

Catholicism 101- Catholic Social Thought: How Does the Catholic Church Interact with the World?

August 9, 2018

“As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25)

“Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, * will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:2-5)

“Dear Young Friends! Only conversion of heart can make our world, which is full of terror and violent, more humane. And that means patience, justice, prudence, dialogue, integrity, solidarity with victims, the needy, and the poorest, limitless dedication, love even unto death for the sake of the other. When you have understood that quote deeply then you can change the world as committed Christians. The world cannot continue down the path that it is taking now. If a Christian in these days looks away from the need of the poorest of the poor, then in reality he is not a Christian!”

-Pope Francis in Introduction to *DoCat: What to Do?*”

“In our own time, there are so many needs which demand a compassionate response from Christians. Our world is entering the new millennium burdened by the contradictions of an economic, cultural and technological progress which offers immense possibilities to a fortunate few, while leaving millions of others not only on the margins of progress but in living conditions far below the minimum demanded by human dignity. How can it be that even today there are still people dying of hunger? Condemned to illiteracy? Lacking the most basic medical care? Without a roof over their heads?

The scenario of poverty can extend indefinitely, if in addition to its traditional forms we think of its newer patterns. These latter often affect financially affluent sectors and groups which are nevertheless threatened by despair at the lack of meaning in their lives, by drug addiction, by fear of abandonment in old age or sickness, by marginalization or social discrimination. In this context Christians must learn to make their act of faith in Christ by discerning his voice in the cry for help that rises from this world of poverty. This means carrying on the tradition of charity which has expressed itself in so many different ways in the past two millennia, but which today calls for even

greater resourcefulness. Now is the time for a new "creativity" in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by "getting close" to those who suffer, so that the hand that helps is seen not as a humiliating handout but as a sharing between brothers and sisters.

We must therefore ensure that in every Christian community the poor feel at home. Would not this approach be the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the Kingdom? Without this form of evangelization through charity and without the witness of Christian poverty the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today's society of mass communications. The charity of works ensures an unmistakable efficacy to the charity of words."- St. John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte 50 (At the Beginning of a New Millennium)*

God's Master Plan: Love

"God created the world out of his overflowing love. He would like us to him as he loves us. He wants us to gather into the great family of his Church." *DoCat* pg. 19

- God's liberating action in the history of Israel
- Jesus Christ, the decisive event of the history of God with mankind is fulfilled
- Trinitarian love is the destiny of all peoples

Together We Are Strong: The Church's Social Mission

- The Church is God's dwelling place with men and women
- Pope Leo XIII *Rerum Novarum* (1892)- addressed growing concerns of the Industrial Revolution
 - dealt with the issue of labor and gave the Church a new paradigm to look at other issues
- Pope Pius XI- *Quadragesimo Anno* responded to the economic crisis of 1929
- St. John XXIII- *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963)
- Blessed Paul VI- *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971)
- St. John Paul II- *Laborem Exercens* (1981) and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991)

Unique and Infinitely Valuable: The Human Person

- Created in the image of God
- Unique and Unrepeatable
- Respect for Human Dignity
- The Equal Dignity of All People ("God shows no partiality"- Acts 10:34)
 - "Only the recognition of human dignity can make possible the common and personal growth of everyone" *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* 145 and (James 2: 1-9)

The Common Good, Personhood, Solidarity, Subsidiarity: The Principles of the Church's Social Teaching

-The Common Good

-“The principle of the common good, to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain the fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people.” (CSDC 164).

-“...the good of all people of all the whole person as its primary goal”-164

-“no one is except from cooperating, according to each one's possibilities, in attaining it and developing it.”

-The Universal Destination of Goods

-“God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity.” 171

-“Each person must have access to the level of well-being necessary for his full development”- 172

-“Private property is an essential element of an authentically social and democratic economic policy, and it is the guarantee of a correct social order.”- 176

-“Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute and untouchable.”- 177

-Preferential Option for the Poor (182)

-“The Church's love for the poor is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, by the poverty of Jesus, and by his attention to the poor. This love concerns material poverty and also the numerous forms of cultural and religious poverty.”

-The Principle of Subsidiarity

-Issues should be addressed as the level closest to the issue

-“It is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities; in short for that aggregate of economic, social, cultural, sports-oriented, recreational, professional, and political expressions to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth.” 185

-“opposed to certain forms of centralization, bureaucratization, and welfare assistance and to unjustified and excessive presence of the State in public mechanisms” 187

-“Various circumstances may make it advisable that the State step in to supply certain functions” 188

-Participation

-“...either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which he belongs.” 189

-Solidarity

-“...the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity.” 192

-“not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.” 193

The Foundation of the Society: The Family

-“The Church considers the family as the first natural society, with underived rights that are proper to it, and places it at the center of social life.” 211

-“Relegating the family to a subordinate or secondary role, excluding it from its rightful position in society, would be to inflict grave harm on the authentic growth of society as a whole.” 211

-Marriage as the foundation- 215

-Parents are the primary educators of their children- 240

Occupation and Vocation: Human Work

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

513. What is the meaning of work?

2426-2428

2460-2461

Work is both a duty and a right through which human beings collaborate with God the Creator. Indeed, by working with commitment and competence we fulfil the potential inscribed in our nature, honor the Creator’s gifts and the talents received from him, provide for ourselves and for our families, and serve the human community. Furthermore, by the grace of God, work can be a means of sanctification and collaboration with Christ for the salvation of others.

Welfare and Justice for All: Economic Life

-“Economic activity and material progress must be placed at the service of man and society”- 326

-Wealth exists to be shared- 328

-“Businesses should be characterized by their capacity to serve the common good of society through the production of useful goods and services.” 338

-“The social doctrine of the Church recognizes the proper role of profit as the first indicator that a business is functioning well.” 340

-“The action of the State and of other public authorities must be consistent with the principle of subsidiarity and create situations favorable to the free exercise of economic activity.” 351

Power and Morality: The Political Community

- “The human person is the foundation and purpose of political life.” 384
- Religious Freedom: A Fundamental Human Right- 421

One World, One Humanity: the International Community

- “The Church is a companion on the journey towards an authentic international community which has taken a specific direction with the founding of the United Nations Organization in 1945.” 440
- Fight against poverty- 449
- Foreign debt- 450

Safeguarding Creation: The Environment

- “A correct understanding of the environment prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited. At the same time, it must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person itself.” 463
- “The attitude that must characterize the way man acts in relation to creation is essentially one of gratitude and appreciation; the world, in fact, reveals the mystery of God who created and sustains it.” 487
- Laudato Si*- Pope Francis 2015

Living in Freedom from Violence: Peace

- “Peace is built up day after day in the pursuit of an order willed by God and can flourish only when all recognize that everyone is responsible for promoting it.” 496
- “It is through prayer that the Church engages in the battle for peace.” 519

Personal and Societal Commitment: Love in Action

II. SOCIAL DOCTRINE

AND THE COMMITMENT OF THE LAY FAITHFUL

a. The lay faithful

541. *The essential characteristic of the lay faithful who work in the Lord's vineyard (cf. Mt 20:1-16) is the secular nature of their Christian discipleship, which is carried out precisely in the world.* “It belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will”[1139]. By Baptism, the laity are incorporated into Christ and are made participants in his life and mission according to their specific identity. “The term ‘laity’ is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful who, by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world”[1140].

542. *The identity of the lay faithful is born in and nourished by the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. Baptism conforms the person to Christ, Son of the Father, first-born of every creature, sent to all as Teacher and Redeemer. Confirmation configures the individual to Christ, sent to give new life to creation and to every being through the outpouring of his Spirit. The Eucharist makes the believer a participant in the unique and perfect sacrifice that Christ offered to the Father, in his own flesh, for the salvation of the world. Lay Catholics are disciples of Christ starting with the sacraments, that is, by virtue of what God has wrought in them, marking them with the very image of his Son Jesus Christ. It is from this divine gift of grace, and not from human concession, that is born the threefold “munus” (gift and duty) that characterizes the lay person as prophet, priest and king, according to his secular nature.*

543. *It is the proper duty of the lay faithful to proclaim the Gospel with an exemplary witness of life rooted in Christ and lived in temporal realities: the family; professional commitment in the world of work, culture, science and research; the exercise of social, economic and political responsibilities. All secular human realities — both personal and social, including various environments and historical situations, as well as structures and institutions — are the context in which the lay Christian lives and works. These realities are places where God's love is received; the commitment of the lay faithful must correspond to this vision and is to be considered an expression of evangelical charity; “for the lay faithful to be present and active in the world is not only an anthropological and sociological reality, but in a specific way, a theological and ecclesiological reality as well”[1141].*

544. *The witness of the lay faithful is born from the gift of grace, recognized, nurtured and brought to maturity[1142]. This motivation makes their commitment in the world significant and is opposed to the characteristics of action that are proper to atheistic humanism, which lack an ultimate basis and are circumscribed within purely temporal limits. The eschatological perspective is the key that allows a correct understanding of human realities. From the standpoint of definitive goods, the lay faithful are able to engage in earthly activity according to the criteria of authenticity. Standards of living and greater economic productivity are not the only valid indicators for measuring the total fulfillment of the human person in this life, and they are of even less value when considering the life to come, “for man's horizons are not bounded only by the temporal order; living on the level of human history, he preserves the integrity of his eternal destiny”[1143].*

545. The lay faithful are called to cultivate an authentic lay spirituality by which they are reborn as new men and women, both sanctified and sanctifiers, immersed in the mystery of God and inserted in society. Such a spirituality will build up the world according to Jesus' Spirit. It will make people capable of looking beyond history, without separating

themselves from it, of cultivating a passionate love for God without looking away from their brothers and sisters, whom they are able to see as the Lord sees them and love as the Lord loves them. This spirituality precludes both an intimist spiritualism and a social activism, expressing itself instead in a life- giving synthesis that bestows unity, meaning and hope on an existence that for so many different reasons is contradictory and fragmented. Prompted by such a spirituality, the lay faithful are able to contribute “to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their own life ... they must manifest Christ to others”[1144].

546. *The lay faithful must strengthen their spiritual and moral lives, becoming ever more competent in carrying out their social duties. A deepening of interior motivations and the acquisition of a style appropriate for their work in the social and political spheres are the results of a dynamic and ongoing formation directed above all to the attainment of harmony between life, in all its complexity, and faith. In the experience of believers, in fact, “there cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called ‘spiritual’ life, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called ‘secular’ life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture”[1145].*

Bringing faith and life together requires following the path judiciously indicated by the characteristic elements of Christian living: the Word of God as a reference point; the liturgical celebration of the Christian Mystery; personal prayer; the authentic experience of Church enhanced by the particular formational services of discerning spiritual guides; the exercise of the social virtues and a persevering commitment to cultural and professional formation.