. It provides the instruction that has been so desperately needed to give clear direction to those who are committed to Catholic Action. It will also be welcomed ecumenically by anyone concerned with true social justice.

There has been a tendency, one which I have written about extensively in the past, for even well intended Catholics and other Christians to be confused when it comes to how they apply their faith to their social participation and citizenship. The social teaching of the Church has often not been known outside of the academy or among a few who have “interpreted” it for others. Or, too often it has been treated as a sort of “after thought;” used in a kind of “proof - texting” application to bolster various political, economic or partisan positions.

Some people have approached their work in the social arena (which encompasses politics and policy, economics,

culture, arts...the entire domain of human and social interaction) as if limited political terms such as “conservative,” “liberal,” (or a host of variations on these two such as neo-liberal, progressive, neo-conservative or paleo-conservative) were, what I have called in past articles, “the noun” and “Catholic” more the adjective in their lives. In other words, they first derived their identity from these limiting labels and only secondarily by reference to their Baptismal vocation and the life orientation that it demands. Thus we hear of “Catholic Conservatives” or even “Catholic Liberals.” Even more unfortunate is the use of other terms, drawn from the political nomenclature of the age (or actually of another age) such as “left” or “right,” by detractors in an effort to pigeonhole and marginalize Catholics, other Christians and other people of faith who seek to inform their participation by the great social principles summarized in this great body of teaching called the Social teaching. Now, if anyone wants to know just what Catholic Social teaching *really* teaches, it is here, all contained in this one volume.

The theological roots of this body of teaching called the “Social teaching” go back, literally, to “the beginning. In the first Book of the Sacred Scriptures, the book of the beginnings, the Book of Genesis, we find the doctrine of creation and the clear beginning of the social doctrine of the Church. It reveals that we were created for relationship, with God, with one another, and with the created order. Throughout the Old Testament we also find clear social instruction concerning social relations.

Then, in the great event that forever changed human history, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh, we find the theology of charity, authentic liberation, and the roots of the Christian contribution to understanding the human vocation revealed as a call to true happiness and human flourishing as revealed in the humanity of Jesus. In His Paschal Mystery, His life, death and Resurrection, we find the deeper meaning of all human existence. The New Testament is also filled with “Social teaching.” For example, the Sermon on the Mount contains the very essence of all of the moral and social teaching of the Church. In effect, Jesus Christ, in His sacred humanity is the Social Teaching made visible in its complete perfection. How he lived, loved and related to others is the pattern for all truly human relations.

In the history of the early Church we then find a beautiful development of the social implications of the Christian faith. This is elucidated in the Christian

Tradition. As the Church matured and passed through time and spread into every Nation, she recorded her inspired insights and wisdom in post New Testament writings and announced them to the faithful, for the whole world, in conciliar pronouncements. In the last one hundred or so years, the Magisterium, the teaching office of the Catholic Church, has continued to expound, develop and update this beautiful patrimony of social doctrine. She has done so as, in the words of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, an “expert in humanity.”

Following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, the Church which is His Body on the earth walks the way of the person. She, as a society in her own right, lives in the midst of every age, with a foot in this passing world and another in the eternal. She offers insights for every age, and for the citizens of every Nation, on how to live in peace. She offers insights on how to structure any society in order to promote true justice and human flourishing. The early Fathers of the Church spoke of the Church as the “world reconciled” and, in the east; they used another pregnant description of the Church as the “world transfigured.” She exists to serve the various societies within which she resides and, as a part of her mission to the whole world, is committed to improving the social conditions of all men and women by promoting authentic social and economic justice, both nationally and internationally.

The full development of Catholic Social teaching is often associated with the promulgation of Pope Leo XIII’s “On Capital and Labor” and the trajectory of encyclicals since. They include the writings of Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI and, of course, the extraordinary contributions of Pope John Paul the Great. Yet, the Church has always reflected upon - and spoken to - the social questions of every age. This is evidenced in the earliest Patristic literature, both East and West. For example, we find tremendous social insights, presented with great aplomb, in such noted teachers in the West as St Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas.

At the root of classical Christian teaching concerning the nature of the human person is the understanding that Christians are called to live a unity of life. The Church proclaims the truth about Jesus Christ, who came to redeem the whole person - and to begin a new creation - both of which will be completed and fulfilled in the resurrection of the body and life in a new heaven and the new earth. Part of the problem has been the lack of good instruction, a full catechesis, of the faithful. The Baptized members of the Church all too often fail to recognize that their faith is not a hat that is taken off upon entry into the “real world,” whatever that term is meant to refer to. They have not even been instructed that there is such a thing as a “Social teaching,” let alone that it has relevance for their lives and is meant to inspire and give structure to their own missionary vocation.

For the mature, truly catechized Christian, there should be no such language as that which is expressed in phrases such as “Well, that is ‘just business’, or ‘just politics’, or ‘just entertainment’...or so on. These expressions are often used to justify a dichotomy between the faith that one professes and the lifestyle that one lives. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council referred to this “separation between faith and life” as “one of the greatest errors of our age.” Pope John Paul II regularly repeated this concern in his marvelous encyclicals and apostolic letters. The Christian faith is meant to be a light that presides over the totality of our fully human lives, informing our consciences and changing the way that we see all of human life and our interactions with one another at every level.

This modern phenomenon of compartmentalization among otherwise seemingly faithful Christians was not the way of the early Church. That is why, before Antioch, the early followers of Jesus Christ were referred to as “the Way.” They lived differently in the midst of the world of their age. They also lived in society very differently. This “difference” is noted in some of the early writings such as the “Didache” or “Teaching of the Twelve” where it is summarized in instructions. These early Christians went into the pagan societies of their age and changed them from within through their words, the witness of their lives and their heroic sacrificial lives. Our relationship with the world must be the same.

The Social teaching of the Church is meant to inform and influence social, economic, political and cultural life, through the work of Christians who not only know of it but have committed themselves to live by it and make it the foundation of their work and service in society. It speaks to - and should affect - all human interactions. It provides principles that reveal the truth about the dignity of every human person, the sanctity of every human life, the primacy and purpose of the family, the nature of human freedom, our obligations to one another (and most especially to the poor) and many, many other “social” concerns. It offers insights for good governance through the application of ordering principles such as subsidiarity and the insistence of full participation. The Social teaching of the Church speaks to issues of war and peace, economic justice, our relationship to the goods of the earth and the environment, and to international relations.

This teaching is called “social” for a purpose. It speaks to human society and to the formation, role and rightful place of social institutions. It reveals the truths that can be known by all men and women - because they are revealed in the Natural law. These truths are confirmed by and expounded upon through Revelation. Thus, this body of teaching is not simply “religious,” in the sense that it is intended only for religious persons. It offers insights that are of tremendous value to all men and women; and it offers them for every nation.

Now, with this Compendium, in one readable and brilliantly organized volume, we have that treasury of Catholic Social teaching made easily available - able to be proclaimed and used for a new Catholic Action. In one place, we have been given all of the sources of the Social Teaching from the Sacred Scriptures, the Tradition and the modern social encyclicals. With the publishing of this very helpful volume, no-one should be able to confuse any Catholic concerning what the Catholic Church has to say on the vital issues upon which she has spoken. That includes some misguided and unfaithful Catholic politicians.

The timing of this volume is of particular importance to those of us who live in the United States because we are soon to begin another critical election cycle in 2006. It has extraordinary implications for our future as a Nation and our place in the world. By the time we have finished all the various State, local and Federal campaigns of 2006, the 2008 presidential campaign will be well underway. During this cycle, no political party should expect a Catholic or, for that matter any orthodox, classical Christian, to vote for their candidate simply because of party affiliation. All candidates should be approached by an educated, catechized and fully prepared Christian constituency who can now make reference to the Social teaching of the Church and apply it through a proper hierarchy of values.

The "Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church" should be read, re-read, studied and then lived. It should become the primary source for the formation of a Catholic social conscience. Its teaching is meant to be implemented in our lives and become the foundation for our social, cultural, economic and political participation. It must become the measuring stick for all political, social,

economic and cultural action undertaken by Catholics. Through our Baptism, we are all called, in accordance with our varied states in life and specific vocations, to continue the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ until He returns. That mission has a social dimension.

As faithful Catholics, we are called to build a new culture of life, family, freedom and solidarity. As we enter into the political arena in the coming election cycle, the Social teaching of the Church must help us to form the building blocks of our Catholic action and citizen participation. If it really does, it will make it nearly impossible for anyone to label us "left," "right," liberal" or "conservative." Rather, it will be said of us that we are first, last and always, faithful Catholic Christians who are committed to building a new world where, in the recent words of Pope Benedict XVI, "development and the economy have a human face and in which the rights of man and international law are governed by the logic of charity and solidarity."

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church is a clear bugle, sounding the Call to a new Catholic Action.

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Source: <http://www.deaconsforlife.org/articles/catholicaction.htm>

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it is on the downswing. That region has high and rising food production, freeing rural residents to work in urban factories.

Those factories, typically sweatshops, often involve human rights abuses.

They are also a second step up the development ladder, a step towards the information technology workers of India who have decent housing, adequate nutrition, good clothing and education for their children.

Mistaken stereotype

The stereotype is that Africa has been left behind because it is rife with political corruption and misrule.

But Sachs maintains that corruption in many

African nations is less than in some Asian nations that are prospering.

"Many African governments are desperately trying to do the right thing, but they face enormous obstacles of poverty, disease, ecological crisis, and geopolitical neglect or worse" (p. 207).

The Church believes that humanity is not a collection of individuals struggling for self-interest, but a global family in which all ought to help all. Nations must help nations; people must help people.

While a fair global marketplace is necessary to ending poverty, more is needed than a market mentality. The end of poverty can only come once peoples are imbued with a commitment to solidarity, justice and universal charity.

Source: <http://www.wcr.ab.ca/cst/cst061906.shtml>

Essay Review: A New Catholic Social Manifesto? The Compendium Of The Social Doctrine Of The Church

Bruce Duncan CSsR

Reflecting Pope John Paul II's passionate engagement with the great social issues of our day, The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church will stand as a key resource for some years. Yet it is not an easy document to assess, since it encompasses such a wide field of topics and issues. Because of the limitations of space, this review will outline the scope of the Compendium, skipping much of the detail about specific areas, and raise some questions and criticisms.

Disturbed that the social teaching of the Church was not well known, John Paul II directed in 1996 that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace prepare a summary for the Great Jubilee of the Church's views on contemporary social issues. It was first termed a 'catechism', stressing in a quite unprecedented way the importance of this synthesis, but the title was changed to Compendium, allowing more room for flexibility in interpretation since the social context was in constant flux. The text was vetted carefully by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith headed by Cardinal Ratzinger, indicating that Benedict XVI is likely to endorse its views strongly. It was a major undertaking and did not appear until late in 2004, with the Vatican edition which runs to 525 pages.

The influence of many great Catholic thinkers is reflected in the text, especially Jacques Maritain, regarded as the decisive political philosopher of Pope Paul VI, along with so many of the new theologians—de Lubac, Chenu, Congar, Häring, Rahner and John Courtney Murray among others, who so shaped the thinking of the Second Vatican Council.

Drafting the Compendium was a daunting task. Pope John Paul II alone had made thousands of important statements and speeches on the great social issues of our time, and there were many important statements by various Vatican spokesmen and organisations to incorporate. This vast amount of material needed to be digested and summarised into themes. The Compendium also needed a literary structure to knit the elements into a consistent and readable text. This has been done quite successfully at times, though clearly the outcome is the work of different hands and viewpoints.

While various unnamed experts and episcopal conferences were consulted, the Compendium does not refer to any of the standard authors, commentaries or academic debates about Catholic social teaching. However, it is not purely a compilation and expansion of official Vatican statements, since the selection of texts and

emphases reflect differences of view. Inevitably the document must be to some extent a compromise.

A disappointing aspect of the English translation is that many sections of the Compendium fail to use inclusive language. It is difficult to understand why this continues to occur in Vatican documents. Inclusive language is now widely regarded as part of the normal courtesies of discourse. In my view, to use non-inclusive language is needlessly counter-productive, and may result in some people who would otherwise be keenly interested in the Compendium refusing to look at it. Perhaps non-English speakers do not realise how significant this issue is in English-speaking countries.

The Structure

The Compendium will be valuable as a standard reference, though as circumstances change, formal Church positions will also adapt. The very title of the Introduction, 'An Integral and Solidary Humanism', reflects Maritain's influence. His philosophy of 'integral humanism' was incorporated into formal Church teaching by Paul VI in his 1967 *Development of Peoples*, and recurs as a motif throughout the Compendium. The book proposes 'an integral and solidary humanism capable of creating a new social, economic and political order, founded on the dignity and freedom of every human person, to be brought about in peace, justice and solidarity' (par. 19).

The text is organised into three sections, the first dealing with the overarching context of God in Christ calling the Church to a social mission to the whole of humanity, based on reverence for the person and support for human rights. The second section largely follows the divisions of Vatican II's Church in the Modern World and considers the various areas of social life, beginning with the family, then devoting chapters to: human work; economic life; the political community; international issues; the environment; and peace. The third section summarises why the Church's social doctrine is important, and urges lay people especially to commit themselves to building a 'civilisation of love'.

Layers of Authority in the Text

The Introduction warns that 'the citations of Magisterial texts are taken from documents of differing authority', and hence may be open to debate and constant

updating or adaptation. 'The document limits itself to putting forth the fundamental elements of the Church's social doctrine, leaving to Episcopal Conferences the task of making the appropriate applications...' (par. 8).

The Compendium is addressed not just to bishops, priests, religious personnel and lay people, but also to other Christian denominations, members of non-Christian religions, and all people of good will, in the hope that this will guide debate about how to achieve the common good of everyone (par. 12).

Chapter One on 'God's plan of love for humanity' opens beautifully with a reflection on how in all religious traditions the intuition of Mystery reveals an aspect of God's face to people. The Mystery calls us to act responsibly with others, as is universally recognised in the Golden Rule (par. 20). This promise of a life of grace is not just for Christians, 'but also for all people of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly' (par. 41).

The Compendium here refreshingly talks of the 'Mystery', or the 'Transcendent One', rather than simply God. The reason presumably is to set a context for recognising that all our ideas and talk of God fall short of the reality, since our understanding rests on analogy, and makes use of metaphor and symbol in the struggle to articulate the meaning of belief.

The Compendium highlights the social implications of the Ten Commandments, especially 'the right of the poor' to sustenance and justice. This was embodied in the practice of the sabbatical and jubilee years to redistribute land, free indentured labour and remit debts. It was not just to remind Israel of its founding principle, but to be continually invoked to eliminate discrimination and economic inequalities (pars. 23-24).

The Gospels interpret Christ as the full revelation of the Father's inner being, but in St Luke especially, expressed in terms of the Jewish jubilee, bringing freedom to the poor, oppressed, the blind and those in prison (par. 28). The salvation Jesus talks about is not just a private or transcendent reality, but includes social and public life. 'In man's inner dimension are rooted... the commitment to justice and solidarity, to the building up of a social, economic and political life that corresponds to God's plan' (par. 40).

The Church's social doctrine of human liberation is intimately involved in its mission. 'Society – and with it, politics, the economy, labour, law, culture – is not simply a secular and worldly reality, and therefore outside or foreign to the message and economy of salvation.' (par. 62).

'Nothing that concerns the community of men and women—situations and problems regarding justice, freedom, development, relations between peoples, peace—is foreign to evangelization...' (par. 66). 'The Church's social doctrine 'is itself a valid instrument of evangelization' [John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 54.]...

This is not a marginal interest or activity, or one that is tacked on to the Church's mission, rather it is at the very heart of the Church's ministry of service...' (par. 67).

Church Authority and Historical Accuracy

The Compendium states: 'Insofar as it is part of the Church's moral teaching, the Church's social doctrine has the same dignity and authority as her moral teaching. It is authentic magisterium, which obligates the faithful to adhere to it. The doctrinal weight of the different teachings and the assent required are determined by the nature of the particular teachings, by their level of independence from contingent and variable elements, and by the frequency with which they are invoked.' (par. 80). However, 'the Church does not attempt to structure or organize society, but to appeal to, guide and form consciences.' (par. 81).

'This social doctrine also entails a duty to denounce' injustice and violence, especially to defend the rights 'of the poor, the least and the weak', and promote the cause of social justice (par. 81). The Church works for a society 'that anticipates in history, in a preparatory and prefigurative manner, the 'new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells'.' (par. 82). This task of social transformation belongs not primarily to priests and religious personnel, but to lay people 'by reason of the secular conditions of their state of life, and of the secular nature of their vocation' (par. 83).

Historical Failures?

By way of criticism, I should point out that the text does not explicitly discuss the failures and blunders in the Church's historical engagement with social issues. Instead, it asserts that 'the Church's social doctrine is a constant teaching that 'remains identical in its fundamental inspiration, in its 'principles of reflection', in its 'criteria of judgment', in its basic 'directives for action'...' (par. 85).

Its section on the development of the modern social teaching (pars. 87-104) gives a brief overview of a gradually unfolding and basically coherent corpus of teaching, with no sense of the conflicts and debates within those developments, and at times the failures and mistakes. It would be more honest if the Compendium frankly acknowledged that the Church has made serious mistakes in the past, especially in recent centuries in its opposition to Enlightenment philosophies developing traditions of human rights and liberty of conscience, as well as of religious freedom.

After all, the Second Vatican Council reversed many earlier Church views, such as the doctrine of the confessional State, the condemnation of the principle of religious liberty etc., and redeveloped Catholic social

teaching precisely using human rights theories it had too sweepingly rejected. The irony that Catholic social teaching now revolves around the human rights of the person is profound.

John Paul II in his Jubilee apologies led the Church in confessing many of the failures by its adherents in the past, but stopped short of acknowledging that some official Church teaching was itself at fault. Failure to acknowledge this transparently disturbs many people who know their history, and results in needless distrust with the Church and its social teaching.

In my view, it would have helped to include in the Compendium a more accurate appraisal of earlier Church positions, recognising the difficulties and that Church leaders can only act as they see fit at the time. The Church's social teaching does not drop directly out of heaven but develops gradually as the result of reason and experience in attempting to respond to human need over centuries. At times in the past the Church has been slow to develop its social thinking, or even reactionary. We need to be honest about this, not least of all because it tells us important things about the limitations and possibilities of failure by the Church in this area.

Human Rights

Chapter Three outlines the Church's understanding of the dignity of the human person as fundamental to the construction of a just society. 'The Church, aware that her essentially religious mission includes the defence and promotion of human rights, 'holds in high esteem the dynamic approach of today which is everywhere fostering these rights'' (par. 159).

Chapter Four, 'Principles of the Church's Social Doctrine', locates the heart of Church teaching in the principles of the common good, the universal destination of goods, and the principles of subsidiarity, participation and solidarity (par. 166). However, its treatment of 'social justice' is surprisingly sketchy and undeveloped for such a key principle (par. 201).

As a means to ensure personal autonomy and freedom, private property is allowed as a means to the end of common use. 'The Church's social doctrine requires that ownership of goods be equally [presumably this would be better translated 'equitably'] accessible to all, so that all may become, at least in some measure, owners...' (par. 176). For 'Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute and untouchable.' (par. 177).

Further, the Compendium highlights the 'preferential option for the poor' (par. 182) but recognises that it is not possible to eliminate poverty entirely from the world. Until Christ returns, 'the poor remain entrusted to us and it is this responsibility upon which we shall be judged at the end of time' (par. 183).

Role of the State

The document warns against over-extending the scope of the welfare State, resulting in a loss of personal responsibility (par. 187). It recognises that the State must step in 'to supply certain functions', but intervention 'must not continue any longer than is absolutely necessary, since justification for such intervention is found only in the exceptional nature of the situation' (par. 188).

However, it somewhat inconsistently strongly supports maintaining a family wage that allows for savings to acquire property as a guarantee of personal freedom. If necessary, it calls for various forms of social provision, such as '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' (par. 250). It even adds that there should be 'economic compensation' for housekeeping and family care (par. 251).

Nevertheless, this discussion underestimates the necessary role of the State in providing a secure and equitable environment for business, and ensuring the redistribution of resources to offer a reasonable equality of opportunity for all citizens. Its view of the welfare State is highly abstract, and does not recognise the great variety of forms welfare States take in western democracies.

The State must favour the free exercise of economic activity but also 'establish limits for the autonomy of the parties in order to defend those who are weaker.' Putting it succinctly, State intervention in the economy must be 'commensurate with society's real needs' (par. 351). However the difficulties arise from questions about who decides, how, and on what basis?

Human Work

The Chapter on human work reflects the Church's deep involvement with the rights of workers in the existing capitalist economy, and its historic debate with forms of socialism and communism. It recalls the prophetic value of Pope Leo XIII's 'heartfelt defence of the inalienable dignity of workers' (par. 268). But it also incorporates John Paul II's distinctive emphasis on the subjectivity of work, 'the self-realization of the person', so that 'work is for man and not man for work.' (par. 272).

The Compendium denies that unions are only 'a mouthpiece for a class struggle which inevitably governs social life', and insists that 'Properly speaking, unions are promoters of the struggle for social justice, for the rights of workers' (par. 306). They also have the task 'of educating the social consciences of workers' so that they play a full and responsible role in society. The Church also recognises the right to strike when conducted by peaceful means and 'when it cannot be avoided, or at least when it is necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit' (par. 304).

In line with a long tradition the Compendium supports workers participating 'in ownership, management and profits' of the industries in which they work (par. 281). It mentions the need to find new ways to ensure the right to participate in industries and firms (par. 281). And since unemployment can become 'a real social disaster', 'Full employment' therefore remains a mandatory objective for every economic system' (par. 288).

The 'presence of women in the workplace must also be guaranteed', especially by professional formation (par. 295). As for child labour, it 'constitutes a kind of violence'. In some countries, this is increasing, and amounts to 'veritable slavery' (par. 296).

Economic and Political Life

Chapter Seven on 'Economic Life' recognises the advantages of the free market but 'points out the need for it to be firmly rooted in its ethical objectives...Faced with the concrete 'risks of an 'idolatry' of the market', the Church's social doctrine underlines its limits' (par. 349).

A number of issues lurk unresolved in Chapter 8 on the political community. Firstly, it states that the purpose of political authority is to promote the common good, understood as the full growth and wellbeing of the human person, and to discover the moral order 'God has imprinted in all his creatures' (par. 384). But one might ask, is this the role of government, or of society more generally? Is not the role of government to focus on the civic good that is achievable within specific circumstances, without trying to enforce all the details of the moral law?

Second, while endorsing democracy, the document rejects 'ethical relativism, which maintains that there are no objective or universal criteria for establishing the foundations of a correct hierarchy of values' (par. 407). One would not disagree with this statement. But instead of falling into a negative mode, how can we encourage a more positive conversation about the objectivity of moral norms? There is much in contemporary thinking that rejects ethical relativism: concern for human rights, mass movements against poverty and hunger, concern for the environment and future generations. Where is the conversation with economic philosophers, for instance, working for a more substantial base for a renewed, more humane economics?

Third, the Compendium states that it does not belong to the Church 'to enter into questions of the merit of political programmes, except as concerns their religious or moral implications' (par. 424). This does not take us very far, since moral issues pervade the political landscape. There are no general rules for the effective resolution of conflicts between moral dimensions and political decisions, except through attempts at courteous, honest and informed debate.

The document continues: 'It is a grave duty of

conscience not to co-operate, not even formally [does it mean 'materially', rather than 'formally'?], in practices which, although permitted by civil legislation, are contrary to the Law of God' (par. 399). These are complex issues for people to work through appropriately, but the treatment here is much too cryptic.

The Compendium recognises the right of resistance to unjust authorities, even to the point of violent resistance in extreme cases, though it prefers passive resistance as more conformable to moral principle (par. 401). It also calls for the just treatment of criminal prisoners, strongly affirms the prohibition against torture, and considers the need to use the death penalty very rare today, if non-existent in practice (par. 403-4005).

A very strange sentence enters the text at this stage, presumably introduced by a different hand: 'Religious freedom is not a moral licence to adhere to error, nor as [sic] an implicit right to error' (par 421). What does this enigmatic sentence mean? It has echoes of the old 'error has no rights' theory rejected by the Second Vatican Council which declared that people have rights to make moral decisions, even though they may err.

International Relations and Poverty

Chapter Nine on 'The International Community' implies a strong critique of recent US foreign policy and calls on the international community to 'reject definitively the idea that justice can be sought through recourse to war' (par. 438). It argues that international law must ensure that 'the law of the more powerful does not prevail' (439).

Surprisingly, the Compendium devotes only a few pages expressly to international economic development, though there are scattered references elsewhere. 'It may seem that underdevelopment is impossible to eliminate...difficulties must nonetheless be met with strong and resolute determination, because development is not only an aspiration but a right that, like every right, implies a duty' (par. 446). It again calls for 'an equitable distribution of goods' on a world scale (par. 448).

It repeats John Paul II's clarion statement in 2000: 'At the beginning of the New Millennium, the poverty of billions of men and women is 'the one issue that most challenges our human and Christian consciences'...The poor should be seen 'not as a problem, but as people who can become the principal builders of a new and more human future for every-one'' (par. 449).

The document laments the protectionism and trade discrimination against developing countries that hinder development, along with deteriorating terms of trade, resulting in a widening gap between rich and poor countries (par. 364); 'freedom of trade is fair only when it is in accord with the demands of justice' (par. 366). It considers that financial deregulation has had very negative consequences for many developing countries (par. 369).

The Compendium also condemns unjust financial systems in extremely strong terms: ‘Those whose usurious and avaricious dealings lead to the hunger and death of their brethren in the human family indirectly commit homicide, which is imputable to them’ [from the Catechism, 2269] (par. 341). ‘Solidarity too must become globalized’ (par. 321).

Environment

An innovation is the chapter, ‘Safeguarding the environment’. The Vatican had been slow to incorporate concern for the environment in its social teaching, but the Compendium embraces it heartily (par. 455). It notes that ‘ill-considered’ and excessive exploitation of the earth’s resources has resulted in a growing awareness of risk; ‘it sometimes seems that the balance between man and the environment has reached a critical point’ (par. 461). It warns that when the scientific data are contradictory, ‘It may then be appropriate to base evaluations on the ‘precautionary principle’... managing the situation of uncertainty’ (par. 469).

Peace

‘The Promotion of Peace’ (Chapter Eleven) is one of the strongest sections of this book, and is of special significance given the war in Iraq and the threat from terrorism. The Compendium strongly condemns war (par. 497), but is not pacifist. ‘A war of aggression is intrinsically immoral’, and states have the duty of defence ‘even using the force of arms’.

However the Compendium has failed to correct the misleading statement in the Catechism that ‘The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy [for war] belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good.’ Cardinal Ratzinger indicated that this may need changing.

The Compendium reflects the strong opposition by the Vatican to the invasion by the US, Britain and Australia of Iraq. It notes that according to the UN Charter, war is only legitimate in self-defence or when authorised by the Security Council to maintain peace. ‘Therefore, engaging in a preventive war without clear proof that an attack is imminent cannot fail to raise serious moral and juridical questions’ (par. 501).

Legitimate defence also extends to protecting the innocent against aggression, on the grounds of international humanitarian law, particularly against systemic violence against civilians, such as ethnic cleansing (par. 504). Refugees have special claims to protection (par. 505).

Further implying Vatican opposition to the cruel sanctions against Iraq, the Compendium insists they must ‘never be used as a means for the direct punishment of an entire population’ (par. 507).

The Compendium condemns as ‘a profanation and a blasphemy to declare oneself a terrorist in God’s name.’ It also condemns the idea that those who die in terrorist attacks are ‘martyrs’. ‘No religion may tolerate terrorism and much less preach it. Rather, religions must work together to remove the causes of terrorism and promote friendship among peoples’ (par. 515).

Social Teaching Neglected

The Compendium laments that the Church’s social teaching ‘is neither taught nor known sufficiently’ (par. 528). Hence it insists that ‘The Church’s social doctrine must be the basis of an intense and constant work of formation, especially of the lay faithful (par. 531). It also insists that priests and seminarians ‘must develop a thorough knowledge of the Church’s teaching’ and take ‘a keen interest in the social issues of their day’ (par. 533).

Conclusion

The 166-page index is very extensive, nearly a third of the whole book (it must be a record), but one wonders why so many headings have been listed. For instance, p. 366 includes headings on ‘Awareness’, ‘Beginnings’ and ‘Benefits’ but they add nothing significant for researchers. Perhaps the index has been computer-generated. There has been no attempt to arrange sub-headings within major categories. Instead there is a reference to every time the word is used, though with a line indicating its context. There is a useful 25-page index of all references to Scriptural or Church sources used.

The Compendium will provide a useful resource for libraries and scholars, though it is unavoidably cryptic at times, and even leaves important questions unresolved. It reflects an important *pris de position* at this stage of debates in Rome and the wider Church. It does not possess the power or authority of the Vatican Council’s *The Church in the Modern World*, even though it does reflect it to some extent, and summarises later developments. It should be used in the context of the standard commentaries and the wider literature—but stay tuned for further developments.

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Nations Must Help Nations

Economic Development Is A Human Right

Glen Argan
WCR Editor

In July 2004, economist Jeffrey Sachs and some of his colleagues visited the Sauri sublocation of eight villages in western Kenya. The region is beset with AIDS, malaria and hunger.

In his book, *The End of Poverty*, Sachs describes meeting with 200 community members one afternoon for several hours. Most of the community farm tiny plots of land, less than a quarter acre in size, which have been exhausted of nutrients.

Only two of the farmers at the meeting reported using fertilizers at present. But when asked how many had used fertilizer in the past, "every hand in the room went up."

The farmers speak

Farmer after farmer described how the price of fertilizer was now out of reach, and how their current impoverishment left them unable to purchase what they had used in the past" (p. 230).

The community recently had a clinic, but the villagers were unable to pay the doctor. He left and the clinic is now padlocked.

Three-quarters of the people suffer from malaria, but only two people had antimalarial bed nets. At least 30 per cent of the adults had AIDS but no one had access to antiretroviral therapy to control the disease.

Until a few years ago, people in Sauri cooked their meals using local wood for fuel. Now, there is no wood left. A quarter of the houses have access to trees that have been grown to fix nitrogen in the soil; the rest do not. Some buy sticks at another village to cook their meals; many use cow dung for fuel or eat uncooked meals.

Secondary education is non-existent, the water is of poor quality and there is no electricity. The economic prospects for Sauri would seem to be extremely bleak.

But Sachs maintains the region could have fertilizer, a doctor, clinic and drugs, a truck, a proper water supply, electricity, modern cooking fuel, a couple of cell phones, and other basic amenities for US\$350,000 a year - US\$70 a resident.

The benefits would be astounding - everything from virtual elimination of malaria to doubling or tripling of food yields.

For the entire country of Kenya, one of the most populous nations in Africa, it would cost about US\$1.5

billion a year to stem the tide of hunger, disease and rural underdevelopment.

Moreover, once the country had more than a subsistence food supply, it could develop industry and get its foot on the first rung of the ladder of development. After that, the need for outside aid would quickly fall off.

But if Kenya needs \$1.5 billion a year for rural development, what does it receive?

Donor aid to the country is about US\$100 million a year, far short of what is needed. Further, Kenya's debt servicing to wealthy nations is about US\$600 million a year. The international community, instead of bolstering the country's economy, is draining it.

Sachs maintains that it is possible to eliminate extreme poverty around the globe by 2025, if world nations would make a firm commitment to doing so. Once extreme poverty was eliminated, countries would be on the road to self-sufficient development.

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church says, "The poverty of billions of men and women is the one issue that most challenges our human and Christian consciences" (n. 449). Economic development is not only something to which people aspire, it is a human right.

The Compendium notes that until recently many countries believed that they could develop by isolating themselves from the world market.

Having tasted the ravages of colonialism and the imperialism of the transnational corporations, poor nations thought they could best go it on their own.

That turned out to be a fiction. The economies of countries isolated from the world economy invariably stagnated.

Economic development means an engagement in the world economy.

Sachs notes that 50 per cent of the population in Africa lives in extreme poverty.

But in East Asia, the percentage of those in extreme poverty has fallen from 58 per cent in 1981 to only 15 per cent in 2001, a major leap forward in only one generation.

Poverty has not been eliminated in East Asia. But

con't on page 11>

True Democracy Demands A Moral Structure

Today's thrust for a secular society denies our need for an ethical foundation

Glen Argan
WCR Editor

It has become a common belief in Western society that the best democracy is thoroughly secular. Such a democracy would be a blank slate, unencumbered by religion or political ideologies.

What makes a state democratic - goes this theory - is a set of procedures - free elections, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, a free press, equality before the law, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and punishment. Democracy has no necessary link with human flourishing or human dignity. It is a set of rules and individual rights.

No one should deny that these freedoms are necessary to democracy. But the Church maintains that there is more to democracy than individual freedom. Democracy is more than a set of rules.

Authentic democracy

Society is not just a collection of autonomous individuals with rights. It is an organism that is something other than the sum of its parts. For the organism to be healthy, each of its parts must be healthy. Authentic democracy requires a number of conditions beyond establishing ways for people to participate in society.

Democracy must respect the dignity of every person. It must respect human rights, including rights to life, water, food, health care, education, decent housing and work. It must include a commitment, not just to the rights of individuals, but also to the common good.

There must be structures for both participation and shared responsibility. People must not only learn reading, writing and arithmetic, they must be formed in true ideals. A democratic society must have a moral structure as well as structures for participation.

Majority rule is not enough to make for democracy. If majority rule goes hand in hand with ethical relativism, then society is prone to tyranny. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church calls ethical relativism "one of the greatest threats to modern-day democracies." If there is no ultimate truth, "then ideas and convictions can be easily manipulated for reasons of power" (n. 407).

These words are crucial for the future of democracy. It is important that there be a division of powers among the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. A good balance protects society's members from one branch of government running roughshod. But government must also be restrained by natural law, that is, by moral truth.

Western societies are currently having serious problems with this. Natural law, in the form of traditional

marriage and the right to life, has been violated by decisions to allow same-sex marriage and abortion.

The Pennsylvania government once enacted a law requiring women to give informed consent before they could have an abortion. In striking that law down in 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court wrote, "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, of the mystery of human life."

Likely no government body has ever given a balder endorsement of individualism uninhibited by morality. But true liberty is not striking off on one's own. It involves responsibility and solidarity. It involves a recognition that creation was intended for all and that all are entitled to share in its goods.

At the opposite extreme from the U.S. Supreme Court are Islamic nations where the consent of the governed is, if a concern at all, a secondary one. In some of those nations, there is no recognition of religion and the state as being separate realms of authority. Laws of the state are derived directly from the Koran.

This is, no doubt, part of why it is so difficult to import Western democracy into the Islamic world. At the very time when Western democracies are trying to expunge any hint of religiosity from their models of governance, Muslim nations are re-asserting the belief that religion is the only thing that matters in governance.

In this context, Catholic teaching is a middle way. We believe democracy is essential to good government and we assert that democracy must be linked to moral truth. We believe that there is no divide between the moral truths revealed by God and the moral truth discoverable by human reason.

But we also accept that there is, in a certain sense, a division between Church and state. The state has no right to restrict the free exercise of religion. The Church, while it can and should speak in the public square especially when morality is being violated, should not interfere in government's prudential application of moral standards to society.

Such a framework can provide the basis for authentic democracy.

Source: <http://www.wcr.ab.ca/cst/cst051506.shtml>

INFORMATION

**The Asian Presentation Of The
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Of The Church**

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Towards A Civilisation Of Love In The 21st Century*

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C O N T E N T S

The Church's Mission for an Integral Humanism in Solidarity	4
The Clarion Call to Catholic Action: The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church	9
Essay Review: A New Catholic Social Manifesto? The Compendium Of The Social Doctrine Of The Church	12
Nations Must Help Nations	17
True Democracy Demands A Moral Structure	18