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2013

**A New Evangelization: Catholic Social Teaching, a Light in
Darkness**

John E. Vesey

**A NEW EVANGELIZATION:
CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING, A LIGHT IN DARKNESS**

by

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Catholic Social Teaching, A Light in Darkness”**

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Mary and John, who were living examples of the Incarnate Word.

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ABSTRACT

The call for a New Evangelization has many beginnings in the life of the Christian community. In this Thesis it is traced through the life of a group of Catholic lay leaders at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Brooklyn, NY who wanted a better life for their families and their community. Their search for a new way of living is highlighted and the reflections that motivated and orientated them are presented in an orderly way in the hope that others can find strength in the wisdom that they discovered in the Christian Tradition.

The origins for a New Evangelization are traced from the call of Blessed John XXIII for Vatican II through the Pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI. Then four characteristics or values that should be present in the life of every Christian and their community are developed to help guide the lay leaders better respond to the four main social problems that were affecting the life of their community. They chose to focus on these problems in their pastoral work so that could offer hope where at times none seemed to exist. This wisdom guided the lay leaders as they struggled to live the message of the Gospel and become agents of social change in their community.

This experience demonstrates that when a community is guided by the Gospel and Christian Tradition, its beliefs and values become incarnate. The community can then take the risks to become a catalyst for social change and shine through its social environment as a light that transforms the darkness of evil.

Introduction

This thesis project is an expression of the effort to respond to the people and the situation in the community of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Brooklyn, New York. Blessed Sacrament is an immigrant community which has its roots principally in the life of the people of Latin America who have left their homeland to begin a new life in the land of promise, the United States of America. As with most immigrant people they are humble, hard working, hopeful for their families, and content to live within their own family and community. The daily problems that affect their lives are often overlooked or seen as something beyond their control. They find their peace primarily in the practice of their faith and in their Church which is now calling them to a New Evangelization.

This project on “A New Evangelization and Catholic Social Teaching” began with 10 lay leaders of the parish and community, and through them, the community itself in the search for a more just life for all. The first part of this project listens to the experiences of the life of the people in the parish and in the community (praxis). The second part revolves around the reflection on the Word of God and Catholic Social Teaching and the question “what are we being inspired to do?” (theory). As this reflection, formation, was evolving the lay leaders worked with the community in an attempt to resolve some of the problems that they identified as the main challenges to the life of the community (praxis). In the process of searching for solutions to these problems, the lay leaders and people adjusted to new insights that resulted from their formation and working together so that they could create new solutions for these problems that were destroying the lives of the people.

The changing nature of the community, new people entering the community with others leaving because of obtaining better jobs or because they wanted more security for

their families, inspired the lay leaders to realize that they had to reach out to more people if they were to improve the life of the community. This realization helped the lay leaders understand that their formation and planning must be ongoing if they were to respond creatively to the problems that were becoming their new reality. This thesis project is a reflection of a people's attempt to live a better life and how they have been sharing that new life with others.

PART ONE: A NEW EVANGELIZATION

Chapter One

A COMMUNITY DISCERNES ITS MAJOR CHALLENGES

There has been a great temptation in the United States¹ and in the U.S. Catholic Church² to focus on the social problems and injustices in other parts of the world and overlook those present in the local communities. As the world changes daily at such a fast pace with increasing levels of globalization, one is easily tempted to focus solely on world events. The economic crisis, which began with the financial crisis on Wall Street in 2008 and continues today in every sector of the US and world economies, has changed the power structure of the world as China has become the dominant world economy as measured by many financial and international indices.³ The level of international violence covered in the front pages of our daily newspapers and dominating the television news media has increased.⁴ With these new political and economic developments, one

¹Ed O'Brien, "HRE (Human Rights Education) in the United States," www.hrea.org/lists/hr-education/markup/msg00387. Commenting on the state of human rights education in the United States as a follow-up to the mid-term review of the United Nation Decade for HRE, Dr. O'Brien writes: "The United States is way behind many other countries in HRE. In schools there is a generally a minimal amount being taught and few schools base their rules and stated values overtly on human rights principles, which they should. . . . The concept of human rights is not yet part of the culture as it relates to issues inside the U.S."

²National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference (NCCB/USCC): Social Development and World Peace, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, 3, 1998, <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching.shtml>.

³Jenny Barchfield, "China Surpasses US as World's Top Energy Consumer," Salon, July 20, 2010, http://www.salon.com/news/2010/07/20/as_china_energy; Miles Johnson, "Asian Buyers Circle Oil Minnows," Financial Times, July 20, 2010, 19; Geoff Dyer, James Lamont, Joe Leahy, Prateek Pradhan, "Unstable Neighbors," Financial Times, July 15, 2010, 5; "Visionary Who Saw a Sleeping Giant Sees a Century of Chinese Auto Domination," Automotive News, July 12, 2010, 26; Kathy Chu, "China on Track to Top Record IPO Proceeds Next Week: Agricultural Bank of China Could Raise \$22B," USA Today, July 9, 2010, B1; Antoaneta Becker, "China: New Economic Power Eyes Future Global Dominance," Global Information Network, July 8, 2010.

⁴Michael M. Grynbaum and Michael S. Schmidt, "Extra Security and Raised Alerts: 'You Get Used to It, but You're Not Used to It,'" New York Times, May 3, 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/05/04/nyregion; William K. Rashbaum, Mark Mazzetti, and Peter Baker, "Arrest Made in Times Square Bomb Case," New York Times, May 3, 2010; Ralph Peters, "The Coming Crusade," New York Post, July 19, 2010, 25; Margaret Coker, "Bombs Target Iraqi Militia, Killing Dozens," Wall Street Journal, July 19, 2010, 7; Marc Lacey, "Report Says US Fails to Assess Drug Aid to Mexico," New York

could easily overlook the challenges, the difficulties, and the social problems that touch the daily lives of the poor and the immigrants in our own local communities.

I. New Evangelization: Priority Begins in the Church in Latin America

Within the Catholic Church, the beginning of a pastoral change in mentality took place in 1968 at the Medellín Conference in Medellín, Colombia. The bishops met to apply the results of the Second Vatican Council to the Church in Latin America. In the conclusions of the Medellín Document, the bishops spoke directly to the peoples of Latin America. They indicated in the Mensaje a los Pueblos de America Latina (Message to the People of Latin America) that the Church was called:

To promote a New Evangelization and an intensive catechesis that reaches the elite and the masses in order to achieve a coherent and committed life of faith.⁵

This was the first time the expression, “New Evangelization,” was used in a Church document and thus there began, in the Latin American Church, the desire to initiate a New Evangelization. To achieve the desired social change in Latin America, where everyone could live a dignified life, the Bishops opted for a New Evangelization of the continent where both the poor and the rich would hear the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. This change would eventually affect the Universal Church and become the priority for all pastoral ministry in the Church.

In 1975, aware of the commitment made by the Bishops of Latin America to transform society through a New Evangelization, conscious of the challenging political and social situations in the world, and desirous to fulfill the Church’s responsibility to be a servant to all people, Pope Paul VI was inspired to mark the tenth anniversary of the

Times, July 20, 2010; Glenn Greenwald, “Cause and effect in the War on Terror,” July 20, 2010, www.salon.com/news/opinion/glenn_greenwald/2010/07/20

⁵Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM), Medellín Document: The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council (Bogota, Columbia: Celam, 1970), 41.

closing of Vatican II with his Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World).

The objectives of the Second Vatican Council, he stated, could be definitively summed up under a single heading: ‘to make the Church of the twentieth century ever more fitted for proclaiming the Gospel to the people of the twentieth century.’⁶

Pope Paul emphasized that:

... evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social. This is why evangelization involves an explicit message, adapted to the different situations constantly being realized, about the rights and duties of every human being, about family life without which personal growth and development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development—a message especially energetic today about liberation.⁷

Pope Paul VI reminded all the baptized that every member of the Church received the mission to evangelize. But before this mission began each individual and the Church itself had to be evangelized. The Church and every member were called to constant conversion and renewal. For “modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”⁸

II. Pope John Paul II and a New Evangelization

Pope John Paul II was elected Pope in 1978 and by the time he died, in 2005, he had visited 129 countries and traveled more than 725,000 miles. He became the face and voice of truth for the Catholic Church. He made it acceptable to be religious in public once again. He was the charismatic Pope who charmed both the young and the old with

⁶Avery Dulles, S.J., “John Paul II and the New Evangelization,” Studia Missionalia, vol. 48, 1999, 168.

⁷Pope Paul VI, On Evangelization in the Modern World (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, 1975), no. 29, pp. 17-18.

⁸Ibid., no. 15.

his goodness, energy, love and showed a special affection for Latin America where, in his 18 visits, he preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ in 39 countries of Central and South America and called everyone to a New Evangelization. Though most people never had the opportunity to read his speeches, it was the witness of Pope John Paul's life that touched the hearts of the people of Latin America.

In his speeches Blessed Pope John Paul built on the reflections of Medellín, Pope Paul VI's inspiration and insights, and called for a New Evangelization, not only in Latin America but also for the Universal Church. On March 9, 1983, in Port au Prince, Haiti, he laid the groundwork when he told the bishops participating in the opening ceremony of the 19th General Assembly of the Council of Latin American Bishops (Consejo Episcopal de Latinoamerica—CELAM) that:

The commemoration of the half millennium of evangelization will gain its full meaning if it is a commitment on your part as bishops, together with your priests and faithful: a commitment, not to re-evangelization, but to a new evangelization, new in ardor, methods, and expression.⁹

John Paul placed a great deal of responsibility for this New Evangelization on the laity. In his apostolic letter Christifideles Laici: On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful, he stated:

This (New Evangelization) will be possible if the lay faithful will know how to overcome in themselves the separation of the Gospel from life, to again take up in their daily activities in family, work and society, an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the Gospel.¹⁰

⁹John Paul II, "Inaugural Speech to the 19th General Assembly of Consejo Episcopal Latino Americano (The Council of Bishops of Latin America—CELAM), Origins, March 24, 1983, vol. 12, no. 41.

¹⁰John Paul II, Christifideles Laici: The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1989), no. 84.

This commitment to social justice required a clear understanding of Catholic Social Teaching by the laity if they were to fulfill their Christian responsibility in the world.

In the United States, the Bishops pointed out that Catholics in the United States have not always been aware of Catholic Social Teaching, nor have they lived up to their social responsibilities in their daily lives:

. . . It is clear that in some educational programs, Catholic Social Teaching is not really shared or not sufficiently integral and explicit. As a result, far too many Catholics are not familiar with the basic content of Catholic Social Teaching. More fundamentally, many Catholics do not adequately understand that the social teaching of the church is an essential part of Catholic faith. This poses a serious challenge for all Catholics, since it weakens our capacity to be a Church that is true to the demands of the Gospel. We need to do more to share the social mission and message of our Church.¹¹

In his Encyclical letter Centesimus Annus: On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, Blessed Pope John Paul II reaffirmed the central role of Catholic Social Teaching in this New Evangelization and stressed its importance for the future of the Church and the World when he stated:

The ‘New Evangelization,’ which the modern world urgently needs and which I have emphasized many times, must include among its essential elements *a proclamation of the Church’s social doctrine*. As in the days of Pope Leo XIII, . . . we need to repeat that there can be *no genuine solution of the “social question” apart from the Gospel, and that the “new things” can find in the Gospel*, the context for their correct understanding and the proper moral perspective for judgment on them. . . .¹²

To further emphasize the importance of Catholic Social Teaching as an instrument of Evangelization, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, published by the Pontifical Council Justice and Peace pointed out:

¹¹NCCB/UCCB (United States Conference Catholic Bishops), 1.

¹²Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus: On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1991), no. 13. (Italics used in the original).

The Church's social doctrine "is itself a valid instrument of evangelization" and is born of the always new meeting of the Gospel message and social life. Understood in this way, this social doctrine is a distinctive way for the church to carry out her ministry of the Word and her prophetic role. In effect, to teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Savior.¹³

In an effort to reaffirm further the centrality of Catholic Social Teaching, Pope Benedict XVI, in his first encyclical God is Love, reminds all Catholics that:

In today's complex situation, not least because of the growth of a globalized economy, the Church's social doctrine has become a set of fundamental guidelines offering approaches that are valid even beyond the confines of the Church; in the face of ongoing development these guidelines need to be addressed in the context of dialogue with all those seriously concerned for humanity and for the world in which we live.¹⁴

III. Lay Leaders Called To Be Agents of Social Change

Living and serving as the parochial vicar in Blessed Sacrament Parish in the East New York section of Brooklyn, New York, I was touched by the goodness of the Latino people and their desire to enjoy a better life. About 85 percent of the parishioners were from the Dominican Republic (another 10 percent from other countries in Latin America). Their experience of Church was based on their life of faith in their home country.

In 1986, the Bishops of the Dominican Republic made a pastoral commitment to send all their Vicarios de Pastoral (Pastoral Vicars) to the Instituto Teologico Pastoral para America Latina (INTEPAL—The Theological Pastoral Institute for Latin America inaugurated in 1974 under the authority of CELAM in Colombia) to insure a unified

¹³The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana; Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004), 30.

¹⁴Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est (God is Love), (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), no. 27, p. 36.

Pastoral Plan for the Dominican Republic. The following year they invited to the Dominican Republic, the Director of INTEPAL, Fr. Jorge Jimenez, to direct a national course on Pastoral Planning for the lay leaders of every Diocese (Fr. Jimenez is now the Archbishop of Cartagena, Colombia and the former President of CELAM, 1999—2003). The Dominican Bishops committed themselves early to plan with their people for a national plan for a new evangelization and chose to put into practice the preferential option made at the Conference in Puebla, Mexico in 1979 for “Pastoral Planning”. The Bishops’ Conference brought all the Dioceses of their country together to initiate a process where everyone would be involved in the work for a new evangelization. Puebla was their guide and inspiration.

The practical way to concretely carry out these fundamental options of evangelization is through a well-planned pastoral effort. (#1306)

A well-planned effort is the specific, conscious, deliberate response to the necessities of evangelization. It should be implemented through a process of participation at every level of the communities and persons concerned. They must be taught how to analyze this reality, how to reflect on this reality from the standpoint of the Gospel, how to choose the most suitable objective and means, and how to use them in the most sensible way for the work of evangelization. (#1307).¹⁵

The Dominican people in Blessed Sacrament were blessed by the pastoral experience of their homeland and always seemed to run to God with their sufferings and problems and prayed to find a solution or a way to deal with their latest tragedy or challenge. The people were kind and possessed a strong charismatic spirit that inspired them to preach the Word to whomever had a need for the consolation that only the Lord could give. However, there were some problems in the community that needed to be dealt with in a more organized way since they threatened the daily lives of people.

¹⁵John Eagleson and Philip Scharper, Puebla and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 284.

As I looked at the situation of the parish, I was motivated and inspired by the pastoral innovations of the Church in Latin America, the desire of the people to achieve social change through a New Evangelization, and the teaching of the recent Popes who insisted that the social doctrine of the Church was an essential element of a New Evangelization and necessary for the establishment of peace and the true development of the world.

Blessed Sacrament Parish was located in the 75th Police Precinct which had the highest number of murders in New York City for the previous ten years. There was a growing problem with domestic violence in the community along with a high percentage of people suffering from joblessness because many were undocumented immigrants. Looking at the daily struggles of the people, I saw that many were filled with hope and joy in spite of what they had to endure on a daily basis. They came to Church faithfully, filling the pews with their children, their songs, and their joy. There would be more or less a thousand people at each of the two Sunday Spanish Masses. The people carried their Bibles to their meetings and were always eager to evangelize, to preach the Word of God. If there was one drawback or deficiency in parish life, it was the separation of the faith life from the life of the community. The common understanding of what was called evangelization and what the Church was calling a New Evangelization, was inadequate and, at times, misguided.

Many of the parishioners clearly saw the need for the evangelization of the community and an improvement in the social conditions of the community: less drugs, less crime, less gangs, less violence, better schools and better jobs. However, most did not understand that to evangelize one had to live and be an agent of Catholic Social

Teaching in the community. I realized that because of the great desire to evangelize and the existing sensitivity to the social problems and needs in the community, it would be possible to recall for the people the experience of the Church in Latin America and plan with them for a future inspired by the light of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church.

The decision of the Church in Latin America to base its planning for the future on Catholic Social Doctrine (an experience that most of our parishioners were at least aware of from their countries of origin), led me to propose to ten volunteer lay leaders¹⁶ a formation program centered on a New Evangelization and Catholic Social Doctrine. After much discussion and reflection the leaders told me that what they wanted to do was to prepare themselves to evangelize the community. With their willingness to better prepare themselves for the evangelization of our community, we decided we could develop a formation program that focused on a New Evangelization and Catholic Social Teaching.

A. Knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching Is Minimal

All the lay leaders were members of parish organizations who worked in the community through their ministry. They read the Bible daily, participated in the Sunday Eucharist, and prayed with their parish groups at least once a week. They admitted that their specific knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching was limited, and in some cases it was non-existent, even though they were prone to talk about what the Church taught. They were aware that the Church had a social teaching but no one knew the name of any

¹⁶All the volunteer lay leaders were born in Latin America and had a primary school education. Three had some high school education. All were fluent in Spanish and two spoke English. Two were male and all were fully employed outside the home making less than \$25,000 a year. Two were undocumented residents of the United States.

of the Fathers of the Church nor had any of them ever read an encyclical or papal letter.¹⁷ None had ever seen or read the documents of Vatican II although each one of the leaders was known for their social commitment in the community and was very clear to them that the parish's social outreach should reflect Jesus to others. Jim Jensen, author of the Pew Research Center report "Pew Internet and American Life Project" stated that:

Some analysts have been concerned that those who have spiritual lives might not be as engaged with the secular world. We see the opposite. Those who are religiously active are more likely to participate in all kinds of groups and more likely to feel good about their communities. Those who are active in religious groups seem to be joiners.¹⁸

It is interesting to note that all the leaders had been inspired, in one way or the other, by the visits of Pope John Paul II to their countries and the love that he had shown to everyone.

The lack of awareness of the Church's social teaching was surprising and an indication not only of the Church's failure to teach Catholic Social Doctrine but also manifested a structural deficiency in the catechetical ministry of the Church. The reality of committed lay leaders responsible for the leadership of parish organizations and its social outreach but without any knowledge of Church Social Teaching and the commitment that it presupposed was astounding.

This realization challenged me to adapt my thesis project to their felt needs. The lack of knowledge underlined even more the importance of a formation program if it was to be hoped that the lay leaders would be enlightened by Catholic Social Teaching and

¹⁷Papal encyclicals or papal letters in Spanish are non-existent in Catholic bookstores in New York City. You can buy them online from the USCCB but this is highly impractical for the people in our community. The Daughters of St. Paul have a limited number of these documents in English but the Spanish edition must be ordered from Miami. This constraint limits the possibility of lay formation in Catholic Social Teaching.

¹⁸Jim Jensen, "The Civic and Community Engagement of Religiously Active Americans" (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, December 23, 2011), 1.

become dynamic agents of social change and signs of hope in a New Evangelization in the community.¹⁹

Challenged by the teaching of our recent popes (John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI), we listened with more sensitivity to the social message in the Bible and to Jesus' concern for those who suffered. We slowly became aware of our Catholic Social Teaching and Tradition and the Christian's responsibility to be concerned for the welfare of their neighbor, community, and world. This formation and the new awareness of the broader responsibility of the Christian in the modern world helped inspire the lay leaders to design pastoral plans to facilitate and encourage more concrete solutions to the social problems in Blesses Sacrament Parish. The hope was that together we would create a more just and peaceful community, a first step in preparing for a new evangelization.

B. Methodology

During the meetings with our lay leaders, it was decided that the first step was to identify the most pressing social needs of our community. For one month prior to the beginning of our formal program we identified the main social problems affecting our community. By using our own personal experience, our community life, and the available social data about trends and social problems in the community, the leaders identified, what were for us, the main social problems affecting our community. After a brief reflection on the Word of God and some elements of Catholic Social Teaching, and guided by what our diocesan Bishop and American Bishops established as the pastoral

¹⁹Some have written that Catholic Social Teaching has been "The Catholic Church's Best Kept Secret." I think it would be more honest to say that it could be called "The Catholic Church's Buried Treasure" that few Catholics are even aware that it even exists. Cf. Edward P. DeBerrie and James E. Hug with Paul J. Henriot, Catholic Social Teaching Our Best Kept Secret, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003).

priorities for us as a Church²⁰, the lay leaders selected those problems the community should respond to. With this orientation, the volunteer parish lay leaders proposed that the four most pressing social problems our community faced were rooted in concerns about: a) solidarity and crime in our community; b) the dignity of women and domestic violence; c) immigration and the rights of the undocumented; and d) marriage and family.

a. Solidarity and Crime

For the years 1993 to 2005, the 75th Precinct which includes Blessed Sacrament Parish has been ranked number one in murders in New York City and thus has been one of the most dangerous communities in the city for more than a decade.²¹ With the prevalence of violent crime and the corresponding inability of the people to come together to respond to the growth of violent gangs and the sale of drugs, the leaders identified the lack of unity in the community as one of the reasons why violence and crime were permitted to reign in the neighborhood.

b. Domestic Violence—The Dignity of Women

In 2009, there were 61 domestic violence related murders in New York City.²² In that year, 62.3 percent of these murders took place in the Diocese of Brooklyn. (In Blessed Sacrament Parish in 2005, there were three domestic violence related murders, the highest number for any community in the City of New York). Witnessing the growth in violence against women in the Diocese and the community and becoming more aware of what this savage behavior means, the parish leaders decided that this problem could

²⁰Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, “The Family: The Hope of the New Evangelization, (letters)” Brooklyn The Tablet, October 4, 2005.

²¹Inspector Michael Marino, the Commanding Officer of the 75th Precinct of the New York Police Department (NYPD), Presentation at a Town Hall Meeting in Blessed Sacrament Church Auditorium on Nov. 4, 2004; Crime Statistics: Police Department, City of New York, CompStat, www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/pdf.

²²Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV), “Domestic Violence Fact Sheet Calendar Year 2009,” www.nyc.gov/html/ocdv.

only be addressed and resolved as a community.

c. Immigration

Between 85 and 90 percent of the parishioners in Blessed Sacrament Parish are immigrants, and it is estimated by parish leaders that between 10 and 15 percent are undocumented residents of our country. Our parish groups are basically all immigrants, and every family seems to have a member or two who are numbered among the undocumented. Daily, people come asking for help so that we somehow intercede and obtain for them a “green card,” i.e. legal residency. Many think, erroneously, that Church officials can just make a phone call to government officials to help them regularize their legal status.

The Diocese of Brooklyn has approximately 1.4 million members out of a total population of 4.8 million in Kings and Queens Counties,²³ which are co-extensive with the diocese. It is calculated that between 10 and 15 percent of the diocesan population are counted among the undocumented. Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio estimated that half of the people who attend Sunday Mass in the Diocese of Brooklyn are foreign born.²⁴ Concerned for the welfare of their people and the unity of their families, the American bishops began a nationwide *Justice for Immigrants Campaign* on Easter Monday, March 2005. This Episcopal decision made immigration reform a pastoral priority for the Diocese of Brooklyn and, by extension, a challenge that had to be faced in Blessed Sacrament Parish.

²³Diocese of Brooklyn website: http://dioceseofbrooklyn.org/about/diocesan_stats.aspx accessed August 26, 2010.

²⁴Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, “Putting Out Into the Deep,” Brooklyn *The Tablet*, October 13, 2007.

d. Marriage and the Family

All of the immigrants in Blessed Sacrament Parish come to the United States in the hope of bettering their own lives and those of their families. Great sacrifices are made so that these hopes may be realized. Immigrants face many challenges because of their lack of formal education and their legal situation. Most are called upon to work long hours for the lowest pay. Paradoxically, the very sacrifices made for the well-being of the family turn out to impact negatively the family itself as parents who spend long hours working neglect the human, Christian formation and schooling of their children. This inadequate model of parenting later on affects the children themselves who when it is their turn to be parents, pass this model on to their children. Seeing the difficulty many parents were having with their children, and the disintegration of family life, our leaders decided that as a parish community we must recommit ourselves to help our families grow as a basic unit of our society. If we want peace, then it must begin in our homes.

On October 4, 2005, Bishop DiMarzio wrote a Pastoral Letter, The Family: The Hope of the New Evangelization, and made pastoral work with the family a priority in all the parishes of the Diocese of Brooklyn. His Pastoral Letter reinforced the decision taken by our parish leaders.

IV. Formation Booklets

After identifying these four critical, social problems, which touch and challenge the daily lives and faith of Blessed Sacrament parish community, we began the twelve weekly study sessions. Each problem was studied for three weeks. Each session began with a presentation on the problem itself as experienced in the community. Then we reflected on appropriate biblical passages after which I presented a variety of selections

from the Church Fathers and Catholic Social Teaching which helped to bring light to the problems under consideration. The group reflections provided much insight into how the lay leaders and their parish organizations could best respond to the challenges that the community was facing. The result of these reflections was developed into twenty formation booklets which would guide the community leaders in their reflections with their parish organizations. By offering the community an alternative to the injustice that it was experiencing, this participative formation program helped our lay leaders respond to social problems found in the community. It was our hope that the lay leaders would become a light in the darkness which had become a part of our community life²⁵.

(Part 2 of this thesis project contains a developed presentation of the ongoing formation that was originally presented to the lay leaders. This ongoing formation would be offered to lay leaders to help them become more effective agents of social change in their communities.)

²⁵George J. Andreopoulos and Richard Pierre Claude, eds., Human Rights Education for the Twenty-first Century, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

Chapter Two

SHARED RESPONSE

As we began to respond to the priorities that had been selected it was decided that, during the initial weekly formation sessions, the leaders would return to their parish organizations and motivate their members to participate in the pastoral plan that resulted from the priorities that had been selected. The leaders thought that it would be best to have a central coordinating committee and then form a small committee for each one of the four priorities. Each committee would coordinate the action plan that was designed by the committee for their priority. Each lay leader would motivate their own group to be committed to the priorities and ask for volunteers to work on one of the committees established to carry out the action plan that was designed for the selected priority.

I. Formation

In the formation sessions it became clearer that there was a strong evangelizing spirit among the leaders but not a very deep understanding of what the Scripture was saying in and of itself. It became necessary to emphasize that when reading the text chosen for a priority, one had to first understand the context of the reading, ask what the Biblical text was saying, and then ask oneself what did the text say to us, especially about how it referred to the priority we were considering.²⁶ How was the text challenging us personally and as a community? What was it moving us to do? Then it was asked what was the best action to take so that each person and community could faithfully respond to the inspiration of the Word of God.

²⁶For an understanding of how Pope Benedict XVI proposes that biblical texts be read one should consult Benedict XVI, Verbum Domini: The Word of the Lord (Boston MA: Daughters of St. Paul, September 20, 2010), no. 87.

This process became very important not only for understanding the Word of God but also for understanding the teaching of the early Church Fathers and Catholic Social Teaching. This formation helped all of us develop a deeper understanding of the Scriptures and our own social commitment to others. During the formation process and the search for a better way of responding to the needs of the community, the lay leaders were beginning to see the relationship between their evangelical spirit and the need for a social commitment so that they could fulfill their Christian commitment to their neighbor who was suffering. The leaders realized that this formation was more important than they had originally thought. If they were going to have a social impact on their community, they felt that an ongoing formation program was a necessity for them. Personal enrichment would prepare them to better educate and motivate their groups to understand the Scriptures and the Church's call for an active social participation in a New Evangelization.

The lay leaders decided that the crime situation and the lack of cohesiveness in the community was something that had to be dealt with immediately. The growing presence of gangs, the strong influence of the hip-hop gang culture, the street violence, coupled with the selling of drugs in various parts of the community had begun to frighten many of the parents in the community. They were frantic and desperate for immediate solutions to their problems. Their fear for the welfare of their children was justifiable and presented all of the community with a situation that could only be dealt with by helping one another.

A. Solidarity and Crime

The lay leaders discerned that it was necessary to involve all of the community in

the search for a solution to this growing problem of crime in the neighborhood. They thought that a two pronged approach should be taken immediately. The first part of this approach was to begin a parish sponsored monthly Town Hall meeting with our local City Council representative, representatives of the local precinct of the New York Police Department (NYPD) and members of the local community. The meetings would be open to everyone but first it was necessary to convince the parishioners of Blessed Sacrament that it was important to meet as a community to resolve our local problems. In the beginning some people were not interested because it meant making sacrifices to better the community; some were skeptical of the idea that meetings offered a possibility for a change in the community; others were apathetic; and still a good number were too busy trying to survive because they worked long hours. After much talking and encouragement, the parish sponsored the Town Hall meetings and the community had its first meeting which was a tremendous success. Two hundred people showed up to say: "we want a better community." The leaders were overjoyed and proceeded confidently.

The second step was the presentation of the possibility of organizing the Block Watchers' Program which had been established and sponsored by the New York City Police Department (NYPD). The leaders thought it best to first present the idea to the parish community for its support and with that, offer the program to the whole community as a possible solution to the growth of crime in the neighborhood.

To convince the lay leaders and the heads of the parish organizations that much could be accomplished through the Block Watchers' Program (BWP) two presentations were made on the effective use of community solidarity to fight crime. The first was the "Ten Point Coalition" of Black Churches in Boston which had tremendous success in

uniting communities to fight youth crime. Scholars have credited the work of the Ten Point Coalition with the Boston Police Department with a greater reduction of crime in Boston from 1990—1991 than that achieved in NYC for the same time period.²⁷

The second presentation was the work of Drs. Felton Earls, Robert Sampson and Stephen W. Raudenbush about their study of The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods. This project studied the way communities influenced people's social development. It studied crime in the context of Chicago neighborhoods, not just what people and communities did, but also what people did in their neighborhood community. The researchers demonstrated that the largest predictor of crime levels in these neighborhoods was "collective efficacy" which they defined as the mutual trust that existed among the neighbors with the desire to intervene in whatever situation necessary for the good of the community, especially for the good of one another's children.²⁸ With this information, all agreed that we should begin the next part of our work. Members of the parish community were asked to volunteer to be representatives of the Block Watchers Program (BWP) on their block. The NYPD had offered this program to communities in years gone by and had thought that this would help them partner with their local community to reduce the level of crime in the community and help create an atmosphere of peace and tranquility among neighbors.

When the local Precinct Commander was contacted about the possibility of starting this program, he was not enthusiastic about the desire of the local community to become involved in this program. He informed us that the program was no longer used

²⁷Orlando Patterson and Christopher Winship, "Boston's Police Solution. A Ten Point Challenge to the Congress of National Black Churches: A Proposal by TenPoint Coalition," New York Times, March 3, 1999.

²⁸Dr. Felton Earls, Robert Sampson and Stephen W. Raudenbush, "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy," Science, vol. 277, August 15, 1997.

by the NYPD even though the local Precinct had the program listed on its website as being part of the local precinct's outreach program. The local Precinct Commander claimed that there was an insufficient number of police available to train the community volunteers who wanted to participate in this program. The head of the Community Affairs Division of the Precinct also informed us that it was an old program rarely used by the NYPD. It became obvious that the administrators of the Precinct were not conversant with modern theories of crime prevention; or the Project Safe Neighbors (PSN): America's Network Against Gun Violence sponsored by the United States Department of Justice; nor did they understand the importance of solidarity in the community for the reduction of crime.

For the next Town Hall meeting the invited speaker was the local Precinct Commander. Before the meeting one of the leaders visited the local City Council representative to ask for his help to start the BWP since the NYPD did not have the necessary personnel to help begin the program. With his assurance of support, the leaders decided to proceed with the program. At the Town Hall meeting, after the Police Commander spoke to the community about all the good things that the police were doing in the most dangerous community in New York City, one of the lay leaders asked the local City Council member to sponsor, with the Parish, a Block Watchers' Program to help reduce crime in the neighborhood. The Precinct Commander responded immediately and volunteered his Community Affairs Staff to train and coordinate the parish volunteers.

The response of the community to the commitment of the NYPD to train and accompany the volunteers in this work was so positive that in the first four months

Blessed Sacrament Parish had to have three different training programs with the Community Affairs Officers of the local Precinct. As the Parish was the only Church community in the Precinct to sponsor the BWP, the Parish was given top priority by the Precinct Commander. He was so pleased with the success of his program that he told the officers they would coordinate all the information received from the community. However, the leaders decided that, to ensure follow-up from the information provided to the NYPD, the information should also be given to the Priest—Coordinator of the BWP so that he would be in constant contact with the local authorities. The police now wanted the collaboration of the community but they did not want to be accountable to the community for what they did or did not do with the information given to them.

The community was taking great personal risks working with the police as they realized that snitches, people working with the gangs or drug dealers, were coming to the Town Hall meetings as well. After the meetings, the people identified some of the young men present as snitches. These young men would go back to their gangs and inform their associates of what had taken place at the meeting as well as who in the community were involved in the Block Watchers' Program. The lay leaders designated their priest moderator to be the person to point out the suspected snitches to the Community Affairs Officers at the meetings so that the NYPD could have a discussion with them about their "community activities." The possibility of retaliation from these criminals was real because of the "gangsta" culture that has grown in our inner city communities. At times the threat was direct because information pointing out who was selling cocaine, when and where, could have only have come from the Church-going neighbors. For the drug dealers or the gang members, "Church going people were the informers because they

went to Church.” Others in the community were frightened because of the “code of silence” imposed on the innocent by the gangs who lived on their block and could easily threaten children or the young people themselves. Those thought to have cooperated with the BWP or the Police were singled out for harassment.

This is particularly true in the inner cities, where gangsta culture has been romanticized through rap music and other forms of entertainment, and where the motto “Stop snitching”, expounded in hip-hop lyrics and emblazoned on caps and T-shirts, has become a creed.²⁹

The fear of being tagged a snitch and being humiliated and targeted for retribution was always present in spite of the presence of the Police. It was a fear that the Community Affairs Officers of the NYPD later acknowledged, barely. In spite of the danger involved we continued to ask for the collaboration of the community. The elderly were especially courageous in supplying the committee with excellent information which was passed on to the NYPD. Then parents began to take a more active role in protecting their children from these dangers.³⁰

During the Town Hall meetings, the community asked that a sports program be started for the young people of the community as they needed something constructive to do after school. Volunteers immediately came forward to help organize a parish intramural program for children and teenagers of the community at large. At this moment, the Town Hall meetings were drawing up to 300 community members, and even representatives from the Police Commissioner’s office began to attend because of the solidarity exhibited by the community.

²⁹Jeremy Kahn, “The Story of a Snitch,” *The Atlantic*, April 7, 2007, 82.

³⁰Lisa Balde, “You’re Not a Snitch,” NBCChicago.com, August 28, 2012. (After a bloody weekend, the Chicago Mayor pleaded for help.)

One year after starting the Town Hall meetings with the NYPD, the community presented a formal proposal to the Police Commissioner of the NYPD and the local Precinct Commander to divide the precinct into two regions. Police data showed that it took the police 15 to 20 minutes to respond from the Precinct headquarters to an emergency 911 call in the parish community. The proposed subdivision would provide a better police presence, improved service to the community, and enable the police to be more efficacious in their response to the needs of the community. The Police Commissioner rejected the proposal but one year later announced his plan to divide the precinct into two divisions so that the police would offer better service to the local community. The improved policing resulted in a reduction in the pervasiveness of drugs in the local community and established a network of relationships that would be used to solve other problems in the community.

B. Immigration and the Rights of the Undocumented

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimated that there were 12 million undocumented people in the United States in 2012; of these 8 million were from different countries in Latin America. About 95 percent of the parishioners in Blessed Sacrament were immigrants and it was estimated that between 10 and 15 percent were undocumented residents of the United States. Everyone seemed to have a family member, a friend, or a member of their parish group numbered among the undocumented. Each of these was asking for help to resolve their impossible situation. After a great deal of reflection, searching for solutions, pleading for help, and suffering with the affected, a course of action was developed to try to respond to these despairing cries for help.

Our first step was to distribute educational pamphlets to different parish groups to give them a better understanding of what had been the Church's tradition in dealing with immigrants. Although all the parishioners were immigrants to the United States not all were seen as sympathetic or understanding of the plight of those who were undocumented. In the beginning it was sad to note the lack of sympathy in the Latino community to the sufferings of the undocumented who were overwhelmingly Latinos themselves. It is estimated that of the 12 million undocumented in the US 80 percent are from Latin America. The silence of the past has changed today because of the voice of the young people who are demanding to be given the opportunity to regularize their "out of status situation", undocumented status, in the United States.

Second, as the community became more aware of the suffering of their own sisters and brothers, a small committee was formed to help those who wanted to apply for the immigration lottery that offered the only possibility of residency in the United States (a green card). Though the lottery offered a very slim possibility of success, it offered hope to those who had no hope. The committee was small in number, but it gave them the opportunity to speak with the different groups in the community about the problems that were being faced by our sisters and brothers.

Trying to respond to the needs of the undocumented, a third step was suggested by a member of the committee that we work with other parishes to offer free legal service to members of the community who had been arrested for immigration violations. Since a nearby parish had a free legal immigration clinic already established, that parish agreed to represent any of the parishioners we recommended to them. Not only would they provide

free legal advice but they also offered to represent pro bono (for free) the people in Federal Immigration Court.

At one of the immigration formation meetings, a lay leader asked why other area parishes were not providing similar assistance to their needy parishioners. This question prompted a fourth step, whereby the committee asked that a presentation on the Church's teaching on immigration be made to the nearby parishes so that they could also develop a similar program for the undocumented.

A fifth step was the coordination of our immigration work with other parishes and dioceses facing the same problems. The committee realized that it could not resolve the legal problems it faced without help from others. They also wanted to learn what others were doing so they could improve what they were doing. The network that was established, *Voices for Immigrant Justice*, united those parishes or centers that were trying to assist the undocumented in the metropolitan area of New York (the Dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre and the Archdiocese of New York). The group met on a monthly basis to discuss the problems that the local communities were facing and attempted to offer proposals to resolve these local difficulties. With the input of our lay leaders and parishioners, a plan of action was designed and offered to *Voices* as a possible working document to resolve some of the immigration questions that we were facing. This action plan was presented to Migration Services of the USCCB for its consideration. They took both our formation program and our action plan and offered them to other dioceses as a possible model for their immigration work. A year later the American Bishops inaugurated their own national program, *Justice for Immigrants*, in the

Diocese of Brooklyn as an attempt to coordinate the work being done in local dioceses and parishes around the country.

The next step in the community was a campaign to contact our local and national representatives to ask them to support changes in the immigration law so that the undocumented would be given an opportunity to regularize their status in the foreseeable future. A visit to the local and state government offices was carried out by parish representatives as well as a visit to members of Congress in Washington DC. At the present moment, the Hispanic community accounts for more than half of the nation's population growth in the last ten years while it also accounts for more than 70 per cent of the growth in the US Catholic population since 1960. This data alone makes it hard to understand why it has been so difficult to motivate the Bishops and local dioceses to be more pro active in their work for the undocumented.³¹

In June 2012, President Obama announced a program that would enable undocumented young people in the United States to regularize their status if they fulfilled certain requirements. The parish committee has had two public meetings to explain who is eligible for this program and is now assisting the undocumented young people to apply for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The committee believes that this is only a stop-gap measure and insists that more formation is needed to further convince our local communities about what should be the Christian attitude towards our undocumented brothers and sisters.

C. Marriage and Family

The personal experience of our lay leaders with the families in our community

³¹Jeffrey S. Passel, "Hispanics Account for More than Half of Nation's Growth in Past Decade," (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research, March 2011), 1; and J. J. Ziegler, "The Coming Latino Majority," Catholic World Report, December 1, 2011.

made them more aware of the importance of marriage. As they look around at our young community they have become more concerned about fatherless children and the inability of the women to make good personal decisions. The maturity of our young males and the temptation to live in the modern hip-hop culture has made it very difficult for young women to find stability and commitment in young men. Sadly the lifestyle of the young women was quite similar to that of the young men and the community was worried about the future of the children. The secular culture created an attractive atmosphere where religious and moral values were not needed, wanted or respected and where marriage commitment was not seen as essential for the stability of the family or the life of the community.³² It seemed that the leaders reflected the concern of Pope Benedict:

Whoever even unknowingly circumvents the institution of the family undermines peace in the entire community, national and international, since he weakens what is in effect the primary agency of peace. This point merits special reflection: everything that serves to weaken the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman, everything that directly or indirectly stands in the way of its openness to the responsible acceptance of a new life, everything that obstructs its right to be primarily responsible for the education of its children, constitutes an objective obstacle on the road to peace.³³

The lay members who wanted to work with marriage and family sensed the need for a more profound formation as they felt the larger society was working against the Christian ideal of marriage and family. The leaders decided that it would be best to begin their work with the parish groups to give everyone the opportunity to renew their own family and matrimonial commitment. They thought that the first step needed would be our own personal renewal and with this we would have a stronger foundation in our own community. Their primary concern was helping couples to understand that their marriage

³²D’Vera Cohn, Jeffrey Passel, et al, “Barely Half of US Adults are Married—A Record Low,” (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, December 14, 2011), 1.

³³Pope Benedict XVI, “The Human Family, A Community of Peace,” (Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2008) (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana).

commitment was a commitment for life and not just one that could be changed at will.

They were very clear about quoting what Jesus said about the life commitment of married people:

Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?” He said in reply, “Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” They said to him, “Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss (her)?” He said to them, “Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery.” (Mt 19:3-9)³⁴

The committee decided that they could best enrich and fortify the families in the parish community by renewing the way that they presented their talks to future spouses and to the parents and godparents of children who were to be baptized. They considered the work that they had been doing with couples in the pre-Cana and Baptismal preparation programs was insufficient in its scope and depth. They had not been given enough formation to fulfill the responsibility that the Church was asking of them in the present moment. If the Church was saying “make your home a church” or insisting that:

For from the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born. By the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism these are made children of God, thus perpetuating the People of God through the centuries. The family is, so to speak, the domestic Church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care any religious vocation.”³⁵

³⁴New American Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Catholic World Press, World Publishing, 1991), 1160.

³⁵“Lumen Gentium” in The Documents of Vatican II, Walter M. Abbot, S.J. (ed.) (New York: The America Press, 1986), no. 11, pp. 27-28.

The leaders insisted that they could no longer be left alone in this ministry. The pastor must assume his responsibility as teacher of the church community and participate with them in the talks that were given to the couples. The leaders also realized that they must find married men and married couples who were leading good Christian lives to help them better prepare others to assume their Christian responsibilities in front of one another and in front of society. As Blessed John Paul II wrote in Familiaris Consortio:

Thus the little domestic Church, like the greater Church, needs to be constantly and intensely evangelized: hence its duty regarding permanent education in the faith.³⁶

The desire for more formation and personal renewal helped the parish renew its work in both spheres. Last year, 2011, there were over 400 baptisms in Blessed Sacrament and about 40 couples asked that they be given the opportunity to bless their marriages. The patience, the kindness, the renewed catechetics, and the active and total participation of the pastor in all of these programs have helped the parish community deepen its commitment to marriage and family. A further proof of the success has been the numerical growth of the parish community and a deeper awareness in the community of the fundamental importance that must be given to the family as the basis of the Church community in society.

The first and fundamental structure for 'human ecology' is the family, in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person. Here we mean the family founded on marriage, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity, and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny.³⁷

³⁶John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981), no. 51.

³⁷Pope John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, no. 39.

Presently the lay leaders are struggling with the phenomenon of the influence of hip-hop on the young people who are coming for their baptismal or marriage preparations. They have seen greater stability in the community but are now asking for more formation so that they can better understand what is occurring in their community.

D. Dignity of Women and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence has become the scourge of the modern world. There is not a country in the world that is not affected by this sickness and it has grown to be so pervasive that it is now a common characteristic of every known society. There is not a country in the world or ethnic group known to humanity that is not plagued by this sickness. Japan is the country that least abuses women--“only” 10 percent of the women are abused by men--while Ethiopia is considered to be the most abusive country in the world with 80 percent of its men abusing women. The sad reality is that 50 percent of all the Ethiopian women feel that it is proper for men to beat women. China is the only country in the world where female suicide is greater than male suicide. All this data is an indication of how far we have fallen and strayed from what God established from the beginning.

So God created human beings, making them to be like Himself. He created them male and female, blessed them and said, “Have many children so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.” (Gen 1:27-28)³⁸

This passage reveals two things about God’s intentions. (1) God made woman as well as man in His image and likeness. (2) The woman and the man were to have authority over the created world. She was as much an administrator of God’s creation as was the man.

³⁸New American Bible, 8.

After much reflection, the lay leaders decided a two-fold strategy was necessary if they were going to properly deal with the problem of Domestic Violence. The first step was the need to emphasize in all parish groups and catechetical programs the dignity of women in the plan of God. Because of the influence of the modern culture, the “macho society” of Latin American countries that most of our people had been exposed to in their home countries, our lay leaders realized that it was of the greatest importance that, on every occasion possible, the dignity and beauty of women be emphasized, taught and proclaimed from the altar to the classroom to every parish organization. It would be only then that we could hope a change would be made.

The second strategy was the organization of workshops for lay leaders and parish organizations about Domestic Violence, its causes, and possible solutions. Domestic Violence is the verbal, physical, economic, spiritual, and emotional abuse of another person mainly a woman. It is estimated that 90 percent of all batterers are men. The Christian community has very rarely dealt with the reality of Domestic Violence. Many have thought that the over-emphasis on the sanctity and permanence of marriage has caused some to overlook the existence of this evil. While God did not intend abuse, abuse has been often rationalized and overlooked in the hopes that the batterer would change, that it was only a momentary lapse of conduct, and that it would not happen again if he was forgiven. The common belief was that things would get better tomorrow for the woman if this was overlooked and the family would remain united. Little thought was given to the effect of the violence on the woman herself or of its effect on the children.

The first commitment was to have the parish priest become an active participant in the Domestic Violence committee of the Kings County District Attorney's Office so that he would become more knowledgeable about the causes and effects of Domestic Violence on the woman, the family, and the community. As a result of participating in the monthly meetings of this committee, the parish had the honor of being on the founding committee of the Family Justice Center of Kings County, the largest family justice center in the United States which was established in Brooklyn in 2005 with a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. The Center combined the judicial (Family Court), the Police Department, the NYC Social Welfare Department, Domestic Violence organizations, and chaplains from different faith communities to provide the victims of domestic violence with the immediate services necessary in one location.

The second commitment was the arrangement of workshops offered to the lay leaders and parish groups on Domestic Violence within the community. Experts were brought into the parish community to strengthen the community's effort to end Domestic Violence. The Parish groups wanted to coordinate their efforts so that through education, the raising of the consciousness of this evil in the community, and the offering of support and aid to the victims, so that they could foster a new attitude in the community. This new attitude encouraged more collaboration among the people and it became a first step in the reduction of the prevalence of Domestic Violence in the community.

In the process of presenting these workshops, some victims of Domestic Violence began to approach the lay leaders and ask for help. In some cases, the victims were referred to the Domestic Violence Police Officers of the local Precinct, and appointments were arranged for others at the Kings County Family Justice Center. Others asked for the

intervention of the parish priest. In all the cases, it was either a spouse, or a boyfriend, or an ex-boyfriend who was the batterer and who had been threatening the woman over a period of time with physical abuse. The lay leaders slowly became aware that this ministry was a very delicate one and often involved physical violence. It was not one where it was just verbal abuse. At one point, three women in the community were murdered by their husbands or boyfriends during a twelve month period. It became obvious to the lay leaders that when violence was present the priest should be the person to intervene in the situation and not the lay leaders. The fear was that the person who was offering spiritual or psychological support to the abused woman could be easily exposed to retaliation or they could be exposing their families to the threat of violence from these abusive males.

II. Dangerous Experience of Retaliation

One day a woman, who had asked for help because she was in an abusive relationship, came to the rectory to say goodbye to the parish priest. She had decided to move to another state, miles away from her abusive boyfriend. She was taking her child with her and wanted to begin her life again, but she said she had one problem. The boyfriend had a gun and he wanted to know who she had been speaking with so that he could kill him. Due to our work with women who were suffering abuse, we learned that:

65% of women physically abused by an intimate partner report having been assaulted multiple times by the same partner. 75% of intimate partner femicides reviewed in a recent study were preceded by one or more incidents of stalking within a year of the crime.³⁹

Because this type of violence is such a common occurrence, women are counseled that: (1) they should always have a place to escape to; and (2) secretly save some money

³⁹Domestic Violence: The Facts, (Somerville, MA: Peace At Home, Inc., 2002). 5.

in case they must flee their homes in an emergency. Those involved in this ministry must understand that the violent will be violent with whomever gets in their way.

On average, more than three women are murdered in the US every day. In 2000, 1,247 women were killed by an intimate partner. The same year, 440 men were killed by an intimate partner.⁴⁰

Domestic Violence is a dangerous experience even for those who participate in this ministry as an act of compassion; but if the community works together and uses the private, public and legal resources available, domestic violence will ultimately cease and every community will be able to proclaim together the dignity of women. But wisdom, caution, collaboration and trust are crucial in this work.

III. Creative Interventions by the Youth Leaders

In the struggle to respond to the scourge of Domestic Violence, two of our most successful responses to this problem came from the lay leaders themselves. The parish basketball program was administered by one of the mothers and three of the coaches of the boys teams were also mothers. They noticed that the young boys and teenagers had very disrespectful attitudes towards their female friends. As a result the coaches decided that they would give the boys orientation twice a year about how they should treat all females. In the last four years, the women have spoken to, counseled, corrected, and encouraged over 600 boys and teenagers in their program. The effect that this has had on the community is beyond words because some of the young people they have dealt with were active gang members and because of their influence they have been able to change lives.

The second initiative was inspired by the lay catechists and the new parish priest. They decided that they would use both the marriage preparation classes and the pre-

⁴⁰Ibid., 4.

baptismal parent classes to talk about the dignity of women and how they should be treated. The parish averages over 400 baptisms and 50 weddings a year. This insight has extended the awareness of the dignity of women and has made the scourge of Domestic Violence a plague to be condemned to thousands of people who were not even part of the design of the parish workshops. The reflective process of the lay people has continued to create new possibilities in the community.

The ongoing commitment of the community has contributed to the good news about the 40 percent drop in city wide domestic deaths this year.⁴¹ But this good news must also take into account the reality that “nearly 20 percent of women in the United States have been raped at least once and one in four has been severely attacked by an intimate partner” according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.⁴² These two facts are our reality.

IV. Presence of the Shepherd is Required for a Hope-filled Future

The lay leaders insisted that their new parish priest must accompany them as they search for the best way to create a more peace-filled community. They believe that without the presence and guidance of their shepherd in an ongoing formation process none of them, including the shepherd, will be able to discern wisely what God is asking of them and the community. Because of the insights of the lay leaders the original formation program was expanded so that the lay leaders, and the priests who would be with them, would have the possibility for more formation in Catholic Social Teaching. At the same time, the priest would have material, easily available, so that he would have the opportunity to renew his own understanding of the Church’s teaching and be able to

⁴¹“Kelly Announces 40 Percent Drop in Citywide Domestic Deaths,” NY Post, August 30, 2012.

⁴²David Beasley, “Nearly One in Five US Women Raped in Lifetime: Study,” Yahoo News!, December 15, 2011.

respond, with his parishioners, to the needs of the community. The larger community would also be given the possibility to share in the wisdom of the Church through this formation and hopefully all would respond to the call and participate actively in a New Evangelization.

V. Pope Benedict Offers His Help

The reality of the lives of the people of Blessed Sacrament Parish and the situation of the community served as the starting point for this thesis project. Now Pope Benedict has decided to aid the community in its reflection and help orientate its future ministry. On October 11th, 2012 the Holy Father called the Catholic Church to begin a “Year of Faith”⁴³ so that through personal and Church renewal, Christians would be better prepared to radiate to others the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us for the salvation of the world. To help in this renewal, the Holy Father says that this is a good opportunity to study the texts of Vatican II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church so that all Christians will gain a deeper understanding of the power and beauty of their faith in the Lord Jesus. Above all, Pope Benedict stressed that “The Year of Faith . . . is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world.”⁴⁴

Within the celebration of the Year of Faith Pope Benedict has convoked the XIII General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops to reflect on “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”.

the celebration of the Synod is expected to enliven and energize the Church in undertaking a new evangelization, which will lead to a rediscovery of the joy of believing and a rekindling of enthusiasm in communicating the faith. The

⁴³Pope Benedict XVI, Porta Fidei: The Door of Faith (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, October 11, 2011).

⁴⁴Ibid., no. 6.

question is not simply devising something new or undertaking unprecedented initiatives in spreading the Gospel, but living the faith in the spirit of it being a divine proclamation.⁴⁵

These petitions and orientations of the Holy Father respond to the struggles, the work and petitions of the lay leaders and the community of Blessed Sacrament. The lay leaders have asked for more formation so that they would be better prepared to orientate their parish organizations so that, as a parish community, they would find more evangelical and hope filled solutions to the problems plaguing the community. What began as a Thesis Project in Blessed Sacrament Parish has grown into a project that Pope Benedict XVI has given to the Universal Church. Through the Synod of Bishops he has called the Church together to renew herself, both as individuals and as an institution, so that through this conversion the Church will be prepared to plan for a new evangelization of the world.

The following sections attempt to respond to part of the orientation given us by our Holy Father as they provide additional catechetical materials for the ongoing formation of the lay leaders on The Call for a New Evangelization. This is followed by a section that responds, with the inspiration of Catholic Social Teaching, to the major problems that the community has tried to address. Our recent Popes have reminded us that Catholic Social Teaching is an essential part of Evangelization, and it is our hope that with this orientation the lay leaders will have the inspiration to adapt to and respond creatively to the new pastoral challenges they will face in their community.

⁴⁵Pope Benedict XVI, Instrumentum Laboris: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, May 9, 2012), no. 9.

Chapter Three

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: THE BEGINNING OF EVANGELIZATION

Jesus did not redeem the world with beautiful words
but with his suffering and his death.
His Passion is the inexhaustible source of life for the world;
the Passion gives power to his words.⁴⁶

Wherever Jesus went there were those who were willing to live and die for him
and those who were determined to kill him.
Why then do you expect everyone to love you,
or become discouraged when someone hates you?⁴⁷

No slave is greater than his master.
If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. (John 15:20)⁴⁸

Suffering with Hope, A Characteristic of a Disciple's Life With Jesus

After Herod put John the Baptist to death (Mt 14:3-12), Jesus continued to respond to the needs of people. He fed five thousand people (Mt 14:13-21) and then a little while later, he fed another four thousand (Mt 14:32-39). At the same time, he healed the sick (Mt 14:34-36; Mt 15:21-31) and his fame spread all over the countryside. Due to the success in his ministry, Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees and the Sadducees. At this moment St. Matthew wrote of the first prediction of the passion that Jesus would suffer.

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. (Mt 16:21)⁴⁹

Matthew told his community that Jesus was aware that he would suffer if he was to continue his mission. From this point on in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus focuses on the

⁴⁶Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "New Evangelization: Address to Catechists and Religious Teachers" on December 12, 2000. Published in *Agenzia Fides* (Congregation for the Evangelization of People, July 26, 2008).

⁴⁷Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, *The Road to Hope: A Gospel from Prison* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2001), 161.

⁴⁸*The New American Bible*, 1160.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 1035.

formation of his disciples. His instruction will deal with the importance of sacrifice and suffering in the lives of the disciples as they go forth to fulfill the mission that he will give them. Jesus informs them: “Whoever wishes to come after me, must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” (Mt 16:24)⁵⁰ Change, adaptation to the circumstances of life would be the challenge all disciples would face. The example of John the Baptist helped Jesus understand what a true man of God was called to suffer.

As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” (Mt 17:22-23)⁵¹

Daily, Jesus struggled with the meaning of sacrifice and suffering in his own life, but he lived with the belief that the Father was with him, would bless him in his struggles and would raise him up to new life.

First century Christians saw the sacrifice, suffering, and death in their own lives as part of the vocation of being one of Jesus’ disciples. Christ’s words to the rich young man served them as a guide: “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come, follow me.” (Mt 19:21)⁵² The early Christians responded to Jesus’ words by giving up everything and following him even to death itself:

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. (Acts 2:42-45)⁵³

⁵⁰Ibid., 1036.

⁵¹Ibid., 1037.

⁵²Ibid., 1041.

⁵³Ibid., 1173.

In this way, the first followers of Jesus came to find meaning in their lives. By sharing their material goods, by dying to their own selfishness, they followed the teachings of Jesus in the hope that one could possess everlasting life.

Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves me.” (John 12:24-26)⁵⁴

I. The Beginning of Evangelization

In the Greek bible, the word evangelize means to proclaim Good News. In the New Testament, the verb evangelize frequently appears in Luke, Acts, and the Pauline corpus. Jesus is anointed to proclaim the Kingdom of God and evangelize the poor. As Jesus began his public ministry, he indicated what his mission would be:

The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. (Lk 4:18-19)⁵⁵

Referring to this text, Blessed John Paul II commented:

The Lord presents himself openly as the one whom the Father ‘has anointed’ (Is. 61, 1) and ‘has sent’ into the world; he comes with the power of the Spirit of God to announce the Good News: The Good News of the Gospel. The words of the prophet Isaiah that Jesus applies to Himself in the Synagogue in Nazareth signal the beginning of the proclamation of the Gospel: the beginning of Evangelization.⁵⁶

By his words, Jesus manifested an awareness, consciousness that through his preaching he was fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament and was announcing the coming of the Kingdom of God. Jesus, with his life and death, brought the good news

⁵⁴Ibid., 1156.

⁵⁵Ibid., 1099.

⁵⁶“Homily during the Mass celebrated in Mattos Neto Park, Salto, Uruguay, May 9, 1988” in Juan Pablo II a la Iglesia de America Latina (Bogota, Columbia: CELAM, 1988), 113. Translation by author.

that the time of salvation was at hand. He who brings the good news also makes it a reality, makes it present.⁵⁷

A. Public Ministry of Jesus

In Matthew's gospel, at the beginning of the Galilean ministry, when Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been arrested he "began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" (Mt 4:17)⁵⁸

The proclamation of the "reign of God" is not, however, only verbal. It effects new reality which gives expression to its presence through the signs of the messianic time: glad tidings have been brought to the poor, liberty proclaimed to captives, sight given to the blind and freedom offered prisoners (Lk 4:18). Living under the rule of God effects, therefore, new possibilities or, better makes it possible to see them become realities. "Preaching" or "speaking" of the kingdom is only, a partial understanding of the intention of the synoptic gospels. They also attest that Jesus' entire life is a proclamation or revelation of a new way of living and valuing which has broken into history (Mt 4:23; 9:35; Lk 9:6).⁵⁹

The "Good News" that Jesus proclaims is that God is among us and offers salvation to all who turn away from sin and evil. The proclamation made by Jesus calls for conversion, reformation of one's life. Jesus invites those who hear him to participate in the Kingdom of God which is at hand: by following him.

Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes into his Father's glory with the holy angels. (Mk 8:34-38)⁶⁰

⁵⁷Leonard A. Bushinski, CSSp, "Gospel," in Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible, (New York, NY: McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., 1963).

⁵⁸New American Bible, 1014.

⁵⁹Louis McNeil, "Evangelization," in The New Dictionary of Theology (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 358.

⁶⁰New American Bible, 1077.

Jesus possesses a unique understanding of what his mission is. Some have referred to him as an itinerant preacher, but he understands that he has come to serve all people, in all of their needs. After curing Simon's mother-in-law, "he cured many others who were sick with various diseases and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him." (Mk 1:34)⁶¹ After a day filled with healings, Jesus is found:

Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you." He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee. (Mk 1:35-39)⁶²

Jesus has come to understand that he cannot rest for he has the urgent mission to announce the Good News. "To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Lk 4:43)⁶³. The mission of Jesus was to reveal God's love for all people. The love of God was like a fisher of men (Mt 4:18-22), like a shepherd seeking lost sheep (Lk 15:1-7), like a merchant seeking after treasure (Mt 13:44-46), like a woman searching after a lost coin (Lk 15:8-10), and was like a father suffering because a son is lost (Lk 15:11-32).⁶⁴

After his Resurrection (Mt 28:1-10), the Risen Lord remained on earth for forty days making appearances to his disciples and telling his apostles about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the mission of the Church (Acts 1:6-9). This mission he passed on to his followers when he commissioned the eleven before his Ascension.

⁶¹Ibid., 1066.

⁶²Ibid., 1166.

⁶³Ibid., 1100.

⁶⁴George L. Carey, "Evangelism," in The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000).

Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mk 16:15-16).⁶⁵

B. The Mission of the Church

At Pentecost, after receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13), the apostles began their mission of preaching Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Peter stood up with the eleven in front of the large crowd of Jews gathered before them and proclaimed to all present:

You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. . . .

Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain the God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do, my brothers?” Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call. (Acts 2:22-24, 36-40)⁶⁶

From the very beginning of their apostolic ministry, the apostles began by preaching about the Lord Jesus. The Risen Lord commissioned them to make disciples of all nations. In this way they continued Jesus’ ministry which is the principal task of the Church: “to continue the announcement of the Good News until Jesus comes again.”⁶⁷ The ministry of Jesus provided the ideal and pattern for Christian ministry. He was described in the gospels as the one who spoke with authority (Mt 7:29; Mt 28:18; Lk

⁶⁵New American Bible, 1088.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1172, 1173.

⁶⁷ Robert Schreier, C.Pp.S, “Evangelization,” in The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought (Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1994), 364.

4:32). Jesus was the model for all preachers and fulfilled the work of all the Old Testament prophets.⁶⁸ He taught in the synagogue (Lk 4:18; Lk 19:47), preached the good news of the kingdom (Lk 4:43; Mt 4:17; Mt 6:33; Mk 1:15; Jn 18:36), healed all kinds of diseases (Mt 9:35, Mt 8:18; Mt 14:36; Lk 6:19), and this compassion for the poor, the sick, the marginalized reveals how to unite one's word with one's action and thus reveal God's love to and for all people. All who follow Jesus are called to follow his example.

In the New Testament one notices that there is a shift in the meaning of the word "Gospel" from the four Evangelists to Acts, St. Paul and the other New Testament writings.

First, the 'good news' was the message which Jesus himself brought. He came 'preaching the gospel of God and saying "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel" (Mk 1: 14). His call to repentance, meaning a change of mind or direction, implied that those first believers were invited to turn their backs on the old life and to follow Jesus Christ as his disciples.

However, the cross and Resurrection formed the defining moment in the growth of the church. From these momentous events the apostles did not merely repeat what Jesus said—they preached Jesus himself. For them, he was the gospel and the kingdom . . . The "good news," then, is that through the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ God has reconciled humankind to himself and has established his kingdom of righteousness, love, and peace. The responsibility of the Church is to 'preach the gospel to all the nations' and to call people to baptism. (Mt 28:18)⁶⁹

The four Evangelists included in their gospels the mandate to preach the gospel, to evangelize the world. The "Great Commission" contains the last recorded words Jesus spoke to his apostles (Mt 28:18; Mk 13:10; Lk 24:47-49; Jn 20:21). The apostles

⁶⁸Oxford Companion to Christian Thought, "Preaching" (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1326.

⁶⁹George L. Carey, "Evangelism," 221.

received the mission to proclaim the Good News to all nations in the name of the Church. All the disciples are expected to be witnesses to and for Christ.

C. The Mission of Peter and Paul

In the Acts of the Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul win new disciples for Jesus through their preaching which is often accompanied by signs and wonders (Acts 5:12-16; Acts 9:32-35; 9:36-43; 14:8-10). The essence of the apostolic ministry is their preaching of the Good News which was to teach, strengthen and guide the young church communities so that they in turn would become witnesses of Jesus through their lives and preaching.

The beginning of the preaching of the Good News to the gentile world is found in the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles where Peter, guided by the Holy Spirit, goes to the house of Cornelius, a pagan who has had a vision of an angel of God (Acts 10:3). Inspired by the Spirit (Acts 10:9-33), Peter comes to understand that through this meeting with Cornelius God has called all people to be one in and through Jesus, the Son of God, who is Lord of all creation. After this, Paul begins his preaching to the gentiles and inspired by the Spirit would become God's instrument to open up the Christian community to receive all people as followers of Jesus. (Acts 13:1-52)

II. Evangelization Continues

A. The Mission of the Early Church

The early church began to grow by sending out disciples to all of the known world to be witnesses to Jesus "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)⁷⁰ Unknown Christians carried the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the farthest corners of the Roman world.

⁷⁰New American Bible, 1170-1171.

By the end of the second century, the Church's missionary work was well underway.

Pantaenus is said to have preached in 'India'; St. Gregory the Illuminator took Christianity to Armenia; the (Arian) Ulphilas converted Goths; St. Frumentius preached in Ethiopia, and missionaries of the Church of the East went to Sri Lanka, Malabar, Indonesia, and China (where the Church was especially active in the 7th and 8th centuries). In the West, St. Patrick's work in Ireland (5th century) was followed by intensive Celtic missionary enterprise embracing Scotland (where St. Columba established the monastery of Iona and further advance was made during the 5th to 7th century by Ninian, St. Kentigern, and St. Maol Rubh), Gaul (where St. Columbanus worked), and England, where St. Aidan's work in the North was supplemented in the South by the Roman mission of St. Augustine. Pope Gregory I's instruction to him not to destroy pagan shrines but to convert them into Christian churches was important in the development of missionary thought. The evangelization of Britain was so successful in the 8th century, British missionaries took a prominent part in the conversion of northern and central Europe. Most notable was the work of St. Willibrord (in Frisia) and St. Boniface (in Thuringia and Hesse).⁷¹

Evangelization continued through the last two centuries of the first millennium.

Some of the best known missionaries of the time included: St. Anskar in Sweden (9th century), St. Cyril and St. Methodius in the Slavonic lands (9th century), missionaries from both Rome and Constantinople in Bulgaria, St. Stephen's work with the Poles and Magyars (10th century), and St. Vladimir in Russia (10th century).

B. Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, monks evangelized much of Europe and they became famous to this day for the monasteries, cathedrals, hospitals, and schools that they established for the good of the people and the care of the poor. With the discovery of the New World, Catholic missionaries, who accompanied Columbus and the other explorers, extended Christianity to North and South America. In 1571 with the defeat of the Muslims at the Battle of Lepanto, Europe freely embarked on the conquest of the rest of the unknown

⁷¹"Missions," in Oxford Companion to Christian Thought (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000).

world. With this extension of Christianity beyond Europe, missionary activity became the special vocation of missionary orders rather than the responsibility of all members of the Church.⁷²

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry through the apostles and the early church, preaching was central to the spreading of the good news. Preaching was the center of the Christian community and it always bore witness to Jesus as the Son of God.

To a great extent the task of evangelizing was seen as preaching the good news to those who had not heard it, especially those in faraway places and distant lands. Secondly, such preaching was directed to those who had heard the good news but no longer followed after Jesus in discipleship. Emphasis was placed on three moments in the process: the explicit proclamation of the good news, the repentance or conversion of the listener, and the development of a local church through baptism and the other sacraments.⁷³

C. Reformation

In the later Middle Ages, and particularly during the Reformation period, the reformers, especially Martin Luther, described as *evangelical* those insights and teachings taken from the gospel. The term, evangelical, came to be used for the movement of the Reformation itself and as a self-designation for its adherents.⁷⁴ As a result Protestants began to use the terms "gospel" and "evangelical" in their preaching and theology and saw themselves as the true evangelical church.

In reaction to this, Catholics avoided using these terms and put their pastoral emphasis on teaching rather than on the announcing of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church put its emphasis on the teaching of the moral law, the structure of the church, and the sacraments. There was a desire to show that Christ had

⁷²Avery Dulles, S.J., "John Paul II and the New Evangelization," *America*, February 1, 1992, (Vol. 166, no. 3), 52.

⁷³Schreiter, 364.

⁷⁴Lukas Vischer, "Evangelical," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Erdmans, 2000), 212.

founded a hierarchical Church that was to be accepted as the instrument of divine revelation. Missionary activity was more ecclesiastical and therefore less evangelical.⁷⁵

At this time, a term more commonly used for “evangelization” throughout much of Catholic Church history was the “spreading of” or “propagation of” the faith. When Pope Gregory XV in 1622 founded a vehicle for coordinating the church’s mission activity, it would be called the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.⁷⁶

By the 18th century, the missionary activity of the Church went into decline. However, the Catholic revival of the 19th century witnessed the foundation of many missionary orders and the preoccupation of the Church once again with the preaching of the Gospel to all peoples.⁷⁷ Unfortunately this preoccupation with the preaching of the Gospel was limited to the missionary orders to the exclusion of all other members of the Church both the laity as well as the diocesan clergy.

D. Twentieth Century

In the first half of the twentieth century, two events came together and the term evangelization was reintroduced into Catholic literature. One was the influence of Protestant theologians like Karl Barth on Catholic Theology and the other was the Church’s preoccupation with the de-Christianization of Europe. In front of this new phenomenon, pastoral theologians and religious educators in Europe became convinced that the remedy to this new pastoral problem was a confident proclamation of the basic message of salvation through Jesus Christ, using the kerygmatic sermons of Peter and

⁷⁵Avery Dulles, S.J., “John Paul II and the New Evangelization,” Studia Missionalia, (Vol. 48, 1999), 166.

⁷⁶Schreier, 364.

⁷⁷Avery Dulles, S.J., Studia Missionalia, 166.

Paul, as reported in the first chapters in the Acts of the Apostles as models.⁷⁸

The temptation for the Church since the time of the Reformation had been to reduce the message and revelation of Jesus to the mere communication of knowledge about the message of Jesus, its meaning, and the importance of the Church. This rational approach to the communication of the good news became an intellectual presentation of facts which put the announcement of Jesus' call with all its dramatic significance: "This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15)⁷⁹ in second place. Emphasis was placed on the intellectual conversion of the individual while the affective relationship with the saving God was either minimized or lost. We had forgotten that the good news was meant to change one's heart and announce that God was present. But a new day was dawning in which the spirit was on the move.

⁷⁸Avery Dulles, S.J., America, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization."

⁷⁹New American Bible, 1066.

Chapter Four

VATICAN II: THE SEEDS OF A NEW EVANGELIZATION

According to an ancient Asian tradition,
a history of the Kingdom was compiled year by year at the Imperial Court.
Two high ministers of the emperor were appointed to carry out this task.
One had to write down the positive things that happened in the kingdom;
the other had to make a list of all the negative things that happened.
Neither of the two was aware of what the other was writing.
Then, at the beginning of the New Year, before the entire imperial court,
the two scribes read their account in a special public audience.
Everyone waited to learn the truth of the kingdom's state of affairs
from the contrast between the two accounts.

After having heard the report, the emperor would turn to the court and invite,
“Whoever has something to say, say it.”

One year, when the emperor invited all to express their opinions, no one dared to speak.
Absolute silence reigned until suddenly there was a moan and the sound of someone crying.
The emperor demanded, “Who is crying? Whoever it is, come before me now and speak.”
A mandarin came out from the crowd, made a triple bow before the emperor, and said with great respect:
“Majesty, no one in this court dares to speak the truth.
I'm afraid that our nation is in great danger and risks downfall!”⁸⁰

On January 25, 1959, on the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, Pope John XXIII addressed a small group of Roman Cardinals. It was less than 100 days after his election as Pope and very few expected anything from this 77 year old “caretaker” Pope. With great humility, Pope John began his address:

Our sole concern is the “bonum animarum” (the good of souls) and our wish is to see the new pontificate meet the spiritual demands of the present time accurately and forcefully.⁸¹

This gentle man of God stressed his preoccupation for the salvation of people while acknowledging the challenges that he must face efficiently and courageously.

I. Prophetic Vision of John XXIII

After highlighting his own ministry as a successor of St. Peter to be both Bishop

⁸⁰Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, Testimony of Hope: The Spiritual Exercises of Pope John Paul II (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2002), 21.

⁸¹Pope John XXIII, “Announcement of Ecumenical Council and Roman Synod: An Address of Pope John XXIII to the Roman Cardinals on January 25, 1959,” The Pope Speaks, (Vol. 5, no. 4 Autumn 1959), 398.

of Rome and Pastor of the Universal Church, he shared with the small group of Cardinals his vision of how he would carry out his ministry.

Venerable Brethren and beloved sons! Trembling a little with emotion, but with humble firmness of purpose, we now tell you of a two-fold celebration: We propose to call a Diocesan Synod for Rome, and an Ecumenical Council for the Universal Church . . . They will lead to the desired and long awaited modernization of the Code of Canon Law.⁸²

Pope John's call for an Ecumenical Council was then followed by three ways that he envisioned the Council to proceed. First he expressed his desire for dialogue among Bishops and Cardinals, then the need for an exchange of ideas between them about the future of the Church, and finally, the need to plan together this future.

Let it suffice for today that we made this announcement to those members of the Sacred College who are present; We intend to communicate it to the other Cardinals who have already returned to their various sees, spread all over the world.

We would like to receive from those near and far a confidential and intimate expression of what they think of our threefold plan, and we would welcome any suggestion that they may care to offer regarding its realization.⁸³

After reminding all of the need "to place our trust in the benevolence of Heaven" he said: "These projects would require hard work from all if they were going to achieve the enlightenment, edification and happiness of the whole Christian world."⁸⁴

Prophetically, Pope John anticipated the future teaching of the Council by telling the Cardinals that the future and the joy of the world depend on how the Church would renew itself. Finally, in what would become a move to change centuries of separation, he spoke of the need to invite "the faithful of the separated communities to follow Us

⁸²Ibid., 400, 401.

⁸³Ibid., 401.

⁸⁴Ibid.

amicably in this quest for unity and for grace, to which so many souls aspire from all corners of the earth.”⁸⁵

In a very simple, gracious, fraternal way, by-passing the hostilities and mutual condemnations of the historic relationships between the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations, Pope John invited all separated brothers and sisters to come with him and search for the unity that Christ desired for his Church. (Jn 17).

II. Opening of Vatican II

On October 11, 1962, in his opening speech to the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII said: “The greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously.”⁸⁶ There has always been a preoccupation in the Church for a correct transmission of the doctrine of the Church. But here there is a concern for a more efficacious transmission of the Gospel message to the faithful. No longer is the emphasis just on the faithful transmission of the deposit of faith, now there is an official preoccupation that doctrine be taught efficaciously. There is an expressed concern by the Holy Father for the faithful and how the Gospel message is transmitted to them and how it is received by them.

This was truly a radical concept for those present. Teaching doctrine was not enough. The Church now had to be concerned about its own methodology. Pope John emphasized to all that the Gospel message was to be presented in such a way that the Church was faithful to what had been received from the apostles and that it was to be expressed in a language that would be better understood by the modern world. What the Church had been doing did not respond to the needs and challenges of the modern world.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Pope John XXIII, “Gaudet Mater Ecclesia: Opening Speech to the Council,” in The Documents of Vatican II, Walter M. Abbot, S.J., General Editor (New York: The Association Press, 1966), 713.

”The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with patience”⁸⁷

To accomplish the vision that he had for the Council and the Church, Pope John XXIII spoke of the necessity of renewal in the Church as she was looking to respond to the demands of the modern world and the necessities of all people.

illuminated by the light of this Council, the Church—we confidently trust—will become greater in spiritual riches and, gaining the strength of new energies there from, she will look to the future without fear. In fact, by bringing herself up to date where required, and by the wise organization of mutual cooperation, the Church will make men, families, and peoples really turn their minds to heavenly things.⁸⁸

The need for spiritual renewal was an acknowledgement that the Church lacked the holiness, the wisdom, the courage necessary to respond to the needs and challenges that were dividing the world. Renewal implied both a change from the past and a repentance for human failures.

The pastoral updating called for challenged the attitudes, customs, habits, and presumptions of the past. This underlined the need for a planning which would be capable of seeing the seeds of future trends in daily life and being creative enough to respond appropriately to these needs under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The search for Christian unity was a call for mutual forgiveness and humility so that Christ’s desire that all be one would become the pastoral guide of all Christian churches.

I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. (John 17:20-21)⁸⁹

⁸⁷Ibid., 715.

⁸⁸Ibid., 712.

⁸⁹New American Bible, 1162.

Catholics were being called to be instruments of forgiveness so that their fellow Christians would also be inspired by their love of Christ to forgive the shortcomings and sinfulness of Catholics while both worked to overcome the prejudices of the past.

Pope John's acknowledgement of the need for reforms in the Church so that she would be better prepared to serve the needs of the world was based on his faith and the promises of our Lord to his Church. This great faith enabled him to face many gloomy faces within the Church.

In the daily exercise of our pastoral office, we sometimes have to listen, much to our regret, to voices of persons who, though burning with zeal, are not endowed with too much sense of discretion or measure. In these modern times they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin. They say that our era, in comparison with past eras, is getting worse, and they behave as though they had learned nothing from history, which is, none the less, the teacher of life. They behave as though at the time of former Councils everything was a full triumph for the Christian idea and life and for proper religious liberty. We feel we must disagree with those prophets of gloom,⁹⁰ who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand.⁹¹

Inspired by the words with which Pope John XXIII greeted the Council and the hope he placed in its work, those present at the beginning of the Council made evangelization one of its many themes.⁹²

⁹⁰The prophetic insights of John XXIII are seen today in China as seen in this report from National Public Radio. "Alongside China's astonishing economic boom, an almost unnoticed religious boom has quietly been taking place. In the country's first major survey on religious beliefs, conducted in 2006, 31.4 percent of about 4,500 people questioned described themselves as religious. That amounts to more than 408 million religious believers, an astonishing number in an officially atheist country, and three times higher than the last official estimate, which had largely remained unchanged for years. The collapse of the communist ideology created a void that has left many Chinese staring into a spiritual vacuum, looking for a value system to counterbalance the rampant materialism that seems to govern life in China." Louisa Lim, National Public Radio, USA, "Chinese Turn to Religion to Fill a Spiritual Vacuum," July 18, 2010.

⁹¹Pope John XXIII, "Opening Speech to the Council," 712.

⁹²"Building on the kerygmatic theology of the preceding decade, Vatican II made use of evangelical terminology. A comparison with Vatican I, which reflected the 19th century mentality, is instructive. Vatican I used the term "Gospel" (evangelium) only once and never used the terms "evangelize" or "evangelization." Vatican II, by contrast, mentioned the "Gospel" 157 times, "evangelize" 18 times and "evangelization" 31 times." Avery Dulles, S.J., "John Paul II and the New Evangelization," 53. It must be noted that the only American theologian to have underlined the preoccupation of the Church at Vatican II for evangelization was Avery Dulles, SJ.

III. Documents of Vatican II

In the first document of the Council, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium), the Council Fathers express the importance to evangelize when they proclaimed:

Christ is the light of all nations. Hence this most sacred Synod, which has been gathered in the Holy Spirit, eagerly desires to shed on all men that radiance of His which brightens the countenance of the Church. This it will do by proclaiming the gospel to every creature. (cf. Mk. 16:15).

By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind. She is also an instrument for the achievement of such union and unity.⁹³

Because the whole Church is missionary by its very nature:

The work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God, this sacred Synod summons all to a deep interior renewal. Thus, from a vivid awareness of their own responsibility for spreading the gospel, they will do their share in missionary work among the nations.⁹⁴

Those responsible for guiding the people in this process in union with the Pope are the bishops:

The task of proclaiming the gospel everywhere on earth devolves on the body of pastors, to all of whom in common Christ gave His command, thereby imposing upon them a common duty, . . .

With all their energy, therefore, they must supply to the missions both workers for the harvest and also spiritual and material aid,⁹⁵ both directly and on their own account, as well as by arousing the ardent cooperation of the faithful.⁹⁶

⁹³“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” in The Documents of Vatican II, 14-15. Italics are the author’s.

⁹⁴“Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church” (Ad Gentes), in The Documents of Vatican II, 623.

⁹⁵All of the dioceses in the United States participate in a Mission Cooperative Program where dioceses and religious congregations from the third world are invited to come and appeal for spiritual and financial assistance during Sunday Masses. However, only 36 US dioceses are actively involved in sending personnel to the missions.

⁹⁶“Constitution on the Church,” 45-46.

Priests who are called to be the closest cooperators with their bishops are reminded that “In their pastoral activity, priests should stir up and preserve among the faithful a zeal for the evangelization of the world.”⁹⁷ But the cooperation of the priests with the bishop must also be personal:

In their Conferences, bishops should deliberate about dedicating to the evangelization of the nations some priests from among the diocesan clergy.⁹⁸ They should deal with the definite offering which in proportion to its resources each diocese is obliged to set aside annually for the work of the missions. They should consider how to direct and organize the ways and means by which the missions receive direct help.⁹⁹

The role of the laity in the world is stressed and its importance is emphasized in the evangelization of the modern world:

They (the laity) exercise a genuine apostolate by their activity on behalf of bringing the gospel and holiness to men, and on behalf of penetrating and perfecting the temporal sphere of things through the spirit of the gospel.¹⁰⁰ In this way, their temporal activity can openly bear witness to Christ and promote the salvation of men. Since it is proper to the layman’s state in life for him to spend his days in the midst of the world and of secular transactions, he is called by God to burn with the spirit of Christ and to exercise his apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven.¹⁰¹

The desire of Pope John XXIII was to bring the Church up to date. The Church had a mission and a message for the modern world (the Gospel) and was called to renew herself so that she could better respond to the needs of humanity and the world in which she lived. The Council Fathers underlined the missionary aspect of this Evangelization by emphasizing that it was a necessary response to the command of Jesus. The final

⁹⁷“Decree on the Missionary Activity on the Church,” 627.

⁹⁸According to the The 2010 Official Catholic Directory (New York, NY: J.P. Kennedy & Sons, 2010) there are 27,614 diocesan priests serving in the United States. The latest statistics for US diocesan priests show that 105 are serving in the missions in the third world. US Catholic Mission Handbook (Washington, DC: US Catholic Mission Association, 2008), 3-6.

⁹⁹“Decree on the Missionary Activity on the Church,” 626.

¹⁰⁰The Catholic population in the United States is 68.5 million. (The 2010 Official Catholic Directory). There are 1,445 lay people actively serving in the missions. (US Mission Handbook).

¹⁰¹“Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,” in Documents of Vatican II, 491-492.

words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20, known to many as the Great Commission, is the command for the Church today:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.¹⁰²

This command of Jesus is cited seven times in the Council documents (Lumen Gentium 17, 19, 24; Dei Verbum 7; Ad Gentes 5; Dignitatis Humanae 13, 14.) The demand to evangelize all people is further stressed by the Council Fathers when they quote or reference Mark 16:15 twelve times. “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” (Lumen Gentium 1, 16, 19, 24; Dei Verbum 7; Unitatis Redintegratio 2; Orientalium Ecclesiarum 3; Ad Gentes 1, 5, 38; Presbyterorum Ordinis 4; Dignitatis Humanae 13.) The words of the risen Lord, his last command to his apostles, are now seen as an essential characteristic of the Church. Not only is the Church called to evangelize but also she is reminded that she must reach out to all people, she must be missionary in both her outlook and in her daily existence.¹⁰³

This experience of living Church at Vatican II, the coming together of bishops from all over the world, from the rich countries and the poor countries, from the developed countries and the undeveloped countries, to share as brothers in the Lord searching for God’s will, would give those present a new experience of Church and renew their spirit. It would increase their hope and free them to re-establish a dialogue between faith, the world they live in, and modern culture.

Challenged to interpret the signs of the times so that she could recognize God’s presence in time, the Church was being given a new pastoral-theological orientation that

¹⁰²New American Bible, 1062.

¹⁰³Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., “Vatican II and Evangelization,” in The New Evangelization: Overcoming the Obstacles (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), 4.

encouraged her to permanently relate her faith with her pastoral ministry (praxis) while maintaining a dialogue with the all the human sciences so that a better understanding of the world could be achieved. All history, and not just Church History, was now being seen as a manifestation of the presence of God. Salvation history was now seen through the experience of human history, God living and moving through time.

Chapter Five

THE CHURCH BEGINS TO IMPLEMENT VATICAN II

Friction among people is a normal part of life.
A society without friction exists only in heaven.
By means of friction a stone can become smoother,
rounder, cleaner, and more beautiful.¹⁰⁴

I. The Medellín Conference: The Call for a New Evangelization

In 1968, from August 26 until September 9, representatives of the bishops of Latin America met in Medellín, Colombia (South America), to reflect on the situation of the Church and the world in Latin America and to apply the teaching of Vatican II to the life of the Church and society in Latin America. This conference would ultimately affect the life of the Universal Church. In his inaugural speech, Pope Paul VI said:

We all realize that the job (your missionary and pastoral work in the past) is not finished. Indeed, the work already done declares its own limitations, highlights new needs, and calls for something new and great. The future demands an effort, a daring, a sacrifice, which introduce a profound anxiety into the Church. We are in a period of total reflection. Like a tidal wave, the uneasiness of our time breaks in upon us—particularly the unrest of these countries, straining toward complete development and anxiously aware of their economic, social, political and moral imbalance.¹⁰⁵

The meeting at Medellín was the first attempt in the Universal Church to apply the teachings of the Second Vatican Council to the pastoral reality of a local church. The attempt to adapt the teachings of the Council to the Latin American culture was the first effort at inculturation of these teachings. Medellín looked at the signs of the times in the Latin American continent and attempted to respond to these challenges through the light

¹⁰⁴Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, The Road of Hope: A Gospel from Prison (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2001), 45.

¹⁰⁵Pope Paul VI, "Inaugural Speech of the Second General Assembly of the Latin American Bishops in Bogota, Colombia, August 24, 1968," The Pope Speaks, (Vol. 13, no. 3), 1968, 248.

of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰⁶ Medellín explicitly considered the poor as “a sign of the times” and stated that God speaks to the world through the poor. God hears the cry and the hopes of the poor because their hopes reach to God in heaven. The bishops proclaimed:

It is necessary to end the separation between faith and life, “because in Christ Jesus . . . only faith working through love avails”. This commitment requires us to live a true scriptural poverty expressed in authentic manifestations that may be clear signs for our peoples. Only poverty of this quality will show forth Christ, Savior of men, and disclose Christ, the Lord of history.

Our reflections . . . shall be assumed by all the people of God . . . to promote a *new evangelization*¹⁰⁷ and intensive catechesis that reach the elite and the masses in order to achieve a lucid and committed faith.¹⁰⁸

The Latin American bishops wanted to take the inspiration that they experienced at Vatican II and apply it to the life of the Church in Latin America so that the proclamation of the Gospel would be believable to all and the people of Latin America could experience the life of the Risen Lord. Their desire was not to limit themselves to theories of development but rather with the guidance of the Holy Spirit enter into a process where everyone would be liberated from the bonds of sin. In a providential way, the final document was called the Medellín Documents: the Church in the Present Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council. This evangelical insight would influence the future of the Church.

II. Paul VI and Evangelii Nuntiandi

In the immediate post-Vatican II era, evangelization was not emphasized in the

¹⁰⁶The Constitution of the Church, Gaudium et Spes, is cited 47 times in the Medellín documents and the encyclical, Populorum Progresso of Paul VI is cited on 32 occasions.

¹⁰⁷It is important to note the historical importance of this insight of the Bishops of Latin America. This is the first time that the term “new evangelization” is used in a church document. This call for a new way of proclaiming the good news of Jesus to the people of Latin America would influence the pontificate of Paul VI and be the seed for his prophetic document “Evangelii Nuntiandi”.

¹⁰⁸“Message to the Peoples of Latin America,” in Medellín Documents: The Church in the Present-Day Transformation. (Bogota, Colombia: CELAM, 1968), 41.

books or in the writings on the Council. Very few writers would see this as a topic of inspiration for the modern Church.¹⁰⁹ Avery Dulles, S.J. pointed out that:

The commentaries on Vatican II published in the first decade after the Council (1965-1975) generally overlooked the centrality of evangelization. They focused attention on collegiality, ecumenism, dialogue, and social teaching. But Paul VI, . . . , corrected this oversight. . . . In 1975, on the tenth anniversary of the close of Vatican II, he published his great apostolic exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi.¹¹⁰

Following the inspiration of the Second Vatican Council, which Pope John Paul II later called the greatest Church experience of our day (“the second Vatican Council is often considered as the beginning of a new era in the life of the Church”),¹¹¹ Pope Paul VI chose Evangelization as the theme for the Synod of Bishops in 1974. From the materials he received from the Synod, Paul VI wrote his Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Nuntiandi: On Evangelization in the Modern World, which is considered by many to be the most important document in the Catholic Church on evangelization in the twentieth century. This Exhortation highlighted, what was for Paul VI, the most important theme of the Second Vatican Council, the Church’s recovery of the importance of its own mission to evangelize the world. Referring to the Synod of 1974, Cardinal Lopez Trujillo, the former president of CELAM and head of the Pontifical Commission on the Family, said:

¹⁰⁹Commentaries about Vatican II contain nothing about the topic evangelization in Vatican II. Derek Worlock, English Bishops at the Council (London: Burns & Oates, 1965); Most Reverend Aloysius J. Wycislo, Vatican II Revisited: Reflections by One Who Was There (New York, NY: Alba House, 1987); E. Schillebeeckx, OP, Vatican II: The Real Achievement (London: Sheed and Ward, 1967); Donald Campion, S.J., The Second Vatican Council; Alberic Stacpoole, Vatican II Revisited By Those Who Were There (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986); Philippe Bordeyne & Laurent Villemin, Vatican II et La Theologie Perspectives Pour le XXI siècle (Paris: Les editions du Cerf, 2006).

¹¹⁰ Avery Dulles, S.J., “John Paul II and the New Evangelization,” 168. In the historic four volume work of History of Vatican II by Giuseppe Alberigo, there is no mention of evangelization as a topic in Vatican II. Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology edited by Karl Rahner does not mention evangelization in this famous five volume work. In Vatican II: An InterFaith Appraisal edited by John Miller, CSC, there is also no mention of evangelization as being a central theme of Vatican II.

¹¹¹Pope John Paul II, “The Coming of the Third Millenium,” The Pope Speaks, (Vol. 40. no. 2), 1995, no. 18, p. 94.

We know that the result of this Synod was Evangelii Nuntiandi. It was a synod in which the Latin American influence was overwhelming with the exception of some points in structure which had an African origin. This was a Synod which was filled with Latin American inspiration.¹¹²

Evangelii Nuntiandi issued by Pope Paul VI on December 8, 1975, was intended to summarize the results of the fourth Synod of Bishops,¹¹³ commemorated the tenth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council and the end of the 1975 Holy Year in which evangelization had been a special theme.¹¹⁴ At Vatican II the Decree on the Church's missionary activity, Ad Gentes, stressed the importance of mission in the life of the Church moving evangelization to the center of the life of the Church and proclaimed that the Church was essentially missionary (Ad Gentes 1, 2). It centered the mission of the Church in the Trinitarian life of God and "rooted the Church's mission in the Trinitarian life of God and saw the sending the Son as the paradigm that gave the Church both its identity and its task."¹¹⁵

A. Evangelization

Pope Paul VI addressed some of the main problems that had been facing the Church about its missionary activity since Vatican II and clearly stated that evangelization is the center of the Church's mission.

. . . the presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is indeed necessary. It is

¹¹²Alvaro Cadavid Duque, Hacer Creible el Anuncio Cristiano en America Latina (Bogota, Colombia: CELAM, 1998), 55. Translated by author. Here Cardinal Lopez Trujillo confirmed the influence that the Medellin document had on Pope Paul VI and for the importance of the call for a New Evangelization by the Bishops of Latin America.

¹¹³Cardinal Moreira Neves recalls that Cardinal Karol Wojtyla suggested that "the Synod's recommendations be entrusted to the pope so that he could transform them into the Synod's final document." Stephen Bevans, SVD, "Celebrating 30 years of Evangelii Nuntiandi," Australian EJournal of Theology, February 2006.

¹¹⁴Pope Paul VI, for some unknown reason, did not mention the fact that it was also the tenth anniversary of the promulgation of Ad Gentes.

¹¹⁵R. Schreiter, C.Pp.S, "Evangelii Nuntiandi," 353.

unique. It cannot be replaced. It does not permit either indifference, syncretism or accommodation. It is a question of people's salvation. It is the beauty of the Revelation that it represents. It brings with it a wisdom that is not of this world.¹¹⁶

Evangelization becomes the center of the life of the church because it was central in the life of Jesus. Pope Paul reminds us that Jesus was the very first and the greatest Evangelizer. He proclaimed the Kingdom of God and a salvation which freed humanity from everything that is oppressive especially from sin and the Evil One.

This Kingdom and this salvation which are the key words of Jesus Christ' evangelization are available to every human being as grace and mercy, yet . . . each individual gains them through a total interior renewal which the Gospel calls metanoia; it is a radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart.¹¹⁷

B. Social Change and Conversion

It is important to underline that this is one of the most historic insights of the teaching of Evangelii Nuntiandi because it enriched Catholic Social Teaching by emphasizing how we could foster social change. It must be remembered that Pope Paul was not only talking about change of heart so that structures in the world could be transformed, but he also reminds the Church of the importance of its own renewal and conversion as the principal witness that it offers the world of the presence of Jesus as the Savior of all humanity.

The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself. . . she always needs to hear the proclamation of the 'mighty works of god' which converted her to the Lord; she always needs to be called together afresh by Him and reunited. In brief, this means that she has a constant need of being evangelized, if she wishes to retain freshness, vigor and strength in order to proclaim the Gospel. The Second Vatican Council recalled and the 1974 Synod vigorously took up again this theme of the Church which is evangelized by

¹¹⁶Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, December 8, 1975), no. 5, p. 4.

¹¹⁷Ibid., no. 10, p. 7.

constant conversion and renewal, in order to evangelize the world with credibility.¹¹⁸

The efficaciousness of the pastoral ministry of the Church, according to Paul VI, is not aimed at or based on the construction of new structures in the world but rather on the conversion of the hearts of the members of the Church. A renewed Church begins with the conversion of its members, beginning with its Shepherds.

For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: “Now I am making the whole of creation new.” But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel.¹¹⁹

This process of evangelization continues to take place daily in the Church when she celebrates the sacraments and witnesses to its own members her faith in Christ and preaches the Gospel as the word of life. (Cf. nn. 42, 43, 47).

Pope Paul emphasized the importance of the testimony, the witness of one’s life, as an expression of Evangelization: “All Christians are called to this witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers.”¹²⁰ But, Pope Paul insisted on the need for an explicit proclamation of the message of Jesus:

. . . because even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified—what Peter called always having ‘your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have’—and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of God are not proclaimed.¹²¹

¹¹⁸Ibid., no. 15, pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁹Ibid., no. 18, p. 11.

¹²⁰Ibid., no. 21, p. 13.

¹²¹Ibid., no. 22, pp. 13-14.

This emphasis on the explicit proclamation of Jesus is destined for change of the world by creating agents of evangelization who become messengers of the Gospel to others.

Finally, the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn.¹²²

The genius of Pope Paul VI was that he had the foresight to see the relationship between the interior change of the person as the key to the social change of society when many were focused on either the interior change of the person while others were preoccupied with the unjust structures of the world. For him, one led to the other.

The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.¹²³

C. Agents for Evangelization

Who then is responsible for the evangelization of the world, the transformation of the social reality that governs the life of the people? Who will be responsible for the creation of the new social order that will benefit all of humanity? Pope Paul quotes the Second Vatican Council to respond to the question of who has the mission of evangelizing when he says:

The Second Vatican Council gave a clear reply to this question: it is upon the Church that “there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going out into the whole world and preaching the gospel to every creature.” And in another text: “. . . the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God.”¹²⁴

¹²²Ibid., no. 24, p. 15.

¹²³Ibid., no. 18, pp. 11-12.

¹²⁴Ibid., no. 59, p. 38.

Evangelization is the responsibility of the whole Church, and it is not limited to a few groups within the Church. It is the mission of the Church and not the work of isolated groups or persons. Pope Paul places great importance on the role of the laity in evangelizing their world.

Lay people, whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks, must for this very reason exercise a very special form of evangelization.

Their primary and immediate task is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community—this is the specific role of the pastors—but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the affairs of the world. Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media.¹²⁵

¹²⁵Ibid., no. 70, p. 46.

Chapter Six

BLESSED JOHN PAUL II:

THE CALL FOR A NEW EVANGELIZATION

Renewal is a return to the sources. Renewal is meant to help us as Catholics to return to the fullness of the Catholic faith and as Christians to return to Christ.

Gandhi often made this thought-provoking remark:

“I love Christ, but I do not love Christians because they are not Christ-like.”¹²⁶

In June 1979, nine months after being elected Pope, Blessed John Paul II made his historic pilgrimage to Communist Poland, his motherland. The world watched and listened in anticipation of what might occur. In sermons, lectures, and addresses, the Holy Father encouraged, inspired and challenged his Polish brothers and sisters to live their faith and be people of hope. Little did the world realize that fourteen months after his visit, a social revolution would occur with the founding of the world famous trade union, Solidarity, which in turn would be the instrument of the downfall of the Communist government.

I. John Paul II Calls for a New Evangelization

On June 9th, during Mass at the Shrine of the Holy Cross in Mogila (in the Archdiocese of Cracow) where he had been the Archbishop only a few months before, Blessed John Paul said:

“Where the Cross is raised, there is raised the sign that that place has now been reached by the Good News of Man’s salvation through Love. Where the cross is raised, *there is the sign that evangelization has begun*. Once our fathers raised the Cross in various places in the land of Poland as a sign that the Gospel had arrived there, that there had been a beginning of the evangelization that was to continue without break until today. It was with this thought also that the first Cross was raised in Mogila, near Krakow, near Stara Huta.

The new wooden Cross was raised not far from here at the very time we were celebrating the Millennium. With it we were given *a sign* that on the threshold of the new millennium, in these new times, these new conditions of life, the Gospel

¹²⁶Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, The Road to Hope, 147.

is again being proclaimed. *A new evangelization* has begun, as if it were a new proclamation, even if in reality it is the same as ever. The Cross stands high over the revolving world.¹²⁷

Under the watchful eye of the world and in the presence of nervous Communist government officials, Pope John Paul was inspired to proclaim, for the first time, that a new evangelization had begun. He proposed no program, no pastoral vision, but talked of the Cross and the life that his people had led. He proclaimed: “Today . . . let us give thanks for the new beginning of evangelization that has been brought about here. And let us all pray that it may be as fruitful as the first evangelization—indeed, even more fruitful.”¹²⁸

On March 3, 1983 in Port au Prince, Haiti, Pope John Paul II told the bishops of Latin America, who were participating in the opening of the 19th General Assembly of the Latin American Bishops’ Council (CELAM), that:

The churches of the whole world are grateful to you for the witness you are giving to an option which consists in being near the poorest, without excluding anyone, so as to teach them to overcome what is unworthy of man, to teach them to progress, not simply in order to become rich, but in order to “be” more.

I call upon you to be paternally sensitive to the sufferings of your faithful and your poorest and most abandoned children, to ensure . . . that your communities, with their priests and deacons in the forefront, may be more and more promoters of integral human development, justice and equity, above all for the benefit of the most needy. Let communion and participation grow.¹²⁹

Haiti had been selected as the host for this meeting because of the great suffering that the Haitian people had endured for years under the reigning dictatorship of the Duvalier family and the Latin American bishops wanted to express the church’s solidarity with the suffering Haitian people.

¹²⁷Pope John Paul II, “Homily,” Mogila, Poland, June 9, 1979. Italics in the original.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹*Origins*, vol. 12, no. 41, March 24, 1983, 661.

In this, the poorest country in Latin America, Blessed John Paul II would raise his prophetic voice in this speech and called, for the first time in the Americas, for a New Evangelization when he said:

The commemoration of the half millennium of evangelization (in Latin America) will gain its full meaning if it is a commitment on your part as bishops, together with your priests and faithful: a commitment, not to re-evangelization, but to a new evangelization, new in ardor, methods and expression.¹³⁰

The commitment of a New Evangelization “is situated in the context of a profoundly religious people who ask for the bread of the word of God, since they put their trust in him; a people whose religion, in its most characteristic cultural form, is an expression of the Catholic faith”¹³¹ And yet Latin America “still has immense regions of poverty and misery, illiteracy, sickness and disease, marginalization. A sincere analysis of the situation shows how painful injustices are at the root of the matter, the exploitation of some people by others, and a grave lack of equity in the distribution of wealth and the goods of culture.”¹³²

In this socio-political environment where the Church in Latin America was struggling to serve its people prophetically, the Holy Father presented this challenge of a New Evangelization to the Church that was being guided in its pastoral work by the reflections of the Conferences of Medellín in 1968 and Puebla in 1979.

In 1979, the Paraguayan government arrested 2500 lay leaders of rural Catholic communities. Somehow the Deputy Minister of Culture had obtained the names of the lay leaders from the president of the Catholic Bishops Conference. Many of the men were held in the Emboscada Prison, 35 miles outside of the capital, Asuncion. The prison was located in an isolated section of the country and could only be approached through a narrow, hilly, gravel road. The lay leaders were not permitted any visitors, neither their families, their parish priests or their Bishops. The only person permitted to enter was the personal chaplain of the president, a

¹³⁰ Ibid., 661.

¹³¹ Ibid., 660.

¹³² Ibid.

native Catholic priest. All of the lay leaders were trusted men of the Church who exercised various ministries in their communities: lay Eucharistic ministers, Delegates of the Word, catechists, leaders of the Third Order of St. Francis, etc. They were pious men with a strong spirituality and fiercely loyal to the Church. After a few weeks without the spiritual consolation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they, the lay leaders, did not believe that the president's personal chaplain would respect the Seal of Confession so they selected one of their companions to be their confessor. Juan Felix was a farmer, father of six children, and the head catechist of the parish of Santa Maria. He was also the head of the local chapter of Secular Franciscans. Sensing his goodness the men would go to him, tell him their sins, and together they would pray the Act of Contrition.¹³³

II. The Laity and a New Evangelization

The pastoral experience of Blessed John Paul II during and after the Second World War in Poland was living proof for him of the importance and value of committed lay people in the Church. In Poland, lay people became instruments of social change and found in the Catholic Church the spiritual guidance and strength necessary to guide them in their struggles for freedom and a new life based on justice and respect for all people.¹³⁴ The many papal visits throughout the world confirmed for Blessed John Paul what he had experienced in Poland: the importance of a committed and well-formed laity for the Church and for the life of the world.

For the twentieth anniversary of Vatican II, Blessed John Paul convoked the Seventh Synod of Bishops to reflect on the "Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council." The result of the Synod was the Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici of Blessed John Paul II which is considered to be the first of his major reflections on Evangelization.

¹³³Told to the author by Juan Felix, who had been one of his students for the Permanent Diaconate.

¹³⁴George Huntston Williams, The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action, (New York: Seabury Press, 1981); George Weigel, Witness to Hope, (New York, NY: Cliff Street Books, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1999); Mieczyslaw Malinski, Pope John Paul II, The Life of Karol Wojtyła, New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1979).

III. Christifideles Laici: On the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the World

A. Prophetic Lay Commitment

The fundamental objective of Christifideles Laici was to inspire and nourish a more prophetic commitment in the Church for the gift and responsibility that lay people have for creating unity in the life of the Church and for sharing in its evangelical mission in the world. Beginning his reflection with the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, Blessed John Paul said lay people:

are those who form that part of the People of God which might be likened to the laborers in the vineyard mentioned in Matthew's Gospel: 'For the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.' (Mt 20:1-2)¹³⁵

After emphasizing the active role that lay people have in the world Blessed John Paul noted that since the end of the Second Vatican Council lay people have not always been prophetic in living out their vocation in the world. In particular, there have been two temptations that have befallen them and these must be avoided in the future. First, there has been a temptation to be so absorbed with "Church services and tasks" that the laity have avoided their "professional, social, cultural and political" responsibilities. Lay people have limited their vocation to "a life in the sacristy" and avoided their responsibility to create a more just world for all. Secondly, there has been a temptation to separate faith from life,¹³⁶ creating a spiritual life separated from one's Christian vocation in the secular world.

There cannot be two parallel lives in their (lay faithful) existence: on the one hand, the so-called 'spiritual' life, with its values and demands; and on the other,

¹³⁵Pope John Paul II, Christifideles Laici: On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the World, no.1, p. 9.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, no. 2, pp. 12-13.

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.¹³⁷

B. Effectiveness in the Apostolate

To ensure that the Church and the lay faithful would begin to focus on the effectiveness (efficiency and efficacy) of the lay apostolate, Blessed John Paul insisted that:

Bearing fruit is an essential demand of life in Christ and life in the Church. The person who does not bear fruit does not remain in communion: Each branch of mine that bears no fruit, he (My Father) takes away" (Jn 15:2).¹³⁸

His insistence on the need of the laity to be actively engaged in the transformation of the world was an indirect criticism of the orientation and formation that had been offered by local Churches. Quoting Evangelii Nuntiandi Blessed John Paul recalled how the lay faithful have collaborated positively in the life of the Church in its mission of spreading the Gospel in the world.

The more Gospel-inspired lay people there are engaged in these realities, clearly involved in them, competent to promote them, and conscious that they must exercise to the full their Christian powers which are often repressed and buried, the more these realities will be at the service of the Kingdom of God and therefore at the service of salvation in Jesus Christ, without in any way losing or sacrificing their human content but rather pointing to a transcendent dimension which is often disregarded.¹³⁹

C. Ongoing Formation

To ensure that lay people would bear fruit in the future Blessed John Paul used the Gospel image of the vine and the branches to insist on the need for permanent ongoing formation of lay people so that they will bear much fruit in their lives.

¹³⁷Ibid., no. 59, pp. 150-151.

¹³⁸Ibid., no. 32, p. 79.

¹³⁹Ibid., no. 23, p. 57.

The fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfill one's mission.

God calls me and sends me forth as a laborer in his vineyard. He calls me and sends me forth to work for the coming of his Kingdom in history.¹⁴⁰

This vision of Blessed John Paul for the lay faithful was intimately connected with the vocation of the whole Church to obey the command of Christ,

‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation’ (Mk 16:15), and take up anew the missionary endeavor. A great venture, both challenging and wonderful, is entrusted to the Church—that of a *re-evangelization*, which is so much needed by the present world. The lay faithful ought to regard themselves as an active and responsible part of this venture, called as they are to proclaim and to live the Gospel in service to the person and to society while respecting the totality of the values and needs of both.¹⁴¹

Speaking forcefully, Blessed John Paul reminded his fellow Bishops of their responsibility to offer the lay faithful the formative elements needed so that a re-evangelization of the present world might begin.

Formation is not the privilege of a few, but a right and duty of all. In this regard the synod Fathers have said: “Possibilities of formation should be proposed to all, especially the poor, who can also be a source of formation for all”; and they added: “Suitable means to help each person fulfill a full, human and Christian vocation should be applied to formation.”¹⁴²

The lay faithful, especially the poor, have a right to an ongoing formation which would prepare them to respond faithfully to their call to be laborers in the vineyard of the world. Blessed John Paul called on Bishops to confide in the poor of their dioceses and share with them the treasures of the Church's teaching so that they can become instruments of social change. Bishops have a duty to teach and not just provide the lay people with the necessary ongoing formation; they also should experience the transforming process of

¹⁴⁰Ibid., no. 58, pp. 148-149. Italics in the original.

¹⁴¹Ibid., no. 64, p. 164.

¹⁴²Ibid., no. 63, p. 160.

ongoing formation. Blessed John Paul emphasized that both renewal and conversion must become an ongoing process for all.

D. Public Life and the Common Good

There were two aspects of public life that Blessed John Paul identified as in special need of evangelization by the laity. The first was the political life of the community. Though this contained many difficulties and at times could be divisive for the community, Blessed John Paul reiterated the obligation that the Christian had to build a world that does not separate charity from justice.

In order to achieve their task directed to the Christian animation of the temporal order, in the sense of serving persons and society, the lay faithful *are never to relinquish their part in "public life,"* that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good*.¹⁴³

The second aspect of life that needed special attention from lay people was an area that many in the Church run away from and have tried to categorize as a political problem, as something that deserves a response from others: *Human Rights*. On this subject, Blessed John Paul clearly stated that this is a responsibility that the lay faithful must respond to if they were to bear fruit as laborers in the Lord's vineyard.

To rediscover and make others rediscover the inviolable dignity of every human person makes up an essential task, in a certain sense, the central and unifying task of the service which the Church and the lay faithful in her are called to render to the human family.¹⁴⁴

After having watched others suffer in Poland during the Second World War and having been a victim of Communism, Blessed John Paul insisted that "Every violation of the

¹⁴³Ibid., no. 42, p. 105. Italics in the original.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., no. 37, p. 91.

personal dignity of the human being cries out in vengeance to God and is an offense against the Creator of the individual.”¹⁴⁵

Catholic Social Teaching was highlighted as the light for the lay faithful as they endeavor to respond prophetically in their service of the total dignity of the person; and it was this wisdom and insight which would provide the laity with the strength to discern how to create a more just society and world.¹⁴⁶

The commitment of the lay faithful to participate in the prophetic mission of Christ was a reminder to all the Church about the responsibility that she has in front of all those who suffer injustice and in front of all the world community. If lay people felt that too great a burden was being placed on them, Blessed John Paul responded that “Their (lay faithful) responsibility, in particular, is to testify how the Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response—consciously perceived and stated by all in varying degrees—to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society.”¹⁴⁷

To enable the laity to fulfill their responsibilities in this New Evangelization, Blessed John Paul reminds all that the lay faithful must daily discern what God is asking of them and be willing to respond to that call because it is God who calls and sends the lay faithful forth as a laborer in his vineyard.

To be able to discover the actual will of the Lord in our lives always involves the following: a receptive listening to the Word of God and the Church, fervent and

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 92.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., no. 30, p. 75. The American bishops in their document, Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Changes and Directions, admit that the teaching of Catholic Social Teaching in the United States has not been successful. Indirectly, they say that their Social Teaching ministry has been flawed while in Christifideles Laici. Pope John Paul II tells us that the basis of the social commitment of the lay faithful is dependent on the light which comes from Catholic Social Teaching. The call for the New Evangelization by John Paul II demands an urgent change in the way the bishops themselves exercise their social teaching ministry. Sadly one must observe that it is difficult to bear fruit in the Lord’s vineyard if the light provided by the Lord, Catholic Social Teaching, is not shared efficiently or efficaciously with his laborers, the lay faithful.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., no. 34, p. 84.

constant prayer, recourse to a wise and loving spiritual guide, and a faithful discernment of the gifts and talents given by God, as well as the diverse social and historic situations in which one lives.¹⁴⁸

Forcefully, Blessed John Paul reminded the Church that she herself must change her own pastoral patterns and customs so that the laity can become more generous, prophetic workers in the vineyard of the world. Bishops and priests were thus told that more was expected from them by way of leadership as the laity was called to transform the world.

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's decree, Ad Gentes: On the Church's Missionary Activity and the 15th anniversary of Pope Paul VI's the Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Nuntiandi, Blessed John Paul II called the Church, confidently and generously, to renew its commitment and responsibility for the evangelization of the world. His eighth encyclical, Redemptoris Missio, was an urgent call to every sector in the Church to renew their enthusiasm and commitment to continue the redeeming mission of the Lord Jesus in the world.

IV. Redemptoris Missio: The Mission of the Redeemer

A. Evangelization Has Just Begun

In his "apostolic journeys" throughout the world, Blessed John Paul II came into contact with populations of the world that no Pope or world leader had ever been able to meet. He developed deeper insights into the pastoral situation of the Church and the needs of the people of the world. In Redemptoris Missio, he loudly proclaimed to all members of the Church that:

The mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion. As the second Millennium after Christ's coming draws to an end, an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves, wholeheartedly to its service.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸Ibid., no. 58, p. 149.

¹⁴⁹Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's

The presumption of some was that much of the mission work had been accomplished as the Church seemed to be present everywhere with hospitals, schools, development programs and relief work. Others thought that the mission *ad gentes* was no longer needed but what Blessed John Paul II saw was the decline of interest and commitment to the mission *ad gentes*. At the beginning of Redemptoris Missio, Blessed John Paul said that this mission was only just beginning and that there was still much to do.

B. The Urgency of Missionary Activity

While the population of the world was increasing, the percentage of the world's Catholics was decreasing, and Blessed John Paul cried out to the Church in the words of St. Paul: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" Blessed John Paul called the Church to listen to the signs of the times and be inspired by the cry of the Gospel and renew its own heart, and reach out to the world with the message of Christ the Lord. From the very beginning of this encyclical, there was a call to conversion of the Church's pastoral life and its vision. Blessed John Paul looked at the world and was convinced more than ever of the urgency of the missionary activity.

there is an undeniable negative tendency (in the Church), and the present Document is meant to help overcome it. Missionary activity specifically directed "to the nations" (*ad gentes*) appears to be waning. . . . For in the Church's history, missionary drive has always been a sign of vitality, just as its lessening is a sign of a crisis of faith.¹⁵⁰

A great part of the Church seemed complacent, it appeared to have forgotten the riches that it had been given was for the good of the world. It had been given the message of peace, Christ crucified for the life of the world: "the Church believes that

Missionary Mandate (Washington, DC: USCCB, December 7, 1990) , no. 1, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., no. 2, p. 5.

God has established Christ as the one mediator and that she herself has been established as the universal sacrament of salvation.”¹⁵¹

C. The Church Must Be the Universal Instrument of Salvation

If peace was to exist in the world, then the universal instrument, the universal sacrament of this blessing must be more generous and courageous in its missionary activity. Blessed John Paul reminded the Church that: “The first beneficiary of salvation is the Church. Christ won the Church for himself at the price of his own blood and made the Church his co-worker in the salvation of the world.”¹⁵²

Sadly, it must be admitted that the Church has not shared this gift selflessly with the world. With great hope Blessed John Paul invited: “the Church to renew her missionary commitment. The present Document has as its goal an interior renewal of faith and Christian life.”¹⁵³

D. Church Renewal: A Necessity

Renewal was not a program just for the world. The conversion that Blessed John XXIII called the Church to, as Vatican II began, was now presented again as a necessity for the modern Church, indicating that what occurred at the Council was not lasting.

Blessed John Paul reminded the Church that renewal was needed especially in the Church because only the Church can offer the world the gift of peace that Christ came to bring the world.

The urgency of missionary evangelization is the fact that it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world, a world which has experienced marvelous achievements but which seems to have lost its sense of ultimate realities and of existence itself.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹Ibid., no. 9, p. 17.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Ibid., no. 2, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 6.

By affirming the need for the mission to all nations, *ad gentes*, Blessed John Paul provided missionaries with a clear basis for their vocation and work and encouraged them to go forth in hope to face the challenges that await them while he asked the whole Church to renew their baptismal commitment to serve the Lord in the most needy of their sisters and brothers.

E. Sign of Faith—Missionary Activity

Through his missionary journeys, Blessed John Paul became more convinced of the need of the missionary activity of the Church. He saw faith as the center of mission.

Mission is an issue of faith, an accurate indicator of our faith in Christ and his love for us . . . ¹⁵⁵ We say with Paul, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith” (Rom 1:16). Christian martyrs of all times—including our own—have given and continue to give their lives in order to bear witness to this faith, in the conviction that every human being needs Jesus Christ, who has conquered sin and death and reconciled mankind to God.¹⁵⁶

The loss of a historical perspective in Church life, the lack of continuity in her historical tradition, coupled with a lack of generosity by all in her pastoral activities and fear of suffering, perhaps even martyrdom, have adversely affected the Mission of the Church, *ad gentes*.

Blessed John Paul reminded the Church that when she encouraged missionary activity her faith was renewed and her Christian identity revitalized: “missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. *Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!*”¹⁵⁷ As a realist but also as a man of hope, Blessed John Paul was aware of the insurmountable challenges

¹⁵⁵Ibid., no. 11, p. 21. (Italics in the original).

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., no. 2, p. 6. (Italics in the original).

that face the Church, but he saw the world's needs being fulfilled only with the presentation of Christ by his Church.

F. The Holy Spirit: The Principal Agent of Mission

Blessed John Paul reminded everyone that the Holy Spirit was the principal agent of the Church's mission, "*ad gentes*". In the missionary mandate "there is a universal dimension of the task entrusted to the Apostles, who are sent to all nations" (Mt 28:19); the Church, all of its members, are called today to participate in this universal mission to all people. Just as the Apostles were given the assurance "by the Lord that they would not be alone in this task, but will receive the strength and the means necessary to carry out their mission."¹⁵⁸

In the same way, the Church today was promised that she would be accompanied by the Holy Spirit in her mission. Reading the Acts of the Apostles through the eyes of faith, Blessed John Paul emphasized:

that at the beginning of the Church the mission *ad gentes*, while it has missionaries dedicated "for life" by a special vocation, was in fact considered the normal outcome of Christian living, to which every believer was committed through the witness of personal conduct and through explicit proclamation whenever possible.¹⁵⁹

For the last few centuries, in the Catholic Church, missionary activity *ad gentes* had been reserved for missionary religious communities, but now using the Scriptures as a guide Blessed John Paul presented the Church with the biblical reality of mission. All, the lay faithful as well as bishops, priests, and religious were called to evangelize *ad gentes*. No one was exempt from mission. This was a biblical interpretation of the significance of

¹⁵⁸Ibid. no. 23, p. 39.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., no. 27, pp. 45-46.

the baptismal commitment for a Christian as well as a radical interpretation of what priestly ministry is called to be.

G. The Laity: Missionaries by Baptism

In his travels, Blessed John Paul saw that “the commitment of the laity to the work of evangelization was changing ecclesial life”, and he called the Church, once again, to “a new awareness that missionary activity is a matter for all Christians, for all dioceses and parishes, Church institutions and associations.”¹⁶⁰ As the apostolic (missionary) activity in the early Church was the responsibility of all the disciples of Jesus so today the missionary (apostolic) activity of the Church was the responsibility of all the baptized disciples of Jesus.

All the Evangelists when they describe the Risen Christ’s meeting with his Apostles, conclude with the “missionary mandate”: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, . . . and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:18-20; cf. Mk 16:15-18; Lk 24:46-49; Jn 20:21-23). This is a *sending forth in the Spirit*, as is clearly apparent in the Gospel of John: Christ sends his own into the world, just as the Father has sent him, and to this end he gives them the Spirit.¹⁶¹

The “missionary mandate” has a universal dimension that is part of the task entrusted to the Apostles, the disciples, and the baptized. They are sent to “all nations” (Mt 28:19); “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). There is also an assurance given to the Apostles, the disciples, and the baptized that the Holy Spirit would be with them always so that they would have the strength, the wisdom to carry out that mission. All are called to believe in the power of God’s presence in them and in the transforming power of the Gospel.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., no. 2, p. 4

¹⁶¹Ibid., no. 22, p. 38.

Recalling Papal teaching about the mission commitment of the laity, Blessed John Paul wrote:

Recent Popes have stressed the importance of the role of the laity in missionary activity. In the Exhortation Christifideles Laici, I spoke explicitly of the Church's "permanent mission of bringing the Gospel to the multitudes—the millions and millions of men and women—who as yet do not know Christ the Redeemer of humanity"¹⁶², and of the responsibility of the lay faithful in this regard. The mission *ad gentes* is incumbent upon the entire People of God.¹⁶³

Calling lay people again to fulfill their baptismal commitment *ad gentes* Blessed John Paul asked the Diocesan Church to restructure itself, change its own pastoral priorities so that as a local Church it could fulfill its own mandate to preach to the ends of the earth.¹⁶⁴

H. Diocesan Priests Are Called to Go "Ad Gentes"

The revelation that diocesan Priests were ordained to fulfill the mission of the Church and not just that of their Diocesan Bishops was found in the teaching of Vatican II.¹⁶⁵ Knowing the needs of the Universal Church and basing his reflections on Vatican II, Blessed John Paul reminded both bishops and priests that the Sacrament of Orders entailed:

The spiritual gift that priests have received in ordination prepares them, not for any narrow and limited mission, *but for the most universal and all-embracing mission of salvation* 'to the end of the earth.' For every priestly ministry shares in the universal scope of the mission that Christ entrusted to his Apostles." For this

¹⁶²Cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter Evangelii Praecones and Encyclical letter Fidei Donum; John XXIII, Encyclical Letter Principes Pastorum; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi.

¹⁶³Redemptoris Missio, no. 71, p. 119.

¹⁶⁴The Neo-Catechumenate Movement sends lay couples all over the world to bear witness to their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior of the world. Presently in the city of Shenyang, China, there are three couples with their families, two from Italy and one from Spain, living as lay missionaries. Since they are not allowed to evangelize, they look for employment as teachers or entrepreneurs so that they can support themselves while they bear witness through their family life to Jesus their Lord. Those who cannot support themselves are maintained financially and their medical needs covered by their parish community in their home diocese.

¹⁶⁵Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum Ordinis, 10: cf. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church Ad Gentes, 39.

reason, the formation of candidates to the priesthood must aim at giving them “*the true Catholic spirit*,” whereby they will learn to transcend the bounds of their own diocese, country or rite, and come to the aid of the whole Church, in readiness to preach the Gospel anywhere. All priests must have the mind and heart of missionaries—open to the needs of the Church and the world, with concern for those farthest away, and especially for the non-Christian groups in their own area.¹⁶⁶

In a subtle way, Blessed John Paul challenged both bishops and priests to reform their own lives, change their pastoral priorities, and be more evangelical in the way that they responded to the needs of the Universal Church.¹⁶⁷ He asked that they be more generous so that the Church would be more efficacious with the Mission that she had received from the Lord.¹⁶⁸

I. Inspiration of Blessed John Paul II and a New Evangelization

During his Pontificate (1978—2005), Blessed John Paul II visited 129 countries during his 104 foreign trips. He travelled over 725,000 miles and met people on every continent in the world. His pilgrimages to every corner of the earth earned him the name “the Pilgrim Pope”; and while he drew large crowds wherever he went, he was seen as the Pope of all people, a man alive with hope. He inspired believers to believe while he had the strength and warmth, the personal charisma, to touch the hearts of many who did not profess Christian belief. While his journeys were primarily aimed at strengthening national and local churches and bringing people together as the people of God, he always

¹⁶⁶Redemptoris Missio, no. 67, p. 114.

¹⁶⁷After the publication of this encyclical, Pope John Paul II established in Rome “The Committee for the Redistribution of the Clergy in the World”. On the first anniversary of this committee, the Holy Father visited them and told them that he was deeply pained to see how few bishops and priests had responded to his call for help in the Mission *Ad Gentes*.

¹⁶⁸Recently released statistics indicate that the total US Catholic population with 67.53 million people has a laity to priest ratio of 1,495. These same statistics also indicate that the US is importing foreign priests from countries where the Catholic to priest ratios are significantly higher: Africa 4,857 to 1; Central America 6,894 to 1; South America 7,135 to 1; and Asia 2,300 to 1. The CARA Report, vol.16, no. 1, Summer 2010 and vol. 14, no. 1, Summer 2010. This data shows a trend in a direction completely different from the Holy Father’s orientation towards the mission commitment of the Church. The US Church is fulfilling its own needs by taking priests from the poor churches of the third world instead of fulfilling John Paul’s call for a mission *ad gentes*.

sought to bring a message of peace to the world. His goodness and vitality inspired many young people, showed the world how to love children, charmed children, and constantly sought to console the sick on every one of his trips.

In his pilgrimages Blessed John Paul expressed a great affection for the laity and encouraged them to assume their responsibility for the growth of the Church and the evangelization of the world. His Apostolic Exhortation, Christifidelis Laici: On the Vocation and Mission of the Laity, reoriented the pastoral mission of the Church by emphasizing to all members of the Church the essential nature and mission of the laity in the Church and the world. No longer was the evangelization of the world to be the domain of bishops or priests or religious. His reflection on the social mission of the laity and their responsibility for the political life of the world was a manifestation of the prophetic nature, not only of his teaching, but also of the mission of the laity in the evangelization of the world today. His desire that lay people receive the necessary formation to assume their mission has still not yet been realized nor has the necessary structures been put in the Church to facilitate such a possibility.

Blessed John Paul's travels revealed to him the increased challenges that the Church faced and the difficulties that it experienced in its attempts to fulfill the evangelical mission that Jesus had given his Church. In his Apostolic Exhortation, Redemptoris Missio: The Mission of the Redeemer, Blessed John Paul reminded the bishops of the world that they shared, with him, the responsibility for the evangelization of the world, a fact ignored by the world's episcopacy even to the present day. He reminded the clergy worldwide that they were ordained to fulfill the mission of the (Universal) Church and not just the mission of the local Church. This was an urgent

need. Blessed John Paul called all priests to volunteer generously whenever necessary to that the needs and mission of the Church could be served.

A year after Redemptoris Missio was published, Blessed John Paul II himself expressed his dismay that his call for a redistribution of the clergy of the world had not been heeded by either the bishops or priests. His emphasis on the need of the mission ad gentes was seen as an affirmation of the evangelical ministry in the Church. His continual call for a new evangelization in the Church and in countries of ancient Christian tradition was a reminder of the need for personal renewal in the Church and of the Church. He remained a person of hope in front of the challenges that he faced on a daily basis.

Chapter Seven

POPE BENEDICT XVI AND A NEW EVANGELIZATION

Rabbi Yoshua ben Levi came upon Elijah the prophet while he was standing at the entrance of a cave.

He asked Elijah, "When will the Messiah come?" Elijah replied, "Go and ask him yourself."

"Where is he?" "Sitting at the gates of the city." "How shall I know him?"

"He is sitting among the poor covered with wounds.

The others unbind all their wounds at the same time and then bind them up again.

But he unbinds one at a time and binds it up again, saying to himself,

'Perhaps I shall be needed: if so I must always be ready so as not to delay for a moment.'"¹⁶⁹

The Pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI has been filled with various challenges which have demonstrated human and structural failures in both the secular and ecclesial domains. These challenges include the ever-increasing presence of wars throughout the world; the world financial crisis which has harmed many people and has blinded the world to the needs of the poor; the growth of religiously inspired violence and the increasing difficulty of inter-religious dialogue especially with, and among, the various branches of the Muslim community. The clergy sex abuse scandal and the public relations failures that followed it have weakened the moral authority of the Catholic Church and wounded the spirit of many church-going Catholics in the West. At the same time, it has provided an obvious opportunity for those who wish to undermine the moral role of the Church and its service to society. All of these things reflect a world that is suffering, but looking for good news about life and the future of its existence.

Pope Benedict XVI, a respected theologian and teacher, who found himself more comfortable in the halls of academia than in front of thousands of people, has surprised many with his pastoral sensitivity and his desire to continue the call for a new evangelization inspired by Pope Paul VI and initiated by his close friend and mentor Blessed John Paul II. His first memorable intervention in the field of evangelization was

¹⁶⁹Henri J. M. Nouwen, The Wounded Healer (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1972), 83-84. (An old legend from the Talmud.)

a talk given to a world gathering of catechists and religion teachers in Rome on December 10, 2000, while he was still serving as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).¹⁷⁰ In the talk, Cardinal Ratzinger showed a deep sensitivity to the challenges facing the Church, and he emphasized the need for an evangelization which would respond to the genuine needs of the world. His observations highlighted a spirituality which could serve as the basis for a new evangelization.

I. A New Evangelization—Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

Cardinal Ratzinger began his presentation by underlining the fact that “human life cannot be realized by itself.” For him, life was an open question, an incomplete project. Even though every human being desired happiness he or she did not know what road to choose to achieve this goal. For the Cardinal,

to evangelize means: to show this path—to teach the art of living. At the beginning of His public life Jesus says: I have come to evangelize the poor (Lk 4:18); this means: I have the response to your fundamental question; I will show you the path of life, the path towards happiness—rather: I am that path.¹⁷¹

For Ratzinger, the deepest poverty in the world was the inability to experience joy, something which was so widespread that it affected both the materially poor and the rich of our societies.

The inability of joy presupposes and produces the inability to love, produces jealousy, avarice—all defects that devastate the life of individuals and of the world. This is why we are in need of a new evangelization.¹⁷²

II. Structure and Method in a New Evangelization

A. Structure

Noting that the Church has always evangelized without interruption, Cardinal

¹⁷⁰Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, The New Evangelization (Rome, December 10, 2000), http://www.christlife.org/evangelization/articles/C_nevangelratzinger.html

¹⁷¹Ibid., 1.

¹⁷²Ibid.

Ratzinger observed that the Church had not always been successful in its evangelical mission:

We can see a progressive process of de-Christianization (in the world) and a loss of essential human values, which is worrisome. A large part of today's humanity does not find the gospel in the permanent evangelization of the Church.¹⁷³

For this reason, the Church was searching for a new evangelization which would be heard by the world. The realization of this new pastoral vision would not come overnight.

Success and great numbers of converts would not come immediately. The temptation of impatience must be resisted because God's way was revealed to us in the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mk 4:31-32).

The kingdom of God always starts anew under this sign. New evangelization cannot mean: immediately attracting the large masses that have distanced themselves from the Church by using new and more refined methods. New evangelization means . . . to dare, once again and with the humility of the small grain, to leave up to God the when and how it will grow (Mk 4:26-29). Large things always begin from the small seed and the mass movements are always ephemeral.¹⁷⁴

Cardinal Ratzinger wove into this parable the spirituality of redemption when he said that "we must accept the mystery that the Church is at the same time a large tree and a very small grain. In the history of salvation it is always Good Friday and Easter Sunday at the same time."¹⁷⁵ Success was not one of the names of God.

B. Method

As the Church struggled to find a more efficient and effective method for a New Evangelization, she must always look to see how the Lord's voice can be made more accessible and comprehensible. The aim should not be to increase the power or the growth of Church institutions but rather how could the Church serve the good of

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 2.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

humanity and make room for the One who was life. All methods, pastoral, administrative, organizational must be modeled on the Lord Himself.

Jesus preached by day, by night He prayed. . . . With these few words, he wished to say: Jesus had to acquire the disciples from God. The same is always true. We ourselves cannot gather men. We must acquire them by God for God. All methods are empty without the foundation of prayer. The word of the announcement must always be drenched in an intense life of prayer.¹⁷⁶

To clarify how one was to respond to the challenges of modernity, Cardinal Ratzinger introduced the “necessity of sacrifice” into the methodology to be used to develop a new evangelization. Jesus not only preached by day and prayed by night, but

His entire life was . . . a path towards the cross, ascension towards Jerusalem. Jesus did not redeem the world with beautiful words, but with His suffering and His death. His passion is the inexhaustible source of life for the world; the passion gives power to His words.¹⁷⁷

Triumph does not come from an expression of power nor does modern methodology guarantee success. All pastoral activity must be penetrated by the living cross of Christ without which failure was assured.

III. The Contents Essential for a New Evangelization

A. Conversion

As the planning for a new evangelization began, one had to keep in mind the inseparability of the Old and New Testaments.

The fundamental content of the Old Testament is summarized in the message by John the Baptist: Convert! (Mk 1:4). There is no access to Jesus without the Baptist; there is no possibility of reaching Jesus without answering the call of the precursor, rather: Jesus took up the message of John in the synthesis of His own preaching: Convert! (Mk 1:15).¹⁷⁸

To clarify this point, Cardinal Ratzinger added:

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

to convert means: not to live as all the others live . . . ; begin to see one's life through the eyes of God; thereby looking for the good, even if uncomfortable; not aiming at the judgment of the majority, of men, but on the justice of God.¹⁷⁹

Conversion to Christ meant that one must be humble, one must have the willingness to entrust “oneself to the love of the other, a love that becomes the measure and the criteria of my own life.”¹⁸⁰

Although conversion was a very personal act, it also had a social aspect. As personal as this new response to Christ was and as affirming as it was in every aspect of life so also was its social effect on the life of the world.

in conversion a new “We”, of the common path of God, must be achieved. In proclaiming conversion we must also offer a community of life, a common space for the new style of life. We cannot evangelize with words alone; the Gospel creates life, creates communities of progress; a merely individual conversion has no consistency.¹⁸¹

B. The Kingdom of God

In the Gospel of St. Matthew we were told that “Jesus began to preach and say ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Mt 4:17). As Jesus began his public ministry he called the people to conversion in order that they could enter the kingdom of God. For Jesus,

the Kingdom of God is not a thing, a social or political structure, a utopia. The Kingdom of God is God. Kingdom of God means: God exists. God is alive. God is present and acts in the world, in our—in my life. . . . Therefore, evangelization must, first of all, speak about God, proclaim the only true God: the Creator—the Sanctifier—the Judge.¹⁸²

To emphasize how one makes present the experience of the kingdom, the presence of God, Cardinal Ratzinger explained:

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²Ibid., 4.

God cannot be made known with words alone. One does not really know a person if one knows about this person second handedly. To proclaim God is to introduce to the relation with God: to teach how to pray. Prayer is faith in action. And only by experiencing life with God does the evidence of His existence appear.¹⁸³

Thus the Cardinal stressed the importance of personal testimony as one proclaimed the kingdom of God. The personal proclamation was ratified by the life of the one who proclaimed the kingdom. One could enter into communion with others only because one was in communion with God.

Speaking about God and speaking with God must always go together. The proclamation of God is the guide to communion with God in fraternal communion, founded and vivified by Christ.¹⁸⁴

In one's actions and in the proclamation of the kingdom, it was Christ who must become transparent in the evangelizing "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

C. Jesus Christ

In the proclamation about the Saviour, Cardinal Ratzinger noted that there are two important aspects. The first being that Jesus offered himself as the path of life in all things; we are called to attain union with God by being assimilated into Christ, and it was only through the sacramental life that communion with Christ can be achieved. The second aspect of the proclamation is the paschal mystery, the Cross and the Resurrection of our Lord. Cardinal Ratzinger noted that there was a great temptation to diminish Jesus Christ the Son of God into a merely historical Jesus and in the proclamation one must emphasize clearly both the divine person of Jesus who died for the salvation of all people.

The Sequela of Christ is participation in the cross, uniting oneself to His love, to the transformation of our life, which becomes the birth of the new man, created according to God (cf. Eph 4:24). Whoever omits the cross, omits the essence of Christianity (cf. 1 Cor 2:2).¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 5.

D. Eternal Life

Cardinal Ratzinger's concept of justice was intimately connected to the last central element of true evangelization, eternal life. For him

the proclamation of the Kingdom of God is the proclamation of the God present, the God that knows us, listens to us; the God that enters into history to do justice. Therefore, this preaching is also the proclamation of justice, the proclamation of our responsibility. Man cannot do or avoid doing what he wants to. He will be judged. He must account for things.¹⁸⁶

Those who suffered the injustices of the world, those who looked for a life where dignity and equality were reflected in their daily lives, those who were spoken about in the Beatitudes, these are the ones who were protected by the proclamation of justice for God; is the judge. Cardinal Ratzinger insisted that:

Only by believing in the just judgment of God, only by hungering and thirsting for justice (cf Mt 5:6) will we open up our hearts, our life to divine mercy . . . if the measure of our life is eternity, then also this life of ours on earth is great and its value immense. God is not the competitor in our life, but the guarantor of our greatness.¹⁸⁷

In all of his ministry, either as a teacher or Bishop, Pope Benedict was dedicated to the study of the word of God. Though the world had the tendency to focus only on his work as a theologian, the Holy Father saw that his search for understanding and his ministry were centered on the strength and light that he received from the Word of God. His historical understanding of the centrality of the Word of God in the history of salvation and the life of the Church was deepened by his own personal experience of the Word of God. The experience of XII Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops: The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church provided him with the opportunity to center

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 5, 6.

all of the ministry of the Church in the Word of God. No evangelical mission was possible without the life that only the Word of God could provide.

IV. Verbum Domini: The Word of God (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation)

The Apostolic Exhortation, Verbum Domini (VD), was made public on November 11, 2010. The exhortation, “The Word of the Lord,” was the result of the XII Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops: The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, (Sacred Scripture in the Life and Pastoral Mission of the Church), which was held at the Vatican from October 5 to 26, 2008.¹⁸⁸ At the end of the assembly, the Synod Fathers asked Pope Benedict to “provide a document on the mystery of the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church, especially in light of the Year dedicated to St. Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles, the two thousandth anniversary of his birth.”¹⁸⁹

A. Fundamentals for Church Renewal

Scripture is the Center of the Life and Ministry of the Church

In his introduction to Verbum Domini, Pope Benedict states:

I wish to point out certain fundamental approaches to a rediscovery of God’s word in the life of the Church as a well-spring of constant renewal. At the same time I express my hope that the word will be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity.¹⁹⁰

After reminding all Catholics that Scripture must be the center of the pastoral ministry and life of the Church today, Pope Benedict recalled the experience that was lived in the Synod, and he encouraged:

¹⁸⁸For the pre-Synod work all Synod fathers were sent a published document (the *Lineamenta*) to help them focus on the topic that would be discussed at the Synod. Their responses to this text were summarized and a working document for the Synod was developed based on these suggestions (the *Instrumentum Laboris*). At the conclusion of the Synod, the Synod Fathers gave the Holy Father, fifty-five suggestions (propositions) to help him develop his reflections, his teaching.

¹⁸⁹Intervention of Mons. Nikola Eterovic, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, November 11, 2010, 1, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents.

¹⁹⁰Pope Benedict XV, Verbum Domini (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, September 30, 2010), no. 1, p. 4.

All the faithful to renew their personal and communal encounter with Christ, the word of life made visible, and to become his heralds, so that the gift of divine life—communion—can spread ever more fully throughout the world . . . which often feels that God is superfluous or extraneous, we confess with Peter that he alone has “the words of eternal life.” (Jn 6:68)¹⁹¹

To emphasize the relationship between the Word of God and eternal life, Pope Benedict stressed that:

The Church is built upon the word of God; she is born from and lives by that word. Throughout its history, the People of God has always found strength in the word of God, and today too the ecclesial community grows by hearing, celebrating and studying that word.¹⁹²

The Word of God, the Scriptures, was now placed in the historical center of Church life and its Mission. The Church was centered once again in the experience of God as lived through his people in Scripture. Church life and growth today, both internally and worldwide, must find its focus, its vision, its renewal and strength in God’s Word. Historically, this was not always the case on the American continent.¹⁹³

B. St. Paul is the Model for All Evangelizers

The Synod’s reflection was accompanied by the testimony of the Apostle Paul, whose life was marked by his zeal for the spread of God’s word.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹Ibid., no. 2, p. 5.

¹⁹²Ibid., no. 3, p. 6.

¹⁹³Christianity reached America at the time of the Reformation, when the Bible lost its privileged place in the Catholic Church and when the majority of God’s people, especially the laity, were deprived of a direct access to Sacred Scripture. The next four centuries have been called the time of Biblical hibernation. The pastoral life of the Church in Latin America was changed with the inspiration of the Second Vatican Council. Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodriguez Maradiaga, SDB, Intervention at the XII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, October 9, 2008.

¹⁹⁴“Paul came from Tarsus, ‘no mean city’ as he called it. His Hebrew name was Saul. He was a member of what we would call today a ‘minority group,’ a member of one of the small Jewish communities of the diaspora who had established themselves in cities around the empire as teachers, merchants, bankers and brokers, and what we would call today ‘consultants,’ knowledgeable and experienced people who could advise others about foreign trade. Like others of his time, he took a Roman name, Paul, to use in Roman cities and roman situations; he had his Hebrew name, Saul, for use among his own people. . . . His experience as a Jew in the gentile world was to be a major factor in his apostolate. He knew Greek, he had lived in a Gentile city, he was familiar with Gentile ways. Thus, when Gentiles began to become Christians, the apostles called on him to do what they could not do—bring the good news of Jesus in a

Pope Benedict reminded Catholics that:

Whenever we reflect on the word of God in the life and mission of the Church, we cannot but think of Saint Paul and his life spent in spreading the message of salvation in Christ to all peoples.”¹⁹⁵

St. Paul becomes the model for the Church who desired to evangelize the modern world and that the work of the Synod must have:

a real effect on the life of the Church: on our personal relationship with the sacred Scriptures, on their interpretation in the liturgy and catechesis, and in scientific research, so that the Bible may not be simply a word from the past, but a living and timely word.¹⁹⁶

Pope Benedict developed Verbum Domini by making constant reference to the Prologue of John’s Gospel (Jn 1:1-18), which makes known “to us the basis of our life: the Word, who from the beginning is with God, who became flesh and who made his dwelling among us (cf. Jn 1:14)”

V. The Purpose of Verbum Domini

A. Be Knowledgeable about the Synod of Bishops

At the very beginning of this apostolic exhortation, Pope Benedict expressed his desire “to make known to the whole people of God the rich fruits which emerged from the synodal sessions and the recommendations which resulted from our common endeavor.”¹⁹⁷ It was our Holy Father’s desire to *communicate the results of the Synod to the world.*

B. The Word of God Is the Source for Church Renewal

Just as the Constitution Dei Verbum of the Second Vatican Council reminded the

language and a style that would make sense to the Gentile world.” Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S.J., Paul: Saint of the Inner City (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990), 2, 3.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., no. 4, p. 10.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., no. 5, p. 10.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., no. 1, p. 3.

Church of the importance of the Scriptures in its daily life and for the life of the world, Pope Benedict reaffirmed *the importance of the Word of God as the source of daily renewal in the life of the Church*. “I wish to point out certain fundamental approaches for a rediscovery of God's word in the life of the Church as well as a well-spring of constant renewal.”¹⁹⁸

C. The Word of God is the Basis of Every Ecclesial Activity

In a world of activity where it seemed that different philosophies and ideologies were motivating the personal, social, and political lives of peoples and nations, Pope Benedict expressed his hope “that *the Word will be evermore fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity*.”¹⁹⁹ Catholics were reminded that the Word of God should be the center of all of their lives and the mission of the Church.

D. The Church Needs a Vibrant Biblical Apostolate

To assure that the Word of God “be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity”²⁰⁰ Pope Benedict called for a *Biblical Apostolate* that would touch the lives of all believers. He called for an

increased emphasis on the Bible in the Church's pastoral activity, all Christians, and catechists in particular, need to receive suitable training. Attention needs to be paid to the *biblical apostolate* . . . centres of formation should be established where laity and missionaries can be trained to understand, live and proclaim the word of God.²⁰¹

The Pastoral Biblical Apostolate, which was synonymous with the Third World and the Missions, was now called to be a central part of the life of the Universal Church.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., no. 1, p. 4.

¹⁹⁹Ibid.

²⁰⁰Ibid.

²⁰¹Ibid., no. 75, pp. 126-127.

E. All Christians Must Bear Witness to the Word of God

Pope Benedict affirmed that all Christians were called to *bear witness to the Word of God*, Christ himself, by the way that they live the Word of God in their daily lives.

The mystery of Pentecost is taking place in God's Church. The spirit of the Lord continues to pour out his gifts upon the Church to guide us into all truth, to show us the meaning of the Scriptures and to make us credible heralds of the word of salvation before the world.²⁰²

F. A Deeper Understanding of the Bible Requires a Collaborative Effort

To achieve a deeper understanding of the Word of God Pope Benedict reminded all that "The Holy Spirit who gives life to the Church, enables us to interpret the Scriptures authoritatively. The Bible is the Church's book, and its essential place in the Church's life gives rise to its genuine interpretation."²⁰³ Thus Pope Benedict called for a more *collaborative working relationship* between scriptural exegetes, theologians, pastors, and the laity.

Since sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit through whom it is written "exegetes, theologians and the whole people of God must approach it as what it really is, the Word of God conveyed as through human words. (cf. 1 Th 2:13)²⁰⁴

Pope Benedict said that "We need to acknowledge the benefits that the historical-critical exegesis and other recently developed methods of textual analysis have brought to the Church."²⁰⁵ The scientific study of the Bible has helped us to attain a deeper understanding of the Bible, and the Pope reminded biblical scholars that "In their work of interpretation, Catholic exegetes must never forget that what they are interpreting is the

²⁰²Ibid., no. 123, p. 191.

²⁰³Ibid., no. 29, p. 53.

²⁰⁴Ibid.

²⁰⁵Ibid., no. 32, p. 57

word of God. . . . They arrive at the true goal of their work only when they have explained the meaning of the biblical text as God's word for today."²⁰⁶

Scripture scholars, theologians, and pastoral ministers are called to work and study the Scriptures in the context of a people of faith who strive to help people get a better understanding of what the word of God means for all today. In this way spiritual lives will be enriched and the dangers of a fundamentalist biblical interpretation of the bible will be avoided.

G. Scripture is the Heart of Christian Spirituality

In his desire to center the reading and study of sacred Scripture in the hearts of all, promote a change of heart, and create a constant desire for renewal, Pope Benedict reminded all that while Scripture was at the heart of all authentic Christian spirituality, *prayer must accompany all reading of sacred Scripture*. Citing the words of the Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum he said:

Let the faithful go gladly to the sacred text itself, whether in the sacred liturgy, which is full of the divine words, or in devout reading, or in such suitable exercises and various other helps which, with the approval and guidance of the pastors of the Church, are happily spreading everywhere in our day. Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture.²⁰⁷

He reminded Catholics of the patristic tradition which emphasized that prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture: "As Saint Augustine puts it: 'Your prayer is the word you speak to God. When you read the Bible, God speaks to you; when you pray, you speak to God.'"²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶Ibid., no. 33, pp. 59-60.

²⁰⁷Ibid., no. 86, p. 140.

²⁰⁸Ibid.

To help all people enrich their lives with the reading of sacred Scriptures so that they would call for personal renewal and be of service to the world in his name, Pope Benedict presented his understanding of the ancient *lectio divina* method (divine reading) for the reading and understanding of the Scriptures. He believed that this method was “Capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God’s word but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living word of God.”²⁰⁹

Pope Benedict next described in detail the method of *lectio divina*.

It opens with the reading of a text, which leads to a desire to understand its true content: *what does the biblical text say in itself?* . . . Next comes, meditation (*meditatio*), which asks: *what does the biblical text say to us?* . . . Following this comes prayer (*oratio*), which asks the question: *what do we say to the Lord in response to his word?* . . . Finally, *lectio divina* concludes with contemplation (*contemplatio*), during which we take up, as a gift from God, his own way of seeing and judging reality, and ask ourselves *what conversion of mind, heart and life is the Lord asking of us?* . . . Contemplation aims at creating within us a truly wise and discerning vision of reality, as God sees it, and at forming within us “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16). . . . We do well also to remember that the process of *lectio divina* is not concluded until it arrives at action (*actio*), which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity.²¹⁰

H. Personal Renewal Necessary for a New Church Missionary Effort

Both Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II implored and reminded all Catholics of the need to renew themselves so that they could be at the service of a new missionary season in the Church.

Our own time, then, must be increasingly marked by a new hearing of God’s word and a *new evangelization*. Recovering the centrality of the divine word in the Christian life leads us to appreciate anew the deepest meaning of the forceful appeal of Pope John Paul II: to pursue the *missio ad gentes* and vigorously to embark upon the new evangelization, especially in those nations where the Gospel has been forgotten or meets with indifference as a result of widespread secularism. May the Holy Spirit awaken a hunger and thirst for the word of God, and raise up zealous heralds and witnesses of the Gospel.²¹¹

²⁰⁹Ibid., no. 87, p. 143.

²¹⁰Ibid.

²¹¹Ibid., no. 122, p. 190.

With the example and teaching of his immediate predecessors, Pope Benedict called the Church today to *continue the Missio ad Gentes while undertaking a New Evangelization*.

Mindful that Blessed John Paul had travelled the world to inspire the Church to preach the Gospel and seeing that some of his writings had not yet borne the fruit that he had desired, Pope Benedict decided to establish a papal entity to be responsible for the promotion of a New Evangelization.

VI. The Pontifical Council for Promoting a New Evangelization

On June 28, 2010 in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, Pope Benedict XVI announced his decision to create a new pontifical council²¹² dedicated to a “renewed evangelization.” Seeing St. Paul as the apostle who was dedicated to preaching the Gospel to all people, the one concerned with reaching to the ends of the earth, Pope Benedict believes that he should be the model of how one should evangelize. Recalling that St. Paul introduced himself as an “apostle by God’s call, set apart for the service of the gospel” (cf Rom 1:1), Pope Benedict highlights the fact that “the whole of his life and his hard work for the Kingdom of God is entirely dedicated to the service of the Gospel.”²¹³

Recalling the life of Paul VI, who was inspired by St. Paul, Pope Benedict reminds us that in Evangelii Nuntiandi, the late Pontiff wrote:

There is no doubt that the effort to proclaim the Gospel to the people of today, who are buoyed up by hope but at the same time often oppressed by fear and distress, is a service rendered to the Christian community and also to the whole of humanity.²¹⁴

²¹²This would become the 12th council of the Roman Curia. There are also nine Vatican Congregations.

²¹³Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, June 28, 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2010_1.

²¹⁴Ibid., 1-2.

Referring to his predecessor, Blessed John Paul II, Pope Benedict emphasizes that he developed an engaging and heart-felt missionary outreach during his long Pontificate and

... represented the Church's missionary nature "in the flesh" with his Apostolic Journeys and with the insistence of his Magisterium on the urgent need for a "new evangelization": "new" not in its content but in its inner thrust, open to the grace of the Holy Spirit which constitutes the force of the new law of the Gospel that always renews the Church; "new" in ways that correspond with the power of the Holy Spirit and which are suited to the times and situations; "new" because of being necessary even in countries that have already received the proclamation of the Gospel.²¹⁵

It is a disconcerting characteristic of our modern world, that it is torn apart by religious fundamentalism, terrorism, a world-wide economic crisis, poverty and injustice. Looking at this picture of the world Pope Benedict reflects:

Even in the deserts of the secularized world, man's soul thirsts for God, for the living God. It was for this reason that John Paul II wrote: "The mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion", and he added: "an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service" (Encyclical Redemptoris Missio, no. 1). There are regions of the world that are still awaiting a first evangelization; others that have received it, but need a deeper intervention; yet others in which the Gospel put down roots a long time ago, giving rise to a true Christian tradition but in which, in recent centuries with complex dynamics the secularization process has produced a serious crisis of the meaning of the Christian faith and of belonging to the Church.

From this perspective, I have decided to create a new body, in the form of a "Pontifical Council", whose principal task will be to promote a renewed evangelization in the countries where the first proclamation of the faith has already resonated and where Churches with an ancient foundation exist but are experiencing the progressive secularization of society and a sort of "eclipse of the sense of God", which pose a challenge to finding appropriate to propose anew the perennial truth of Christ's Gospel.²¹⁶

VII. Motu Proprio Ubicumque et Semper: Everywhere and Always

On September 28, 2010 Pope Benedict XVI established the Pontifical Council for

²¹⁵Ibid., p. 2.

²¹⁶Ibid., 2 and 3.

Promoting a New Evangelization with the (Apostolic letter in the form of) Motu Proprio Ubicumque et Semper. Pope Benedict reminded the Church of its duty to proclaim always and everywhere the Gospel of Jesus Christ who had sent the Apostles to make disciples of all nations (cf Mt 28:19-20). Since the first Pentecost, when she received the Holy Spirit, the Church has preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people: “Hence the mission of evangelization, a continuation of the work desired by the Lord Jesus, is necessary for the Church: it cannot be overlooked; it is an expression of her very nature.”²¹⁷

In the course of history, Pope Benedict notes, the Church has had to adapt to the needs of every age and situation so that she might faithfully preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The social changes of the third millennium have profoundly altered the way we look at the world. The advances in science and technology along with the changes in the economic sphere and the global-scale migration of peoples have affected our ways of living and the way the world is governed. While some have benefitted from these changes, many have suffered; and in many places there has been a loss of the sense of the sacred, and the faith in a provident creator, God, has been lost.

Concerned with the meaning and value of human life and the Church’s vocation to be of service to the world, the Second Vatican Council chose, as a central topic, the question of the relationship of the Church to the modern world. Pope Benedict has pointed out that:

In view of this conciliar teaching, my Predecessors reflected further on the need to find adequate ways to help the people of our time to hear the living and eternal Word of the Lord.²¹⁸

²¹⁷Pope Benedict XVI, Ubicumque et Semper, September 21, 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_letters/documents.

²¹⁸Ibid., 2

This concern of the Church for the world in all its suffering and injustice means that she must also be prepared for the service that she is to offer in Jesus' name. Looking at these challenges and the reality of our world, Pope Benedict observed that:

With foresight, the Servant of God Paul VI noted that the task of evangelization, 'as a result of the frequent situations of dechristianization in our day, also proves equally necessary for innumerable people who have been baptized but who live quite outside Christian life, for simple people who have a certain faith but an imperfect knowledge of the foundations of that faith, for intellectuals who feel the need to know Jesus Christ in a light different from the instruction they received as children, and for many others.' (Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi, no. 52)²¹⁹

Then the Holy Father recalled that:

the Venerable Servant John Paul II made this urgent task a central point of his far-reaching Magisterial teaching, referring to it as the "new evangelization" It is enough to recall what was affirmed in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici

Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about what is needed is *to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself* present in these countries and nations.²²⁰

Inspired by the preoccupations and insights of his predecessors, Pope Benedict himself considered

it opportune to offer appropriate responses so that the entire Church, allowing herself to be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, may present herself to the contemporary world with a missionary impulse in order to promote the new evangelization.²²¹

Aware of the different situations that exist in all parts of the world, Pope Benedict is concerned that each local Church respond uniquely and faithfully to the challenges that they find in their region of the world. He is insistent that all remember:

²¹⁹Ibid.

²²⁰Ibid.

²²¹Ibid.

To proclaim fruitfully the Word of the Gospel one is first asked to have a profound experience of God. . . . Likewise at the root of all evangelization lies not a human plan of expansion, but rather the desire to share the inestimable gift that God has wished to give us, making us sharers in his own life.²²²

In light of these concerns, Pope Benedict established the Pontifical Council for

Promoting a New Evangelization to encourage reflection on the topics of a New Evangelization: identify, and promote ways and means to accomplish it through close collaboration with Bishop Conferences throughout the world; find new ways of communicating the Gospel through modern forms of social communication; and promote the use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church as an essential tool in the formation of Christians today.

VIII. Work of the Pontifical Commission

In March 2011, six months after the Pontifical Commission was established, Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella, the President of the Commission, reported that the Commission has discovered that “at least 20 different definitions of new evangelization” are being used in churches throughout the world. In looking at the Churches in the west, or the first and second world, where economic and scientific development has caused a crisis of faith, the Archbishop lamented a lack of learning about the faith in these countries or a lack of religious formation in the lives of lay people.

According to the Archbishop, the Commission has found a deep sense of religiosity or popular religion in many Churches throughout the world. However, these religious traditions do not find intellectual support in the formation of the people in their faith. This absence leads Catholics to leave their faith for groups where their emotional

²²²Ibid., 3.

needs are met or for groups that are more fundamentalist in their outlook. Because of this the Archbishop feels that a clearer definition of a new evangelization is essential.

In May 2011, Pope Benedict addressed the Council and said that for a long time he had seen the need to offer a concrete answer to the moment of crisis in Christian life which was verified in so many countries, above all in those of ancient Christian tradition.

The term “New Evangelization” speaks of the need for a renewed method of proclamation, especially for those who live in a context, such as the present one, in which the developments of secularization have left heavy traces even in countries with a Christian tradition. . . . To underscore that at this moment in the history of the Church she is called to carry out a New Evangelization, means intensifying missionary action to correspond fully with the Lord’s mandate. The Second Vatican Council reminded that “the groups among which the Church dwells are often radically changed, for one reason or other, so that an entirely new set of circumstances may arise” (Decree *Ad Gentes*, 6). With farsighted understanding, the Conciliar Fathers saw on the horizon the cultural change that today is easily verifiable. Precisely this changed situation, which has created an unexpected situation for believers, requires particular attention to the proclamation of the Gospel, to give the reason for one’s faith in situations that are different from the past.²²³

The Holy Father noted that in the past it was possible to discover a general Christian sense of life in the world but today, because of the fragmentation of life in our world, there is no longer a unified point of reference. Because of this:

To proclaim Jesus Christ the only Savior of the world seems more complex today than in the past; but our task remains the same as at the dawn of our history. The mission has not changed, just as the enthusiasm and the courage that moved the Apostles and the first disciples must not change. The Holy Spirit who pushed them to open the doors of the Cenacle, making them into evangelizers (cf. Acts 2:1-4), is the same Spirit that moves the Church today in a renewed proclamation of hope to the men of our time.²²⁴

Throughout history, Pope Benedict said that the Church has continuously proclaimed:

²²³Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, first plenary assembly, May 30, 2011, 1, <http://www.zenit.org>

²²⁴*Ibid.*, 2.

The salvific mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but that same proclamation today needs a renewed vigor to convince contemporary man, who is often distracted and insensitive.²²⁵

To proceed with this mission, the Holy Father asked the Commission to delineate a plan to help the whole Church carry out the commitment for a New Evangelization²²⁶, a plan which takes into consideration the need for the religious formation of the new generations. But all plans must be accompanied by the witness of the life of those who are evangelizing.

To emphasize the importance of the integrity of one's life, Pope Benedict made the words of the Servant of God, Pope Paul VI his own:

It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus—the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity. (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 41).²²⁷

The pastoral ministry of Pope Benedict XVI has faced many problems and challenges that have affected the world and they have influenced how he has approached his pontificate. The economic crisis which began in the United States in 2007 has spread throughout the world and has affected in a disproportionate way the lives of the poor in every country. What was thought to be an American problem became a world-wide crisis and indicated the injustice and instability of the economic systems that had governed the

²²⁵Ibid.

²²⁶From June 16 to 21, 2011 two meetings on the theme of the New Evangelization took place in Vilnius, Lithuania. The meeting was sponsored by the European Bishops Conference with 30 Bishops' Conferences of the continent participating. In the final press release of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences it stated "the New Evangelization is not a magic potion . . . First of all it is an attitude. It is an act of faith in Christ who 'makes all things new.' It is a work of renewal inherent in the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is already in place and it needs to be proclaimed to the world. The new evangelization does not require the Christian faithful to do something more; it asks only to embody every day in our prayer and our works of charity, in family life and at work, faith, hope and charity in God who became man. The spokespersons have also highlighted how this new evangelization is already active particularly in the world of economy, in the new media, in the sector of voluntary charity work . . ." Fides Service (fidesnews-en@fides.org), June 24, 2011.

²²⁷Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, 2.

world. The growth of the violence in Africa among different ethnic groups and in developing nations threatened the growth of democracy. Terrorism which had no ethical foundation was often seen as the tool of radical fundamentalists who used the Muslim religion as a justification for their actions. The growth of the number of the poor without any hope of a better life continued to spur migration in greater numbers throughout the world. At the same time, the world experienced the “Arab Spring,” a wave of demonstrations and protests in the Arab world calling for political change, a new way of life, an end to the fratricidal conflicts and wars in the Middle East. Influenced and organized by the use of social media, these demonstrations showed the possibility of young people participating in the creation of a new world order. Although no one knows where this will go, it is a sign that the world is changing and a moral voice must emerge so that peace can be attained by all. These events along with the internal organizational problems, the scandals that the Church has experienced, and the desire for a more evangelical, prophetic Church influenced Pope Benedict XVI to call the Catholic Church to a Year of Faith.

IX. Apostolic Letter Motu Proprio Data: Porta Fidei: (The Door of Faith)

A. Lifetime Journey of Faith

On October 11, 2011 Pope Benedict XVI declared a Year of Faith with his Apostolic Letter, Porta Fidei: The Door of Faith. This year will begin on October 11, 2012 the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council and also marks the 20th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI reminded the Church that she is on a “lifetime journey” that began at Baptism and only ends with eternal life, the fruit of the Resurrection. It is a “summons to an authentic and renewed

conversion to the Lord, the one Savior of the world.”²²⁸ Pope Benedict insisted that the Church must “rediscover” this *journey of faith*. This turning to Jesus, this conversion would permit all to enter into a deeper relationship with our Lord. In this way, the Church would be able to give clearer witness to the world of the joy that comes from knowing Christ.

B. Crisis of Faith

The Holy Father reminded the Church that the social, cultural, and political changes that have taken place in the world had an effect on the cultural matrix that had united the world throughout recent history. Since the world has been affected by the changes of modernity, large swathes of people have experienced a profound crisis of faith. This crisis has also affected the life of faith in the Church and Pope Benedict pointed out that the Church must deepen her own faith in the Lord Jesus by rediscovering a taste for feeding on the Word of God and on the Bread of Life that is offered as sustenance to the disciples of Jesus (cf. John 6:51). What is the work of the Church today asked Pope Benedict. “We know Jesus’ reply: ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent’” (John 6:29).²²⁹

C. Church Renewal

The theme for the Synod of Bishops convoked for 2012 is “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.” Pope Benedict indicated that the Synod could enrich the celebration of The Year of the Faith and would be a good opportunity for personal reflection of and a rediscovery of the true meaning of faith in Jesus. All would be helped by studying and reflecting on the documents of Vatican II

²²⁸Pope Benedict XVI, Porta Fidei (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul, October 11, 2011), no. 6.

²²⁹Benedict XVI, Porta Fidei, no. 3, p. 3.

and attaining a systematic knowledge of the content of the faith through the formation offered in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. “The renewal of the Church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers. . . . Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us.”²³⁰ Citing the Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium from Vatican II, Pope Benedict reminded all believers that

the Church, . . . clasping sinners to its bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal. . . . The Year of Faith, from this perspective, is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world.²³¹

D. Stronger Ecclesial Commitment to a New Evangelization

Aware of the need for a courageous commitment on the part of the Church for its own renewal, Pope Benedict insisted that

there is a need for stronger ecclesial commitment to a new evangelization in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith. In rediscovering his love (Jesus Christ) day by day, the missionary commitment of believers attains force and vigor that can never fade away.²³²

It is through the act of believing that faith grows and becomes stronger.

Reflection on the faith will have to be intensified, so as to help all believers in Christ to acquire a more conscious and vigorous adherence to the Gospel, especially at a time of profound change such as humanity is currently experiencing.²³³

E. History of Our Faith

A decisive characteristic of this year should be retracing the history of our faith. Pope Benedict insisted that reflecting on the “contributions that men and women have made to the growth and development of the community (the Church) through the witness

²³⁰Ibid. no. 6, p. 5.

²³¹Ibid., pp. 6-7.

²³²Ibid., no. 7, pp. 6-7.

²³³Ibid., no. 8, pp. 7-8.

of their lives”²³⁴ will help Christians to reflect on their own faith and undergo the necessary transformation (conversion) so that they may be prepared to be the instruments of God in the modern world. Keeping one’s gaze fixed upon Jesus Christ, one enters into the mystery of his Incarnation, in his becoming man, in his sharing our human weakness so as to transform it by the power of his resurrection. In him who died and rose again for our salvation, the examples of faith that have marked these two thousand years of our salvation history are brought into the fullness of light.²³⁵

By faith, Mary accepted the Angel’s word and believed and became the Mother of God (cf. Luke 1:26-38). Mary tasted the fruits of Jesus’ resurrection and in the Upper Room, with the Twelve, she received the Holy Spirit. By faith, the Apostles left everything to follow Jesus and following his command went out to the whole world to bring the Gospel to all people (cf. Mark 16:15) and proclaimed to all the joy of the Resurrection, of which they were faithful witnesses. By faith the disciples formed the first community and centered around the teaching of the Apostles, celebrated the Eucharist and shared their possessions with those in need (cf. Acts 2:42-47). By faith, the martyrs gave their lives bearing witness to the Gospel and many continue to live that way today. May this year of faith deepen our relationship with Christ the Lord so that the Church be the visible sign of God’s presence in the world for all people.

X. Vision of Pope Benedict and a New Evangelization

The most widely known comments of Cardinal Ratzinger on a New Evangelization, before he was elected Pope, were presented while he was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). While most people expected a theological dissertation on a New Evangelization, the Cardinal presented a talk which has become the basis for his spirituality for a New Evangelization. Once elected Pope, Pope

²³⁴Ibid., no. 13, p. 13.

²³⁵Ibid., p. 14.

Benedict continued his call for a renewal of Church life so that the Church would be prepared to assume this new responsibility for a new evangelization of the Catholic world and the mission Ad Gentes.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, Verbum Domini (The Word of the Lord), Pope Benedict reaffirmed the importance of the Word of God as the source for the daily renewal in the life of the Church and insisted that it must be at the heart of every ecclesial activity. For him all pastoral ministry (pastoral, administrative, organizational) must be enlightened by the Word of God. To assure that this would become the guiding principle of Church life, Pope Benedict insisted that all Churches must have an active and inspiring Biblical Apostolate so that all Christians would come to a deeper understanding of the Word of God and bear witness to the Word in all things that they do. Pope Benedict reminded all that while Scripture was at the heart of all Christian spirituality, prayer must accompany all reading of Sacred Scripture. Only with a personal renewal of one's heart will the Church as a community be prepared to participate in a New Evangelization.

With his Moto Proprio, Ubicumque et Semper (Everywhere and Always), Pope Benedict established a structure (Pontifical Council for Promoting a New Evangelization) which would be responsible for organizing a New Evangelization both on a global scale and in the local dioceses. He would also be responsible for following up on the development of this pastoral initiative and to be of assistance in whatever country or diocese when needed. It was the intention of Pope Benedict to see that the inspirations of his venerable predecessors, Pope Paul VI and Blessed John Paul II, be put into practice in the pastoral ministry of both the universal Church and the local Church. The man noted

as a theologian has become a praxis-orientated pastor concerned with the efficacious ministry of the local Church and in its service to the world.

In his pastoral ministry, Pope Benedict has challenged the Church itself to understand that it is not enough to say one is evangelizing. He is concerned with the efficaciousness of the Church's response to a world that is suffering and searching for truth and peace. He has stated clearly the belief that the only way for the world to live in peace and be reconciled with one's neighbor is with the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this reason he has committed himself to the renewal of the Church because the Church has been called to be the light to all nations. One can clearly detect from his writings the feeling that he sees the Church as having failed in this ministry.

Pope Benedict has introduced a new theological term in the pastoral ministry of the Church. It is called accountability. He has created structures in the Church so that one will be able to show that one is responding to the needs of the Church and the world. This call to renewal has just begun. The changes and transformations in the internal structures of the Church and the local dioceses have yet to take place. This pastoral journey has just begun and it will cause many hardships in pastoral planning because local Churches have been basically concerned about themselves and not the universal mission to evangelize the world. At the same time the structure of the universal Church has put very little emphasis on the efficaciousness of its own evangelical ministry and the necessity of the participation of the local churches in the exercise of this mission.

Chapter Eight

LIVING HOPE

This Thesis Project began as a way to share the story of the lived faith experience of a humble, joyful, hope filled, suffering community. Initially the focus was on the needs and desires of a small group of lay leaders who wanted to become better prepared leaders and more successful “evangelizers” in their community. In the beginning the lay leaders thought that the formation program, which was a process, would help them improve the pastoral work that they were trying to carry out in the community. As the formation program developed it became apparent that the call for a New Evangelization demanded not only a change in personal and community attitudes but it also required a greater awareness of what the Church had been saying to its members about the need for a new evangelization.

The formation program helped the lay leaders realize that a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures, Papal teachings, and a more complete understanding of Catholic Social Teaching, coupled with the social orientation of their Bishop, was essential if they were to have an impact on the hearts of people and the social life of the community.

Working in an inner city parish, patience is not a highly esteemed virtue when one is constantly struggling with life and death issues. Most of the lay leaders in the formation program came to get a different and more challenging understanding of the value of this virtue through the use of its Spanish translation: PACIENCIA. This word is made up of two roots: 1) PAZ (Peace), peace of the heart, the compassion and mercy of Christ and 2) CIENCIA, (knowledge) the gift of knowledge which comes from the Holy Spirit. Patience, when seen as an active instrument in the process of looking for a more

humane life for all, took on a new meaning. It was no longer seen as the passive reality which waits for something to happen so that life might improve. Rather it became a dynamic instrument, searching, discerning, evaluating the new steps that must be taken in the search for a new tomorrow. This realization helped all understand that the formation process had to be an ongoing process. Ongoing, not just because there was so much Scripture to understand and see from a different perspective or because of the new awareness of the insights and orientations that came from Papal Teaching and Catholic Social Teaching but also because the social reality of the community was constantly changing. This new awareness and deepened insights demanded of them an ongoing, serious reflection and periodic changes in their planning and projects. If they were to be efficacious instruments of social change in their pastoral commitments they realized more formation was needed.

The constant change in the social reality of the community, due to the arrival of new immigrants, the economic recession which forced people to move so that they could find better jobs, or the new surges in crime in the community helped the lay leaders see the need to train other lay leaders so that they would have greater support as they struggled to devise plans to change the social reality of the community. They realized that they had to constantly renew themselves and help form other lay leaders so that the pastoral commitments that were being established could grow and not be lost when those who had received formation had to move to another community, city, or country. Instead of seeing the constant change of members in the community as something to fear, the lay leaders began to see this as a living characteristic of the community and something that they had to be open to as they served the community.

These changes in the community and the daily challenges that had to be faced helped the lay leaders mature in their own understanding of what a lay leader was called to be. The call to be a disciple of Jesus took on a new meaning and broadened the commitment of evangelization to include not just the members of the parish community but to all those present in the larger community. As their personal awareness of what it meant to be a Christian was being enriched the lay leaders began to ask the unthinkable, the unspoken fear of many, “What would happen if the parish community was “blest” with a new pastor who did not understand what the community and its lay leaders had been doing?” “Did their search for a better way to be a Christian, their desire to evangelize depend on the pastor agreeing with what they were doing?” “What would happen to all that the lay leaders had struggled to do with the community if the new pastor wanted to do something else?”

These are questions that the community began asking because of the structure of the local Church and their own personal experiences with changes in the pastoral leadership in their parish. Just as the lay people moved for various reasons so did their Pastors, suddenly, and without consultation. The concern of the lay leaders manifested a growing maturity in their pastoral commitment. To respond to these pointed inquiries, it was necessary to admit that changes in leadership has always been a serious pastoral challenge. A lack of continuity among pastors has been a common feature of some parish communities. Having observed that some pastors have arrived in their new parish communities with pastoral plans that they developed by themselves, I tried to explain to the lay leaders the different types of planning that has been used in the Church so that they would have a better understanding of what they could be faced with.

The most common approach to planning is the “Business Model” where a group of experts are called together or assigned the task to plan for the future of the community, the Diocese or organization. (In Latin America this is known as “Discriminatory Planning”). This type of planning follows the methodology used in business by big corporations. It is basically dependent on the use of planning experts, with data specialists, using a top down approach for its planning. The philosophy that inspires this planning is: “I or We know what is best for the future of the community/organization.” This type of planning excludes the participation or influence of the community because it will become overbearing and slow down the planning process. This type of planning saves time and can be done quickly and quietly because it is controlled by a small group and eliminates surprises. This planning usually marginalizes any possibility of the community engaging in a process of communion which could build unity in the community and ownership of the plan that is designed for the community. Not only does it impose a superior-inferior mentality but it also eliminates the possibility of local leaders learning how to plan and claim ownership of the plan that is agreed upon. Since this process is built on efficiency and speed, sadly, it is often used in Church Planning in the United States. But since it does not encourage the participation of the community, its success in the community is usually limited and the formative educational role that it should play in the life of the people is lost.

The popular method of designing pastoral plans, “Participatory Planning” (*Planeación Pastoral*), was made famous in Latin America through the Pastoral Theological Institute of Latin America (the Instituto Teológico Pastoral de América Latina—INTEPAL) of the Conference of Bishops of Latin America (CELAM). This

planning methodology was spread throughout Africa and Asia by CELAM and each continent has added its own indigenous characteristics to the methodology. While this process requires the participation of the community, it can be difficult to foresee what the results of this community involvement will become. It is a more respectful approach to planning as it respects the God given talent and wisdom of each person in the community and treats everyone as a mature, committed Christian. Everyone becomes responsible for the community's decisions as the process to make commitments involves the participation of all and demands an openness to others' opinions and insights. This process fosters the need for the personal conversion of both the ideas and attitudes of each person. This planning demands that everyone be open to change, even the leaders themselves. This process takes time, great effort and patience, but it helps to bond everyone in the community together and enables the leaders to design plans that are the result of the collaboration of everyone. However, it was not easy to accomplish this goal, as we discovered in our efforts to respond to the needs of our community; but we believed that it was only through this process could we carry out our pastoral options for the evangelization of the community.

The lay leaders were constantly encouraged to be faithful to what they were reflecting on. The Word of God was seen as the basis for the pastoral ministry in the Church and not just as the basis for "evangelizing." The leaders came to understand that the teachings of the Church and Catholic Social Teaching were a living reflection of the Gospel of Jesus that they must share with others and above all they realized that they would bear witness to Jesus only through lives of love. These were not optional adventures of life that depended on what a new pastor thought or wanted.

The struggles that we faced and the lay leaders' fears about the willingness of a new Pastor to respect the pastoral decisions of the lay leaders greatly influenced the formation program and the orientation of this thesis project. The decision to show that the call to a New Evangelization came from Blessed John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI (and continues today with Pope Francis) was an attempt to highlight that the call came from the Church and not just from the hearts of our lay leaders. The presentation of the ecclesial insistence of this call was a pedagogical tool to help strengthen the lay leaders in their understanding of their call and their desire to become better evangelizers. This would become the foundation for the development of an ongoing program and the basis of all pastoral ministry in the parish.

The call to evangelize has its basis in the commission of Jesus to his apostles, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always until the end of the age." (Mt 28:19-20). The call to a New Evangelization by our recent pontiffs is a reminder that the Church has yet to begin its mission. The planning methodology that was used in the community was a conscious attempt to engage everyone in the community to plan for a more just society and world and to give them the ability to constantly adapt their work so that they could better serve the community. Tomorrow a new methodology could be designed to accomplish the goals that the lay leaders have established for themselves and their community and this is a good sign. Whatever new challenges come, whatever changes occur in their leadership, what remains constant is the call to a New Evangelization and of this the lay leaders are convinced. Whether there is a new pastor

or an old pastor, the call to go forth and to teach by the witness of their lives is the principal witness that the lay leaders give to the Gospel of Jesus. This was the conviction upon which this thesis project was developed, and this is the hope for tomorrow that those who participated in the development of this pastoral program would continue to be people of hope who reflect the merciful love of Jesus to all and sow the seeds of the future in his name.

PART TWO

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING, A LIGHT IN DARKNESS

“Let us never give in to that pessimism, that bitterness which the devil offers us every day. Let us not give in to pessimism and discouragement; we have that firm confidence which the Holy Spirit gives the Church, with his mighty breath, the courage to persevere and to seek new ways to evangelize, to bring the Gospel to the ends of the Earth (cf. Acts 1:8). The Christian truth is appealing and persuasive because it responds to the profound needs of human existence, announcing convincingly that Christ is the only Savior of the whole man and of all men. This announcement is still valid today, as it was at the beginning of Christianity, when the first great missionary expansion of the Gospel was carried out. . . .

The old have the wisdom of having walked in life, like the elderly Simeon, the aged Anna in the temple. And it was precisely that wisdom that made them recognize Jesus. We offer this wisdom to the young: like good wine, which over the years becomes better, we give to young people the wisdom of life.”

Pope Francis, Address to Cardinals, Vatican City, March 15th, 2013

Chapter One

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: A LIGHT IN DARKNESS

As we begin the process of developing our understanding of what the New Evangelization is calling both the institutional Church and all its members to face, the reality is that changes must be made in the way that they have been living the Christian life so that they may become a clearer light of Christ in a world covered by a growing darkness.²³⁶ Both are faced with the question of what role *Catholic Social Teaching* will have in the future mission of the New Evangelization.

The conversion process that must take place will affect the daily lives of all members of the Church, but it will also be a special challenge for the structures of the Church. Christian life as it has been lived and the institutional response of the Church to

²³⁶Pope Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter, “Motu Proprio Data,” Porta Fidei (Door of Faith), October 11, 2011, no. 2, p. 2.

the needs of the world are no longer seen as an acceptable way of preaching the Gospel today. In his call for a Year of Faith (October 11, 2012 to November 24, 2013) Pope Benedict reminded all the members of the Church:

Ever since the start of my ministry as successor of Peter, I have spoken of the need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ. During the homily at the Mass marking the inauguration of my pontificate I said “the Church as a whole and all her pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life and life in abundance.”²³⁷

As darkness has been covering the world through war, senseless violence among different religious and ethnic groups, the meaningless suffering of so many women, children, and poor people, and the marginalization of the third and fourth worlds, the Church and its members are being called to respond courageously and generously to the needs of all people. They are faced with a world searching for peace and are called to reflect the light of Christ in every nation, to billions of people who live in the growing darkness of our modern world. Pope Benedict pointed out that:

The word of God sheds light on human existence and stirs our conscience to take a deeper look at our lives. . . . The Gospel, on the other hand, reminds us that every moment of our life is important and must be lived intensely, in the knowledge that everyone will have to give an account of his or her life. In the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, the Son of Man considers whatever we do or do not do to “the least of his brethren” (cf. Mt. 25:40, 45) as done or not done to himself: “I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me” (Mt. 25: 35-36).²³⁸

For those who have had doubts about the intrinsic nature and importance of the social commitment of the Christian in the world, Pope Benedict stressed that:

²³⁷Ibid.

²³⁸Pope Benedict XVI, Verbum Domini: The Word of the Lord, (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2010), no. 99, p. 149.

the Word of God itself emphasizes the need for our engagement in the world and our responsibility before Christ, the Lord of history. As we proclaim the Gospel, let us encourage one another to do good and to commit ourselves to justice, reconciliation, and peace.²³⁹

As if voicing the words of Blessed John Paul II in Christifideles Laici, Pope Benedict said to all those who take part in political and social life that:

Evangelization and the spread of God's word ought to inspire their activity in the world, as they work for the true common good in respecting and promoting the dignity of every person. Certainly it is not the direct task of the Church to create a more just society, although she does have the right and duty to intervene on ethical and moral issues related to the good of individuals and peoples. It is primarily the task of the lay faithful, formed in the school of the Gospel, to be directly involved in political and social activity.²⁴⁰

The centrality and importance of teaching *Catholic Social Doctrine* has been part of the life of the Church from its very beginning. Blessed John Paul II constantly reiterated the centrality of this teaching in his encyclical Centesimus Annus, which celebrated the 100th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's inspiring document Rerum Novarum.

To teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Savior. This doctrine is likewise a source of unity and peace in dealing with the conflicts which inevitably arise in social and economic life.²⁴¹

The Church by its very nature is called to be a light to all nations because of the mission that it has received from the Lord to go and preach the Gospel to all nations (cf. Mk 16:14-18, Mt 28:16-20) and also because of the need that exists in the world today for peace and harmony among all people. (The Church, because it is a human institution as well, is also called to be the keeper of both sister and brother (cf. Gen 4:8-16)). The

²³⁹Ibid., p. 150.

²⁴⁰Ibid., no. 100, p. 151.

²⁴¹Blessed John Paul II, "Centesimus Annus" Daniel J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (eds.), Catholic Social Thought The Documentary Heritage. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), no. 5, p. 442.

relationship between the living and teaching of Catholic Social Doctrine and the New Evangelization was underlined many times by Blessed John Paul himself:

The “new evangelization,” which the modern world urgently needs and which I have emphasized many times, must include among its essential elements *a proclamation of the church’s social doctrine*. As in the days of Pope Leo XIII, this doctrine is still suitable for indicating the right way to respond to the great challenges of today, when ideologies are being increasingly discredited. Now as then, we need to repeat that there can be *no genuine solution of the “social question” apart from the Gospel*, and that the “new things” can find in the Gospel the context for their correct understanding and the proper moral perspective for judgment on them.²⁴²

I. Catholic Social Doctrine: Tradition

In an attempt to respond to the physical, economical, political, and spiritual sufferings of people, the church has developed a body of teachings and principles to guide people as they take action to improve their lives and the situations of their communities and nation. This body of knowledge provides the Christian community with a doctrinal point of reference, based on their life of faith, which will help them discern the possible actions they can take to develop a better future for all. The Bishops of Latin America meeting in 1979 in Puebla, Mexico, described Catholic Social Teaching in this way:

The contribution of the Church to liberation and human promotion has gradually been taking shape in a series of doctrinal guidelines and criteria for action that we now are accustomed to call “the social teaching of the Church.” These teachings have their source in Sacred Scripture, in the teaching of the Fathers and major theologians of the Church, and in the magisterium (particularly that of the most recent popes). As is evident from their origin, they contain permanently valid elements that are grounded in an anthropology that derives from the message of Christ and in the perennial values of Christian ethics. But they also contain changing elements that correspond to the particular conditions of each country and each epoch.²⁴³

²⁴²Ibid., p. 443.

²⁴³John Eagleson and Philip Scharper, no. 472, p. 189.

The sources of Catholic Social Teaching are: (A) sacred scripture; (B) teachings of the Early Fathers of the Church and the great theologians of the Church; (C) the Magisterium of the Church.

A. Sacred Scripture

Sacred Scripture has always been the basis for the life of the Christian community even when it was misunderstood and poorly applied to the human experience. All believers are in agreement that scripture recounts the history of God's interaction with his children before and after the fall and his loving relationship with them that culminated in the life and death of his only Son, Jesus Christ. Both the Old and New Testament contain many passages that express and reveal the dignity of man and woman, the special place that the poor have in God's eyes, the demands that are placed on all to live a just life, and the condemnation of those who misuse the goods of the earth (material wealth).

In the Book of Genesis, we read "God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them (Gen 1:27)."²⁴⁴ In the Book of Exodus, the Lord said "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers so I know well they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." (Ex. 3:7-8).²⁴⁵ In the Book of Deuteronomy God told the Jewish people "You shall not defraud a poor and needy hired servant, whether he be one of your own countrymen or one of the aliens who live in your communities. You shall pay him each day's wages before sundown on the day itself, since he is poor and looks forward to them. Otherwise

²⁴⁴All biblical references are from the New American Bible, (Grand Rapids, MI: Catholic World Press, World Publishing, 1991).

²⁴⁵Ibid., 60.

he will cry to the Lord against you, and you will be held guilty.” (Deut. 24:14-15).²⁴⁶

The prophet Amos condemned, in the name of God, the people who abused the poor when he said:

Hear this word, . . . You who oppress the weak and abuse the needy; Who say to your lords, ‘Bring drink for us!’ The Lord God has sworn by his holiness: Truly the days are coming upon you when they shall drag you away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks; you shall go out through the breached walls each by the most direct way, and you shall be cast into the mire, says the Lord. (Amos 4:1-3).²⁴⁷

In the New Testament, Jesus reminded his disciples:

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? (Mt. 5:43-46)²⁴⁸

In St. Luke’s Gospel, Jesus responded to the question “Who is my neighbor?” with words that must guide all Christians today,

A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim? He answered, ‘The one who treated him with mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’ (Lk 11:29-37).²⁴⁹

In St. Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus emphasized to his disciples:

²⁴⁶Ibid., 183.

²⁴⁷Ibid., 954.

²⁴⁸Ibid., 1016-1017.

²⁴⁹Ibid., 1112.

I tell you, unless your righteousness (justice) surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:20).²⁵⁰

St. James, the leader of the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem, wrote in his letter to the twelve tribes in the diaspora:

If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘go in peace, keep warm, and eat well’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.²⁵¹ (James 2:15-17).

B. The Fathers of the Church

The title, Fathers of the Church, was given to early Church writers (who wrote in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Armenian) whose writings on doctrinal matters was considered to be a guide for the Church of their time. Their orthodox teaching received the approval of the early Church and their holy lives gave witness to their belief. During the controversies that plagued the Church, all parties appealed to the teaching of these Fathers to support their theological arguments or teachings. In the west, the last of the Church Fathers is considered to be St. Isidore of Seville (d. 636) and in the east this period ended with St. John Damascene (d. 749). The teaching authority of these Church Fathers was held as infallible when they taught a doctrine unanimously.

The Fathers of the Church preached about, wrote about, and developed many of the principles and concepts of the social teaching of the Catholic Church. They explained Sacred Scripture to both the rich and poor in such a way that all could apply its teaching to their everyday lives even if their teaching went against the customs of their time. The Scriptures offered the Church Fathers the light to discern the steps that had to be taken so that the Gospel could be preached and care given to those most in need. For the Fathers

²⁵⁰Ibid., 1015.

²⁵¹Ibid., 1344.

the poor were the chosen ones of God and the rich were responsible to share the blessings of the earth with the poor, those considered to be the least of the brethren. The Fathers demanded justice and equality for all especially when there was mistreatment of people.

St. Ambrose (d. 397), Bishop of Milan, insisted that riches be shared with the poor and condemned the rich for their greed.

You rich, how far will you push your frenzied greed? Are you alone to dwell on the earth? Why do you cast out men who are fellow-creatures and claim all creation as your own? Earth at its beginning was for all in common, it was meant for rich and poor alike; what right have you to monopolize the soil?²⁵²

St. John Chrysostom tried to convince the rich to abandon their covetousness and care for the poor.

When therefore, you have returned home, when you lie down on your couch, when the lights around your house shine bright, when your table is well prepared and plentiful, at that time remember that poor miserable man wandering about like dogs in the alleys, in darkness and in mire, and from these alleys he goes back, not to his house, his wife, or his bed, but to a pile of straw, like those dogs which we hear baying all through the night. And you, if you see but a drop of water falling from the ceiling, you would throw the whole house in confusion, calling for the slaves and disturbing everything, while he, laid in rags, and straw, and dirt, has to bear the bitter cold.²⁵³

St. Basil (d. 379) was considered a great Church statesman, a gifted organizer, and a successful social activist. He often stressed the social function of riches in his attempt to convince the wealthy to care for the poor.

Imitate the earth; bring forth fruit as it does; shall your human status be inferior to a lifeless thing? The earth brings forth fruits not for its own pleasure but for your service; you can reap for yourself the fruit of all generosity because the rewards of good works return to those who offer them. If you give to the hungry, the gift becomes your own and comes back to you with increase. As the wheat falling on the ground turns to gain for the man who lets it fall, so the grain bestowed on the hungry brings you profit a hundredfold hereafter.²⁵⁴

²⁵²Peter C. Phan, Message of the Fathers of the Church: Social Thought Vol. 20, (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1984), 168.

²⁵³Ibid., 153.

²⁵⁴Ibid., 115.

St. Gregory the Great (d. 604) affirmed to the early Church that the goods of the earth are for the use of all people and not that of a few.

Different admonition should be given to those who neither desire what belongs to others nor give what is their own on the one hand, and to those who give of what they have, but do not desist from taking what belongs to others on the other. Those who neither desire what belongs to others nor give what is their own should be admonished to consider carefully that the earth of which they dispose is common to all men, and therefore brings forth nourishment for all in common. Wrongly, then, do those suppose themselves innocent who claim for their own private use the common gift of God; those who, by not sharing what they have received, are accomplices of the death of their neighbors, since they every day in a certain way kill as many of those who die of hunger whose subsidies they refuse to give. For, when we give necessities of any kind to the poor, we do not bestow our own, we give them back what is theirs; we rather pay a debt of justice than accomplish works of mercy.²⁵⁵

But Augustine had already insisted that when one used their goods badly they should be deprived of the right of ownership to their goods because their misuse of them deprived others of their benefit.

If we look carefully at what is written: ‘The whole world is the wealth of the faithful man, but the unfaithful one has not a penny,’ do we not prove that those who seem to rejoice in lawfully acquired gains, and do not know how to use them, are really in possession of other men’s property? Certainly, what is lawfully possessed is not another’s property, but ‘lawfully’ means justly and justly means rightly. He who uses his wealth badly possesses it wrongfully, and wrongful possession means that it is another’s property.²⁵⁶

In the Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) developed the social teaching of the Church by being guided by the reflections of the early Fathers and strictly adhering to their teachings. He summarized their doctrine in his treatise on justice which shows a development in the Church’s thought and, in time, it would become the basis for the social encyclicals of the modern papacy. In asking the question “whether it is lawful to steal through stress of need?” St. Thomas responded:

²⁵⁵Ibid., 261.

²⁵⁶Ibid., 208.

I answer that things which are of human right cannot derogate from natural right or Divine right. Now according to the natural order established by Divine providence, inferior things are ordained for the purpose of succouring man's needs by their means. Wherefore the division and appropriation of things which are based on human law, do not preclude the fact that man's needs have to be remedied by means of these very things. Hence whatever certain people have in superabundance is due, by natural law, to the purpose of succouring the poor. For this reason Ambrose says: 'It is the hungry man's bread that you withhold, the naked man's cloak that you store away, the money that you bury in the earth is the price of the needy man's redemption and freedom.'²⁵⁷

While St. Thomas does accept private ownership he affirmed that one possesses things not as one's own but as something to be held in common so that a person is ready to share them with those who are in need. For St. Thomas when a needy person takes another's property, because of an urgent need, it is not an act of thievery but rather it is the act of one taking his own property by reason of that need. St. Thomas agreed with the teaching of the early Fathers and showed a development in moral thinking. Private ownership, personal riches, had social implications for the wealthy and for society and not just in the Catholic community. This radical thinking of St. Thomas was lost in the late 19th century when the individualism of capitalism and the possessiveness of private property became the driving force of the economic life of the western world. There were no limits placed on the ownership of property and the social obligations towards the poor were abandoned. The Church had become identified with the power structures of society and slowly began to lose the working class to the new social movements of the day. At this moment in history the Church began to understand that the rapid development of industrialization resulting in the worsening conditions of the workers and the abuse of child labor were not only causing political and social instability in society, but also the Church was losing her traditional base, the workers. In an attempt to respond to the

²⁵⁷The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, vol. 10, Part II, Second part, Q. 66, Art. 7. (London: R & T Washbourne, Ltd., 1918), 232-233.

needs of her members and to restore social order, Pope Leo XIII (d. 1903) wrote his first encyclical, Rerum Novarum (“Of New Things”) in 1891 in which he would defend the rights of workers and their rights to form unions, earn a just wage, and work under humane conditions.

II. Magisterium of the Church—Social Writings of the Popes and Vatican II

For most of the 19th century, the Catholic Church was a European focused Church. England dominated the world while the German Empire became known for its industrial technology and skill. Africa, Asia, and Latin America were the neglected part of the Church as they were underdeveloped and colonized by European powers. The Industrial Revolution in Europe was creating a new social order that would affect the life of the world. The agricultural based society and its accompanying stability were being replaced by an industrial society which did not have the same stability for the workers and their families. The factory based production of goods brought about by technological developments and more efficient production methods promised greater output and greater wealth. The resulting urbanization and industrialization of Europe did not benefit everyone in the same way. The majority of workers lived in over-crowded, dirty, slums and had little access to healthcare or education for their children. Their wages were low and labor conditions were poor, dangerous, and unhealthy. The possibility of accidents grew daily as the demand for production increased. Workers toiled day and night for very little pay, with no rights and no one to defend them against the exploitation of their employers, and living under the worst of conditions. Slowly they began to lose their human dignity and their hope for a better life. Workers were disoriented, treated like objects, and were looking for a way out of this misery.

With this suffering, Pope Leo XIII was inspired to write the first social encyclical, Rerum Novarum, “On the Condition of Labor,” to offer a word of hope and orientation to all affected by this industrialization, urbanization, and a new poverty that never existed before. Pope Leo insisted that society had a responsibility to defend and foster the rights of families, that workers had the right to protect themselves by forming unions, and that people should have the right to the fruits of their labor and all things should be used equitably. He insisted that they be paid a just wage, what he called a “family wage,” one that allowed the worker to support his or her family (just as the farm provided support for the family even if poor). This first encyclical would be the beginning of the Church’s social teachings that are generally composed of Papal statements, Conciliar documents, or documents from the Synod of Bishops. There is a general consensus that the following documents constitute the social teachings of the Church:

- 1) Leo XIII’s Rerum Novarum (1891). Written during a time of turmoil, many felt the Church had to be involved in the sufferings of people speaking with the wisdom of its Christian past. This encyclical addressed the rights of workers, urbanization, poverty, the duties of workers and employers. Pope Leo spoke of a family wage, workers’ rights to unionize, and the role of public authority to defend the poor.
- 2) Pius XI’s Quadragesimo Anno (1931). “The Reconstruction of the Social Order” reaffirmed the principles found in Rerum Novarum. It was written during the Great Depression and strongly criticized both capitalism and communism. Pius XI urged that efforts be made to help the lower class and expressed the Church’s solidarity with the workers. He called for a reform of the social order and used the concept of “subsidiarity” for the first time in a papal document.

3) John XXIII's Mater et Magistra (1961). After reviewing and confirming the teaching of Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno, Pope John XXIII presents the Church's teaching about the new and serious problems that the world is facing. Discussing the social function of private property and the need for a just wage for workers, Pope John XXIII also expressed deep concern for the state of agriculture in the modern world and stressed the need for international cooperation to reduce poverty and the imbalance between rich and poor nations. At the same time, he insisted that members of the Church partake in the social reform of their countries. The renewal of the social relationships in these countries could be aided by spreading the wisdom that is embodied in Catholic Social Teaching.

4) John XXIII's Pacem in Terris (1963). "Peace on Earth" was the first encyclical to be addressed to all people of goodwill and addressed the world which was threatened by the arms race and nuclear war. Pope John believed peace was attainable by all countries and outlined his philosophy of human rights and social responsibility that should be followed by individuals and their governments so that the world community could live in peace. Pope John's philosophy of human rights should stand as a basis for Catholic involvement in favor of human rights throughout the world.

5) Vatican II's Gaudium et Spes ("Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World") 1965. The pastoral constitution stated that the Church must scrutinize the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel as "the joys and hopes, the griefs of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ."²⁵⁸ The constitution presented the most developed theological basis for the Church's social activities to date. It stated

²⁵⁸ "Gaudium et Spes", in Documents of Vatican II, no. 1, p. 199.

that the Church has a special responsibility to dedicate herself to the defense of human dignity, to build up the solidarity in the human community, and to dedicate herself to the common good of all humanity. In order to avoid war and create a socio-economic life that would benefit all, there must be greater international cooperation among all nations. The Church was especially concerned about the situation of marriage and the family and the respect that should be given to all cultures.

6) Paul VI's Populorum Progressio (1967). "The Development of Peoples" is the strongest Church statement on socio-economic development and related it to the growth to the Christian understanding of human development. Guided by the Gospel and Catholic Social Thought, he called for urgent action from nations because of the growth of human poverty caused by structural injustice in the world. The widening gap between rich and poor nations showed the urgent need for international development. Pope Paul VI indicated that the situation of extreme poverty was the cause of war, and he pointed out that economic justice was the basis for peace. "Development is the new name for peace."

7) Paul VI's Octogesima Adveniens (1971). Writing to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum, Paul VI reviewed Catholic Social Teaching since Rerum Novarum and then examined the recent changes in the world. Due to the difficult situations existing in the world, he insisted that greater efforts to establish a just world were needed and emphasized that local churches had a responsibility to act to relieve the situation of injustice in their communities. The urbanization of the world was creating great populations of marginalized people thus creating a new poor whose fundamental aspirations and dreams were being destroyed. The Church through the laity must commit

itself to alleviate the suffering and build human solidarity among peoples. The option for the poor will create the new conditions necessary for a more hopeful world. For this reason Pope Paul VI issued a Call to Action.

8) World Synod of Bishops' Justitia in Mundo (1971). The 1971 Synod of Bishops condemned the structural injustices that oppressed humanity and called for the unity of Christians with people of good will to eradicate the injustice in the world. "Action on the behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."²⁵⁹ Thus, it emphasized the need of the Church to be concerned with the social transformation of the world and not to limit itself to the personal conversion of people. It called the Church to give witness to justice in its own lifestyle and through its educational activities. The document insisted that Catholic Social Teaching was needed for the creation of a more just world.

9) Paul VI's Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975). This Apostolic Exhortation, "Evangelization in the Modern World," reminded the Church of its responsibility to proclaim the Gospel to all people in a language and in a way that could be understood by all. Pope Paul VI pointed out that evangelization has a personal and social dimension. It is both religious and temporal. Jesus must be proclaimed and Christians must be involved in the work for peace, justice, and the liberation of people. "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."²⁶⁰ To achieve structural change, personal conversion is a requirement from

²⁵⁹ "Justice in the World" in Catholic Social Thought, 289.

²⁶⁰ "Evangelization in the Modern World" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 41, p. 317.

all Christians and the Church itself. The recourse to violence is unacceptable to the Christian way of life.

10) John Paul II's Laborem Exercens (1981). Commemorating the ninetieth anniversary of Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum, John Paul II highlights the dignity of work and the importance of the worker who shares in the activity of the Creator and thus works for the good of humanity, a vision which must be recovered. Thus he criticized both capitalism and communism who treated workers as instruments of production. He stressed that work is for the good of the person and not the person for the good of work and the human person (worker) is more important than and has priority over capital. He supported both the rights of workers and unions and outlined a spirituality of work for everyone.

11) Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987). Celebrating the twentieth anniversary of Populorum Progresso, John Paul II focused on human development. Looking at the persistent extreme poverty in the world, John Paul laid the blame for it on the confrontation between the liberal capitalism of the west and the Marxist economics of the east. He condemned this super-power conflict and the existing structures of sin that hindered human development. He called for both personal and societal conversion to solidarity among people so that authentic human development could take place. In all development there must be an option for the poor and rich countries have a special responsibility for this development.

12) Centesimus Annus (1991). John Paul II issued "On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum" to address the political changes in Eastern Europe resulting from the collapse of communism. He condemned the socialism that dominated Eastern European life, but this would be a victory for capitalism only if it responded justly to the needs of

working people. He reaffirmed the importance of the human dignity of the person, the rights of all people, and the universality of all material goods. He once again reaffirmed the need for the Church's Social Teaching as a guide for resolving the conflicts that were facing the world.

13) Pope Benedict XVI's Caritas in Veritate (2009). "Charity in Truth" is the first social encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI in which he states that it ". . . is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity. . . . Charity is the heart of the Church's social doctrine."²⁶¹ Pope Benedict then points out that there is no possible authentic or global development possible without truth. All authentic development must be governed by two criteria, justice and the common good for only then, will we be able to respond to the real needs of our neighbor. The encyclical offers a detailed reflection on the economic and social issues of our day and emphasizes that Paul VI's Populorum Progressio "deserves to be considered the Rerum Novarum of the present age, shedding light upon humanity's journey towards unity."²⁶² It underlined the indispensable importance of the Gospel for building a society according to freedom and justice and:

pointed out that the causes of underdevelopment are not primarily of the material order. He invited us to search for them in other dimensions of the human person: first of all, in the will, which often neglects the duties of solidarity; secondly in thinking, which does not always give proper direction to the will. Hence, in the pursuit of development, there is a need for 'the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism which will enable modern man to find himself anew.'²⁶³

The encyclical engages in a dialogue with all the political, business, religious leaders and heads of development agencies in the global world. He stresses that the

²⁶¹Pope Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 2009), no. 1.

²⁶²Ibid., no. 8.

²⁶³Ibid., no. 19.

Church does not offer specific solutions to all of these problems but does offer moral principles that should orient all people of good will as they strive to build a better world and resolve the conflicts that are now being faced and will be faced in the future. Pope Benedict points out that while the world's wealth is growing in absolute terms, inequalities are on the increase and the only way to create a more just socio-economic process is based on an ethics that is people centered. This must become the guiding principle in development programs and in international cooperation.

With this inspiration and guide:

It is up to these Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops who hold responsibility and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of good will, to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political, and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed. In this search for the changes which should be promoted, Christians must first of all renew their confidence in the forcefulness and special character of the demands made by the Gospel. The Gospel is not out-of-date because it was proclaimed, written and lived in a different sociocultural context. Its inspiration, enriched by the living experience of Christian tradition over the centuries, remains ever new for converting men and for advancing the life of society. It is not however to be utilized for the profit of particular temporal options, to the neglect of its universal and eternal message.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴Pope Paul VI, "Octogesima Adveniens" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 3, p. 266.

Chapter Two

SOLIDARITY

I. Introduction

Solidarity is a word and a concept that entered into modern consciousness and usage through the birth of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity” on August 31, 1980 at the Gdansk Shipyard, Poland. These men revolutionized modern political thought and experience by bringing together in one trade union federation the iron workers of Poland which numbered about 9.5 million members. The result of their solidarity would be the birth of a free nation in 1990 under the leadership of Lech Walesa. Solidarity was the first free trade union in a Warsaw Pact country and became a beacon of hope to all oppressed people throughout the world and introduced a new word into the lexicon of human discourse.

Blessed John Paul II was the Bishop of Cracow during this struggle for labor’s rights at the Gdansk Shipyard, which was located in his Diocese. He was an early supporter of the workers’ struggle for justice and supported the trade movement. Lech Walesa said that Pope John Paul greatly influenced and supported the workers in their struggle: “The Holy Father through his meetings demonstrated how numerous we were. He told us not to be afraid.”

Pope John Paul II introduced the concept of Solidarity into Catholic Social Teaching with his encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis published in 1987, and since then it has been used extensively in theological journals, political writings, and social science manuals. John Paul II indicated that solidarity referred to working for the common good. Today, many writers distinguish between “affective solidarity” and “effective solidarity.”

Affective solidarity expresses an emotional concern for and identification with the needs of those who are poor or suffering from some form of injustice. One feels the needs and pain of those who suffer, identifies with them, and feels sorry for them. One's emotions are dominant, but action, change, does not result from this emotion. It is a non-committal approach to the evil that is witnessed. One becomes an observer but not an agent of social change. Effective solidarity looks to initiate a change in what one is seeing or experiencing and takes on different forms and actions. One may change one's way of living to reflect patterns more characteristic of the poor. Another response is to work in programs designed to solve problems of housing or hunger, or lobby for legislation that will alleviate the suffering of the poor. One works for the poor but does not become poor. Another response is for one to work with the poor and live with the poor. Then there are those who share their lives completely with the poor²⁶⁵, serving them and learning from them.²⁶⁶

Solidarity is a complex concept that entails the terms friendship, social charity, and civilization of love, concepts that have been present in Catholic Social Teaching. What follows is how this idea has developed and matured. The challenge today for those who are desirous of living in a just world is to make this a characteristic, a lived experience, a characteristic of their own lives. To live the Christian life means to be an expression of solidarity to all those in need whoever they may be or wherever they may be. The life of Pope John Paul II shows that for him solidarity means a commitment to change the world through the inspiration of the Gospel of Jesus.

²⁶⁵Cf. Paul Steidl-Meier, S.J., Social Justice Ministry Foundations (New York, NY: Le Jacq Publishing, 1984).

²⁶⁶Cf. Paolo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 30th Edition (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000).

II. Solidarity in the Scriptures

In his encyclical, Centesimus Annus, Blessed John Paul wrote:

What we nowadays call the *principle of solidarity*, the validity of which both in the internal order of each nation and in the international order I have discussed in the encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, is clearly seen to be *one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization*. This principle is frequently stated by Pope Leo XIII, who uses the term ‘friendship,’ a concept already found in Greek philosophy. Pope Pius XI refers to it with the equally meaningful term ‘social charity.’ Pope Paul VI, expanding the concept to cover the many modern aspects of the social question, speaks of a ‘civilization of love’.²⁶⁷

What follows are scriptural passages which reflect the presence of solidarity in their teachings. The four categories in which the teaching of solidarity is found in scriptures are: love, compassion, fellowship, and discipleship.

A. Love

1 Cor 13: 1

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.

Lev 19:18b

Take not revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.

Mt 5:43-44

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you . . .

Amos 5:14-15

Seek good and not evil, that you may live; then truly will the Lord, the God of hosts, be with you as you claim!

Micah 6:8

You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Jn 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

²⁶⁷Blessed John Paul II, “Centesimus Annus” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 10, p. 446.

1 Jn 4:12

No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us.

1 Jn 4:20-21

If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

B. Compassion**Mk 1:40-43**

A leper came to him (and kneeling down) begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once.

Mk 5:21-23 and 35-42

When Jesus had crossed again (in the boat) to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea. One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live." . . . While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?" Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid; just have faith." He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. So he went in and said to them, "Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep." And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out. He took along the child's father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was. He took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. At that they were utterly astonished.

Lk 7:11-15

Soon afterward he journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, "Do not weep." He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

Lk 10:29-37

But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

C. Fellowship

Acts 2:43-45

Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need.

D. Discipleship

Mt 10:42

“And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple—amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.”

Mt 14:13-21

When Jesus heard of it, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, “This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the crowds so that they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves.” Jesus said to them, “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.” But they said to him, “Five loaves and two fish are all we have here.” Then he said, “Bring them here to me,” and he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over—twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children.

Mt 15:32-38

Jesus summoned his disciples and said, “My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way.” The disciples said to him, “Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?”

Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?” “Seven,” they replied, “and a few fish.” He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets full. Those who ate were four thousand men, not counting women and children.

Mt 25:31-45

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you? And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers o mine, you did for me. Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’ Then they will answer and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?’ He will answer them, ‘Amen I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’ And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Prov 3:27

Refuse no one the good on which he has a claim when it is in your power to do it for him.

Prov 19:17

He who has compassion on the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his good deed.

Prov 3:3

Let not kindness and fidelity leave you: bind them around your neck; Then will you win favor and good esteem before God and man.

Is 58:7

Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.

Is 56:6-7

And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, ministering to him, Loving the name

of the Lord, and becoming his servants—All who keep the Sabbath free from profanation and hold to my covenant, Them I will bring to my holy mountain and make joyful in my house of prayer; Their holocausts and sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar, For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Ps 14 and Ps 15

Ps 14: A Lament over Widespread Corruption

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” Such are corrupt; they do abominable deeds; there is not one who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be one who is wise and seeks God. All alike have gone astray; they have become perverse; there is not one who does good, not even one. Will all these evildoers never learn, they who eat up my people just as they eat bread? They have not called upon the Lord; then they shall be in great fear, for God is with the just generation. You would confound the plans of the afflicted, but the Lord is his refuge. Oh, that out of Zion would come the salvation of Israel! When the Lord restores the well-being of his people, then shall Jacob exult and Israel be glad.

Ps 15 The Guest of God

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy mountain? He who walks blamelessly and does justice; who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue; Who harms not his fellow man, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; By whom the reprobate is despised, while he honors those who fear the Lord; Who, though it be to his loss, changes not his pledged word; who lends not his money at usury and accepts no bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be disturbed.

Mt 19:16-24

Now, someone approached him and said, “Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?” He answered him, “Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He asked him, “Which ones?” And Jesus replied, “‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother’; and ‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” The young man said to him, “All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Amen I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

Mt 24:45-51

“Who, then, is the faithful and prudent servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household to distribute to them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on his arrival finds doing so. Amen, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property. But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is long

delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eat and drink with drunkards, the servant's master will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour and will punish him severely and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.

Mt 6:24

"No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Lk 16:19-31

"There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"

III. Solidarity and the Early Church Fathers

A. The Didache

The Didache whose extant form dates to the second century, is a record of Christian belief, practice and governance in the first century. The first line of the Didache is "Teaching of the Lord to the Gentiles (or Nations) by the Twelve Apostles." The text, parts of which constitute the oldest surviving written catechism, has three main sections which deal with Christian ethics, rituals such as baptism and Eucharist, and finally Church organization. The work was not accepted as part of the New Testament.

The Didache is considered part of a second-generation of Christian writings known as the Apostolic Fathers.

Give to All

1.5 Give to everybody who begs from you, without looking for any repayment, for the Father wants that we should share his gracious bounty to all men. A giver who gives freely, as the commandment bids him, is blessed, for he is guiltless. But woe to the receiver! If he receives because he is in need, he is guiltless. But if he is not in need, he will be required to show why he received and for what purpose. He will be thrown into prison and his action will be investigated, and he will not get out until he has paid the last penny.²⁶⁸

Work and Sharing

4.5-4.8 Do not be one who reaches out to take, but shuts his hands when it comes to giving. If your labor has brought you earnings, make an offering as a ransom for your sins. Give without hesitation and without grumbling, and you will discover who He is that will requite you with generosity. Never turn away the needy; share all your possessions with your brother, and call nothing your own. If you and he share what is immortal in common, how much more should you share what is mortal!²⁶⁹

Hospitality and Work

12.2-12.5 If the newcomer is only passing through, assist him as much as you can. But he must not stay with you more than two days, or, if necessary, three. If he wants to settle down among you, and if he is a skilled worker, he must work for his living. If, however, he knows no trade, use your judgment to make sure that he does not live idleness on the pretext he is a Christian. If he refuses to do this, he is only trying to exploit Christ. You must be on your guard against such people.²⁷⁰

B. Clement of Rome

Clement was the third successor to Peter in Rome. His letter to the Corinthians is interesting with its emphasis on social order and structure, on the necessity of mutual solidarity, and on the duty of praying for the governing authority.

Social Order and Cooperation for the Common Good

37.1-5 So now, my brothers, let us campaign resolutely under his irreproachable directions. Think of the men who serve our generals in the field, and the discipline, readiness, and obedience with which they carry out their orders. Not everyone of them is a general, colonel, captain, sergeant, and so on. But each at his own rank executes the

²⁶⁸Phan, Message of the Fathers of the Church, 45.

²⁶⁹Ibid.

²⁷⁰Ibid., 46.

orders of the emperor and of the generals. The great cannot exist without the small; nor the small without the great. Every organism is composed of different elements; and this ensures the common good. Take the body as an instance. The head cannot function without the feet. Nor, likewise, can the feet function without the head. Even the smallest of our physical members are indispensable and valuable to the whole body; yet all of them work together and are united in a single obedience to preserve the whole body intact.²⁷¹

Social Solidarity

38.1-2 In Christ Jesus, then, we must preserve this corporate body of ours in its entirety. Each must be subject to his neighbor, according to his special gifts. The strong are not to ignore the weak, and the weak should respect the strong. The rich must provide for the poor, and the poor should thank God for giving him someone to meet his needs.²⁷²

Prayer for the Poor

59.4 We beseech you, O Lord, be our Helper and Protector. Rescue the afflicted, pity the lowly, raise up the fallen, assist the needy, heal the sick, bring back those of your people who stray, feed the hungry, release our captives, support the weak, comfort the faint-hearted. Let all the nations realize that you are the only God, that Jesus Christ is your Child, and that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture.²⁷³

C. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius of Antioch before his martyrdom in Rome wrote seven letters, six to different churches and one to Polycarp. Although he was intensely preoccupied with the unity of the Church, he found time to care for the needy and the slaves.

Letter to Polycarp: *Widows and Slaves*

4.1-3 Take care that widows are not neglected. Next to the Lord, you must be their protector . . . do not treat slaves, whether men or women, in an overbearing manner. On the other hand, they must not grow insolent. It should be their aim to be better slaves, for the glory of God, so that they may obtain from God a better freedom. Moreover they should not be overanxious to gain their freedom at the Church's expense, for then they only become slaves of selfish passion.²⁷⁴

Letter to Diognetus

The author of this letter is unknown as is the recipient. However, it is thought that it is an apology for Christianity. What is included here, is the letter's description of the

²⁷¹Ibid.

²⁷²Ibid., 47.

²⁷³Ibid.

²⁷⁴Ibid., 48.

position of the Christian in the world, its condemnation of economic exploitation, and its insistence on the need to imitate God's liberality in providing for the needy.

True Happiness

10.4-7 To be happy does not, indeed, consist in dominating one's neighbors, or in wanting to have more than one's weaker brethren, or in possessing riches and ordering one's inferiors about. No one can become an imitation of God like that, for such things are wholly alien to his majesty. But if a man takes his neighbor's burden on himself, and is ready to supply another's need from his abundance; if, by sharing the blessings he has received from God with those who are in want, he himself becomes a god to those who receive his bounty—such a man indeed is an imitator of God. Then, while you walk on earth, you will see that there is a god who rules in heaven; then you will begin to discourse on the mysteries of God; and you will love and admire those who are being punished for their refusal to deny God.²⁷⁵

D. The Shepherd of Hermas

The Shepherd of Hermas is supposed to have been written as the result of a series of visions. Its social teaching is quite extensive and significant. The author recognized the existence of two social classes, the rich and the poor, and uses the image of the vine and its branches to emphasize their mutual dependence. He suggests that one should not desire for more than what is sufficient and that riches are made to be shared to all. He admits that the rich can be saved, provided that they practice penance and almsgiving.

Third Vision: Sharing of Goods to the Needy

17:(9) 2 Now, then, listen to me: Live in peace with one another, care for one another, help one another. Do not enjoy God's creatures excessively and all by yourselves, but give a share also to those who are in need. For some people, from the abundance of things to eat, bring on disease to their bodies and weaken them, while others, having nothing to eat, are weakened in their bodies from lack of sufficient food and suffer ill health. So this failure to share is harmful to you who have and do not share to those who have not. Keep in mind the judgment to come. You rich, seek out those who are hungry so long as the tower is not yet completed, for, after the completion of the tower, you will be wishing to do good and will not have the opportunity. Now then, you who pride yourselves on your riches, take care lest the poor groan at any time, and their cry will reach the Lord, and you and your goods be shut out from the door of the tower.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵Ibid., 50.

²⁷⁶Ibid., 51-52.

Second Mandate: Give to All from the Fruits of Your Labor

2,4 Clothe yourself with holiness, in which there is no evil, which gives no offence, and in which everything is smooth and cheerful. Do good, and from the fruit of your labors, which is God's gift to you, give to all those in need without distinction, not debating to whom you will and to whom you will not give. Give to all, since it is God's will that we give to all from his bounties. Those who have received will give an account to God why they received and for what purpose. For, those who receive because they are in need will not be judged, but those who receive under false pretenses will be punished. Under these circumstances, the giver is innocent, since he only performed the service that the Lord had commanded him to perform, with simplicity and without distinguishing to whom to give and to whom not to give. This service, then, performed with simplicity, becomes acceptable in God's eyes. Therefore, the man who thus serves with simplicity will live unto God.²⁷⁷

First Similitude: A Christian is a Foreigner in This World. With His Riches He should Acquire Riches before God by Sharing His Wealth with Others.

1,6 Be careful therefore, while you live in a foreign land, not to acquire anything more than an adequate sufficiency. Be ready, so that, when the ruler of this city wishes to expel you for opposing his law, you may come out of his city and enter your own, and there observe your own law with joy and without detriment to anyone. Be on your guard, then, you who serve the Lord and hold him to your heart. Remember God's commandments and the promises he made, and do his works. Trust that he will fulfill his promises if you keep his commandments. Instead of fields, then, buy souls that suffer tribulation, according to your ability. Look after widows and orphans and do not neglect them. Spend your wealth and all your possessions you have received from the Lord on this kind of fields and houses. It is for this purpose that the Master has made you wealthy, to perform this ministry for him. It is far better to buy such lands and possessions and houses, for you will find them, when you settle in your own city. Such is your luxury, good and holy, free from sadness and fear, full of joy. Do not live then in the luxury of the pagans; it is of no use to you, servants of God.²⁷⁸

Second Similitude: The Rich and the Poor Help Each Other

5.5-7 "The rich man has great wealth, but, so far as the Lord is concerned, he is poor, because, distracted as he is by his wealth, he can offer only a very limited praise and prayer to God; and when he does, his praise and prayer is brief and weak and has no power to come before God. So, when a rich man goes to a poor man and gives him what he needs, he can be confident that what he does for the poor man can obtain a reward from God (for the poor man is rich in his prayer and in his praise, and his prayer has great power with God.)" With this faith, then, the rich man does not hesitate to supply the poor man with everything. On the other hand, the poor man who has been assisted by the rich intercedes for him and gives thanks to God for his benefactor. And the latter is more committed to help the poor man, so as not to let him wanting in anything during his life, because he knows that the poor man's prayer is acceptable and rich in God's eyes. Both fulfill their duties in this way: The poor man offers his prayers—these are his riches—

²⁷⁷Ibid., 52.

²⁷⁸Ibid., 52-53.

and gives back to the Lord the gift of prayers that he has received. In the same way the rich man unhesitatingly gives to the poor the riches he has received from the Lord. This is a great and acceptable deed in the sight of God because the rich man knows how to administer his riches correctly and distributes to the poor God's gifts and rightly accomplishes the Lord's ministry.²⁷⁹

E. Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr was born in Palestine between the years 100 and 110 and converted to Christianity about the year 130. His main works included two Apologies and the Dialogue with Trypho. Justin is one of the Apologists who sought to prove the innocence of the Christians in order to obtain toleration from the hostile civil authority and who tried to prove the value and truth of their religion to pagan thinkers.

First Apology: The Sharing of Goods in the Early Christian Community

14. . . . Those who once delighted in fornication now embrace chastity alone; those who made use of magic arts have dedicated themselves to the good and unbegotten God; we who once took most pleasure in accumulating wealth and property now bring what we have into a common fund and share with everyone in need; we who hated and killed one another and would not associate with men of different tribes because of their different customs, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them and pray for our enemies and try to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live in accordance with the good precepts of Christ, so that they may share with us the same joyful hope of a reward from God the Ruler of all.²⁸⁰

Assistance to the Needy Among Christians

67. And those who are prosperous, and who so wish, contribute, each one as much as he chooses to. The collection is deposited with the president (of the Eucharistic liturgy), who will take care of orphans and widows, those who are in want on account of sickness or any other cause, those who are in prison, and the strangers sojourning among us; in a word, he is the guardian of all who are in need.²⁸¹

F. Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria was born at Athens about the year 150. His main works include The Exhortation to the Greeks, The Tutor, The Stromata, and a sermon on Mark 10:17-31, "Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?". Clement began a new patristic period

²⁷⁹Ibid., 53-54.

²⁸⁰Ibid., 56.

²⁸¹Ibid., 57.

in writing. Before the third century, the writings were mostly apologetic and anti-heretical. The need developed for a comprehensive, orderly and more sophisticated elaboration of the Christian faith. One of the most famous centers of theological learning was the catechetical school of Alexandria.

The Tutor: Be Content with What is Sufficient and Share Goods with Others

2, 12.120 God himself has created human beings for communion or sharing with one another, by sharing himself first of all, and by sending his Word to all men alike, and by making all things common. Therefore, everything is common, and the rich should not grasp a greater share. The expression, then “I own something, and have more than enough: why shouldn’t I enjoy it?” is neither worthy of man nor proper to the sharing of goods. It is more conformable to charity to say: “I have something: why shouldn’t I share it with those in need?” Whoever says so fulfills the command: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” and is perfect. This is true luxury, the lavishness that stores up treasure; spending money on foolish desires is to be reckoned as waste, not expenditure.²⁸²

How to Share Our Riches

3, 6.34 . . . At any rate, we should reiterate on every occasion that most enlightening of all maxims, that is, the good man, in his temperance and righteousness, ‘stores up treasure in heaven.’ Whoever sells his earthly possessions and distributes them to the poor will find the imperishable treasure where there is neither moth nor robber. Such a man is truly blessed, even if he is small and weak and insignificant, and is rich indeed with the greatest of all riches. On the other hand, if a man becomes wealthier than Midas and Cinyra, but is unjust and haughty, like the man who was luxuriously clothed in purple and fine linen, yet despised Lazarus, he is miserable, lives in wretchedness, and will never find true life. Wealth, in fact, seems to me like a snake; it will twist around the hand and bite unless one knows how to grasp it properly, dangling it without danger by the point of the tail. In the same way, wealth, wriggling either in an experienced or inexperienced grasp, tends to cling to the hand and bite unless a person rises above it and uses it with discretion, so as to crush the beast by the charm of the Word and escape unharmed.²⁸³

The Rich Man is the One Who Gives

3, 6.35 If distinctions be made, let it be granted that the rich man is the one who has many possessions, loaded with gold like a dirty purse; but that the righteous man alone is the honest one, for honesty is the quality that preserves order and proper balance between managing and giving. “Some distribute their own goods,” it is written, “and become richer.” (Prov. 11: 24) Of such men, Scripture says: “He has distributed; he has given to the poor; his justice remains forever” (Ps. 11: 24). Therefore, it is not he who possesses

²⁸²Ibid., 66.

²⁸³Ibid., 67-68.

and keeps his wealth who is wealthy, but he who gives; it is giving, not receiving that makes a man happy. Generosity is the fruit of the soul, true wealth resides in the heart.

Good things should be considered the property only of good men. But Christians are good; a fool or a libertine can neither perceive nor truly possess the good. Therefore Christians alone possess good things, so Christians alone are wealthy. Holiness is true wealth, and the word is more valuable than all treasure; these are not increased by cattle or fields but are given by God. They cannot be taken away for the soul alone is such a man's treasure. It is the best possession to its owner, making man truly blessed. If a man abstains from desiring things that are beyond his reach but possesses by asking from God the things he desires in a holy way, is not that man abundantly wealthy, and indeed possessed of all things, since he has God as his everlasting treasure?²⁸⁴

Who Is the Rich Man that Is Saved? Wealth is a Useful Instrument for Doing Charity

14. We must not then throw away the wealth which is also beneficial to our neighbors. These things are called 'possessions' because they are possessed, and 'wealth' because they are useful and provided by God for the use of men. They lie at our disposal like materials or like instruments which can be well used by those who know how. An instrument, if you use it skillfully, will produce a skillful effect. If you lack the skill, it will be affected by your lack of skill, but it is itself free from blame.

Wealth is an instrument of this kind. If you are able to make a right use of it, then it will serve justice. If it is wrongly used, then it will serve injustice. For its nature is to serve, not to rule. That which is in itself incapable of good or evil is blameless, and must not be blamed; that which is capable of using it well or ill by reason of its free choices is to be held responsible. And this is the human mind, which possesses both independent judgment and the power of free choice in the disposal of what has been given it. So what is to be destroyed is not one's possessions but the passions of the soul, which hinder the right use of one's property. By thus becoming virtuous and good, a man will be able to make good use of his riches. The renunciation, then, and selling of all possessions, is to be understood in reference to the passions of the soul.²⁸⁵

The Poor in Spirit

. . . Imagine a man who holds his possessions, his gold, silver and houses, as the gifts of God; who serves the God who gave them by using them for the welfare of mankind; who knows that he possesses them more for the sake of his brethren than his own; who is superior to and not a slave of his possessions; who does not go about with his possessions in his heart or let himself be enclosed within them; who is always engaged in some good and holy work; and who, as cheerfully as their abundance. Such a man is the one whom the Lord calls 'blessed' and 'poor in spirit.' He is worthy to inherit the kingdom of heaven; he is not the rich man who cannot obtain life.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴Ibid., 68-69.

²⁸⁵Ibid., 74.

²⁸⁶Ibid., 75.

G. Tertullian

Although the Church of Africa had a relatively late beginning, it has provided Latin Christianity with the most original thinker of the ante-Nicene period, Tertullian. Tertullian was born in Carthage and was educated in philosophy and law. After he became a convert to Christianity, he left Rome and returned home to Carthage as a catechist and priest. His writings center on the trinity, Christology, ecclesiology, and the sacraments, for which he is known as the founder of theology in the West. He wrote only occasionally on social issues wherein he admits the legitimacy of private property, although he did write that “all things are common among us except our wives.” This statement has been taken to mean not communism as such, but rather the common sharing of goods.

The Apology: *The Social Involvement of Early Christians*

39. . . . Men of proven character preside over us, obtaining that honor not by money, but by proof of their virtue and ability. There is no buying and selling of any sort in the things of God. Though we have a treasure-chest, it is not made up of purchase-money as if religion could be obtained at a price. Once a month, each member, if he wishes, puts in a small donation, but only if he so desires and to the extent he is capable. There is no compulsion, everything is voluntary. These gifts are, as it were, piety's deposit fund. They are not withdrawn to be spent on feasts, and drinking, and on eating-houses, but to support and bury poor people, to help needy boys and girls, orphans, and shut-in old folks. They are also used to assist those who have suffered shipwreck, who are condemned to the mines, deported to the islands, or incarcerated, for being faithful to God's cause. . . .²⁸⁷

H. Cyprian of Carthage

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage and martyr, lived between 200 and 258. He distinguished himself by his social concern and his charitable activities, especially during the plague that devastated his city. On social matters, his “On Works and Almsgiving” is certainly one of the most important writings. It is the first work that discusses and

²⁸⁷Ibid., 82-83.

develops systematically the doctrine of almsgiving. For Cyprian, almsgiving is not simply an act of charity but a serious obligation of justice deriving from the duty of sharing the goods that God has destined for the common use. It is also a means of purification and a means of obtaining forgiveness of sins.

On Works and Almsgiving

The Scripture and the Duty of Almsgiving

7. Thus in the Gospel, the Lord, the Teacher of our life and Master of eternal salvation, who bestows life on those who believe in him and provides for them forever, among his divine commands and heavenly precepts, orders and prescribes nothing more frequently than that we continue in almsgiving and not cling avariciously to our earthly possessions but rather store up heavenly treasures. “Sell your possessions,” he says, “and give alms.” Again: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither rust nor moth consumes and where thieves do not break in. For where your treasure is, there also will be your heart.” And when he wished to show the man who had been made perfect and complete by the observance of the law, he said: “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell all that you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me . . .”²⁸⁸

The Example of the Poor Widow for the Rich to Imitate

15. . . . Behold in the Gospel the widow mindful of the heavenly precepts, doing good in the very midst of the pressures and hardships of poverty, casting two mites which were her only possessions into the treasury. When the Lord noticed and saw her, judging her work not for its quantity but for its intention, and considering not how much but from how much she had given, said: “Truly I assure you, this poor widow has put in more than all the rest. They make contribution out of their surplus, but she out of her want has given all that she had to live on.” A greatly blessed and glorious woman, who even before the day of judgment merited to be praised by the voice of the Judge. Let the rich man be ashamed of his lack of generosity and unbelief. A widow, and a poor one at that, is found to be rich in good works. If all collections are destined to be distributed to orphans and widows, she gives who deserves to receive, so that we may know what punishment awaits the rich man without good works, since in this example, not even the poor are exempt from doing good works. And that we may understand that these works are given to God and whoever does these deserves well of God, Christ calls them ‘gifts of God’ and points out that the widow has placed two mites among the gifts of God so that it is made abundantly clear that whoever pities the poor lends to God.²⁸⁹

The Number of Children is No Excuse for Not Giving Alms

18. Now you may argue that you have many children in the family and the number of children does not allow you to perform good works. My reply is that by this very fact

²⁸⁸Ibid., 87-88.

²⁸⁹Ibid., 89.

you ought all the more to do good works, since you are the father of many pledges. You have more people for whom you should pray to the Lord, more people whose sins must be forgiven, more people whose consciences must be cleansed, more people whose souls must be freed. Just as in the material life the greater the number of your children, the greater is the expense for their nourishment and sustenance, so too in the spiritual life and heavenly life, the greater the number of your children, the greater is the number of good works. . . If then you truly love your children, if you want to show them fully your fatherly and tender love, you should do more good works so that you may commend your children to God by your good works.²⁹⁰

I. Basil the Great

Basil (330—379) earned the title of “the Great” for his outstanding qualifications as an ecclesiastical statesman and organizer, as a great exponent of Christian doctrine, as the Father of oriental monasticism, as a reformer of liturgy, and as an effective social activist. His social teaching is interesting since it deals directly with the social character of man and the nature of private property and riches. More than any of his predecessor, Basil emphasizes the social purpose of riches, the limitations and the social function of the right of private ownership, the duty of sharing one’s possessions. He sharply criticizes the rich for their lack of social consciousness, condemns lending with interest, and insists on sharing as an obligation of social justice.

The Hexameron: The Greed of the Rich

Homily 7, 3. The food of fish differs according to their species. Some feed on mud; others eat seaweed; others content themselves with the plants that grow in water. But the greater part devour each other, and the smaller are food for the larger. And if by chance a fish that has eaten another smaller than itself is itself eaten by another larger, both are swallowed up in the belly of the last. And do we men act otherwise when we oppress our inferiors? What difference is there between the last fish and the man who, urged by devouring greed, swallows the weak into the belly of his insatiable avarice? One person took possession of what belongs to the poor, you caught him and made him a part of your wealth. You have shown yourself more unjust than the unjust, and more miserly than the miser. Take care that you do not end up like the fish, by hook, by snare, or by net. Surely we too, when we have done the deeds of the wicked, shall not escape punishment at the last.²⁹¹

²⁹⁰Ibid., 89-90.

²⁹¹Ibid., 109-110.

Homily on “I Will Pull Down My Barns”: *The Rich Man is a Steward of God’s Goods*

2. Surely what ails his soul is much what ails the glutton, who would burst with cramming rather than give the poor any of his leftovers. Man, remember who gives you these goods. And remember yourself—who you are, what you are steward of, from whom you had it, why you have been favored above most. You have been made the minister of a gracious God, steward for your fellow-servants. Do not suppose that all these things were provided for your belly. The wealth you handle belongs to others; think of it accordingly. Not for long will it delight you; soon it will slip from you and be gone, and you will be asked to give strict account of it. Yet you keep it all locked away behind doors and sealed up; and then the thought of it keeps you awake at nights; you take counsel about it inwardly, and your counselor is yourself—a fool.²⁹²

The Social Function of Riches

3. My hearer, see that it goes not so with you. These things have been written that we may not act in such ways ourselves. Imitate the earth; bring forth fruit as it does; shall your human status be inferior to a lifeless thing? The earth brings forth fruits not for its own pleasure but for your service; you can reap for yourself the fruit of all generosity because the rewards of good works return to those who offer them. If you give to the hungry, the gift becomes your own and comes back to you with increase. As the wheat falling on the ground turns to gain for the man who lets it fall, so the grain bestowed on the hungry brings you profit a hundredfold hereafter. . . . Your money you must leave behind you, whether you will or not, but the glory of good works you will bear with you to the Master, when a whole people, standing about you before their judge and yours, call you their foster-father and benefactor and all the names won by charity. . .²⁹³

The Rich Man Who Does Not Share His Possessions with Others Commits Injustice

7. . . . Is God unjust when he distributes the necessities of life unequally? Why are you rich and another poor? Surely it is that you may win the reward of charitableness and faithful stewardship, and he the noble prizes of patience?²⁹⁴

Homily Delivered in Times of Famine and Drought: *Lack of Sharing is Comparable to Murder*

7. The pain of starvation, from which the hungry die, is a horrible suffering. Of all human calamities, famine is the principal one, and the most miserable of deaths is, no doubt, that by starvation. In other kinds of death, either the sword puts a quick end to life, or the roaring fire burns out the sap of life in some instances, or the teeth of beasts, mangling the vital limbs, would not prolong the torture. Hunger, however, is a slow torture which prolongs the pain; it is an infirmity well established and hidden in its place, a death always present and never coming to an end. It dries up the natural liquids, diminishes the body heat, contracts the size, and little by little drains off the strength. The flesh clings to the bones like a cobweb. The skin has no color . . . The belly is hollow, contracted, formless, without weight, without the natural stretching of the viscera, joined to the bones of the back. Now, what punishment should not be inflicted

²⁹²Ibid., 114.

²⁹³Ibid., 115.

²⁹⁴Ibid., 117.

upon the one who passes by such a body? What cruelty can surpass that? How can we not count him among the fiercest of fierce beasts and consider him as a sacrilegious person and a murderer? The person who can cure such an infirmity and because of avarice refuses his medicine, can with reason be condemned as a murderer.²⁹⁵

The Short Rules: Private Property and Its Use

Question 92: How can you be certain that the Lord commands us to sell all our possessions? For what reason should we do so? Is it because the goods are in themselves condemnable or is it because they cause distractions to the soul?

Answer: To this question it may be answered first that if the goods were bad in themselves, then they could have in no way been created by God. “Everything God created is good; nothing is to be rejected” (1 Tim. 4: 4). Secondly, the Lord’s command does not teach that we have to reject and flee the goods as though they are bad, but that we should administer them. And the one who is condemned is condemned not because he possesses things, but because he makes a bad use of what he possesses. Thus a detached attitude towards and a respect for the earthly goods and a wise administration of them according to the command of the Lord are of great help in obtaining many things. First, to purify us of our sins . . . and secondly, to gain the kingdom of heaven and possess an inexhaustible treasure.²⁹⁶

J. Gregory of Nazianzus

A close friend of Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus who lived between 330 and 390 was called “the Christian Demosthenes” because of the power of his eloquence. Gregory left a collection of orations, poems, and letters. He is considered the greatest Christian rhetorician of the fourth century both in his prose and in his poems.

On the Love for the Poor: Compassion Towards All the Afflicted . . .

6. We must, then, open the doors to all the poor and all those who are victims of disasters, whatever the causes may be, since we have been told to rejoice and to weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:12) And since we are human beings, we must pay our debt of goodness to our fellow human beings, whatever the cause of their plight: orphanhood, exile, cruelty of the master, rashness of those who govern, inhumanity of tax-collectors, brutality of blood-thirsty bandits, greediness of thieves, confiscation or shipwreck. All are equally miserable and look up to our hands in the same way as we look up to those of God whenever we stand in need of something.²⁹⁷

Social Conscience and Sharing

²⁹⁵Ibid., 119.

²⁹⁶Ibid., 121.

²⁹⁷Ibid., 123.

19. . . . How can we enjoy pleasures amidst the calamities of our brethren? May God preserve me from being rich while they are indigent, from enjoying robust health if I do not try to cure their diseases, from eating good food, clothing myself well and resting in my home if I do not share with them a piece of my bread and give them, in the measure of my abilities, a part of my clothes and if I do not welcome them into my home. . . .²⁹⁸

The Origin of Wealth, Poverty, and Avarice

25. Let us observe the supreme and first law of God, who rains on the just and the unjust and makes the sun rise on all equally (Mt. 4:45). He spread out the earth for all the animals, with its fountains, rivers and forests; he gave air to winged animals, water to aquatic creatures, and to all the basic elements of life, not dominated by any power, not restricted by any law, not separated by any boundaries. No, all these necessities of life he has put at the disposal of all and abundantly, so that no one would lack anything. In this way he honors by equality of the gift the equality of nature and at the same time manifests the abundance of his goodness. But no sooner do men bury gold, or silver, or luxurious and unnecessary clothes, or glittering stones or any other thing for its style, than there are signs of war and mutiny and tyranny, and instantly eyebrows are raised with contempt and they deny mercy to the unfortunate people, even though they are their kinsmen. Nor do they try to help the needy, not even with their superfluity.²⁹⁹

They should at least consider that poverty and wealth, freedom (as we call it) and slavery and other similar names were introduced quite late into the history of mankind, as a sort of common diseases following the iniquity and its inventions. But, in the beginning, as the Gospel says, it was not so (Mt. 19:8). He who created man at the beginning made him free and endowed him with freedom of choice, subjected only to his law, and made him rich in the delights of Paradise. The same things he desired for and the same grace he gave to the rest of mankind because they descend from the first and only man. Freedom and wealth were the only law; true poverty and slavery are its transgression.³⁰⁰

K. Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa was the younger brother of Basil and lived about 335 to 394.

He was a gifted speculative theologian and mystic as well as a most versatile and successful author. Fundamental to Gregory of Nyssa's theology is his anthropology.

Man, for him, is what the Scripture says he is: the image and likeness of God, and consequently enjoys the highest dignity among the earthly creatures over which he has received from God dominion and power.

²⁹⁸Ibid., 124-125.

²⁹⁹Ibid., 125.

³⁰⁰Ibid.

On the Beatitudes: Mercy and the Social Order

Fifth Homily: . . . Therefore the creature in need should be made equal to the one who has a larger share, and that which is lacking should be filled by what has abundance. This is the law mercy gives men in regard to the needy. . . . Mercy is a voluntary sorrow that joins itself to the suffering of others. . . . Mercy is the loving disposition towards those who suffer distress. For an unkindness and cruelty have their origin in hate, so mercy springs from love, without which it could not exist. . . . Mercy is intensified charity. Hence a man of such dispositions of soul is truly blessed, since he has reached the summit of virtue. . . .³⁰¹

Love of the Poor: Fasting and Sharing

Therefore I say to you: Fast from evil-doing, discipline yourselves from covetousness, abstain from unjust profits, starve the greed of mammon, keep in your houses no snatched and stolen treasure. For what use is it to touch no meat and to wound your brother by evil-doing? What advantage is it to forgo what is your own and to seize unjustly what is the poor's? What piety is it to drink water and thirst for blood, weaving treachery in the wickedness of your heart? Judas himself fasted with the eleven, but since he did not curb his love for money, his fasting availed him nothing to salvation. . . .³⁰²

. . . These days have brought us naked and homeless men in plenty; a host of captives is at everyone's door; strangers and fugitives are not lacking, and on every side their begging and stretched-out hands are there to see. Their house is the open air; their lodgings are the arcades, the streets, the deserted corners of the markets; they lurk in holes like owls and birds of the night. Their clothing is tattered rags; their means of subsistence, the feeling of the compassionate. Their food is anything thrown by the passers-by; their drink, the springs they share with the beasts. . . . They live a wild and vagabond life, not by habit but because need and misfortune have brought them to it.

You who are fasting, these are the men I bid you help. Be generous to these, your distressed brothers. Give to the hungry what you deny to your own appetite. . . . Clasp the afflicted man as if he were gold. Take the sufferer to your arms as if he were your own health, the welfare of your wife and children and servants all your house. A poor man that is sick is doubly in want. Those without means who are in good health can pass from door to door; they can go in search of the well-to-do; they can sit at the cross-roads and cry out to all comes. But men shackled by illness, men cooped up in some narrow lodging-place or corner like Daniel in the den, these wait for you—the religious man, the friend of the poor—to be another Habacuc to them. . . .³⁰³

But you will say: "I am poor as well." Granted; suppose you are. Nevertheless, give what you can; God asks for nothing above your powers. You can give a loaf yourself, another will give a cup of wine, another clothing; thus one man's hardship will be relieved by your combined aid. It was not from one benefactor but from the whole people that Moses took what was needed for the tabernacle; one who was rich in gold

³⁰¹Ibid., 129.

³⁰²Ibid., 130.

³⁰³Ibid., 131.

brought that, another silver; a poor man brought skins, and one still poorer the hair of goats. Consider too how the widow's mite was more than the offerings of the rich; she gave everything that she had; they cast in but little of what was theirs.³⁰⁴

Do Not Despise the Poor

God himself is the prime author of beneficence, the rich and generous provider of all that we need. But we, who are taught in Scripture's every syllable to copy our Lord and Maker in so far as the mortal may imitate the divine and immortal—we snatch everything to our own enjoyment, assigning some things to ourselves to live upon, hoarding the rest for our heirs. Pitiless as we are, we care nothing for the unfortunate, we give no kindly thought to the poor. A man sees his fellow-man with no bread to eat, no food to sustain life itself; yet far from hastening to help, far from offering him rescue, he leaves him like a once sturdy plant to wither unwatered pitifully away—and this even if he has wealth to overflowing and might let the channels of this abundance run forth to comfort many. The flow from one river-source brings richness to many a spreading plain; so the wealth of one household is enough to preserve multitudes of the poor, if only a grudging uncharitable heart does not fall like a stone to block the passage and thwart the stream.³⁰⁵

God Wants Us to Have an Equal Share of His Goods

Live with restraint; do not think everything your own, but reserve a part for God's dear poor. All things belong to God, the Father of us and them. We are all of the same stock, all brothers. And when men are brothers, the best and most equitable thing is that they should inherit in equal portions. The second best is that even if one or two take the greater part, the others should have at least their own share. But if one man should seek to be absolute possessor of all, refusing even a third or a fifth to his brothers, then he is a cruel tyrant, a savage with whom there can be no dealing, an insatiate beast gloatingly shutting its jaws over the meal it will not share. Or rather he is more ruthless than any beast; wolf does not drive wolf from the prey, and a pack of dogs will tear the same carcass; this man in his limitless greed will not admit one fellow-creature to a share in his riches. . . .³⁰⁶

L. St. John Chrysostom

Born in c. 347 and ordained a priest by Flavian, bishop of Antioch, he was appointed by his bishop to devote special attention to the ministry of preaching, a task he performed so well that he was given the name of Chrysostom, "golden mouthed."

Against his wish, Chrysostom was made patriarch of Constantinople in 398 and immediately set about the work of reforming the moral and spiritual life of the city. John

³⁰⁴Ibid., 131-132.

³⁰⁵Ibid., 132.

³⁰⁶Ibid., 133.

Chrysostom may certainly be said to be the most brilliant and eloquent exponent of the great themes of the Greek patristic social doctrine. At the heart of his social thought lies the double principle that sustains and nurtures common life: charity, which is embodied in compassion and sharing; and solidarity, which expresses itself in the mutual interdependence of all human beings. Chrysostom was so zealous in exhorting almsgiving and exalting the dignity of the poor and sometimes railed so violently against riches that he has been accused of being a demagogue.

On Lazarus: What the Rich Possess Belongs to the Poor

. . . Thus, not giving part of one's possessions to others is already a kind of robbery. If what I am telling you sounds perhaps rather odd, do not be surprised. I will adduce a text from the divine Scriptures which says that it is rapine, avarice and theft, not only taking possession of things belonging to others but also refusing to give part of one's possessions to others. What text is this? Reproaching the Jews through the mouth of the prophet, God says: "The earth has produced its fruits but you have not brought in tithes, and robbery of the poor dwells in your house" (Mal. 3:10). "Because you have made the customary offerings," says the Lord, "you have taken away what belongs to the poor." This he says in order to make it clear to the rich that what they possess belongs to the poor, even when they receive the inheritance from their parents or come in for some money, whatever the source. Elsewhere he also says: "Rob not the poor man of his livelihood" (Sirach 4:1). A robber is one who takes things belonging to others, since robbery is taking and keeping what is not one's own. These texts therefore teach that if we refuse to give alms, we will be punished in the same way as robbers.³⁰⁷

Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew: The Duty of the Rich to Make Good Use of His Possessions

Homily XLIX, 3, 4. For the temporal goods are but an appendage to the spiritual ones, so vile and trifling they are in comparison with these, however great they may be. Let us not therefore spend our energies on them, but regard both the acquisition and the loss of them with equal indifference, like Job who neither clung to them when present, nor sought them absent. On this account riches are called "chremata" (utilities), so that we should not bury them in the earth but should use them aright. Each artisan has his peculiar skill, so does the rich man. The rich man does not know how to work in brass, nor to frame ships, nor to weave, nor to build houses, nor any such thing. Let him then learn to use his wealth aright, and to pity the poor; so will he know a better art than all those.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷Ibid., 138.

³⁰⁸Ibid., 142.

The Excellence of the Art of Almsgiving

Homily LII, 4. Therefore justly will the rich, if they are wicked, be more punished than the poor, since they were not softened even by their prosperity. And tell me not that they gave alms, since if they did not give in proportion to their fortune, they will not escape punishment. Our alms are judged not by the measure of our gifts, but by the largeness of our heart. But if these suffer punishment, much more will those who are eager about superfluous things; who build houses of two or three stories, but despise the hungry; who give heed to covetousness, but neglect almsgiving. . . .³⁰⁹

It is Easy for the Rich to Do Away with Poverty

Homily LXVI, 3. . . . For as proof that we do sow sparingly, let us inquire, if you please, who are more numerous in the city, poor or rich; and who, neither poor nor rich, are the middle class. As for instance, a tenth part is rich, and a tenth is poor that has nothing at all, and the rest is middle class. Let us distribute then among the poor the whole multitude of the city, and you will see how great is our disgrace. For the very rich are indeed few; but those who come next to them are many; again the poor are much fewer than these. Nevertheless, although there are so many that are able to feed the hungry, many go to sleep in their hunger, not because those that have are not able with ease to succor them, but because of their great barbarity and inhumanity. For if both the wealthy, and those next to them, were to distribute among themselves those who are in need of bread and clothing, scarcely would one poor person fall to the share of fifty men or even a hundred. Yet, they are waiting every day, despite the fact that there is a great abundance of those who can help them.³¹⁰

Homilies on the First Letter to the Corinthians: The Essence of Christianity

Homily XXV, 3. . . . This is the rule of the most perfect Christianity, its most exact definition, its highest point, namely, the seeking of the common good. Paul himself states it when he says: “Even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11, 1). For nothing can so make a man an imitator of Christ as caring for his neighbors. Indeed, even though you fast, or sleep on hard ground, or even suffer unto death, but should you take no thought for your neighbor, you have done nothing great; despite what you have done, you still stand far from this model of a perfect Christian.³¹¹

M. Ambrose of Milan

Ambrose (c. 337—397), bishop of Milan, a doctor of the Church, was preeminently a pastor, a successful man of action, an energetic administrator, endowed with an iron will, a great sense of discipline, and a superb practical turn of mind. On social teachings, his most significant works include On Naboth, On Tobit, and On Duties.

³⁰⁹Ibid., 143.

³¹⁰Ibid., 144.

³¹¹Ibid., 153.

Justice, according to Ambrose, is primarily a social virtue. He declares that the two principles that govern and sustain society are justice and good-will. The former implies wisdom, the latter, goodness (On Duties, I, 28, 130). Justice is one of the four cardinal virtues that secure the common good.

On Naboth: Ambition and Greed of the Rich

2. You rich, how far will you push your frenzied greed? Are you alone to dwell on the earth? Why do you cast out men who are fellow-creatures and claim all creation as your own? Earth at its beginning was for all in common, it was meant for rich and poor alike; what right have you to monopolize the soil? Nature knows nothing of the rich; all are poor when she brings them forth. Clothing and gold and silver, food and drink and covering—we are born without them all; naked she receives her children into the tomb, and no one can enclose his acres there. A little turf suffices for the poor and rich, and the earth which proved too narrow for the appetites of the living is wide enough at last for the rich and all that is his.³¹²

The Hypocrisy of the Rich Man's Fasting

44. How vividly does the Scripture portray the rich and their ways! They are disconsolate if they cannot rob their neighbors, they refuse to eat, they fast—not to lessen their crime but to accomplish it. At such times you see them joining the congregation at church—dutiful, demure, regular—hoping to win the grace to effect their evil purpose. But God says to them: “This is not the fast that I have chosen, that you bow your head like a reed or be in sackcloth or ashes. You shall not call this an acceptable fast . . . But loose every bond of wickedness, undo the knots of covenants made by force, let the afflicted go free, tear up very unjust writing. Break your bread to the hungry; and bring the needy and homeless into your house. . .” (Is 58:5-7)³¹³

Sharing of Riches Is a Duty of Justice

53. What you, rich, give to the needy brings profit to yourself; for yourself too your possession is increased when it is diminished. You yourself are fed by the bread you give to the poor, because whoever has mercy on the poor is himself sustained by the fruits of his compassion. Mercy is sown on earth and sprouts in heaven; what is planted in the poor produces in front of God. “Do not say, I will give tomorrow,” says the Lord (Prov 3, 28). If he does not suffer that you say: “I will give tomorrow,” how can he bear you to answer: “I will not give”? When giving to the poor you are not giving him what is yours; rather you are paying back to him what is his. Indeed what is common to all and has been given to all to make use of, you have usurped for yourself alone. The earth belongs to all, and not only to the rich; yet those who do not enjoy it are far fewer than those who do. You are paying back, therefore, your debt; you are not giving gratuitously what you do not owe. . .³¹⁴

³¹²Ibid., 168.

³¹³Ibid., 172.

³¹⁴Ibid., 173-174.

On the Duties of the Clergy: *Mercy and Its Advantages*

I, 11, 38. Mercy, also, is a good thing, for it makes men perfect insofar as it imitates the perfect Father. Nothing graces the Christian soul so much as mercy. It is exercised chiefly towards the poor; you should consider them as sharers with you in the common fruits of the earth, which brings them forth for the use of all. Consequently you should distribute to the poor what you have and in this way help your fellow-men and companions. You give money, the poor man receives life; the money you give is his livelihood; your money is his property.³¹⁵

39. Further he gives more to you than you to him, since he is your debtor in regard to your salvation. If you clothe the naked, you clothe yourself with righteousness. If you welcome the stranger into your home and receive the needy, they will procure for you the friendship of the saints and an eternal dwelling-place. That is no small recompense. You sow earthly things and receive heavenly rewards. . . .³¹⁶

Letters: *Follow the Example of Christ*

2, 26. Let your people seek the riches of good works and be rich in character. The beauty of riches is not in the purses of the rich, but in their support of the poor. In the weak and needy, riches shine brighter. Let the wealthy learn to seek not their own interests, but those which are Christ's, so that Christ may seek them out and bestow his possessions on them. He spent his blood for them; he poured his Spirit; he offers them his kingdom. What else can he give who has given himself? Or what will the Father refuse to give, who delivered his only-begotten Son to death for us? Therefore, admonish them to serve the Lord in purity and grace, to lift up their eyes to heavenly things with all the intensity of their minds, to count nothing as gain except what profits eternal life, since all the gain of this world is the loss of souls. . . .³¹⁷

N. Jerome

Jerome was born around 340 near Dalmatia, present day Croatia and moved to Rome around 360 where he was baptized and there became interested in the affairs of the Church. He went to Trier where he began his theological studies which continued for the rest of his life. Around 373, he traveled to Antioch and came into contact with the experience of the Church of the East and its Church Fathers. Between 374-379, he began his monastic experience living in the desert. This experience broadened his

³¹⁵Ibid., 176.

³¹⁶Ibid.

³¹⁷Ibid., 181.

understanding of Christianity and the Scriptures and later brought him into contact with St. Gregory of Nazianzus.

Returning to Rome around 382, Jerome began his translation work with some of the homilies of Origen and the Chronicle of Eusebius. After this, he would begin his translation of the Bible which has been his gift to the world.

Homily on Luke 16: 19 – 31: The Rich Man and Lazarus: *The Rich Man and Lazarus*

. . .The rich man, in purple splendor, is not accused of being avaricious, nor of carrying off the property of another, nor of committing adultery, nor, in fact, of any wrongdoing; the evil alone of which he is guilty is pride. Most wretched of men, you see a member of your own body lying there outside at your gate, and have you no compassion? If the precepts of God mean nothing to you, at least take pity on your own plight, and be in fear lest you become such as he. Why do you save what is superfluous to your pleasures? Give in alms to your own member what you waste. I am not telling you to throw away your wealth. What you throw out, the crumbs from your table, offer as alms.³¹⁸

O. St. Augustine of Hippo

Augustine (354-430) is the greatest Latin Father and one of the greatest theologians of all times. As a bishop, he ably performed the heavy task of administering his diocese, including that of building an almshouse for the poor and at least five basilicas. He preached incessantly, paying special attention to catechizing the poor and ignorant. Although St. Augustine has not systematically developed a body of social doctrine, he provided several key concepts, dispersed throughout his writings, which serve as a structure for his social teaching. These include the social order, private property, and the relation between Church and State. St. Augustine's teaching on man's social relationship centers around the notion of order. His teaching on riches and the right of ownership is based upon the concept of right use.

³¹⁸Ibid., 189.

The Way of Life of the Catholic Church

Christianity and Possession of Goods

I, 35, 77. . . . For how many men of wealth, how many rural householders, and merchants, and soldiers, how many civic leaders, and even senators, persons of both sexes, suffered for the true faith and religion, giving up all those vain and temporal goods which they used but were not enslaved to, thus proving to unbelievers that they possessed these goods and were not possessed by them.³¹⁹

IV. Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching

Solidarity in the Social Thought of John Paul II *“is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”*³²⁰

A. Introduction of the Term by Blessed John Paul II

In this way what we nowadays call the *principle of solidarity*, the validity of which both in the internal order of each nation and in the international order I have discussed in the Encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, is clearly seen to be *one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization*. This principle is frequently stated by Pope Leo XIII, who uses the term “friendship,” a concept already found in Greek philosophy. Pope Pius XI refers to it with the equally meaningful term “social charity.” Pope Paul VI, expanding the concept to cover the many modern aspects of the social question, speaks of a “civilization of love”.³²¹

B. Solidarity Challenges Us, Inspires Us

a. To See the Living Image of God in One’s Neighbor

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

³¹⁹Ibid., 204.

³²⁰Blessed John Paul II, “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 38, p. 421.

³²¹Blessed John Paul II, “Centesimus Annus” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 10, p. 446.

At that point, awareness of the common fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of all in Christ “children in the Son” and of the presence and life giving action of the Holy Spirit will bring to our vision of the world a new criterion for interpreting it. Beyond human and natural bonds, already so close and strong, there is discerned in the light of faith a new model of the unity of the human race, which must ultimately inspire our solidarity. This supreme model of unity, which is a reflection of the intimate life of God, one God in three Persons, is what we Christians mean by the word “communion.” This specifically Christian communion, jealously preserved, extended and enriched with the Lord's help, is the soul of the Church's vocation to be a “sacrament,” in the sense already indicated.³²²

b. To Recognize One Another As Persons

The exercise of solidarity within each society is valid when its members recognize one another as persons. Those who are more influential, because they have a greater share of goods and common services, should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess. Those who are weaker, for their part, in the same spirit of solidarity, should not adopt a purely passive attitude or one that is destructive of the social fabric, but, while claiming their legitimate rights, should do what they can for the good of all. The intermediate groups, in their turn, should not selfishly insist on their particular interests, but respect the interests of others.³²³

c. To Respect Every Human Being

In the spirit of solidarity and with the instruments of dialogue we will learn: respect for every human person; respect for the true values and cultures of others; respect for the legitimate autonomy and self determination of others; to look beyond ourselves in order to understand and support the good of others; to contribute to our own resources in social solidarity for the development and growth that come from equity and justice; to build structures that will ensure that social solidarity and dialogue are permanent features of the world we live in.³²⁴

d. To See “The Other” as Our “Neighbor,” a Helper

Solidarity helps us to see the “other” - whether a person, people or nation - not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our “neighbor,” a “helper” (cf. Gen 2:18-20) to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God.³²⁵

³²²Blessed John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, no. 40, pp. 423 and 424.

³²³Ibid., no. 39, p. 422.

³²⁴Blessed John Paul II, “World Day of Peace Message,” 1986, no. 5.

³²⁵Blessed John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, no. 39, p. 422.

e. To Commit Oneself to the Common Good

Solidarity, then, is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all. This determination is based on the solid conviction that what is hindering full development is that desire for profit and that thirst for power already mentioned. These attitudes and structures of sin are only conquered presupposing the help of divine grace by a diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one's neighbor with the readiness, in the gospel sense, to lose oneself for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to serve him instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. Mt 10:40-42; 20:25; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 22:25-27).³²⁶

f. To Develop All Peoples As One World

The same duty of solidarity that rests on individuals exists also for nations: Advanced nations have a very heavy obligation to help the developing peoples (GS, no. 86). It is necessary to put this teaching of the Council into effect. Although it is normal that a nation should be the first to benefit from the gifts that Providence has bestowed on it as the fruit of the labors of its people, still no country can claim on that account to keep its wealth for itself alone. Every nation must produce more and better quality goods to give to all its inhabitants a truly human standard of living, and also to contribute to the common development of the human race. Given the increasing needs of the under developed countries, it should be considered quite normal for an advanced country to devote a part of its production to meet their needs, and to train teachers, engineers, technicians and scholars prepared to put their knowledge and their skill at the disposal of less fortunate peoples.³²⁷

g. To Overcome Selfishness

In order to overcome today's widespread individualistic mentality, what is required is a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity, beginning in the family with the mutual support of husband and wife and the care which the different generations give to one another. In this sense the family, too, can be called a community of work and solidarity.³²⁸

h. To Overcome Misery Now

We are all united in this progress toward God. We have desired to remind all men how crucial is the present moment, how urgent the work to be done. The hour for action has now sounded. At stake are the survival of so many innocent children

³²⁶Ibid., no. 38, pp. 421 and 422.

³²⁷Pope Paul VI, "Populorum Progressio" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 48, p. 251.

³²⁸Blessed John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, no. 49, pp. 476 and 477.

and, for so many families overcome by misery, the access to conditions fit for human beings; at stake are the peace of the world and the future of civilization. It is time for all men and all peoples to face up to their responsibilities.³²⁹

C. The Development of Solidarity in Catholic Social Teaching

a. Mater et Magistra

Workers and employers should regulate their mutual relations in a spirit of human solidarity and in accordance with the bond of Christian brotherhood. For the unregulated competition which so-called liberals espouse, or the class struggle in the Marxist sense, are utterly opposed to Christian teaching and also to the very nature of man.³³⁰

b. Pacem in Terris

Since men are social by nature they are meant to live with others and to work for one another's welfare. A well-ordered human society requires that men recognize and observe their mutual rights and duties. It also demands that each contribute generously to the establishment of a civic order in which rights and duties are more sincerely and effectively acknowledged and fulfilled.³³¹

It is not enough, for example, to acknowledge and respect every man's right to the means of subsistence if we do not strive to the best of our ability for a sufficient supply of what is necessary for his sustenance.³³²

The society of men must not only be organized but must also provide them with abundant resources. This certainly requires that they observe and recognize their mutual rights and duties; it also requires that they collaborate in the many enterprises that modern civilization either allows or encourages of even demands.³³³

It is in keeping with their dignity as persons that human beings should take an active part in government, although the manner in which they share in it will depend on the level of development of the country to which they belong.³³⁴

Since the mutual relations among nations must be regulated by the norm of truth and justice, they must also derive great advantage from an energetic union of mind, heart and resources. This can be effected at various levels by *mutual cooperation in many ways*, as is happening in our own time with beneficial results

³²⁹Paul VI, Populorum Progressio, no. 80, p. 259.

³³⁰Pope John XXIII, "Mater et Magistra" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 23, p. 88.

³³¹Pope John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 31, p. 135.

³³²Ibid., no. 32, p. 135.

³³³Ibid., no. 33, pp. 135 and 136.

³³⁴Ibid., no. 73, p. 143.

in the economic, social, political, educational, public health and sports spheres. We must remember that, of its very nature, *civil authority exists, not to confine its people within the boundaries of their nation, but rather to protect, above all else, the common good of the entire human family.*³³⁵

c. Gaudium et Spes

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history.³³⁶

Though mankind today is struck with wonder at its own discoveries and its power, it often raises anxious questions about the current trend of the world about the place and role of man in the universe, about the meaning of his individual and collective strivings, and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity. Hence, giving witness and voice to the faith of the whole People of God gathered together by Christ, this Council can provide no more eloquent proof of its *solidarity with the entire human family* with which it is bound up, as well as its respect and love for that family, than by engaging with it in conversation about these various problems.³³⁷

God did not create man for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. So also “it has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals, without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness.” So from the beginning of salvation history he has chosen men not just as individuals but as members of a certain community. Revealing his mind to them, God called these chosen ones “His people” (Exod. 3:7-12), and, furthermore, made a covenant with them on Sinai.³³⁸

In economic enterprises it is persons who work together, that is, free and independent human beings created to the image of God. Therefore the active participation of everyone in the running of an enterprise should be promoted. . . . Among the basic rights of the human person must be counted the right of freely founding labor unions. These unions should be truly able to represent the workers and to contribute to the proper arrangement of economic life. Another such right is that of taking part freely in the activity of these unions without risk of reprisal.

³³⁵Ibid., no. 98, p. 147.

³³⁶“Gaudium et Spes” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 1, p. 166.

³³⁷Ibid., no. 3, pp. 166 and 167.

³³⁸Ibid., no. 32, p. 184.

Through this sort of orderly participation, joined with an ongoing formation in economic and social matters, all will grow day by day in the awareness of their own function and responsibility. Thus they will be brought to feel that according to their own proper capacities and aptitudes they are associates in the whole task of economic and social development and in the attainment of the universal common good.³³⁹

Christians should collaborate willingly and wholeheartedly in establishing an international order involving genuine respect for all freedoms and amicable brotherhood between all men. This objective is all the more pressing since the greater part of the world is still suffering from so much poverty that it is as if Christ himself were crying out in these poor to beg the charity of the disciples.³⁴⁰

d. Populorum Progressio

There can be no progress toward the complete development of man without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity.³⁴¹

It is not just a matter of eliminating hunger, or even of reducing poverty. The struggle against destitution, though urgent and necessary, is not enough. It is a question, rather, of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion, or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control; a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man. This demands great generosity, much sacrifice, and unceasing effort on the part of the rich man. Let each one examine his conscience, a conscience that conveys a new message for our times. Is he prepared to support out of his own pocket works and undertakings organized in favor of the most destitute? Is he ready to pay higher taxes so that the public authorities can intensify their efforts in favor of development? Is he ready to pay a higher price for imported goods so that the producer may be more justly rewarded? Or to leave this country, if necessary and if he is young, in order to assist in this development of the young nations?³⁴²

The same duty of solidarity that rests on individuals exists also for nations:

“Advanced nations have a very heavy obligation to help the developing peoples.”³⁴³ “We

³³⁹Ibid., no. 68, p. 212.

³⁴⁰Ibid., no. 88, p. 227.

³⁴¹“Populorum Progressio” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 43, p. 250.

³⁴²Ibid., no. 47, p. 251.

³⁴³Ibid., no. 48, p. 251.

must repeat once more that the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations.”³⁴⁴

e. Octogesima Adveniens

. . . It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel’s unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church. . . It is up to these Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops who hold responsibility and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of good will, to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political, and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed.³⁴⁵

It is in fact the weakest who are the victims of dehumanizing living conditions, degrading for conscience and harmful for the family institution. The promiscuity of working people’s housing makes a minimum of intimacy impossible. . . There is an urgent need to remake at the level of the street, of the neighborhood, or of the great agglomerative dwellings the social fabric whereby man may be able to develop the needs of his personality. Centers of special interest and of culture must be created or developed at the community and parish levels with different forms of associations, recreational centers, and spiritual and community gatherings where the individual can escape from isolation and form anew fraternal relationships.³⁴⁶

To build up the city, the place where men and their expanded communities exist, to create new modes of neighborliness and relationships, to perceive an original application of social justice and to undertake responsibility for this collective future, which is foreseen as difficult, is a task in which Christians must share.³⁴⁷

. . . Human rights are still too often disregarded, . . . or else they receive only formal recognition. . . Legislation is necessary, but it is not sufficient for setting up true relationships of justice and equality. In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others. If, beyond legal rules, there is really no deeper feeling of respect for and service to others, then even equality before the law can serve as an alibi for flagrant discrimination, continued exploitation, and actual contempt. Without a renewed education in solidarity, an overemphasis on equality can give rise to an individualism in which

³⁴⁴Ibid., no. 49, p. 251.

³⁴⁵Blessed John Paul II, “Octogesima Adveniens” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 4, p. 266.

³⁴⁶Ibid., no. 11, p. 269.

³⁴⁷Ibid., no. 12, p. 269.

each one claims his own rights without wishing to be answerable for the common good.³⁴⁸

f. Justitia in Mundo

The Church, indeed, is not alone responsible for justice in the world; however, she has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need for love and justice contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians. Of itself, it does not belong to the Church, insofar as she is a religious and hierarchical community, to offer concrete solutions in the social, economic, and political spheres for justice in the world. Her mission involves defending and promoting the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.³⁴⁹

Like the Apostle Paul, we insist, welcome or unwelcome, that the Word of God should be present in the center of human situations.³⁵⁰

The examination of conscience which we have made together, regarding the Church's involvement in action for justice, will remain ineffective if it is not given flesh in the life of our local Churches at all their levels.³⁵¹

g. Evangelii Nuntiandi

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian, or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, *their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good*. . . . Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst? Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelization.³⁵²

h. Laborem Exercens

The call to solidarity and common action addressed to the workers—especially to those engaged in narrowly specialized, monotonous, and depersonalized work in industrial plants, when the machine tends to dominate man—was important and eloquent from the point of view of social ethics. It was the reaction against the degradation of man as the subject of work and against the unheard of

³⁴⁸Ibid., no. 23, pp. 273 and 274.

³⁴⁹“Justitia in Mundo” in Catholic Social Thought, 294.

³⁵⁰Ibid., 297.

³⁵¹Ibid., 300.

³⁵²Pope Paul VI, “Evangelii Nuntiandi” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 21, p. 310.

accompanying exploitation in the field of wages, working conditions and social security for the worker. This reaction united the working world in a community marked by great solidarity.³⁵³

i. Centesimus Annus

Among the many factors involved in the fall of oppressive regimes, some deserve special mention. Certainly, the decisive factor which gave rise to the changes was the violation of the rights of workers. It cannot be forgotten that the fundamental crisis of systems claiming to express the rule and indeed the dictatorship of the working class began with the great upheavals which took place in Poland in the name of solidarity. It was the throng of working people which foreswore the ideology which presumed to speak in their name. On the basis of a hard, lived experience of work and of oppression, it was they who recovered and, in a sense, rediscovered the content and principles of the church's social doctrine.³⁵⁴

It is necessary to break down the barriers and monopolies which leave so many countries on the margins of development, and to provide all individuals and nations with the basic conditions which will enable them to share in development. This goal calls for programmed and responsible efforts on the part of the entire international community. Stronger nations must offer weaker ones opportunities for taking their place in international life, and the latter must learn how to use these opportunities by making the necessary efforts and sacrifices and by ensuring political and economic stability, the certainty of better prospects for the future, the improvement of workers' skills, and the training of competent business leaders who are conscious of their responsibilities.³⁵⁵

In order to overcome today's widespread individualistic mentality, what is required is a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity, beginning in the family with the mutual support of husband and wife and the care which the different generations give to one another. In this sense the family too can be called a community of work and solidarity.³⁵⁶

Sacred Scripture continually speaks to us of an active commitment to our neighbor and demands of us a shared responsibility for all of humanity. This duty is not limited to one's own family, nation or state, but extends progressively to all mankind, since no one can consider himself extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family. Attentive and pressing concern for one's neighbor in a moment of need—made easier today because of the new means of communication which have brought people closer together—is especially

³⁵³Blessed John Paul II, "Laborem Exercens" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 8, p. 361.

³⁵⁴Blessed John Paul II, "Centesimus Annus" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 23, p. 455.

³⁵⁵*Ibid.*, no. 35, pp. 465 and 466.

³⁵⁶*Ibid.*, no. 49, pp. 476 and 477.

important with regard to the search for ways to resolve international conflicts other than by war.³⁵⁷

D. Other Papal References on Solidarity

In talking about the principle of solidarity, Pope John Paul II writes:

This principle is frequently stated by Pope Leo XIII, who uses the term “friendship,” a concept already found in Greek philosophy. Pope Pius XI refers to it with the equally meaningful term “social charity.” Pope Paul VI, expanding the concept to cover the many modern aspects of the social question, speaks of a “civilization of love.”³⁵⁸

a. Pope Leo XII—Friendship

Rerum Novarum (1891) was the first of the great social encyclicals. It expresses concern for the status of workers which had suffered as a result of the industrial organization. The wealth of the world was concentrated in the hands of a few while most workers were suffering a life little better than slavery. In a time of political and economic turmoil the Church realized it needed to share in the sufferings of the social issues of the day and to offer the wisdom of the Gospel as a light to those looking for answers to these great difficulties thus expressing the Church’s solidarity with the struggle of workers.

But, if Christian precepts prevail, the respective classes will not only be united in the bonds of friendship, but also in those of brotherly love. For they will understand and feel that all men are children of the same common Father, who is God; that all have alike the same last end, which is God Himself, who alone can make either men or angels absolutely and perfectly happy; that each and all are redeemed and made sons of God, by Jesus Christ, “the first-born among many brethren”; that the blessings of nature and the gifts of grace belong to the whole human race in common, and that from none except the unworthy is withheld the inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven. “If sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and co-heirs with Christ.” Such is the scheme of duties and of rights which is shown forth to the world by the Gospel. Would it not seem that, were society penetrated with ideas like these, strife must quickly cease?³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷Ibid., no. 51, p. 478.

³⁵⁸Ibid., no. 10, p. 446.

³⁵⁹Pope Leo XIII, “Rerum Novarum” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 25.

b. Pius XI—Social Charity

Quadragesimo Anno (“On Reconstructing the Social Order”) commemorates the fortieth anniversary of the issuance of Rerum Novarum by Pope Leo XIII. As Pope Leo endeavored to respond to the social problems of his day, Pope Pius XI issued this encyclical to the Universal Church and to all the world pointing the way to the solution of the pressing social problem that was being faced in his day, a possible new world war.

Toward the close of the nineteenth century, new economic methods and new developments of industry had in many nations led to a situation wherein the human community appeared more and more divided into two classes. The first, small in numbers, enjoyed practically all the comforts so plentifully supplied by modern invention. The second class, comprising the immense multitude of workingmen, was made up of those who, oppressed by dire poverty, struggled in vain to escape from the straits which encompassed them.³⁶⁰

This state of things was quite satisfactory to the wealthy, who looked upon it as the consequence of inevitable and natural economic laws, and who, therefore, were content to abandon to charity alone the full care of relieving the unfortunate as though it were the task of charity to make amends for the open violation of justice, a violation not merely tolerated, but sanctioned at times by legislators...³⁶¹

Such also was the opinion of many Catholics, priests and laymen, who with admirable charity had long devoted themselves to relieving the undeserved misery of the laboring classes, and who could not persuade themselves that so radical and unjust a distinction in the distribution of temporal goods was quite in harmony with the designs of an all-wise Creator.³⁶²

c. Pope Paul VI—Civilization of Love

In a homily addressed to 90,000 pilgrims who attended Midnight Mass in St. Peter’s Square on December 25, 1975, to celebrate the closing of the Holy Year, Pope Paul VI said:

The wisdom of fraternal love, which with strength and works that are rightly called Christian, has characterized the history of the holy church, will explode with new fruitfulness, with victorious happiness, with regenerating social

³⁶⁰Pope Pius XI, “Quadragesimo Anno” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 3, p. 42.

³⁶¹Ibid., no. 4, pp. 42 and 43.

³⁶²Ibid., no. 5, p. 43.

consciousness. Not hatred, not strife, not avarice, will be its dialectic, but love—the love that generates love, the love of man for man, not for some provisional and equivocal interest, or for some bitter and ill-tolerated condescension, but for the love of you: for you, O Christ, discovered in the suffering and in the need of each of our fellowmen. The civilization of love will prevail over the anxiety of implacable social struggles, and it will give to the world the longed-for transfiguration of humanity that, at last, is Christian.³⁶³

E. Pius XII--The Unrecognized Contribution to Human Solidarity

Cardinal Pacelli was elected Pope on March 2, 1939 in the shortest conclave since 1623. Aspiring to be a new “Pope of Peace,” Pius XII tried to prevent World War II by proposing an international conference to deal with Hitler’s demands against Poland. Britain refused to participate in the conference as did Hitler. Pius then offered to serve as a mediator, between Germany and Poland, France and Italy, but his mediation was not accepted. On September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland and three days later Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. On October 20, 1939, Pius XII issued his first encyclical, Summi Pontificatus (“On the Limitations on the Authority of the State”) in which he outlined a possible path to peace and stressed the importance of human solidarity to maintain a world at peace:

Among the many errors which derive from the poisoned source of religious and moral agnosticism, We would draw your attention, Venerable Brethren, to two in particular, as being those which more than others render almost impossible or at least precarious and uncertain, the peaceful intercourse of peoples.³⁶⁴ The first of these pernicious errors, widespread today, is the forgetfulness of that law of human solidarity and charity which is dictated and imposed by our common origin, and by the equality of rational nature in all men, to whatever people they belong, and by the redeeming Sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ on the Altar of the Cross to His Heavenly Father on behalf of sinful mankind.³⁶⁵

³⁶³Pope Paul VI, “Christmas Message,” December 25, 1975, St. Peter’s Square.

³⁶⁴Pope Pius XII, Summi Pontificatus, no. 34.

³⁶⁵*Ibid.*, no. 35.

F. Catechism of the Catholic Church

a. Human Solidarity as Described in the Catechism

The Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to human solidarity as part of man's vocation and life in the Spirit. It is a part of the human condition.

The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of “friendship” or “social charity,” is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood. (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, nn. 38—40 and Centesimus Annus, no. 10)³⁶⁶

Solidarity is manifested in the first place by the distribution of goods and remuneration for work. It also presupposes the effort for a more just social order where tensions are better able to be reduced and conflicts more readily settled by negotiation.³⁶⁷

Socio-economic problems can be resolved only with the help of all the forms of solidarity: solidarity of the poor among themselves, between rich and poor, of workers among themselves, between employers and employees in a business, solidarity among nations and peoples. International solidarity is a requirement of the moral order; world peace depends in part upon this.³⁶⁸

The virtue of solidarity goes beyond material goods. In spreading the spiritual goods of the faith, the Church has promoted, and often opened new paths for, the development of temporal goods as well. And so throughout the centuries has the Lord's saying been verified: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.” (Mt. 6: 33)

For two thousand years this sentiment has lived and endured in the soul of the Church, impelling souls then and now to the heroic charity of monastic farmers, liberators of slaves, healers of the sick, and messengers of faith, civilization, and science to all generations and all peoples for the sake of creating the social conditions capable of offering to everyone possible a life worthy of man and of a Christian. (Pius XII, “Discourse, June 1, 1941”)³⁶⁹

Solidarity is an eminently Christian virtue. It practices the sharing of spiritual goods even more than material ones.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶Catechism of the Catholic Church, (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: Urbi et Orbi Communications, 1994), no. 1939.

³⁶⁷*Ibid.*, no. 1940.

³⁶⁸*Ibid.*, no. 1941.

³⁶⁹*Ibid.*, no. 1942.

³⁷⁰*Ibid.*, no. 1948.

b. Justice and Solidarity among Nations

Not only is there required to be solidarity among people, there is a call to solidarity among nations.

Various causes of a religious, political, economic, and financial nature today give “the social question a worldwide dimension.” There must be solidarity among nations which are already politically interdependent. It is even more essential when it is a question of dismantling the “perverse mechanisms” that impede the development of the less advanced countries. In place of abusive if not usurious financial systems, iniquitous commercial relations among nations, and the arms race, there must be substituted a common effort to mobilize resources toward objectives of moral, cultural, and economic development, “redefining the priorities and hierarchies of values.”³⁷¹

Rich nations have a grave moral responsibility toward those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves or have been prevented from doing so by tragic historical events. It is a duty in solidarity and charity; it is also an obligation in justice if the prosperity of the rich nations has come from resources that have not been paid for fairly.³⁷²

³⁷¹Ibid., no. 2438.

³⁷²Ibid., no. 2439.

Chapter Three

IMMIGRATION

As we begin the second decade of the twenty-first century, there is only one expression more feared by political leaders than “economic crisis” and that is “immigration.” According to the United Nations, there are presently 214 million immigrants in the world looking for a new home, and there are very few countries willing to open their doors to receive them. Of all the global issues of this new century, immigration is one of the most important ones for the future of humanity and peace of the world. Presently about one of every thirty-five people is a migrant looking for a new country to call home. The number of international migrants is increasing every year by almost 50 million people. (It is estimated that in China alone, the number of internal migrants is between 150 to 200 million people.) This represents an estimated annual rate of growth of about three percent.

Migration is a dynamic phenomenon and has a great influence on the economic and social life of every country. The reasons for migration are many and varied including labor migration, family reunification, security, civil rights, and health. But most immigrants are poor people who leave their homelands because of oppressive social structures; or political situations of war; or systemic injustice; or famine; or because they seek a better future for themselves and their families. Migrants are mostly desperate people who are willing to live under the poorest of conditions, make any sacrifice necessary so that they can have the opportunity to begin a new life. However, very few countries see poor immigrants as a future blessing for their countries even though the history of migration shows this to be a fallacy. Most countries have been built by poor

immigrants. Those countries who have embraced them have been blessed and, for the world, the greatest example of this generosity has been the United States of America.

At this moment China is the biggest country in the world with 1.34 billion people. Sometime around 2020, India will be the most populous nation in the world. By 2050, it is forecast that Africa will be the largest population center of the world and the forecast is that in 2100 Africa will have a population that will be near 3.6 billion people.

According to the projections of the U.S. Census, the United States will have a population of 423 million by 2050. However, the largest grouping of people in the world will live in the African continent. The world is changing and the migration of peoples will grow as will the challenges.

The public discourse on migration demands an understanding of the complex and dynamic reality of the movement of peoples. It is a multi-dimensional experience that demands a flexible policy approach in order to manage immigration effectively. A cooperative and thorough approach to migration management is necessary to deal with the immigration pressures of this century. Policies are necessary to facilitate and regulate immigration. For these policies to be successful, governments must work collaboratively.

The Catholic Christian has a role to play in this discussion. The Christian must be able to respond to the immigrant who is asking for hospitality and be able to express their faith view in such a way that her or his influence on government policy will provide a just and fraternal response where the migrants' hope of a better life will be realized in the new home they are seeking.

This section will reflect on the values, the attitude, and behavior that a Catholic Christian should have towards the immigrant who is seeking hospitality and security in

this new country. We will begin our presentation on Catholic Social Teaching starting with the Bible, the Church Fathers, and modern Catholic Social Teaching. In this way, I hope this will provide an opportunity for a self-evaluation of the present reception of migrants in our communities and at the same time offer the possibility of thinking about the future reception of migrants in a different way. Because of the complexity of this phenomenon, it is hoped that this reflection will help all of us to develop a more comprehensive approach to respond to this modern day cultural challenge which faces all people in every country of the world.

I. Scriptural References Applicable to the Immigration Debate

A. Old Testament

As we begin our reading of The Old Testament we are told in the Creation account how God created all the parts of the world in the first five days and “God saw how good it was” (Gen 1: 35). Then on the sixth day:

God created man in his image, in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them (Gen 1: 27).³⁷³

From the very beginning of creation we are told that every human being is made to the image and likeness of God and because of this everyone carries a special dignity and is entitled to a special respect. The Old Testament begins with a story about migrant people; people who have been called by God to travel on a journey of faith; a people that will be blessed because they have been willing to believe in God and follow where He was guiding them. The Bible is a book about immigrants, refugees, a people without a land, but a people chosen by God to lead all people to Him.

The Bible begins with the story about Adam and Eve who have been sent into

³⁷³New American Bible, 9.

exile because of their disobedience and now must find a new home and dwell there for eternity (Gen 3:21–24). Noah and his family find favor with God because of his goodness, but humanity suffers from a natural disaster which causes the destruction of the earth and the need for him to rebuild the world (Gen 7:1–4 and 8:13–17). Abraham is called to “go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and your father’s house to a land that I will show you” (Gen 12:1).³⁷⁴ And so Abraham goes with Sarah to the land that the Lord will show them. Joseph, who has been sold as a slave, is blessed by the Pharaoh of Egypt; and when his family is found to be in need of food and shelter to survive they move to Egypt and find God’s blessing through the Pharaoh of Egypt (Gen 46:1–7). Moses, called by God to be one day the leader of his people, is adopted by the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt. One day he kills an Egyptian who was mistreating a kinsman and must flee into an alien land to find safety (Ex 2:11–22).

The Old Testament recounts the history and sojourn of the Jewish people who begin their lives made into the image and likeness of God and journey through valleys and over mountaintops to reach their homeland, land promised them by God. Reading the Old Testament through the eyes of this migrant people, through the eyes of these refugees, one can get a better understanding of the dignity and respect that is owed to the refugees of the 21st century.

Genesis 1: 27–28

God created man in his image, in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 3:21–24

For the man and his wife the Lord God made leather garments, with which he clothed them. Then the Lord God said: “See! The man has become like one of us, knowing what is good and what is bad! Therefore, he must not be allowed to put out his hand to take fruit from the tree of life also, and thus eat of it and live forever. The Lord God

³⁷⁴Ibid., 18.

therefore banished him from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he had been taken. When he expelled the man, he settled him east of the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 46:1–7

Israel set out with all that was his. When he arrived at Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. There God, speaking to Israel in a vision by night, called, “Jacob! Jacob!” “Here I am,” he answered. Then he said: “I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you a great nation. Not only will I go down to Egypt with you; I will also bring you back here, after Joseph has closed your eyes.” So Jacob departed from Beer-sheba, and the sons of Israel put their father and their wives and children on the wagons that Pharaoh had sent for his transport. They took with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in the land of Canaan. Thus Jacob and all his descendants migrated to Egypt. His sons and his grandsons, his daughters and his granddaughters—all his descendants—he took with him to Egypt.

Exodus 2:11–22

On one occasion, after Moses had grown up, when he visited his kinsmen and witnessed their forced labor, he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his own kinsmen. Looking about and seeing no one, he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out again, and now two Hebrews were fighting! So he asked the culprit, “Why are you striking your fellow Hebrew?” But he replied, “Who has appointed you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses became afraid and thought, “The affair must certainly be known.” Pharaoh, too, heard of the affair and sought to put him to death. But Moses fled from him and stayed in the land of Midian. As he was seated there by a well, seven daughters of a priest of Midian came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father’s flock. But some shepherds came and drove them away. Then Moses got up and defended them and watered their flock. When they returned to their father Reuel, he said to them, “How is it you have returned so soon today?” They answered, “An Egyptian saved us from the interference of the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock!” “Where is the man?” he asked his daughters. “Why did you leave him there? Invite him to have something to eat.” Moses agreed to live with him, and the man gave him his daughter Zipporah in marriage. She bore him a son, whom he named Gershom; for he said, “I am a stranger in a foreign land.”

Exodus 12:49

The law should be the same for the resident alien as for the native.

Exodus 22:20--24

You must not molest the stranger or oppress him, for you lived as a stranger in the land of Egypt.

Exodus 23:9

You must not oppress the stranger: you know how a stranger feels, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:10

You shall not pick your vineyard bare, nor gather up grapes that have fallen. These things you shall leave for the poor and the alien. I, the Lord, am your God.

Leviticus 19:33–34

When strangers sojourn with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Numbers 15:15–16

There is but one rule for you and for the resident alien, a perpetual rule for all your descendants. Before the Lord you and the alien are alike, with the same law and the same application of it for the alien residing among you as for yourselves.

Deuteronomy 6:5

Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 10:17–20

Yahweh is your God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, triumphant and terrible, never partial, never to be bribed. It is he who sees justice done for the orphan and the widow, who loves the stranger and gives him food and clothing. Love the stranger then, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 15:4, 7–9

Let there be no poor among you then. Is there a poor man among you, one of your brothers, in any town of yours in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you? Do not harden your heart or close your hand against that poor brother of yours, but be openhanded with him and lend him enough for his needs.

Deuteronomy 24:17-22

You must not pervert justice in dealing with a stranger or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that Yahweh your god redeemed you from there. That is why I lay this charge on you. When reaping the harvest in your field, if you have overlooked a sheaf in that field, do not go back for it. Leave it for the stranger, the orphan and the widow, so that Yahweh your god may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees you must not go over the branches twice. Let anything left be for the stranger, the orphan and the widow. When you harvest your vineyard you must not pick it over a second time. Let anything left be for the stranger, the orphan and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt. That is why I lay this charge on you.

Deuteronomy 27:19

A curse on him who tampers with the rights of the stranger, the orphan and the widow.

Tobit 4:7-8

Set aside part of your goods for almsgiving. Never turn your face from any poor man and God will never turn His from you.

Psalm 9:7-10

See, Yahweh is enthroned for ever, he sets up his throne for judgment; he is going to judge the world with justice, and pronounce a true verdict on the nations.

May Yahweh be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold when times are hard. Those who acknowledge your name can rely on you, you never desert those who seek you, Yahweh.

Psalm 41:1-3

Happy the man who cares for the poor and weak: if disaster strikes, Yahweh will come to his help. Yahweh will guard him, give him life and happiness in land: ah, do not let his enemies treat him as they please! Yahweh will be his comfort on his bed of sickness; most carefully you make his bed when he is sick.

Psalm 82:2-4

No more mockery of justice, no more favoring of the wicked! Let the weak and the orphan have justice, be fair to the wretched and destitute; rescue the weak and needy, save them from the clutches of the wicked!

Psalm 103:6

Yahweh, who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed.

Proverbs 21:3

To act virtuously and with justice is more pleasing to Yahweh than sacrifice.

Proverbs 21:13

He who shuts his ear to the poor man's cry shall himself plead and not be heard.

Proverbs 22:22-23

Because a man is poor, do not therefore cheat him, nor, at the city gate, oppress anybody in affliction; for Yahweh takes up their cause, and extorts the life of their extortioners.

Proverbs 31:8-9

Speak, yourself, on behalf of the dumb, on behalf of all the unwanted: speak, yourself, pronounce a just verdict, uphold the rights of the poor, of the needy.

Ecclesiasticus 4:8-9

To the poor man lend an ear, and return his greeting courteously. Save the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor, and do not be mean-spirited in your judgments.

Isaiah 10:1-3

Woe to the legislators of infamous laws, to those who issue tyrannical decrees, who refuse justice to the unfortunate and cheat the poor among my people of their rights, who

make widows their prey, and rob the orphan. What did you do on the day of punishment, when, from far off, destruction comes? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?

Isaiah 61:1-2

The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me, for Yahweh has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bid up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to the captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favor from Yahweh, a day of vengeance for our God.

Jeremiah 22:3

Yahweh says this: Practice honesty and integrity; rescue the man who has been wronged from the hands of his oppressor; do not exploit the stranger, the orphan, the widow; do no violence, shed no innocent blood in this place.

Amos 5:15

Hate evil, love good maintain justice at the city gate, and it may be that Yahweh, God of Sabaoth, will take pity on the remnant of Joseph.

Micah 6:8

What is good has been explained to you; this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, to walk humbly with your God.

Zechariah 7:8-10

The word of Yahweh was addressed to Zechariah as follows: He said: Apply the law fairly, and practice kindness and compassion toward each other. Do not oppress the widow and the orphan, the settler and the poor man, and do not secretly plan evil against one another.

Malachi 3:5

Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and those who do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

B. New Testament

The New Testament begins with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem in the days of the ruthless King Herod. One day visitors from a foreign country came to inquire where the newborn King of the Jews was born. These Magi Kings came to worship this great King. When King Herod learned of the birth of the newborn King of the Jews, he was greatly troubled and plotted to kill the child Jesus because he saw him as a threat to his throne.

Jesus, a little baby, is taken by Joseph and Mary and they flee into Egypt. They thus become first refugee family in the New Testament and for us undocumented refugees seeking asylum in a foreign land. In the Christian tradition, they become the model for all refugee families for all eternity.

Jesus begins his public ministry in Nazareth. One day he went to according to his custom into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day.

He unrolled the scroll and found that passage where it was written: the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Lk 4: 18-19).

Jesus begins his ministry as an itinerant preacher who goes from town to town preaching the Good News of the Lord. He has no place to lay his head, but there is always someone to receive him. He dealt with people from different regions and backgrounds of Israel and at times from different cultures. He was open to receive those in need in spite of the social and religious regulations of the Jewish people. He would praise the Samaritan who helped his neighbor; he spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well; he healed the lepers who begged for his help; he cured the daughter of the Roman soldier; he fed the hungry, the thirsty, and implored his disciples to clothe the naked, care for the sick and imprisoned. The least of these brethren we are called to serve in his name. And so we read the Gospel through the eyes of Jesus who often lived without a place to rest as a stranger in a foreign land and we ask to see all people as our sisters and brothers as he saw and treated them.

Matthew 2:13–15

When they had departed (the Magi), behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” Joseph rose and took the

child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Matthew 25:31–46

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' The righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.' And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that (he) answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Luke 4:16-30

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recover of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, “Isn't this the son of Joseph?” He said to them, “Surely you will quote me this proverb, ‘Physician, cure yourself,’ and say, ‘Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.’” And he said, “Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away.

Luke 10:25-28

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” He said in reply, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.”

Luke 10:30-37

Jesus replied: “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?” He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Luke 17:11-19

As he continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village, ten lepers met (him). They stood at a distance from him and raised their voice, saying, “Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!” And when he saw them, he said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. Jesus said in reply, “Ten were cleansed, were thy not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this

foreigner returned to give thanks to God?” Then he said to him, “Stand up and go; your faith has saved you.”

John 4:7-10

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said to her, “If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

We want you to know, brothers, of the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their profound poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For according to their means, I can testify, and beyond their means, spontaneously, they begged us insistently for the favor of taking part in the service to the holy ones, and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us through the will of God, so that we urged Titus that, as he had already begun, he should also complete for you this gracious act also. Now as you excel in every respect, in faith, discourse, knowledge, all earnestness, and in the love we have for you, may you excel in this gracious act also.

I say this not by way of command, but to test the genuineness of your love by your concern for others. For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich. And I am giving counsel in this matter, for it is appropriate for you who began not only to act but to act willingly last year: complete it now, so that your eager willingness may be matched by your completion of it out of what you have. For if the eagerness is there, it is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have; not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality your surplus at the present time should supply their needs, so that their surplus may also supply your needs, that there may be equality. As it is written: "Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less."

Galatians 3:28

There are no distinctions. All are one in Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5:1

You have been called to live in freedom. For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:13-15

Love your neighbor as Yourself. For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

Philippians 2:1-11

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but (also) everyone for those of others.

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 3:10-12

Put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.

1 John 4:19-21

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar, for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

II. References From The Early Church Fathers Applicable to Immigration

In the first three centuries, Christianity was perceived as some type of Jewish sect. Because of the persecution that it suffered, Christianity did not have a home, and its members were scattered throughout the Roman Empire and brought their religion with them sharing it with whomever was open to receiving the Gospel message of Jesus. The persecution that the early Church suffered became the reason for its expansion throughout

the Roman Empire. Instead of being the cause of its destruction, the persecution, the suffering, led to the growth of Christianity because the early Christians fled Rome to find a safe haven throughout the Empire. The suffering did not provide the early Christians with the opportunity to participate in the social life of the Empire. Its main preoccupation was its survival from day to day and caring for the poor and the needy among its members.

With the conversion of Constantine, in the early part of the fourth century, Christianity became the religion of the Empire, and the Church became involved in the public life of the world that it inhabited. Now faced with a new challenge, the Church influenced the Empire with its works of social charity that it had developed during the days of persecution, and it now became a model for the way the Empire began to deal with its citizens.

A. The Didache

1, 5. Give to everybody who begs from you, without looking for any repayment, for the Father wants that we should share his gracious bounty to all men.³⁷⁵

4, 10. Do not be harsh when giving orders to male or female slaves, since they trust in the same God as yours; otherwise they may cease to fear Him who is over you both. He has not come to call men according to their station but those whom the Spirit has made ready.³⁷⁶

4, 11. And you, slaves, obey your masters with respectfulness and fear, as if they represented God.³⁷⁷

12, 2. If the newcomer is only passing through, assist him as much as you can. But he must not stay with you more than two days, or, if necessary, three. 3. If he wants to shelter down among you, and if he is a skilled worker, he must work for his living. 4. If, however, he knows no trade, use your judgment to make sure that he does not live in

³⁷⁵Phan, Message of the Fathers of the Church, 45.

³⁷⁶Ibid.

³⁷⁷Ibid.

idleness on the pretext he is a Christian. 5. If he refuses to do this, he is only trying to do exploit Christ. You must be on your guard against such people.³⁷⁸

B. Clement of Rome

38, 1. In Christ Jesus, then, we must preserve this corporate body of ours in its entirety. Each must be subject to his neighbor, according to his special gifts. 2. The strong are not to ignore the weak, and the weak should respect the strong. The rich must provide for the poor, and the poor should thank God for giving him someone to meet his needs.³⁷⁹

C. The Shepherd of Hermas

Third Vision, 17, (9)

2. Now, then, listen to me: Live in peace with one another, care for one another, help one another. Do not enjoy God's creatures excessively and all by yourselves, but give a share also to those who are in need. 3. For some people, from the abundance of things to eat, bring on disease to their bodies and weaken them, while others, having nothing to eat, are weakened in their bodies from lack of sufficient food and suffer ill health. 4. So this failure to share is harmful to you who have and do not share to those who have not. 5. Keep in mind the judgment to come. You rich, seek out those who are hungry so long as the tower is not yet completed, for, after the completion of the tower, you will be wishing to do good and will not have the opportunity. 6. Now then, you who pride yourselves on your riches, take care lest the poor groan at any time, and their cry will reach the Lord, and you and your goods be shut out from the door of the tower.³⁸⁰

A Christian is a Foreigner in This World. With His Riches He Should Acquire Riches before God by Sharing His Wealth with Others.

First Similitude, 1

6. Be careful therefore, while you live in a foreign land, not to acquire anything more than an adequate sufficiency. Be ready, so that, when the ruler of this city wishes to expel you for opposing his law, you may come out of his city and enter your own, and there observe your own law with joy and without detriment to anyone. 7. Be on your guard, then, you who serve the Lord and hold him to your heart. Remember God's commandments and the promises he made, and do his works. Trust that he will fulfill his promises if you keep his commandments. 8. Instead of fields, then, buy souls that suffer tribulation, according to your ability. Look after widows and orphans and do not neglect them. Spend your wealth and all your possessions you have received from the Lord on this kind of fields and houses. 9. It is for this purpose that the Master has made you wealthy, to perform this ministry for him. It is far better to buy such lands and possessions and houses, for you will find them when you settle in your own city. 10.

³⁷⁸Ibid., 46.

³⁷⁹Ibid., 47.

³⁸⁰Ibid., 51-52.

Such is your luxury, good and holy, free from sadness and fear, full of joy. Do not live then in the luxury of the pagans; it is of no use to you, servants of God.³⁸¹

All Should Be without Material: *Tenth Similitude, 114; (4)*

2. Tell all who can perform charitable acts not to cease doing them, since doing good works is useful to them. Now I say that every man should be relieved in his difficulties. For a person who is in need and suffers inconveniences in his daily life is in torment and anguish.

3. Whoever delivers a needy man from his necessities draws great joy for himself. For the man who is harassed by this kind of misfortune suffers the same torture and affliction as the man in prison. Indeed, many who are incapable of enduring these calamities take their own lives. Therefore, whoever knows the misfortune of such a person, and does not release him, commits a serious sin and is guilty of that man's blood.

4. So, all you who have received riches from the Lord, perform good deeds, lest, while you are delaying, the building of the tower be finished. For your sakes, the construction of the tower has been interrupted. So, if you do not hurry to do good, the tower will be completed and you will find yourselves excluded from it.³⁸²

D. Justin Martyr

First Apology: The Sharing of Goods in the Early Christian Community

14. . . .we who once took most pleasure in accumulating wealth and property now bring what we have into a common fund and share with everyone in need; we who hated and killed one another and would not associate with men of different tribes because of their different customs, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them and pray for our enemies and try to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live in accordance with the good precepts of Christ, so that they may share with us the same joyful hope of a reward from God the Ruler of all.³⁸³

Assistance to the Needy among Christians

67. . . .And those who are prosperous, and who so wish, contribute, each one as much as he chooses to. The collection is deposited with the president (of the Eucharistic liturgy). Who will take care of orphans and widows, those who are in want on account of sickness or any other cause, those who are in prison, and the strangers sojourning among us, in a word, he is the guardian of all who are in need.³⁸⁴

E. Clement of Alexandria

The Tutor: *Be Content with What is Sufficient and Share Goods with Others*

2.12.120 . . . It is absurd that one man lives in luxury, while so many others suffer in

³⁸¹Ibid., 52-53.

³⁸²Ibid., 55.

³⁸³Ibid., 56.

³⁸⁴Ibid., 57.

poverty. How much more glorious it is to serve many than to live in luxury. How much more reasonable to spend money on human beings than on stories and gold! How much more useful to have friends as our ornamentation than lifeless decorations! Can possessing lands ever give more benefit to anyone than practicing kindness?³⁸⁵

F. Cyprian of Carthage

Against the Fear of Giving Alms

9. . . . The Holy Spirit speaks through Solomon and says: “He that gives to the poor shall never be in want, but he that turns away his eyes shall be in great want.” It is said therefore that the merciful and those who do good can never be in want, rather the sparing and barren will come to want.³⁸⁶

G. Lactantius

The Divine Institutes

Foundation and Origin of Social Life

6, 10. . . . Humanity, therefore, is the greatest bond that unites men together and whoever violates it must be regarded as impious and parricidal. . . .

Therefore, men who harm other men, men who spoil, torture, kill, exterminate others against human kindness and every right, should be considered as ferocious beasts.

Because of this bond of brotherhood, God teaches us always to do good, never evil. He himself tells us what to do good means: to aid the lowly and the unfortunate, to give food to the needy. Because God is merciful, he wishes that men should live in society and that we should see in each human being our own nature. We do not deserve to be set free in dangers if we do not help others; we do not deserve aid if we refuse it to others.³⁸⁷

H. Basil the Great

The Rich Man Who Does Not Share His Possessions with Others Commits Injustice

7. . . . The bread in your board belongs to the hungry: the cloak in your wardrobe belongs to the naked, the shoes you let rot belong to the barefoot; the money in your vaults belongs to the destitute. All you might help and do not—to all these you are doing wrong.³⁸⁸

I. Gregory of Nazianzus

On the Love for the Poor (XIV): *The Principal Part of Charity is Love for the Poor*

5. . . . Now, if following Paul and Christ himself, we have to maintain that charity is the first and greatest of all commandments, the sum of all the laws and prophets (Mt 22:26). I suggest that the main part of charity is the love for the poor and mercy and compassion for our fellow brethren. There is no better sacrifice that can be offered to God than mercy,

³⁸⁵Ibid., 66-67.

³⁸⁶Ibid., 88.

³⁸⁷Ibid., 96-97.

³⁸⁸Ibid., 117.

as kindness and truth go before him (Ps 89:15) and as he himself asks that mercy be offered rather than condemnation. And God, who measures justly and puts mercy in the balance, will with kindness repay kindness.³⁸⁹

III. Development of Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration

The horror and the scourge of World War II and the destruction of many countries in Europe challenged the Catholic Church like never before. Pope Pius XII showed his concern and preoccupation during the war for all the suffering people of Europe. After the war, he encouraged national churches to be involved in the care of the refugee people who visited their countries in their need of asylum. In 1952, he presented to the world a model for all refugee families for all times when he said the “emigre Holy Family of Nazareth fleeing into Egypt is the archetype of every refugee family.”³⁹⁰ Blessed John XXIII, who also helped families during second world war when he was the Papal Nuncio in Europe, developed the thought of Pius XII and talked about the migrants right to life, their right to freedom of movement, that their lives should be protected from harm, and that refugees who suffered should be given refuge in our homelands.

The beauty of Blessed John XXIII’s thought was amplified by the Second Vatican Council which insisted that workers who come from another country should be granted the right to bring their families to live with them so they could provide them with a decent dwelling in life. Blessed John himself would further say that because we are one family we must be in solidarity with the poor. Pope Paul VI at the United Nations would insist that indifference is not permissible in front of the need of so many people because human solidarity with those in need is an obligation that all must offer in the spirit of brotherly love. Pope Paul VI insisted that it is especially the work of Christians to work

³⁸⁹Ibid., 122-123.

³⁹⁰Pope Pius XII, Exsul Familia, 1952, www.papalencyclicals.net/PiusXII.

with energy for the establishment of universal brotherhood. “It belongs to the laity, without waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live.”³⁹¹ Blessed John Paul II insisted that the immigrant worker must be treated by the same standard as any other worker. He continued by saying “We are called to work so that every person’s dignity is respected, the immigrant is welcomed as a brother or sister, and all humanity forms a united family which knows how to appreciate with discernment the different cultures which comprise it.”³⁹² Today Pope Benedict XVI reminds all Catholics that we “are one family of brothers and sisters in societies that are becoming ever more multiethnic and intercultural, where also people of various religions are urged to take part in dialogue, so that a serene and fruitful coexistence with respect for legitimate differences may be found.”³⁹³

A. Pope Pius XII: Exsul Familia (1952)

The emigre Holy Family of Nazareth, fleeing into Egypt, is the archetype of every refugee family. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, living in exile in Egypt to escape the fury of an evil king, are, for all times and all places, the models of protectors of every migrant, alien and refugee of whatever kind who, whether compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave (his) native land, (his) beloved parents and relatives, his close friends, and to seek a foreign soil.³⁹⁴

B. Pope John XXIII

a. Pacem in Terris (1963)

Beginning our discussion of the rights of man, we see that every man has the right to life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life; these are primarily food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹Pope Paul VI, “Octogesima Adveniens” in Catholic Social Thought, no.48, p. 284.

³⁹²Blessed John Paul II, “Message for World Migration Day 2000,” no. 5.

³⁹³Pope Benedict XVI, “Message on Sunday, June 5, 2005.”

³⁹⁴Pope Pius XII, Exsul Familia, no. 1.

³⁹⁵Blessed John XIII, “Pacem in Terris” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 11, p. 132.

Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own country; and, when there are just reasons for it, the right to emigrate to other countries, and take up residence there. The fact that one is a citizen of a particular state does not detract in any way from his membership in the human family as a whole, nor from his citizenship in the world community. (no. 25)³⁹⁶

Minorities often dwell within the territory of a people of another ethnic group, and this is the source of serious problems. . . . It must be made clear that justice is seriously violated by whatever is done to limit the strength and numerical increase of these lesser peoples; the injustice is even more serious if vicious attempts of this kind are aimed at the very extinction of these groups.³⁹⁷

It is especially in keeping with the principles of justice that effective measures be taken by the civil authorities to improve the lot of the citizens of an ethnic minority, particularly when that betterment concerns their language, the development of their natural gifts, their ancestral customs, and their accomplishments and endeavors in the economic order.³⁹⁸

The sentiment of universal fatherhood which the Lord has placed in our heart makes us feel profound sadness in considering the phenomenon of political refugees: a phenomenon which has assumed large proportions and which always hides numberless and acute sufferings.³⁹⁹

At this point it will not be superfluous to recall that such exiles are persons, and that all their rights as persons must be recognized, since they do not lose those rights on losing the citizenship of the states of which they are former members.⁴⁰⁰

Among the rights of a human person there must be included that by which a man may enter a political community where he hopes he can more fittingly provide a future for himself and his dependents. Wherefore, as far as the common good rightly understood permits, it is the duty of that state to accept such immigrants and to help to integrate them into itself as new members.⁴⁰¹

Wherefore, on this occasion, we publicly approve, and commend every undertaking, founded on the principles of human solidarity and Christian charity, which aims at making migration of persons from one country to another less painful.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁶Ibid., no. 25, p. 134.

³⁹⁷Ibid., no. 95, p. 146.

³⁹⁸Ibid., no. 96, p. 146.

³⁹⁹Ibid., no. 103, pp. 147 and 148.

⁴⁰⁰Ibid., no. 105, p. 148.

⁴⁰¹Ibid., no. 106, p. 148.

⁴⁰²Ibid., no. 107, p. 148.

b. Mater et Magistra (1965)

The solidarity which binds all men and makes them members of the same family imposes upon political communities enjoying an abundance of material goods not to remain indifferent to those political communities whose citizens suffer from poverty, misery, and hunger, and who lack even the elementary rights of the human person.⁴⁰³

C. Second Vatican Council: Gaudium et Spes (1965)

When workers come from another country or district and contribute to the economic advancement of a nation or region by their labor, all discrimination as regards wages and working conditions must be carefully avoided. All the people, moreover, above all the public authorities, must treat them not as mere tools of production but as persons, and must help them to bring their families to live with them and to provide themselves with a decent dwelling; they must also see to it that these workers are incorporated into the social life of the country or region that receives them.⁴⁰⁴

D. Pope Paul VI

a. “Address to the United Nations” (October 4, 1965)

We cannot remain indifferent in the face of the urgent need to construct a human society which will guarantee everywhere, to groups and particularly to minorities, the right to life, to personal and social dignity, to development in a protected and improved environment, and to the equitable distribution of the resources of nature and the fruits of civilization.⁴⁰⁵

b. Populorum Progressio (1967)

We cannot insist too much on the duty of welcoming others - a duty springing from human solidarity and Christian charity – which is incumbent both on the families and the cultural organizations of the host countries. . . . this hospitality should aim to provide them, in the warm atmosphere of a brotherly welcome, with the example of wholesome living, an esteem for genuine and effective Christian charity, an esteem for spiritual values.⁴⁰⁶

The same welcome is due to emigrant workers, who live in conditions which are often inhuman, and who economize on what they earn in order to send a little relief to their family living in misery in their native land.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³Blessed John XIII, Mater et Magistra, 1965, www.vatican.va/Holy_Father/john_xxiii/encyclicals, 157.

⁴⁰⁴“Gaudium et Spes” in The Documents of Vatican II, no. 66.

⁴⁰⁵Pope Paul VI, “Address to the United Nations, October 4, 1965,” www.christusrex.org/

⁴⁰⁶Pope Paul VI, “Populorum Progressio” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 67, p. 256.

⁴⁰⁷*Ibid.*, no. 69, p. 256

c. Octogesima Adveniens (1971)

We are thinking also of the precarious situation of a great number of emigrant workers whose condition as foreigners makes it all the more difficult for them to make any sort of social vindication, in spite of their real participation in the economic effort of the country that receives them. It is urgently necessary for people to go beyond a narrowly nationalist attitude in their regard and to give them a charter which will assure them a right to emigrate, favor their integration, facilitate their professional advancement and give them access to decent housing where, if such is the case, their families can join them.⁴⁰⁸

Linked to this category are the people who, to find work, or to escape a disaster or a hostile climate, leave their regions and find themselves without roots among other people.⁴⁰⁹

It is everyone's duty, but especially that of Christians, to work with energy for the establishment of universal brotherhood, the indispensable basis for authentic justice and the condition for enduring peace: "We cannot in truthfulness call upon that God who is the father of all if we refuse to act in a brotherly Way towards certain men, created in God's image. A man's relationship with God the Father and his relationship with his brother men are so linked together that scripture says: 'He who does not love does not know God.' (1 John 4:8.)"⁴¹⁰

It belongs to the laity, without waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live. Let each one examine himself, to see what he has done up to now, and what he ought to do. It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations: these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action.⁴¹¹

E. Synod of Bishops: "Justice in the World" (Statement of the Synod of Bishops, 1971)

Our action is to be directed above all at those men and nations which because of various forms of oppression and because of the present character of our society are silent, indeed voiceless, victims of injustice.⁴¹²

Take, for example, the case of migrants. They are often forced to leave their own country to find work, but frequently find the doors closed in their faces because of discriminatory attitudes, or, if they can enter, they are often obliged to lead an insecure life or are treated in an inhuman manner. The same is true of groups that

⁴⁰⁸Pope Paul VI, "Octogesima Adveniens" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 17, p. 271.

⁴⁰⁹Ibid.

⁴¹⁰Ibid.

⁴¹¹Ibid., no. 48, p. 284

⁴¹²Synod of Bishops, "Justice in the World" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 20, p. 291.

are less well off on the social ladder such as workers and especially farm workers who play a very great part in the process of development.⁴¹³

To be especially lamented is the condition of so many millions of refugees, and of every group or people suffering persecution—sometimes in institutionalized form—for racial or ethnic origin on tribal grounds. This persecution on tribal grounds can at times take on the characteristics of genocide.⁴¹⁴

Justice is also being violated by forms of oppression, both old and new, springing from restriction of the rights of individuals. This is occurring both in the form of repression by the political power and of violence on the part of private reaction, and can reach the extreme of affecting the basic conditions of personal integrity. There are well-known cases of torture, especially of political prisoners, who besides are frequently denied due process or who are subjected to arbitrary procedures in their trial.⁴¹⁵

In the Old Testament, God reveals himself to us as the liberator of the oppressed and the defender of the poor, demanding from man faith in him and justice toward man's neighbor. It is only in the observance of the duties of justice that God is truly recognized as the liberator of the oppressed.⁴¹⁶

By his action and teaching Christ united in an indivisible way the relationship of man to God and the relationship of man to other men. Christ lived his life in the world as a total giving of himself to God for the salvation and liberation of men. In his preaching he proclaimed the fatherhood of God towards all men and the intervention of God's justice on behalf of the needy and the oppressed (Luke 6:21-23). In this way he identified himself with his 'least brethren' as he stated: 'As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (Mt 25:40)⁴¹⁷

According to the Christian message, therefore, man's relationship to his neighbor is bound up with his relationship to God; his response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in his love and service of men. Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every man is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a brother of Christ, the Christian finds in every man God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹³Ibid., no. 21, p. 291.

⁴¹⁴Ibid., no. 22, p. 292.

⁴¹⁵Ibid., no. 24, p. 292.

⁴¹⁶Ibid., no. 30, p. 293.

⁴¹⁷Ibid., no. 31, p. 293.

⁴¹⁸Ibid., no. 34, p. 293.

The Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social national, and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of man and his very salvation demand it. The Church . . . has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need for love and justice contained in the gospel message, a witness to be carried out in church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians.⁴¹⁹

F. Blessed John Paul II

a. Laborem Exercens (1981)

The person working away from his native land, whether as a permanent emigrant or a seasonal worker, should not be placed at a disadvantage in comparison with the other workers in that society in the matter of working rights. Emigration in search of work should in no way become an opportunity for financial or social exploitation. As regards to the work relationship, the same criteria should be applied to immigrant workers as to all other workers in the society concerned. The value of work should be measured by the same standard and not according to the difference in nationality, religion or race.⁴²⁰

b. Ecclesia in America (January 1999)

In its history, America has experienced many immigrations, as waves of men and women came to its various regions in the hope of a better future. . . . The Church is well aware of the problems created by this situation and is committed to spare no effort in developing her own pastoral strategy among these immigrant people, in order to help them settle in their new land and to foster a welcoming attitude among the local population, in the belief that a mutual openness will bring enrichment to all.⁴²¹

Migrants should be met with a hospitable and welcoming attitude which can encourage them to become part of the Church's life, always with due regard for their freedom and their specific cultural identity. (no. 65)⁴²²

c. "Message for World Migration Day" (2000)

The Church hears the suffering cry of all who are uprooted from their own land, of families forcefully separated, of those who, in the rapid changes of our day are unable to find a stable home anywhere. She senses the anguish of those without rights, without any security, at the mercy of every kind of exploitation, and she

⁴¹⁹Ibid., no. 36, p. 294.

⁴²⁰Blessed John Paul II, "Laborem Exercens" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 23.2, p. 384.

⁴²¹Blessed John Paul I, Ecclesia in America, www.vatican.va/Holy_Father/john_paul_ii/apos_exhortations, no. 65.

⁴²²Ibid.

supports them in their unhappiness.⁴²³

We are called to work so that every person's dignity is respected, the immigrant is welcomed as a brother or sister, and all humanity forms a united family which knows how to appreciate with discernment the different cultures which comprise it.⁴²⁴

d. "Message for 90th World Day of Migrants and Refugees" (2004)

Equally, the right to emigrate exists. This right, Blessed John XXIII recalls in the Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* is based on the universal destination of the goods of this world (cf. nn. 30 and 33). It is obviously the task of Governments to regulate the migratory flows with full respect for the dignity of the persons and for their families' needs, mindful of the requirements of the host societies. In this regard, international Agreements already exist to protect would-be emigrants, as well as those who seek refuge or political asylum in another country. There is always room to improve these agreements. (no. 3)⁴²⁵

G. Pope Benedict XVI

a. "Message on Sunday, June 5, 2005"

...Recalling this great bishop, (Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, patron of immigrants) my thoughts go to those who are far from their homeland and often also from their families; I hope that they will always meet receptive friends and hearts on their path who are capable of supporting them in the difficulties of every day.⁴²⁶

b. "Message for 97th World Day of Migrants and Refugees" (2011)

"One human family": This profound link between all human beings is the origin of the theme that I have chosen for our reflection this year: "One human family," one family of brothers and sisters in societies that are becoming ever more multiethnic and intercultural, where also people of various religions are urged to take part in dialogue, so that a serene and fruitful coexistence with respect for legitimate differences may be found. The Second Vatican Council affirms that: "All peoples are one community and have one origin, because God caused the whole human race to dwell on the face of the earth (cf. Acts 17:26); they also have one final end, God." ("[Message for the World Day of Peace](#)," 2008, 1) "His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men."

⁴²³Blessed John Paul II, "Message for World Migration Day 2000," www.vatican.va/Holy_Father/john_paul_ii/messages, no. 6.

⁴²⁴Ibid., no. 5

⁴²⁵Blessed John Paul II, "Message for the 90th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2004," www.vatican.va/Holy_Father/john_paul_ii/messages, no. 3.

⁴²⁶Pope Benedict XVI, "Message on Sunday June 5, 2005," www.vatican.va/Holy_Father/Benedict_xvi/messages

(Declaration [*Nostra aetate*](#), 1) Thus, “We do not live alongside one another purely by chance; all of us are progressing along a common path as men and women, and thus as brothers and sisters.” (“[Message for the World Day of Peace](#),” 2008, 6)⁴²⁷

The road is the same, that of life, but the situations that we pass through on this route are different: many people have to face the difficult experience of migration in its various forms: internal or international, permanent or seasonal, economic or political, voluntary or forced. In various cases the departure from their Country is motivated by different forms of persecution, so that escape becomes necessary. Moreover, the phenomenon of globalization itself, characteristic of our epoch, is not only a social and economic process, but also entails “humanity itself [that] is becoming increasingly interconnected,” crossing geographical and cultural boundaries. In this regard, the Church does not cease to recall that the deep sense of this epochal process and its fundamental ethical criterion are given by the unity of the human family and its development towards what is good.⁴²⁸ In an increasingly globalized society, the common good and the effort to obtain it cannot fail to assume the dimensions of the whole human family, that is to say, the community of peoples and nations, in such a way as to shape the earthly city in unity and peace, rendering it to some degree an anticipation and a prefiguration of the undivided city of God.⁴²⁹

H. American Bishops’ Pastoral Letters on Immigration

In an attempt to respond to the challenge of unauthorized immigration into the United States, in the 21st century, the Bishops of the United States wrote two major letters to orientate the Catholic community on this topic. The first, “Welcoming the Stranger Among Us,” was published in 2000; and the second, a joint letter with the Catholic Bishops of Mexico entitled “Strangers No Longer,” was published in 2003. To better understand the urgency of these letters and why the second was co-authored with the Catholic Bishops of Mexico, one must have a clearer understanding of who the majority of unauthorized immigrants were in the United States.

⁴²⁷Pope Benedict XVI, “World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2011,” www.vatican.va/Holy_Father/Benedict_xvi/messages

⁴²⁸Ibid.

⁴²⁹Ibid.

The term “unauthorized migrant” is defined as one who resides in the United States but who is not a citizen. In addition, this person has not received permanent residence status nor does the person have an authorized temporary status which might permit longer-term residency and permission to work legitimately in the United States. At the time the Bishops wrote, the majority of this population consisted of two groups: the first group entered without valid documents by crossing the southwestern border clandestinely; and the second group entered with valid visas but who either stayed past the expiration date of their visa or violated some other term of their admission.

According to the 2010 Census, there are 50.5 million Hispanics living in the United States, and they account for 16.3 % of the total U.S. population. As of 2008, the Pew Hispanic Center estimated that 11.9 million unauthorized immigrants lived in the United States with 8 million undocumented immigrants participating in the U.S. workforce. Slightly more than 75% of this population are Hispanics with 59% (or 7 million) of the 11.9 million coming from Mexico. The other 41% of the undocumented immigrants have come from Asia (11%), Central America (11%), South America (7%), the Caribbean (4%), and the Middle East (less than 2%). While many immigrants have entered the United States by crossing the southwest border, unauthorized immigrants are now widely distributed, with significant numbers living in California, Georgia, North Carolina, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. The geographical distribution of immigrants has changed since 2000. California for example, still houses the largest number of undocumented migrants, 2.7 million; but while it accounted for 42% of all undocumented immigrants in 1990, it currently accounts for only 22%, a significant decline.

Most unauthorized immigrant adults reside with immediate family members. Nearly 50% of the unauthorized immigrant households include a husband and wife and children. The children of undocumented migrants account for 6.8 percent of the students enrolled in the nation's elementary and secondary schools. The number of U.S. born children living with unauthorized immigrant parents has reached 4 million in 2008 which is an increase from 2.7 million in 2003. The number of children who are unauthorized migrants themselves numbers 1.5 million in 2008 which represents very little change since 2003.

In general, adult unauthorized immigrants are disproportionately likely to be poorly educated. Of the unauthorized immigrants aged 25 to 64, 47% have less than a high school education. Of the unauthorized migrants 18 to 24 years of age who have completed high school, 49 % are in college or have attended college, compared to U.S. born residents of whom 71% attend college.⁴³⁰ It is estimated that over 90% of Mexico is Catholic so it is easy to understand the concern of the bishops of both the United States and Mexico for this situation of the undocumented in the United States.

a. "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us" (2000)

In their pastoral letter "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us," the American Bishops recall that in the Word of God Moses and the Jewish people flee from Egypt while the Holy Family flees from the terror of King Herod. Both families are refugees. These images should call us to deep compassion for immigrants. Immigrant experience in the United States has been varied in the numbers and cultures of people who have come here. Many were forced to leave their homelands because of well-founded fears of

⁴³⁰Cf. Pew Research Center Publications, "A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States," April 14, 2009

persecution. This presents a challenge for us as a Church and as a people.

The presence of so many different cultures and religions in so many parts of the United States has challenged us as a Church to a profound conversion so that we can become truly a sacrament of unity. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to welcoming the stranger is that many Americans have forgotten their immigrant past. The Bishops call us to move beyond the anti-immigrant stance that has become popular in different parts of our country. They also call Catholics to reach out to the ethnic communities living side by side in our parishes and work with them to create a community of neighbors and friends. Conversion must become part of our lives if we are to become an evangelizing Church willing to dialogue and proclaim the Gospel to all people.

The call to communion goes out to all members of the Church. We are called to take concrete measures to overcome misunderstanding, ignorance, and fear so that we may enjoy the communion that is our destiny as Children of God. As Catholics we are called to welcome all immigrants and help them and ourselves become the one family of God. This call to solidarity is a call to promote the effective recognition of the rights of immigrants and to overcome all discrimination based on race, culture or religion.⁴³¹

b. “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope” (2003)

In his Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in America, John Paul II declared that the ultimate solution to illegal immigration is the elimination of global underdevelopment. While we struggle to achieve this, the Holy Father reminded all that the human rights of all migrants must be respected.

In 2003, the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States jointly issued the pastoral letter, “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope.” In this letter,

⁴³¹USCCB, Welcoming the Stranger Among Us, November 2000.

the bishops acknowledged that the current U.S. immigration system was badly in need of reform and that a broad approach was required to fix it. The bishops offered a comprehensive set of recommendations for changing U.S. laws and policies to reflect the principles contained in Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching, thus bringing about a more humane and just immigration system in the United States.

The bishops' call for reform included the following elements: global anti-poverty efforts; expanded opportunities to reunify families; temporary worker program; broad-based legalization; and restoration of due process for immigrants. To bring this about, the bishops decided to mount a national campaign, Justice for Immigrants. The Campaign was designed to unite and mobilize a growing network of Catholic organizations, the Catholic laity, as well as others of good faith to work for justice for immigrants.

The Bishops spoke as shepherds of one Church united in the view that migration was necessary and beneficial and were aware that the migrants and immigrants come from our parishes, are in our parishes, come from our communities, and are in our communities. They spoke as pastors concerned for the welfare of God's children. They stressed the fact that America is a continent of immigrant peoples who came to inhabit these lands and who gave birth to new civilizations. Our common faith in Jesus Christ moves us to search for ways to overcome all forms of discrimination and violence so that we may build relationships that are just and loving.

Recounting migration through the light of faith, the Bishops used the Word of God and Catholic Social Teaching to inspire the Catholic community and deepen their understanding about the migration of people so that a new consciousness is formed that

will help create a new public policy towards the migrants that come to live among us.

Aware of the right of every nation to control its borders, they recall that Pius XII in Exsul Familia stated that this right of control is not absolute because the needs of immigrants must always be measured against the needs of receiving countries. Blessed John XXIII, in his encyclical Pacem in Terris expanded on this right to migrate and also stated that people have the right to not migrate.

The Bishops enumerated five principles which should guide the Church's position on migration issues. These principles include: (1) persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland; (2) persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families; (3) sovereign nations have the right to control their borders; (4) refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection; and (5) the human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.

While offering comments about public policy, the Bishops do recognize that the Church is challenged to live the experience of disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13–25), as they are converted to be witnesses of the risen Lord after they welcome him as a stranger. The Bishops seek to encourage broad-based efforts to provide both a comprehensive network of social services and advocacy for migrant families. For this reason the Bishops have begun the Justice for Immigrants: The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform. The primary objectives of this campaign are: (1) to educate the public, especially the Catholic community, including Catholic public officials, about Church teaching on migration and immigrants; (2) to create political will for positive immigration reform; (3) to work for legislative and administrative reforms based on the

principles articulated by the bishops; (4) to organize Catholic networks to assist qualified immigrants obtain the benefits of the reforms.

I. Observations

When these pastoral letters were written, they were received with great affection and it was felt that they would have an influence on both the pastoral ministry of the Church and on public policy. The commitment to establish a program, Justice for Immigrants: The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform, was a flash of hope in and for the immigrant community and an expression of the Catholic Church's desire to continue to work for immigration reform. But times have changed, and the focus of people has shifted. The economic crisis has adversely affected both the institutional Church as well as the individual Catholics. Job losses, stock market losses, and overall uncertainty about the economic future and security have forced individuals to shift their attention away from immigration reform to individuals concerns about current employment and future retirement. These same factors have reduced the Church's revenue as parishioners are no longer able to support their historical contributions. This lack of funding has reduced the ability of the Church to undertake many programs and their financial effectiveness of many of the Church's programs. The clergy sex abuse scandal has diminished the Church's moral leadership in the United States and has weakened its own pastoral energy and activity among the poor. The Justice for Immigrants Campaign has become a casualty of both of these events. It has no relevance in the immigrant community or among the advocates for immigration reform. While it is estimated that 75 percent of the undocumented in the United States are of Hispanic origin, it is worthwhile observing that all the information provided by the American

Bishops for their Justice for Immigrants Campaign has been in English only for the last five years. This failure to reach out and orientate the Hispanic community is an indication of a pastoral failure that has underlined the inefficiency and complacency of this Campaign and the efforts by the Bishops to organize the laity behind this important issue. It is also sad to note how this lack of energy on the national level of the Episcopal Conference has been replicated in local dioceses. Lack of interest has permeated this pastoral effort. The idea and the plan of the Bishops were inspirational. The history and the tradition of the American Church with the immigrant community that inspired this plan have been lost. The campaign has not been carried out efficaciously in the pastoral life of the Church. Both of these letters are now unknown, unmentioned in the local communities.

It is painful to realize that a good many people in local Catholic communities have turned to support harsh local immigration laws that seem to be based on the fear of the new immigrant community rather than on the reality that we are all immigrants or children of immigrants who are called as the family of God. The lack of formation in Catholic Social Teaching on immigration is part of the reason for these results.

The present political debate in the United States is using the pain of the undocumented as a means of obtaining votes in the next presidential election. Instead of working for comprehensive immigration reform through Congress as required by law, the current administration of President Obama, anticipating next year's presidential elections, has changed its approach to implementing the immigration laws and suspended deportation proceedings against tens of thousands of undocumented immigrants who

have been caught violating immigration laws. This political opportunism has been observed by liberal journalists who have noted that:

Democrats have also damaged the cause of comprehensive immigration reform by crowing about how they will benefit politically. For more than a decade, Democratic strategists have prophesied that increased Latino immigration, legal and illegal, will create a permanent Democratic majority. Do these Democratic strategists think that their Republican counterparts are not paying attention to boasts that naturalization of illegal immigrants would instantly add 12 million Democrats to the U.S. electorate?⁴³²

Public policy today is being driven by political posturing with each political party advocating only those policies which bring them the most votes. The common good is not the center of our political discourse and, sadly, the immigration debate is not the center of the pastoral life of the Church. The politicization of this moment has divided us into opposing groups of people and more than anything else today the American people need to be inspired by the Gospel message. These divisions among us caused by ignorance of our own beliefs and our own history, the economic crisis, the fear of lost jobs, the fear of lost security, the uncertainty about the future, and the fear of new people living among us, can be eradicated only if the American people can once again be inspired to live by their highest ideals. The Catholic Church has a tremendous resource and a responsibility to renew its own commitment to the immigrant community. It is called to reach out to the larger community with love and its message of hope so that the stranger will be welcomed among us because it is only together that we can make this journey.

⁴³²Michael Lind, "Comprehensive immigration reform is dead—and the left is to blame," May 18, 2011, Salon.com, <http://www.salon.com>.

Chapter Four

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

I. Introduction

Whoever even unknowingly circumvents the institution of the family undermines peace in the entire community, national and international, since he weakens what is in effect the primary agency of peace. This point merits special reflection: everything that serves to weaken the family based on the marriage of a man and a woman, everything that directly or indirectly stands in the way of its openness to the responsible acceptance of a new life, everything that obstructs its right to be primarily responsible for the education of its children, constitutes an objective obstacle on the road to peace.”⁴³³

The future of the world and of the church passes through the family.⁴³⁴

As we begin to reflect on the Christian tradition of marriage and family it is important for us to acknowledge that we live in a world that is in transition, not just socially, politically and economically but also culturally with a shift in populations and spheres of influence. Though people in the west have been slow to recognize their loss of influence and prestige to the growing east and south, the image of the United States of America and its loss of prestige in the world community best epitomizes/manifests this shift in the relationships of the world community. Alliances are being struck by the developing countries which exclude the west, both the United States and Europe in the hopes that a new world community will develop inspired by the cultures and customs of the world that has been held down, neglected, and abused by the ruling nations of the west.

The Asian and African continents and Latin America account for 83 percent of the world’s population (or 5.6 billion out of 6.5 billion people worldwide). Europe and

⁴³³Pope Benedict XVI, “Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2008.”

⁴³⁴Blessed John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio (On the Family), (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1981), no. 75, p. 112.

North America combine for a total of 17 percent (or 1 billion). The numbers clearly indicate that there is a shift in the life of the people of the world. Even if we might be slow in adapting to the shift in political realities, the cry for freedom in many countries where totalitarian governments have ruled for decades and the overwhelming sense of injustice in the lives of many are now causing political changes that the modern world has never imagined. In many of these countries, we hear and see people saying that their values and their customs are now to be respected by all and this is not only occurring in Muslim countries, but throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. The West has influenced the world for decades but now even though it has not wanted to accept the reality, it is being replaced as the dominant cultural norm for the future. For the people of the east and the south, their lives and communities are built on marriage and the family. While in the disintegrating west⁴³⁵, it seems that the basis of life is in question.

In the United States, the institution of marriage and therefore family life has continued to weaken, in the last decade. Since its founding, marriage was the basis of the life of the community and the nation, but today we can observe a greater diversity in what was once known as family life.

Fewer adults are married, more are divorced or remaining single, and more are living together outside of marriage or living alone. Today, more children are born out-of-wedlock (now almost four out of ten), and more are living in stepfamilies, with cohabiting but unmarried adults, or with a single parent. This means that more children each year are not living in families that include their own married,

⁴³⁵In the mid-part of the twentieth century, Dietrich Bonhoeffer insists on the permanency of the marriage commitment. While he was waiting in jail to be executed by Hitler, he wrote his famous “A Wedding Sermon from a Prison Cell” and said: “God is guiding your marriage. Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power. For it is God’s holy ordinance, by means of which he wills to perpetuate the human race until the end of time. In your love you see your two selves as solitary figures in the world; in marriage you see yourselves as links in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and go to his glory and calls into his kingdom.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “A Wedding Sermon from a Prison Cell,” Letters & Papers from Prison, (Fontana Books, 1959), 150.

biological parents, which by all available empirical evidence is the gold standard for insuring optimal outcomes in a child's development.⁴³⁶

These changes to the fabric of human existence challenge the very meaning of what life and human dignity are and present believing people with an opportunity to respond to the needs of people who are struggling for the best way to respond to the urgencies of the present moment. Pope John Paul II urged the Church to meet these challenges to marriage⁴³⁷ and family life with the security of their faith, God's plan, and the help of the Holy Spirit.

At a moment of history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family, ensuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and thus contributing to the renewal of society and of the people of God.⁴³⁸

One special preoccupation for all should be the loss of child-centeredness in the life of American society. Not only does this go against the command God gave to Man and Woman "to multiply and fill the earth" but it also is a rejection of not only our Christian tradition, but also what has made the American society what it was.

⁴³⁶David Popenoe, "The State of Our Unions 2007," The National Marriage Project, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University, July 2007), 6.

⁴³⁷In December 2009, Liu Xiabo, as he was awaiting trial for inciting subversion of state power in China released a statement: I Have No Enemies—My Final Statement. (For his Human Rights Work, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2010.) "Ask me what has been my most fortunate experience of the past two decades, and I'd say it was gaining the selfless love of my wife, Liu Xia. She cannot be present in the courtroom today, but I still want to tell you, my sweetheart, that I'm confident that your love for me will be as always. Over the years, in my non-free life, our love has contained bitterness imposed by the external environment, but is boundless in afterthought. I am sentenced to a visible prison while you are waiting in an invisible one. Your love is sunlight that transcends prison walls and bars, stroking every inch of my skin, warming my every cell, letting me maintain my inner calm, magnanimous and bright, so that every minute in prison is full of meaning. But my love for you is full of guilt and regret, sometimes heavy enough to hobble my steps. I am a hard stone in the wilderness, putting up with the pummeling of raging storms, and too cold for anyone to dare touch. But my love is hard, sharp, and can penetrate any obstacles. Even if I am crushed into powder, I will embrace you with the ashes." Robert Mackey, "Jailed Chinese Dissident's 'Final Statement,'" The New York Times, October 8, 2010.

⁴³⁸Blessed John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 3, p. 13.

Throughout history marriage has first and foremost been an institution for procreation and raising children. It has provided the cultural tie that seeks to connect the father to his children by binding him to the mother of his children. Yet in recent times, children have increasingly been pushed from center stage. . . . In a cross-national comparison of industrialized nations, the United States ranked virtually at the top in the percentage disagreeing with this statement: “The main purpose of marriage is having children.” Nearly 70 percent of Americans believe that the main purpose of marriage is something other than children. . . . One effect of the weakening of child-centeredness is clear. A careful analysis of divorce statistics shows that, beginning around 1975, the presence of children in a marriage has become only a very minor inhibitor of divorce (slightly more so when the child is male than female).⁴³⁹

What is especially pernicious is the subtlety that a female child is valued less than the male child in society and the family. This is a direct result of the rejection of God’s plan for humanity and this treatment of women is being repeated now throughout the world. This loss of child-centeredness leads to the devaluation of the worth of female children so that technology is now abused in the unreasonable demand for male children (using ultrasound scanning technology to determine the sex of the unborn child and favors the abortion of unborn female babies)⁴⁴⁰, the kidnapping and trafficking in stolen female children⁴⁴¹, and the use of the aborted female babies in the development of medications.⁴⁴²

This chapter will present the beliefs and teachings of the Catholic Church on Marriage and the Family beginning with the Scriptures, continuing with a few thoughts from the Church Fathers, and the teachings from the Magisterium of the Church. It will be a summary of God’s plan for Marriage and the Family in the hope that we can rediscover “the blessing given when God first established marriage as a natural institution

⁴³⁹The State of Our Unions Marriage in America 2010: When Marriage Disappears: The New Middle America, The National Marriage Project, University of Virginia, 85 and 87.

⁴⁴⁰Asia News.it, “China’s one child policy won’t change despite causing skewed male/female ratio,” January 24, 2007.

⁴⁴¹Ibid., “Chinese government stealing children, demanding ransom for return,” March 21, 2006.

⁴⁴²Ibid., “Aborted fetuses from China turned into medications,” August 10, 2011.

and when Christ restored and elevated it as a sacramental sign of salvation.”⁴⁴³

II. Scriptural References Applicable to Marriage and Family

A. Old Testament

The Old Testament begins with a beautiful account of how God created Man and Woman to be in an exclusive relationship (Genesis 2:18 and 24) and made them in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). God, the author of this relationship which we call marriage, blessed Man and Woman and told them to bless the earth with their children. Thus, the human family was established. The first man, Adam, was given as his wife, Eve and their unique relationship was to be the foundation of human life. They would complement one another and be equal in dignity because they were made into the image of God. Because God made them for one another they were to live as a communion of persons and in this way they would reflect the unity that we find in the Trinity.

In the account of Genesis, matrimony is monogamous, the original design of God for Man and Woman. The Old Testament tells us of the struggle to live this ideal. Throughout the Bible there is also praise for the perfect wife (Proverbs 10:31), an equal partner. Marriage was carried out with great celebrations that often lasted seven days. The Bridegroom would go with his friends and a band to the Bride’s house where she would be waiting for him (Song of Songs 3:11, Psalm 45).

These were the ideals; in practice women were a depressed class in Semitic society. A woman was a man’s property; a man could take one wife or several, and expect them to work as hard as any man; a wife could be punished by mutilation or death for her sexual infidelity while her husband’s was treated lightly; she could also be divorced at will.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴³USCCB, Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, November 17, 2009, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁴⁴Rodger Charles S.J., Christian Social Witness and Teaching, (Herefordshire, U.K.: Gracewing, 1998), Volume 1, 24.

The culture of the Jewish people and those that surrounded them often clashed with the ideal that was presented in Genesis. The unity between man and woman in a monogamous relationship which was blessed by family and life lasting fidelity would be challenged in different moments and in different circumstances. The ideal was not always met with success and though the Old Testament is filled with human failures the ideal set out by Genesis was always remembered as the blessing God promised to his people. What we read below is the attempt of the Old Testament writers to encourage Israel to be faithful to God's plan.

Genesis 1:26-26

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground."

Genesis 2:18-24

The Lord God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." So the Lord God formed out of the ground various wild animals and various birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each of them would be its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be the suitable partner for the man. So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called 'woman,' for out of 'her man' this one has been taken." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.

Numbers 36:5-9

So Moses gave this regulation to the Israelites according to the instructions of the Lord: "The tribe of the Josephites are right in what they say. This is what the Lord commands with regard to the daughters of Zelophehad: They may marry anyone they please, provided they marry into a clan of their ancestral tribe, so that no heritage of the Israelites will pass from one tribe to another, but all the Israelites will retain their own ancestral heritage. Therefore, every daughter who inherits property in any of the Israelite tribes shall marry someone belonging to a clan of her own ancestral tribe, in order that all the Israelites may remain in possession of their own ancestral heritage. Thus, no heritage can pass from one tribe to another, but all the Israelite tribes will retain their own ancestral heritage."

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

“When a man, after marrying a woman and having relations with her, is later displeased with her because he finds in her something indecent, and therefore he writes out a bill of divorce and hands it to her, thus dismissing her from his house: if on leaving his house she goes and becomes the wife of another man, and the second husband, too, comes to dislike her and dismisses her from his house by handing her a written bill of divorce; or if this second man who has married her, dies; then her former husband, who dismissed her, may not again take her as his wife after she has become defiled. That would be an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring such guilt upon the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage.

Proverbs 18:22

He who finds a wife finds happiness; it is a favor he receives from the Lord.

Tobit 8:4-9

When the girl’s parents left the bedroom and closed the door behind them, Tobiah arose from bed and said to his wife, “My love, get up. Let us pray and beg our Lord to have mercy on us and to grant us deliverance.” She got up, and they started to pray and beg that deliverance might be theirs. He began with these words:

“Blessed are you, O God of our fathers;

praised be your name forever and ever.

Let the heavens and all your creation praise you forever.

You made Adam and you gave him his wife Ever to be his help and support;
and from these two the human race descended.

You said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone;
let us make him a partner like himself.’

Now, Lord, you know that I take this wife of mine not because of lust,
but for a noble purpose.

Call down your mercy on me and on her,
and allow us to live together to a happy old age.”

They said together, “Amen, amen,” and went to bed for the night.

The Song of Songs 4:9-10

You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride; you have ravished my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one bead of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride, how much more delightful is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your ointments than all spices!

The Song of Songs 8:6b

For stern as death is love, relentless as the nether world is devotion; its flames are a blazing fire.

Hosea 2:21-22

I will espouse you to me forever; I will espouse in right and in justice, in love and in mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the Lord.

Malachi 2:14-15

And you say, “Why is it?” --Because the Lord is witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have broken faith though she is your companion, your betrothed wife. Did he not make one being, with flesh and spirit: and what does that one require but godly offspring? You must then safeguard life that is your own, and not break faith with the wife of your youth.

B. New Testament

In the time of Jesus, divorce had become a common practice among the Jewish people. Moses, frustrated with the hardness of the hearts of his brother Jews, had given permission for them to divorce their wives if they found something indecent in them (Deut. 24:1-4). This permission was interpreted differently by the Rabbinical schools of thought,

The School of Shammai says: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found in her indecency in anything. . . .And the School of Hillel says: He may divorce her even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, ‘Because he hath found in her indecency in anything. R. Akiba says: Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, ‘And it shall be if she find no favor in his eyes.’⁴⁴⁵

Thus, one school was lenient and the other was strict. The significance was that Moses altered the ideal of marriage because of the stubbornness of the males in his community who received the “right to divorce,” something that was denied to the women. When Jesus was tested and asked “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?” (Matt. 19:3-9) he rejects totally the tradition of divorce as practiced by the Jews and reminds them “what God has joined together, let no man divide” (Matt. 9:6). Here, we have the basis for the teaching of Jesus on the indissolubility of marriage.

The New Testament highlights the dignity of man and woman, restores the relationship of equality between them, and presents marriage as a visible sign of Christ’s

⁴⁴⁵Raymond E. Brown, S.S. (Editor), The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 642.

love for the Church. St. Paul tells us that in marriage, man and woman are to reflect the love of Christ for his Church and because of this are to respect one another as equals.

They are to have and live a love that must be blessed with the self-sacrifice of the Cross (Ephesians 5:21-32).

Matthew 5:31-32

It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.' But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 19:3-9

Some Pharisees approached him, and tested him, saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause whatever?" He said in reply, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." They said to him, "Then why did Moses command that the man give the woman a bill of divorce and dismiss (her)?" He said to them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery."

Mark 10:2-12

The Pharisees approached and asked, "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" They were testing him. He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?" They replied, "Moses permitted him to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her." But Jesus told them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother (and be joined to his wife), and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate." In the house the disciples again questioned him about this. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." (And) Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out

now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

“To the married, however, I give this instruction (not I, but the Lord): A wife should not separate from her husband—and if she does separate she must either remain single or become reconciled to her husband—and a husband should not divorce his wife.

1 Corinthians 7:27-28

Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek a separation. Are you free of a wife? Then do not look for a wife. If you marry, however, you do not sin, nor does an unmarried woman sin if she marries; but such people will experience affliction in their earthly life, and I would like to spare you that.

1 Corinthians 7:39

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whomever she wishes, provided it be in the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

This is the will of God, your holiness: that you refrain from immorality, that each of you know how to acquire a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in lustful passion as do the Gentiles who do not know God; not to take advantage of or exploit a brother in this matter, for the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you before and solemnly affirmed. For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not a human being but God, who (also) gives his Holy Spirit to you.

Hebrews 13:4

Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the immoral and adulterers.

Ephesians 5:21-33

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So (also) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He

who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

For this reason a man shall leave (his) father and (his) mother
and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.

III. References from The Early Church Fathers on the Family as Domestic Church

At the Second Vatican Council the family, for the first time in official Church documents, was referred to as a “domestic Church.” Pope John Paul II would take this term and popularize it in his Apostolic Letter, Familiaris Consortio. But this is not the origin of this new insight into the vocation of the family. The concept of the family as domestic Church had its origins in writings of some of the early Church Fathers.

A. The Domestic Church in the Thought of the Early Church Fathers: St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine

In his sermon In Genesis “Make your home a church.” (Patrologia Graeca 54, Chapter 6, para. 2, 607) and in several other places, St. John Chrysostom associates the family household (oikia) with the “small church” (ekklesia mikra). (Cf. Patrologia Graeca 62, 143 and 62, 549)

St. Augustine, in his sermon De bono viduitatis, says:

I implore you, through him from whom you have received this gift, that you together with your domestic church remember to include me also in your prayers. (Patrologia Latina 40, De bono viduitatis, no. 29, 450)

The text that is the basis for the claim that the father (in his absence the mother) exercises an episcopal role within the family, which is the domestic Church, comes from St. Augustine.

Take our place in your homes. The head of a family is therefore called a “bishop” because he exercises supervision and because he provides care by listening.” (Sermon, 94 Patrologia Latina 38,58 off)

B. Development of the Theological Concept of Family as Domestic Church: Second Vatican Council

a. “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church” (Lumen Gentium)

For from the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born. By the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism these are made children of God, thus perpetuating the People of God through the centuries. The family is, so to speak, the domestic Church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care any religious vocation.⁴⁴⁶

b. “Decree on the Apostolate of Laity” (Apostolicam Actuositatem)

The family has received from God its mission to be the first and vital cell of society. It will fulfill this mission if it shows itself to be the domestic sanctuary of the Church through the mutual affection of its members and the common prayer they offer to God, if the whole family is caught up in the liturgical worship of the Church, and if it provides active hospitality and promotes justice and other good works for the service of all the brethren in need.⁴⁴⁷

C. John Paul II and the Family as Domestic Church: Familiaris Consortio

In his Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris Consortio, John Paul II presents in a systematic way the Church’s teaching on family and develops the concept of “domestic church.” He places this concept in the Church’s Magisterium as a characteristic of the family that he will continue to develop during his pontificate. For him, it will become a dominant theme by which the family will be understood.

Familiaris Consortio

The Christian family is also called to experience a new and original communion which confirms and perfects natural and human communion. In fact the grace of Jesus Christ, ‘the first-born among many brethren,’ is by its nature and interior dynamism ‘a grace of brotherhood,’ as Saint Thomas Aquinas calls it. The Holy Spirit, who is poured forth in the celebration of the sacraments, is the living source and inexhaustible sustenance of the supernatural communion that gathers believers and links them with Christ and with each other in the unity of the

^{446c} Lumen Gentium” in The Documents of Vatican II, no. 11, p. 29.

^{447c} Apostolicam Actuositatem” in The Documents of Vatican II, no. 11, pp. 502-503.

Church of God. The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason too it can and should be called the ‘domestic Church.’⁴⁴⁸

A vivid and attentive awareness of the mission that they have received with the Sacrament of Marriage will help Christian parents to place themselves at the service of their children’s education with great serenity and trustfulness, and also with a sense of responsibility before God, who calls them and gives them the mission of building up the Church in their children. Thus in the case of baptized people, the family, called together by word and sacrament as the Church of the home, is both teacher and mother, the same as the worldwide Church.⁴⁴⁹

In order to understand better the foundations, the contents and the characteristics of this participation, we must examine the many profound bonds linking the Church and the Christian family and establishing the family as a ‘Church in miniature’ (*Ecclesia domestica*), in such a way that in its own way the family is a living image and historical representation of the mystery of the Church.⁴⁵⁰

In turn, the Christian family is grafted into the mystery of the Church to such a degree as to become a sharer, in its own way, in the saving mission proper to the Church: by virtue of the Sacrament, Christian married couples and parents ‘in their state and way of life have their own special gift among the People of God.’ For this reason they not only *receive* the love of Christ and become a *saved* community, but they are also called upon to *communicate* Christ’s love to their brethren, thus becoming a *saving* community. In this way, while the Christian family is a fruit and sign of the supernatural fecundity of the Church, it stands also as a symbol, witness and participant of the Church’s motherhood.⁴⁵¹

Thus the little domestic Church, like the greater Church, needs to be constantly and intensely evangelized: hence its duty regarding permanent education in the faith.⁴⁵²

As the Synod repeated, taking up the appeal which I launched at Puebla, the future of evangelization depends in great part on the Church of the home. This apostolic mission of the family is rooted in Baptism and receives from the grace of the Sacrament of Marriage new strength to transmit the faith, to sanctify and transform our present society according to God’s plan.⁴⁵³

It should not be forgotten that the service rendered by Christian spouses and parents to the Gospel is essentially an ecclesial service. It has its place within the

⁴⁴⁸Blessed John Paul, II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 21, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁴⁹*Ibid.*, no. 38, pp. 62-63.

⁴⁵⁰*Ibid.*, no. 49, p. 75.

⁴⁵¹*Ibid.*, no. 49, pp. 75-76.

⁴⁵²*Ibid.*, no. 51, p. 79.

⁴⁵³*Ibid.*, no. 52, pp. 79-80.

context of the whole Church as an evangelized and evangelizing community. Insofar as the ministry of evangelization and catechesis of the Church of the home is rooted in and derives from the one mission of the Church and is ordained to the upbuilding of the one Body of Christ, it must remain in intimate communion and collaborate responsibly with all the other evangelizing and catechetical activities present and at work in the ecclesial community at the diocesan and parochial levels.⁴⁵⁴

Animated in its own inner life by missionary zeal, the Church of the home is also called to be a luminous sign of the presence of Christ and of his love for those who are ‘far away, for families who do not yet believe, and for those Christian families who no longer live in accordance with the faith that they once received. The Christian family is called to enlighten “by its example and its witness . . . those who seek the truth.”⁴⁵⁵

Family prayer has for its very own object *family life itself*, which in all its varying circumstances is seen as a call from God and lived as a filial response to his call. Joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, births and birthday celebrations, wedding anniversaries of the parents, departures, separations and homecomings, important and far-reaching decisions, the death of those who are dear, etc.—all of these mark God’s loving intervention in the family’s history. They should be seen as suitable moments for thanksgiving, for petition, for trusting abandonment of the family into the hands of their common Father in heaven. The dignity and responsibility of the Christian family as the domestic Church can be achieved only with God’s unceasing aid, which will surely be granted if it is humbly and trustingly petitioned in prayer.⁴⁵⁶

There exists a deep and vital bond between the prayer of the Church and the prayer of the individual faithful, as has been clearly reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council. An important purpose of the prayer of the domestic Church is to serve as the natural introduction for the children to the liturgical prayer of the whole church, both in the sense of preparing for it and of extending it into personal, family and social life. Hence the need for gradual participation by all the members of the Christian family in the celebration of the Eucharist, especially on Sundays and feast days, and of the other sacraments, particularly the sacraments of Christian initiation of the children. The directives of the Council opened up a new possibility for the Christian family when it listed the family among those groups to whom it recommends the recitation of the Divine Office in common. Likewise, the Christian family will strive to celebrate at home, and in a way suited to the members, the times and feasts of the liturgical year.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴Ibid., no. 53, p. 81.

⁴⁵⁵Ibid., no. 54, p. 82.

⁴⁵⁶Ibid., no. 59, p. 88.

⁴⁵⁷Ibid., no. 61, p. 90.

Therefore, it must be emphasized once more that the pastoral intervention of the Church in support of the family is a matter of urgency. Every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care for the family, which should be treated as a real matter of priority, in the certainty that future evangelization depends largely on the domestic Church.⁴⁵⁸

May the Virgin Mary, who is the Mother of the Church, also be the Mother of ‘the Church of the home.’ Thanks to her motherly aid, may each Christian family really become a ‘little Church’ in which the mystery of the Church of Christ is mirrored and given new life. May she, the Handmaid of the Lord, be an example of humble and generous acceptance of the will of God. May she, the Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the Cross, comfort the sufferings and dry the tears of those in distress because of the difficulties of their families.⁴⁵⁹

D. The Catechism of the Catholic Church

With the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Church now will use language that portrays Christian family clearly as a domestic Church.

2204. “The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a *domestic church*. It is a community of faith, hope, and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament.”

2207. “The family is the *original cell of social life*. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.”

1656. “In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith. For this reason the Second Vatican Council, using an ancient expression, calls the family the *Ecclesia domestica*. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are “by word and example . . . the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child, fostering with special care any religious vocation.”

1666. “The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called “the

⁴⁵⁸Ibid., no. 65, p. 95.

⁴⁵⁹Ibid., no. 86, p. 131.

domestic church,” a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity.”

IV. Marriage and Family in Catholic Social Teaching

The Age of the Fathers of the Church is usually defined as the time between the first and eighth centuries. Christianity was first perceived as a Jewish sect that spread throughout the Roman Empire because of the persecution directed against the early Church. In time Christianity would go from a persecuted sect to become the official religion of the Roman Empire. This time is usually divided into two periods marked by the conversion of Constantine. Before his conversion, Christianity was persecuted and its members could not participate in the life of society because their lives were at risk. From the fourth century Christians were allowed to participate actively in public life because when Constantine was baptized he made Christianity the official religion. Christianity became so involved in the social life of Rome that its charitable organizations were organized not just for the benefit of Christians but for non-Christians as well. During this time the Church Fathers began writing about how Christians could partake in the life of the Roman state. Their writings are noteworthy for their great interest in the use of wealth, the treatment of the poor, and the participation of Christians in the social and political life of their times. Their writings on marriage and family are not well known or easily accessible.

In this section, I will concentrate on the writings of the Church since Pope Leo XIII, which will help us to focus on marriage and the family.

A. Marriage: Pope John Paul II

a. The Plan of God: Familiaris Consortio

According to the plan of God, marriage is the foundation of the wider community

of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning.⁴⁶⁰

b. God is the Author of Matrimony: Gaudium et Spes

The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws, and is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent. Hence, by that human act whereby spouses mutually bestow and accept each other, a relationship arises which, by divine will and in the eyes of society too, is a lasting one. For the good of the spouses and their offspring's as well as of society, the existence of the sacred bond no longer depends on human decisions alone.

For God Himself is the author of matrimony, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes. All of these have a very decisive bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of the individual members of a family, and on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family itself and of human society as a whole. By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown.

Thus a man and a woman, who by their compact of conjugal love are no longer two, but one flesh (Mt 19:3), render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions. Through this union they experience the meaning of their oneness and attain to it with growing perfection day by day. As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on the spouses and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them.⁴⁶¹

c. Procreation is the Participation in God's Own Creative Work

A certain sharing by man in God's lordship is also evident in the specific responsibility that he is given for human life as such. It is a responsibility that reaches its highest point in the giving of life through procreation by man and woman in marriage. As the Second Vatican Council teaches: God himself, who said, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2:18) and "who made man from the beginning male and female" (Mt 19:4), wished to share with man a certain special participation in his own creative work. Thus he blessed male and female saying: "Increase and multiply" (Gen 1:28)

By speaking of a certain special participation of man and woman in the creative work of God, the Council wishes to point out that having a child is an event which

⁴⁶⁰Blessed John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 14, p. 27.

⁴⁶¹"Gaudium et Spes," in Documents of Vatican II, no. 43, pp. 250-251.

is deeply human and full of religious meaning, insofar as it involves both the spouses, who form one flesh (Gen 2:24), and God, who makes himself present.⁴⁶²

B. What is the Family?

a. The Family Is the First and Vital Cell of Society

“Since the Creator of all things has established the conjugal partnership as the beginning and basis of human society,” the family is “the first and vital cell of society.”⁴⁶³ The family has vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life. . . .⁴⁶⁴

b. The Family is the First School of Social Virtues

It is from the family that citizens come to birth, and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society. Thus, far from being closed in on itself, the family is by nature and vocation open to other families and to society, and undertakes its social role.⁴⁶⁵

c. The Family is the Fundamental Structure for Human Ecology

The first and fundamental structure for “human ecology” is the family, in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person. Here we mean the family founded on marriage, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity, and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny.⁴⁶⁶

d. The Family is the Sanctuary of Life

It is necessary to go back to seeing the family as the sanctuary of life. The family is indeed sacred: it is the place in which life the gift of God can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth. In the face of the so called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶²Blessed John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 43, p. 71.

⁴⁶³“*Apostolicam Actuositatem*” in *Documents of Vatican II*, no. 11.

⁴⁶⁴Blessed John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 42, p. 67.

⁴⁶⁵*Ibid.*, no. 42, pp. 67-68.

⁴⁶⁶Blessed John Paul II, “*Centesiumus Annus*” in *Catholic Social Thought*, no. 39, p. 468.

⁴⁶⁷*Ibid.*, no. 39.

e. The Family is the Place where One Grows Wiser

The natural family, monogamous and stable, such as the divine plan conceived it and as Christianity sanctified it, must remain the place where the various generations come together and help one another to grow wiser and to harmonize personal rights with the other requirements to social life.⁴⁶⁸

f. The Family is the Place for Transmitting and Raising Life

Within the “people of life and the people for life,” the family has a decisive responsibility. This responsibility flows from its very nature as a community of life and love, founded upon marriage, and from its mission to “guard, reveal, and communicate love.” Here it is a matter of God's love, of which parents are co-workers and, as it were, interpreters when they transmit life and raise it according to his fatherly plan.⁴⁶⁹

g. The Family is the Fundamental Nucleus of Society

As the fundamental nucleus of society, the family has a right to the full support of the State in order to carry out fully its particular mission. State laws, therefore, must be directed to promoting its well being, helping it to fulfill its proper duties. In the face of increasing pressure nowadays to consider, as legally equivalent to the union of spouses, forms of union which by their very nature or their intentional lack of permanence are in no way capable of expressing the meaning and ensuring the good of the family, it is the duty of the State to encourage and protect the authentic institution of the family, respecting its natural structure and its innate and inalienable rights.⁴⁷⁰

h. The Family Is Called to Build a Culture of Life

The family has a special role to play throughout the life of its members, from birth to death. It is truly the sanctuary of life: “the place in which life—the gift of God—can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth.”⁴⁷¹

Consequently, the role of family in building a culture of life is decisive and irreplaceable.

As the domestic church, the family is summoned to proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of life. This is a responsibility which first concerns married couples,

⁴⁶⁸Pope Paul VI, “Populorum Progressio” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 36, p. 248.

⁴⁶⁹Blessed John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no. 92, p. 145.

⁴⁷⁰Blessed John Paul II, “World Day of Peace Message, 1994,” no. 5.

⁴⁷¹Blessed John Paul II, “Centesimus Annus” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 39, p. 468.

called to be givers of life, on the basis of an ever greater awareness of the meaning of procreation as a unique event which clearly reveals that human life is a gift received in order then to be given as a gift. In giving origin to a new life, parents recognize that the child, “as the fruit of their mutual gift of love, is, in turn, a gift for both of them, a gift which flows from them.”⁴⁷²

i. The Family is the Domestic Church

The family is, so to speak, the domestic Church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care any religious vocation.⁴⁷³

j. The Family is Like the State

The family, like the State, is by the same token a society in the strictest sense of the term, and is governed by its own proper authority, namely, by that of the father. Wherefore, assuming, of course, that those limits be observed which are fixed by its immediate purpose, the family assuredly possesses rights, at least equal with those of civil society, in respect to choosing and employing the things necessary for its protection and its just liberty. We say at least equal because, inasmuch as domestic living together is prior both in thought and in fact to uniting into a polity, it follows that its rights and duties are also prior and more in conformity with nature. But if citizens, if families, after becoming participants in common life and society, were to experience injury in a commonwealth in stead of help, impairment of their rights instead of protection, society would be something to be repudiated rather than to be sought for.⁴⁷⁴

C. The Sacredness of Human Life

a. Human Life Comes from God

Man's life comes from God; it is his gift, his image and imprint, a sharing in his breath of life. God, therefore, is the sole Lord of this life: man cannot do with it as he wills. God himself makes this clear to Noah after the flood: “For your own lifeblood, too, I will demand an accounting . . . and from man in regard to his fellow man I will demand an accounting of human life.” The biblical text is concerned to emphasize how the sacredness of life has its foundation in God and in his creative activity: “For God made man in his own image.”⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷²Blessed John Paul II, Evangeliium Vitae, no. 92, pp. 145 and 146.

⁴⁷³“Lumen Gentium” in Documents of Vatican II, no. 11, p. 29.

⁴⁷⁴Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum (Boston, MA: Daughters of St. Paul), no. 20, p. 13.

⁴⁷⁵Blessed John Paul II, Evangeliium Vitae, no. 39, p. 66.

b. Human Life is Sacred Because It Begins with the Creative Action of God

“Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the ‘creative action of God’ and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can, in any circumstance, claim for himself the right to destroy directly an innocent human being.” With these words, the Instruction Donum Vitae sets forth the central content of God's revelation on the sacredness and inviolability of human life.⁴⁷⁶

c. The Outcry for Human Rights Must Include the Right to Life for all People

The common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture is false and illusory if ‘the right to life,’ the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination. The Church has never yielded in the face of all the violations that the right to life of every human being has received, and continues to receive, both from individuals and from those in authority. The human being is entitled to such rights, ‘in every phase of development,’ from conception until natural death; and in ‘every condition,’ whether healthy or sick, whole or handicapped, rich or poor.⁴⁷⁷

d. Lay People Must Fight the Mentality of the Culture of Death

The Church today lives a fundamental aspect of her mission in lovingly and generously accepting every human being, especially those who are weak and sick. This is made all the more necessary as a “culture of death” threatens to take control. In fact, the Church family believes that human life, even if weak and suffering, is always a wonderful gift of God's goodness. Against the pessimism and selfishness which casts a shadow over the world, the Church stands for life: in each human life she sees the splendour of that “Yes,” that “Amen,” which is Christ himself (cf. 2 Cor 1:19; Rv 3:14). To the “No” which assails and afflicts the world, she replies with this living “Yes,” this defending of the human person and the world from all who plot against life (Familiaris Consortio, no. 30). It is the responsibility of the lay faithful, who more directly through their vocation or their profession are involved in accepting life, to make the Church's “Yes” to human life concrete and efficacious.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶Ibid., no. 53, p. 87.

⁴⁷⁷Blessed John Paul II, Christifideles Laici: The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1988), no. 38, p. 94.

⁴⁷⁸Ibid., no. 38, pp. 95 and 96.

e. Respect Must Be Given To Every Human Person

The Church teaches that there exist acts which per se and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object. The Second Vatican Council itself, in discussing the respect due to the human person, gives a number of examples of such acts: Whatever is hostile to life itself, such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit; whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat laborers as mere instruments of profit, and not as free responsible persons: all these and the like are a disgrace, and so long as they infect human civilization, they contaminate those who inflict them more than those who suffer injustice, and they are a negation of the honor due to the Creator.⁴⁷⁹

f. The Gospel of Life is at the Heart of Jesus' Message

The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message. Lovingly received day after day by the Church, it is to be preached with dauntless fidelity as good news to the people of every age and culture.

At the dawn of salvation, it is the Birth of a Child which is proclaimed as joyful news: I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (Lk 2:10-11). The source of this great joy is the Birth of the Savior; but Christmas also reveals the full meaning of every human birth, and the joy which accompanies the Birth of the Messiah is thus seen to be the foundation and fulfillment of joy at every child born into the world (cf. Jn 16:21).

When he presents the heart of his redemptive mission, Jesus says: I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly (Jn 10:10). In truth, he is referring to that new and eternal life which consists in communion with the Father, to which every person is freely called in the Son by the power of the Sanctifying Spirit. It is precisely in this life that all the aspects and stages of human life achieve their full significance.⁴⁸⁰

D. Parents and the Education of Children

a. Parents are the First and Foremost Educators of Their Children

The task of giving education is rooted in the primary vocation of married couples to participate in God's creative activity: by begetting in love and for love a new person who has within himself or herself the vocation to growth and development,

⁴⁷⁹Blessed John Paul II. Veritatis Splendor, (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1993), no. 80, p. 101.

⁴⁸⁰Blessed John Paul II., Evangelium Vitae, no. 1, p. 11.

parents by that very fact take on the task of helping that person effectively to live a fully human life. As the Second Vatican Council recalled, “since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children.”⁴⁸¹

b. The Education of Children is a Right and Duty of All Parents

Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it. For it devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well rounded personal and social development will be fostered among the children. Hence, the family is the first school of those social virtues that every society needs.

The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.⁴⁸²

c. Parents Must Educate Children about the Social Role of the Family

The social role of the family certainly cannot stop short at procreation and education, even if this constitutes its primary and irreplaceable form of expression.

Families, therefore, either singly or in association, can and should devote themselves to manifold social service activities, especially in favor of the poor, or, at any rate, for the benefit of all people and situations that cannot be reached by the public authorities' welfare organization.

The social contribution of the family has an original character of its own, one that should be given greater recognition and more decisive encouragement, especially as the children grow up, and actually involving all its members as much as possible.⁴⁸³

E. Children and Parents

a. God is Present in Human Fatherhood and Motherhood at Birth

When a new person is born of the conjugal union of the two, he brings with him into the world a particular image and likeness of God himself: the genealogy of the person is inscribed in the very biology of generation. In affirming that the spouses, as parents, cooperate with God the Creator in conceiving and giving birth

⁴⁸¹Blessed John Paul II., Familiaris Consortio. no. 36.

⁴⁸²Ibid., no. 36.

⁴⁸³Ibid., no. 44.

to a new human being, we are not speaking merely with reference to the laws of biology. Instead, we wish to emphasize that God himself is present in human fatherhood and motherhood quite differently than he is present in all other instances of begetting “on earth.” Indeed, God alone is the source of that “image and likeness” which is proper to the human being, as it was received at Creation. Begetting is the continuation of Creation.⁴⁸⁴

b. The Father is Called to Be a Unifier

In revealing and in reliving on earth the very fatherhood of God, a man is called upon to ensure the harmonious and united development of all the members of the family: he will perform this task by exercising generous responsibility for the life conceived under the heart of the mother, by a more solicitous commitment to education, a task he shares with his wife, by work, which is never a cause of division in the family but promotes its unity and stability, and by means of the witness he gives of an adult Christian life which effectively introduces the children into the living experience of Christ and the Church.⁴⁸⁵

c. It is Important to Clearly Recognize the Value of Woman’s Maternal/Family Role

There is no doubt that the equal dignity and responsibility of men and women fully justifies women's access to public functions. On the other hand, the true advancement of women requires that clear recognition be given to the value of their maternal and family role, by comparison with all other public roles and all other professions. Furthermore, these roles and professions should be harmoniously combined, if we wish the evolution of society and culture to be truly and fully human.⁴⁸⁶

V. Insights of Blessed John Paul in Familiaris Consortio (Family in the Modern World)

In 1981, Pope John Paul II published his Apostolic Exhortation on “The Family in the Modern World” (Familiaris Consortio.) In 1980, he had convoked the Synod of Bishops to study the theme “On the Role of the Family,” a topic that had been chosen as a result of a world-wide consultation with bishops. Among the topics that the bishops wanted to discuss, the most mentioned was marriage and the family. The historical

⁴⁸⁴Blessed John Paul II, “Letter to Families” (Gratissimam Sane), 1994, no. 9, www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families_en.html.

⁴⁸⁵Blessed John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 25.

⁴⁸⁶Ibid., no. 23.

situation of the time underlined the social difficulties the family was facing and these circumstances challenged the Church to offer support, words of consolation, and orientation for the good of the family, and the future of modern civilization. The increase in divorce, the abandonment of families by fathers, the development of new models of marriage and family in different cultures, the changing position of women in society, the acceptance of artificial birth control by many Catholics, the proliferation of abortion as an acceptable practice, the economic crisis that families faced, the awareness of the different needs and strains in different cultures were problems that called for clarity on the value and meaning of marriage in the contemporary world. These problems and some of the responses offered by modern world made it obvious to the bishops that the Church's traditional teaching on marriage and the family was being challenged in some areas, ridiculed in others, and ignored by some in every part of the world. To respond to the pleas of bishops, Pope John Paul II presented to both the Church and the world his understanding of the Church's teaching on marriage and the family so that the Christian wisdom of the past would become a cornerstone for the future of all.

The "Family in the Modern World" is divided into four main parts. The introduction and part one begin with an affirmation on the value of marriage and the family:

Willed by God in the very act of creation, marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to fulfillment in Christ and have need of His graces in order to be healed from the wounds of sin and restored to their "beginning," that is, to full understanding and the full realization of God's plan.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁷Ibid., no. 3, p. 13.

Immediately after this, John Paul goes on to talk about the dangers that couples and families must face if they are to be faithful to their commitment in the contemporary world.

At a moment of history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family, ensuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and thus contributing to the renewal of society and the People of God.⁴⁸⁸

To help us understand the situation of the family in its historical context, John Paul emphasizes both the positive and negative characteristics of the social and cultural situation of the modern family which is

an inescapable requirement of the work of evangelization. It is, in fact, to the families of our times that the Church must bring the unchangeable and ever new Gospel of Jesus Christ . . . Moreover, the call and demands of the Spirit resound in the very events of history, and so the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family by the circumstances, the questions and the anxieties and hopes of the young people, married couples and parents of today.⁴⁸⁹

Among the positive aspects in which the family finds itself are a greater attention to the quality of interpersonal relationships in marriage, the promotion of the dignity of women, to responsible procreation and education of children, and the discovery of the ecclesial mission of the family and its responsibility for the building of a more just society. Some of the negative characteristics which attempt to degrade the fundamental values of marriage and the family include a mistaken emphasis on the independence of the spouses, problems of authority between parents and children, the growing number of

⁴⁸⁸Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹Ibid., no. 4, p. 14.

divorces, the scourge of abortion, the recourse to sterilization, and the appearance of a contraceptive mentality.

In countries of the Third World, John Paul points out that families often lack both the means necessary for survival such as food, work, housing and medicine and the most basic freedoms that are necessary to enjoy a humane life. At the same time he contrasts this with richer countries where people are driven by a consumer mentality and enjoy the goods of the earth to the extent that they see the birth of new life in their families as a threat to their well-being and happiness. The conflicts that are being lived by the modern family demand a wisdom to help navigate these challenges that are being faced.

The second part of Familiaris Consortio proposes to help the modern family navigate the challenges of the modern world by presenting anew the plan of God for marriage and the family, a theology of the family for the contemporary world. John Paul insists that it is only in the plan of God that the family discovers who it is, its identity, and its mission; what it can be and what it should do in the world. Once again, John Paul reminds spouses that:

The Spirit which the Lord pours forth gives a new heart, and renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us. Conjugal love reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained, conjugal charity, which is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ who gave Himself on the Cross.⁴⁹⁰

This ideal lived between spouses enables them to be open to the gift of life that God gives them through their children and with them they begin to form a communion of persons that will reflect to all the family of God which is the Church. (cf. Familiaris Consortio, no. 15)

⁴⁹⁰Ibid., no. 13, p. 25.

The third part of the letter introduces the role of the Christian family. The mission of the family is to be a community of life and love whose essential characteristic is love. It is called to form a community of persons, serve life in all of its stages, participate actively in the development of society both socially and politically, and to share in the evangelizing mission of the Church. The primary responsibility of the family is to develop an authentic community of persons so that each will grow and mature to fulfill its God-given mission. This community is established on the conjugal communion of man and woman who through their fidelity and self-giving to one another form a communion in the family which becomes the basis of the communion between parents and children and brothers and sisters with one another and then is strengthened and enabled to reach out to the community at large.

The Holy Spirit, who is poured forth in the celebration of the sacraments, is the living source and inexhaustible sustenance of the supernatural communion that gathers believers and links them with Christ and with each other in the unity of the Church of God, The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason too it can and should be called “the domestic Church.”⁴⁹¹

Family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. Aware of the world that the family is called to live in, John Paul mentions some specific challenges that each family must confront. God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity and it is necessary that a woman be given the respect that God has bestowed upon her. The offenses against women’s dignity present in society and sometimes in the marriage and family must be rejected as they go against God’s plan for man and woman.

God then manifests the dignity of women in the highest form possible, by assuming human flesh from the Virgin Mary, whom the Church honors as the

⁴⁹¹Ibid., no. 21, p. 37.

Mother of God, calling her the new Eve and presenting her as the model of redeemed woman. The sensitive respect of Jesus towards the women that He called to His following and His friendship, His appearing on Easter morning to a woman before the other disciples, the mission entrusted to women to carry the good news of the Resurrection to the apostles—these are all signs that confirm the special esteem of the Lord Jesus for women.⁴⁹²

Men are reminded that they must be more concerned with their families and give the time necessary to the children so that the fathers may also participate in their formation and education since a father's absence causes psychological and moral imbalances in the life of the child and the development of the family. (cf. Familiaris Consortio no. 25) Married love requires that a man have a profound respect for his wife because she is his equal. Man is a husband and a father just as a woman is a wife and a mother. John Paul emphasizes this by quoting St. Ambrose who reminds the husband that “You are not her master, but her husband; she was not given to you to be your slave, but your wife. . . Reciprocate her attentiveness to you and be grateful to her for her love.”⁴⁹³

Blessed John Paul II reiterates that the primary role of the woman is seen as mother and she should not be compelled to work outside the home. The value of the work of the woman in the home should be recognized by all as infinite. However, the social role of women is to be recognized and developed according to the circumstances and the need of society and family because she has been given gifts that are necessary for the common good.

Just as spouses and parents have been blessed with equal dignity and rights so their children must also be respected because of their uniqueness and dignity they have

⁴⁹²Ibid., no. 22, p. 38.

⁴⁹³Ibid., no. 25, p. 42.

received in the image and likeness of God. Together as a family they must respect one another and be more caring of the older members of their family.

In our confused world where life depends on human whim, John Paul II firmly reaffirms that the fundamental task of the family is to serve life,⁴⁹⁴ to actualize in history the original blessing of the Creator – that of transmitting by procreation the divine image from person to person. He also reminds all that the fruitfulness of marital love is not restricted to the procreation of children. It is enriched by all those fruits of a moral, spiritual, and supernatural life which the Father and Mother are called on to hand on to their children and, through the children, to the Church and to the world.

To foster communion in the family is the primary vocation of parents to educate their children about God’s plan for them and for the family. Since the parents are the first and foremost educators of their children, no one can fulfill their obligation to help their children grow in the love of God and develop the social virtues which will be needed to create a society where respect and equality will be shown to all people and be the ground of all human relations.

The family is the first and fundamental school of social living: as a community of love, it finds in self-giving the law that guides it and makes it grow. The self-giving that inspires the love of husband and wife for each other is the model and norm for the self-giving that must be practiced in the relationships between brothers and sisters and the different generations living together in the family.

⁴⁹⁴Another new campaign produced by black pro-life advocates says African-American political leaders have betrayed the black community with their support for abortion, which has destroyed millions of black Americans. Catherine Davis, founder of the Restoration Project, stated: “Something is wrong when those elected to protect the interests of their constituents turn a blind eye to the horrific impact that abortion is wreaking on the black community. In New York City, for every 1,000 black babies born alive, 1,489 are aborted. In Washington, D.C. for every 100 black babies born alive, 165 are aborted. Something is wrong.” Dr. Alveda King, the niece of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said: “It’s outrageous that Margaret Sanger’s Negro Project to control the birth rate of Blacks is alive and thriving today because so many black leaders have sold their constituents the lie that abortion is the key to emancipating African-American women. Abortion kills babies and hurts women and families. These pro-abortion voices are not the voices of Black America.” Stephen Ertelt, “Billboard: African-Americans Leaders Betrayed Blacks on Abortion,” LifeNews.com, August 16, 2011.

And the communion and sharing that are part of everyday life in the home at times of joy and at times of difficulty are the most concrete and effective pedagogy for the active, responsible and fruitful inclusion of the children in the wider horizon of society.⁴⁹⁵

As the family enters the world outside of the home, John Paul emphasizes that from the beginning the family is the first and vital cell of society. It is the origin and the most effective means for humanizing and making more humane the life of the world. As the first school of social life where relationships are based on respect, justice, dialogue and love family is called to share these fruits of their daily life with the world, especially with the poor. Because of its experience of peace and justice, the family is called to cooperate in the establishment of a new order where there will be solidarity and respect established among all people. The lived social reality of the family should have a direct influence on the political decisions of the world in which it lives.

The Christian family who is living its faith as the domestic Church is also called to share in the mission of the Church to build up the Kingdom of God. As the family matures in its faith, it becomes an evangelizing community which speaks to others through its lived faith and thus becomes a transforming agent for others as it bears witness to God's plan. The ministry of the parents in this evangelizing domestic community is original and irreplaceable as they are called to face with courage and inner peace the difficulties which may arise as they attempt to be evangelizing witnesses to their own children and their neighbors. To strengthen the parents and children in this life of communion, family prayer will help build their inner spirit and open them up to the mystery of God as they attempt to dialogue with God personally and as a community.

The concrete example and living witness of parents is fundamental and irreplaceable in educating their children to pray. Only by praying together with

⁴⁹⁵Blessed John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 37, p. 60.

their children can a father and mother—exercising their royal priesthood—penetrate the innermost depths of their children’s hearts and leave an impression that the future events in their lives will not be able to erase.⁴⁹⁶

Fortified by their experience of communion with God and one another, the Christian family can renew daily its commitment to be instruments of God’s love in their own family community and be for others a community of love.⁴⁹⁷

Familiaris Consortio is a gift not just for the Church but also for the world. It is a letter of hope as it reminds all people of the joy that comes from living according to God’s plan. Blessed John Paul II presents in a very convincing way the beauty of the family as the basis of society and also of the Church as she is the “domestic Church.” Though he overlooks the tradition of the early Church Fathers found in St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine, he reminds the modern Church of a reality that it has yet to understand or accept pastorally. Without refocusing its efforts on the challenge of the New Evangelization,

The lay faithful ought to regard themselves as an active and responsible part of this venture, called as they are to proclaim and to live the Gospel in service to the

⁴⁹⁶Ibid., no. 60, p. 89.

⁴⁹⁷In a study by the Family Research Council researchers found that pupils involved in religious activities spend more time on their homework. They achieve better test results and are less likely to drop out of high school. Its positive impact is not confined to school, but continues at college level. One study found that 19.5% of students who infrequently worshiped drop out of school compared to only 9.1% of students who attended worship often. . . . Religion helps students: it internalizes values and norms that help achievement; it fosters high personal expectations, and helps students avoid socially deviant behavior . . . ; religious families tend to be cohesive and stable, to plan for students’ futures, and to expect much of them.” Father John Flynn, LC, “The Positive Role of Religion,” <http://www.zenit.org/phprint.php>, Sept. 19, 2010. Another study, conducted by The National Marriage Project from the University of Virginia, compared religion and relationship quality across America’s major racial and ethnic groups. This study found that for all groups, shared religious activity—attending church together and especially praying together—is linked to higher levels of relationship quality. “African-Americans derive the most benefits from that connection because they are significantly more likely than whites or Latinos to pray together and attend church together, offsetting other socioeconomic factors tied to lower relationship quality.” “Across Races, Couples that Pray Together are Happier Study Finds,” <http://www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/newsRelease>, Sept. 20, 2010. A third study, “Religious Practice and Educational Attainment,” conducted by Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D., concluded that religious practice has very beneficial effects on the educational attainment of children. “The direct positive effects of religious practice by the student include: higher grade point averages; more time spent on homework, and a significant decrease in high school drop-out rates. Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D., “Religious Practice and Educational Attainment” Research Synthesis, Family Research Council, September 2010.

person and to society while respecting the totality of the values and needs of both.⁴⁹⁸

Just as he re-introduces and strengthens the concept of family as domestic Church, Blessed John Paul also emphasizes the role of the woman in Christian marriage and the family. In God's plan, the woman is equal in dignity with man and complements him with her gifts, without which he will never be whole. Blessed John Paul stresses the importance of God's plan to understand the vocation of both married life and the family. He not only highlights the value of the woman but also asks that men be faithful and responsible in living out their life commitment with their wives and children. They are both responsible for the life of the family and the evangelizing mission that the family has in the world.

Though there is limited direct use of the Scriptures, there are many references to Scripture, the letter is easy to read and therefore should be a study text so that Church communities and families will get a deeper understanding of the social and political responsibilities of the family to influence public life. They are called to be active agents in the creation of a new world order and this renewed emphasis on the vocation of the laity in the world has yet to be embraced by the Christian community as a whole. The challenge of the Church community to be agents of the pastoral care of the family seems to be neglected in modern pastoral life. There is much time spent on denouncing the evils that attack or weaken marriage and family life. But it does not appear that local Church communities are dedicating their time or resources on this primary and irreplaceable institution of Church and society.

⁴⁹⁸Blessed John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, no. 64, p. 164.

Chapter Five

DIGNITY OF WOMEN

I. Introduction

We find the beginning of the Christian understanding about the Dignity of Women in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. In the first book of the Bible, Genesis (chapters 1 to 3), we are presented with an understanding of the meaning and value that God gives to humanity. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we will find different emphases and expressions of what this will mean for God's people at a certain historical moment. However, all of the texts should be taken together so that we may truly understand the meaning of the dignity of women in the sight of God.

It is only in the latter part of the twentieth century, that there has been an interest expressed in the role of women in the Bible. For centuries, her role was either ignored, overlooked, or totally misconstrued and not seen as an integral part of God's creation and plan for humanity. In the beginning what God created was good, both woman and man reflected the image, likeness, and goodness of God. But it was their sin that brought them punishment, and the harmony that originally existed between them and God, between each other, and between them and creation, was destroyed.

II. Scriptural References

The following Biblical citations present the value, vocation, and life of woman in the Word of God. The evil of domestic violence can best be understood when we look at God's plan for woman, the daughter who was created to reflect His image, likeness, and goodness to others.

A. Old Testament

Creation Narrative

Genesis 1:27-28

So God created human beings, making them to be like Himself. He created them male and female, blessed them and said, “Have many children so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.”

This passage reveals two things about God’s intentions. (1) God made woman as well as man in His image and likeness. (2) The woman and the man were to have authority over the created world. She was as much an administrator of God’s creation as was the man.

Genesis 3:14a-15

Then the Lord God said to the snake . . . “I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring’s heel.”

It is through the offspring of the woman that the devil will be overcome and defeated. Later on it will be through the offspring of the New Eve, Mary, that the evil one will meet final defeat.

Patriarchal Narratives

From the beginning of the Patriarchal Narratives, matriarchs have a decisive if unofficial role in the sequence of events that bring about the presence of God in the life of the Jewish people.

Genesis 27:5-10

While Isaac was talking to Esau, Rebecca was listening. So when Esau went out to hunt, she said to Jacob, “I have just heard your father say to Esau, bring me an animal and cook it for me. After I have eaten it, I will give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die. Now, son,” Rebecca continued, “listen to me and do what I say. Go to the flock and pick out two fat young goats, so that I can cook them and make some of the food your father likes so much. You can take it to him to eat and he will give you his blessing before he dies.”

1 Kings 1:11-40

As King David is about to die, Bathsheba obtains the kingship for Solomon her son.

1 Kings 1:17-18

Bathsheba said to King David, “Your Majesty, you made me a solemn promise in the name of the Lord your God that your son Solomon would be king after you. But Adonijah has already become king, and you don’t know anything about it. . . .”

1 Kings 1:29-30

King David said to Bathsheba . . . “I promise you by the living Lord, who has rescued me from all my troubles, that today I will keep the promise I made to you in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, that your son Solomon would succeed me as king.”

Prophetic Ministry

Although women were prevented from participating in the temple as priests, they were still permitted to participate in the prophetic ministry in Israel.

Judges 4:4-9

Now, Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophet, and she was serving as a judge for the Israelites at that time. She would sit under a certain palm tree between Ramah and Bethel . . . and the people of Israel would go there for her decisions. One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam from the city of Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, has given you this command: ‘Take ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them to Mount Tabor. I will bring Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, to fight you at the Kishon River. He will have his chariots and soldiers, but I will give you victory over him.’”

Then Barak replied, “I will go if you go with me, but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go either.” She answered, “All right, I will go with, but you won’t get any credit for the victory, because the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman.” So Deborah set off for Kedesh with Barak.

Exodus 15:19-21

The Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. But when the Egyptian chariots with their horses and drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought the water back, and it covered them. The prophet Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took her tambourine, and all the women followed her, playing tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang for them: “Sing to the Lord, because he has won a glorious victory; he has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea.”

2 Kings 22:14-20

Kilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to consult a woman named Huldah, a prophet who lived in the newer part of Jerusalem. . . . They described to her what had happened, and she told them to go back to the king (King Josiah of Judah) and give him the following message from the Lord: “I am going to punish Jerusalem and all its people,

as written in the book that the king has read. They have rejected me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and so have stirred up my anger by all they have done. My anger is aroused against Jerusalem, and it will not die down. As for the king himself, this is what I, the Lord God of Israel, say: You listened to what is written in the book, and you repented and humbled yourself before me, tearing your clothes and weeping, when you heard how I threatened to punish Jerusalem and its people. I will make it a terrifying sight, a place whose name people will use as a curse. But I have heard your prayer, and the punishment which I am going to bring on Jerusalem will not come until after your death. I will let you die in peace.”

Respect for the Mother

In the patriarchal family, the mother was subordinate to the father but the law stipulated that she was to be respected and loved just as the father.

Exodus 20:12

Respect your father and your mother, so that you may live a long time in the land that I am giving you.

Exodus 21:15 and 17

Whoever hits his father or his mother is to be put to death.

Whoever curses his father or his mother is to be put to death.

Leviticus 19:3

Each of you must respect your mother and your father, and must keep the Sabbath as I have commanded. I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 20:9

The Lord gave the following regulations: any of you that curse your father or mother shall be put to death; you are responsible for your own death.

Deuteronomy 5:16

Respect your father and your mother, as I, the Lord your God, command you, so that you may live a long time in the land that I am giving you.

Deuteronomy 21:18-20

Suppose someone has a son who is stubborn and rebellious, a son who will not obey his parents, even though they punish him. His parents are to take him before the leaders of the town where he lives and make him stand trial. They are to say to them, “Our son is stubborn and rebellious and refuses to obey us; he wastes money and is a drunkard.” Then the men of the city are to stone him to death, and so you will get rid of this evil. Everyone in Israel will hear what has happened and be afraid.

Deuteronomy 27:16

God's curse on anyone who dishonors his father or mother. And all the people will answer, Amen!

The Wisdom Literature

The Wisdom literature encourages the son to listen to and put into practice the teaching of his father and mother if not, he will become a fool and a great disappointment to them.

Proverbs 1: 8–9

My child, pay attention to what your father and mother tell you. Their teaching will improve your character as a handsome turban or necklace improves your appearance.

Proverbs 6:22-23

Son, do what your father tells you and never forget what your mother taught you. Keep their words with you always, locked in your heart. Their teaching will lead you when you travel, protect you at night, and advise you during the day. Their instructions are a shining light; their correction can teach you how to live.

Proverbs 10:1

Wise children make their fathers proud of them; foolish ones bring their mothers grief.

Proverbs 15:20

Wise children make their fathers happy. Only fools despise their mothers.

The Ideal Wife

The ideal wife is portrayed in imagery that the world is challenged to recover.

Proverbs 31:10-11

How hard it is to find a capable wife! She is worth far more than jewels! Her husband puts his confidence in her, and he will never be poor. As long as she lives, she does him good and never harm. She keeps herself busy making wool and linen cloth. She brings home food from out-of-the-way places, as merchant ships do. She gets up before daylight to prepare food for her family and to tell her servant women what to do. She looks at land and buys it, and with money she has earned she plants a vineyard. She is a hard worker, strong and industrious. She knows the value of everything she makes, and works late into the night. She spins her own thread and weaves her own cloth. She is generous to the poor and needy.

Sirach 26:13-16

A gracious wife is her husband's delight; her abilities make him a stronger man. A wife who doesn't talk too much is a gift from the Lord. Such restraint is admirable beyond

words. A modest wife has endless charm; it is a quality too precious to measure. The beauty of a good wife in her well-kept home is like the noonday sun shining in the Lord's sky.

Unknown Heroines

Wisdom is found in those women who have no name but who save their villages and for such courage they are remembered today.

2 Samuel 14:1-20

When the commander of King David's army Joab wanted to reconcile the King with his devious son Absalom, he implored the wise woman from Tekoa to help him. The woman went to King David, pretending to be a widowed mother of two sons and presented to him her pain. One of the sons killed the other and her family wanted to take revenge and kill the surviving son but she wanted to forgive him. King David listened and decided she was right to forgive her son. Then the wise woman pointed out that King David, having the same problem, was not willing to forgive his son Absalom. After reflection, David admitted he was wrong and allowed his son to return to Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 20:1-23

Joab, the commander of King David's army, was preparing to attack the city of Abel. A man named Sheba had led a failed revolt against King David and took refuge in Abel. A wise woman appeared at the city wall and appealed to Joab for her town and her people. They agreed on a plan. If Sheba was killed, the city would not be destroyed. The wise woman returned and told the townspeople about the plan "and they cut off Sheba's head and threw it over the wall to Joab." Joab and his army rode away.

B. New Testament

The renewed interest in biblical research on the place women has highlighted once again Jesus' ministry and women's participation in preaching the Good News.

While all of the apostles were men, Jesus welcomed women into His group of disciples and treated them with great love and respect, giving them a position that was unusual for their environment.

Discipleship

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee named Nazareth. He had a message for a young woman promised in marriage to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly

blessed you!” Mary was deeply troubled by the angel’s message, and she wondered what his words meant. The angel said to her, “Don’t be afraid, Mary: God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was, and he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end!” Mary said to the angel, “I am a virgin. How, then, can this be?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and God’s power will rest upon you. For this reason the holy child will be called the Son of God. Remember your relative Elizabeth. It is said that she cannot have children, but she herself is now six months pregnant, even though she is very old. For there is nothing that God can not do. I am the Lord’s servant,” said Mary; “may it happen to me as you have said.” And the angel left her.

Luke 8:1–3

Jesus traveled through towns and villages, preaching the Good News about the Kingdom of God. The twelve disciples went with him, and so did some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (who was called Magdalene), from whom seven demons had been driven out; Joanna, whose husband Chuza was an officer in Herod’s court; and Susanna, and many other women who used their own resources to help Jesus and his disciples.

Luke 10:38–42

As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, “Lord do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me.” The Lord said to her in reply, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.

John 11:1–3 (1–44)

A man named Lazarus, who lived in Bethany, became sick. Bethany was the town where Mary and her sister Martha lived. (This Mary was the one who poured the perfume on the Lord’s feet and wiped them with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was sick.) The sisters sent Jesus a message: “Lord, your dear friend is sick. . . .”

Jesus’ Concern for Needs of Women

Matthew 9:20-22

A woman who had suffered from severe bleeding for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak. She said to herself, “If only I touch his cloak, I will get well.” Jesus turned around and saw her, and said, “Courage, my daughter! Your faith has made you well.” At that very moment the woman became well.

Mark 7:25-30

A woman, whose daughter had an evil spirit in her, heard about Jesus and came to him at once and fell at his feet. The woman was a Gentile, born in the region of Phoenicia in

Syria. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. But Jesus answered, "Let us first feed the children. It isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." "Sir," she answered, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's leftovers!" So Jesus said to her, "Because of that answer, go back home, where you will find that the demon has gone out of your daughter!" She went home and found her child lying on the bed; the demon had indeed gone out of her.

Matthew 21:31b

Speaking in the temple to the chief priests and the elders about who will be saved, Jesus said "I tell you: that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the Kingdom of God ahead of you."

When a woman is caught in adultery and there is the possibility that some Pharisees will have her stoned, Jesus defends her. The Pharisees show their hypocrisy by already having permitted the man caught with her to go free in violation of the law.

John 8:3-11

The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught committing adultery, and they made her stand before them all. "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. In our Law Moses commanded that such a woman must be stoned to death. Now, what do you say?" They said this to trap Jesus, so that they could accuse him. But he bent over and wrote on the ground with his finger. As they stood there asking him questions, he straightened up and said to them, "Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone at her." Then he bent over again and wrote on the ground. When they heard this, they all left, one by one, the older ones first. Jesus was left alone, with the woman still standing there. He straightened up and said to her, "Where are they? Is there no one left to condemn you?" "No one, sir," she answered. "Well, then," Jesus said, "I do not condemn you either. Go, but do not sin again."

Since the time of Moses, married men were allowed to divorce their wives while women could not divorce their husbands. When approached by the Pharisees who attempt to trick him, Jesus defends married women against the abuses that they have experienced both from the Law and from their husbands since the time of Moses.

Matthew 19:3-8

Some Pharisees came to him and tried to trap him by asking, "Does our Law allow a man to divorce his wife for whatever reason he wishes?" Jesus answered, "Haven't you read the scripture that says that in the beginning the Creator made people male and female? And God said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.' So they are no longer two, but one. No human

being must separate, then, what God has joined together.” The Pharisees asked him, “Why, then, did Moses give the law for a man to hand his wife a divorce notice and send her away?” Jesus answered, “Moses gave you permission to divorce your wives because you are so hard to teach. But it was not like that at the time of creation.”

Poor women are blessed through Jesus

Luke 1:46-55

Mary said, “My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Savior, for he has remembered me, his lowly servant! From now on all people will call me happy, because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me. His name is holy; from one generation to another he shows mercy to those who honor him. He has stretched out his mighty arm and scattered the proud with all their plans. He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors, and has come to the help of his servant Israel. He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham and to all his descendants forever!”

Luke 21:1-4

Jesus looked around and saw rich people dropping their gifts in the Temple treasury, and he also saw a very poor widow dropping in two little copper coins. He said, “I tell you that this poor widow put in more than all the others. For the others offered their gifts from what they had to spare of their riches; but she, poor as she is, gave all she had to live on.”

Women Remain with Jesus as He Suffers

In preparation for his death, Jesus is anointed at Bethany by a woman.

Matthew 26:6-13

Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon, a man who had suffered from a dreaded skin disease. While Jesus was eating, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar filled with an expensive perfume, which she poured on his head. The disciples saw this and became angry. “Why all this waste?” they asked. “This perfume could have been sold for a large amount and the money given to the poor!” Jesus knew what they were saying, and so he said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? It is a fine and beautiful thing that she has done for me. You will always have poor people with you, but you will not always have me. What she did was to pour this perfume on my body to get me ready for burial. Now, I assure you that wherever this gospel is preached all over the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

John 19:25-27

Standing close to Jesus’ cross were his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother, “He is your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “She is your mother.” From that time the disciple took her to live in his home.

Women First Witnesses of the Risen Christ

John 20:11-18

Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. “Woman, why are you crying?” they asked her. She answered, “They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!” Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there: but she did not know that it was Jesus. “Woman, why are you crying?” Jesus asked her, “Who is it that you are looking for?” She thought he was the gardener, so she said to him, “If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned toward him and said in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (This means “Teacher.”) “Do not hold on to me,” Jesus told her, “because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God.” So Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and related to them what he had told her.

Luke 24:1-12

Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, so they went in: but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. They stood there puzzled about this, when suddenly two men in bright shining clothes stood by them. Full of fear, the women bowed down to the ground, as the men said to them, “Why are you looking among the dead for one who is alive? He is not here; he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was in Galilee: “The Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and three days later rise to life.”” Then the women remembered his words, returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven disciples and all the rest. The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; they and the other women with them told these things to the apostles. But the apostles thought that what the women said was nonsense, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; he bent down and saw the grave cloths but nothing else. Then he went back home amazed at what had happened.

Matthew 28:1-9

After the Sabbath, as Sunday morning was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake; an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled the stone away, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid that they trembled and became like dead men. The angel spoke to the women. “You must not be afraid,” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has been raised, just as he said. Come here and see the place where he was lying. Go quickly now, and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from death, and now he is going to Galilee ahead of you; there you will see him! Remember what I have told you.’” So they left the tomb in a hurry, afraid and yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Peace be with you.” They came up to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. “Do not be afraid,” Jesus said to them. “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

III. Dignity of the Woman in Catholic Social Teaching

Recent Church literature shows a very profound interest on the part of the Church for women and their suffering. In the intervention by the Holy See at the Third Commission of the 60th General Assembly of the United Nations on October 13, 2005, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the representative of the Holy See at the United Nations, said:

Violence against women in all its forms, including domestic violence and harmful traditional practices, is a grave violation of the dignity of women and their human rights. In some countries female foeticide and infanticide continue. Often, violence against women results from the consideration of a woman, not as a human person with rights on an equal basis with others, but as an object to be exploited. In this context, an increasing scourge is trafficking of women and girls, as well as various forms of prostitution. All forms of violence against women are rightly to be condemned and the Holy See, for its part, seeks to work in collaboration with all those of good will in giving priority to social policies aimed at the elimination of the causes of such violence.⁴⁹⁹

One is deeply touched to read such a profound statement in defense of exploited women. However, it has taken the Church centuries to formally focus specific attention on women, their contributions to society and public life, and their personal sufferings and struggles.

A. Rerum Novarum

In the first social encyclical that was published by Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, in 1891, Pope Leo writes:

Work which is suitable for a strong man can not reasonably be required from a woman or a child. . . . Women, again, are not suited to certain trades; for the woman is by nature fitted for home work, and is not that which is best adapted at once to preserve her modesty, and to promote the good bringing up of children and the well-being of the family.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁹Archbishop Celestino Migliore, “Intervention by the Holy See at the United Nations, October 13, 2005” (www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state)

⁵⁰⁰Pope Leo XIII, “Rerum Novarum” in Catholic Social Thought, no. 33, p. 30.

The nature of work available to most men at this time was either agricultural or industrial. The Pope was mainly concerned about the worker and the family. For Pope Leo, a woman's role and her place was in the home with her children and not in the factory working the twelve hour days of the time. In papal documents from this time on, women will be mentioned under generic statements regarding the dignity of "man," that is the human person and in her relationship to the family.

B. Quadragesimo Anno

In his encyclical, Quadragesimo Anno, written in 1931, Pius XI repeats the same themes. In the section, A Just Wage:

In the first place, the wage paid to the working man should be sufficient for the support of himself and of his family. It is indeed proper that the rest of the family contribute according to their power toward the common maintenance, as in the rural home or in the families of many artisans and small shopkeepers. But it is wrong to abuse the tender years of children or the weakness of woman. Mothers should especially devote their energies to the home and the things connected with it. Most unfortunate, and to be remedied energetically, is the abuse whereby mothers of families, because of the insufficiency of the father's salary, are forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the domestic walls to the neglect of their own proper cares and duties, particularly the education of their children.⁵⁰¹

The identity of a woman was seen as related to her children and family and as someone dependent on her husband for support and not as an autonomous person. This is a theme that will become the norm in most Catholic teaching.

C. Pacem in Terris

In 1963, Pope John XXIII wrote in his encyclical Pacem in Terris,

Our age has three distinctive characteristics. First of all, the working classes have gradually gained ground in economic and public affairs. . . . Secondly, it is obvious to everyone that women are now taking part in public life. This is happening more rapidly perhaps in nations of Christian civilization, and, more slowly, but broadly, among peoples who have inherited other traditions or cultures. Since women are becoming more conscious of their human dignity, they

⁵⁰¹Pope Pius XI, "Quadragesimo Anno" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 71, p. 58.

will not tolerate being treated as mere material instruments, but demand rights befitting a human person both in domestic and public life. . . . Finally, . . . all nations have either achieved or on the way to achieving independence.⁵⁰²

The distinctive characteristics of the age were the rise of the working class, the participation of women in public life, and the birth of new nations.

D. Gaudium et Spes

Pope John XXIII called for the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 and coupled with his writings, this would deepen Catholics' understanding of the Church and its responsibility to the world. Catholic Social Teaching would be deeply affected by this new understanding of Church and how the Gospel message should be proclaimed to the world. The hierarchical, authoritarian world of Pope Leo XIII was becoming the world view that recognized the freedom of people, the challenges of modernity, and a world seeking freedom without being dominated by religions.

The major social teaching of Vatican II was Gaudium et Spes: The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World. In the beginning of the document when speaking about the situation of Men in the Modern World, the Church, aware of the tensions that have been developing in the modern world, insightfully observes: "As for the family, discord results from demographic, economic, and social pressures, or from difficulties which arise between succeeding generations, or from new social relationships between men and women."⁵⁰³

This is the first acknowledgement in the Council of a relational problem that could exist between a man and a woman and the recognition of the woman as a person in her own right. Later on the Council will affirm the fundamental dignity of all human

⁵⁰²Pope John XXIII, "Pacem in Terris" in Catholic Social Thought, nn. 39-42, p. 137.

⁵⁰³"Gaudium et Spes" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 8, p. 170.

beings when it states:

True, all men are not alike from the point of view of varying physical power and the diversity of intellectual and moral resources. Nevertheless, with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are not yet being universally honored. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right and freedom to choose a husband, to embrace a state of life, or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men.⁵⁰⁴ (GS 29)

Added emphasis was placed on the rights of women in this statement, in acknowledgement that in some cultures, in some nations, her rights were being violated.

E. Octogesima Adveniens

In 1971, Paul VI wrote Octogesima Adveniens. In reflecting on New Social Problems, he writes:

Similarly, in many countries a charter for women which would put an end to an actual discrimination and would establish relationships of equality in rights and of respect for their dignity is the object of study and at times of lively demands. We do not have in mind that false equality which would deny the distinctions laid down by the creator himself and which would be in contradiction with woman's proper role, which is of such capital importance, at the heart of the family as well as within society. Developments in legislation should on the contrary be directed to protecting her proper vocation and at the same time recognizing her independence as a person, and her equal rights to participate in cultural, economic, social, and political life.⁵⁰⁵

The vocation of a woman is now inclusive. It is not just a focus on the family and husband but now also includes her participation in cultural, economic, social and political life.

F. Justitia in Mundo

After the 1971 Synod of Bishops, Pope Paul VI decided not to make a formal statement but rather permitted the declaration of the Bishops, Justitia in Mundo to be

⁵⁰⁴Ibid., no. 29, p. 183.

⁵⁰⁵Pope Paul VI, "Octogesima Adveniens" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 13, p. 270.

recognized as the official document of the Synod. This was the first and only time that the Holy Father did not write a formal document presenting the conclusions and hopes of a Synod of Bishops.

For the Bishops, as they analyze the situation of the world, they perceive:

Serious injustices which are building around the world of men a network of domination, oppression, and abuses which stifle freedom and which keep the greater part of humanity from sharing in the building up and enjoyment of a more just and more fraternal world.⁵⁰⁶

But at the same time the Bishops have reason to hope as they see:

In associations of men and among peoples themselves there is arising a new awareness which shakes them out of any fatalistic resignation and which spurs them on to liberate themselves and to be responsible for their own destiny. Movements among men are seen which express hope in a better world and a will to change whatever has become intolerable.⁵⁰⁷

The Bishops emphasize that:

it does not belong to the Church . . . to offer concrete solutions in the social, economic, and political spheres for justice in the world. Her mission involves defending and promoting the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.⁵⁰⁸

In the Church's witness to the Practice of Justice, the bishops:

reiterate the recommendations that lay people should exercise more important functions with regards to church property and should share in its administration. We also urge that women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church.⁵⁰⁹

As the Bishops reflect on the injustice in the world, they also emphasize that the Church itself must ask what type of witness she is giving to the world. Is she just and faithful in her lifestyle to the preaching of the Gospel? Her concern for the participation of lay people and women in the Church is a recommendation that the Church's own

⁵⁰⁶Synod of Bishops, "Justitia in Mundo" in *Catholic Social Thought*, Introduction, 288.

⁵⁰⁷Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸Ibid., Chapter 2, 294.

⁵⁰⁹Ibid., Chapter 3, 295.

structures must themselves be purified so that the Church may preach by example and not just with her words.

G. Laborem Exercens

In 1981, Pope John Paul II in his encyclical, Laborem Exercens, sets forth a philosophy and theology of work in the contemporary world. Commemorating the 90th anniversary of the encyclical Rerum Novarum, his analysis is based on the Book of Genesis and focuses on the themes of subduing the earth, having dominion over the earth, and being responsible for the earth. In his reflection, John Paul manifests his concern, above all, for the family.

Just remuneration for the work of an adult who is responsible for a family means remuneration which will suffice for establishing and properly maintaining a family and providing security for its future. Such remuneration can be given either through a family wage—that is, a single salary given to the head of the family for his work, sufficient for the needs of the family without the spouse having to take up gainful employment outside the home—or through other social measures such as family allowances or grants to mothers devoting themselves exclusively to their families.⁵¹⁰

H. Mulieris Dignitatem

Being aware of and supportive of the desire of women for advancement in secular occupations, John Paul called for a social re-evaluation of how the role of the mother in rearing her children may be fulfilled without the loss of employment opportunities in the secular world. Speaking about the role of the woman and her desires to be both mother and professional, John Paul II states:

Experience confirms that there must be a social re-evaluation of the mother's role, of the toil connected with it and of the need that children have for care, love and affection in order that they may develop into responsible, morally and religiously mature and psychologically stable persons. It will redound to the credit of society to make it possible for a mother . . . to devote herself to taking care of her children and educating them in accordance with their needs, which vary with age. Having

⁵¹⁰Blessed John Paul II, "Laborem Exercens" in Catholic Social Thought, no. 19, p. 379.

to abandon these tasks in order to take up paid work outside the home is wrong from the point of view of the good of society and of the family when it contradicts or hinders these primary goals of the mission of a mother.⁵¹¹

On August 15, 1988, on the occasion of the Marian Year in the Apostolic Letter, Mulieris Dignitatem: On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II became the first pope to publish a major document devoted exclusively to the dignity and vocation of women. Mulieris Dignitatem was written in response to the request of the 1987 Synod of Bishops for further study on the meaning and dignity of being a woman and of being a man. According to Pope John Paul, the text, the style, and the character of this document is that of a “meditation.”

John Paul II insists that the role of women can be and should be understood in terms of their essential dignity and vocation. For him,

it is a question of understanding the reason for and the consequence of the Creator’s decision that the human being should always and only exist as a woman or a man. It is only by beginning from these bases, which make it possible to understand the greatness of the dignity and vocation of women, that one is able to speak of their active presence in the Church and in society.⁵¹²

The basis of John Paul II’s reflection is the Word of God. He considers only the scripture passages which portray the equality of woman and man, God’s plan for humanity from the beginning, and those Church traditions which see them as intimate partners in the work of God.

a. The Role of Mary, Mother of God

Mary is the beginning and the center of this reflection on women.

When the time had fully come, God sent forth His son born of woman.” (Gal 4: 4) There begins the central event, the key event in the history of salvation: the Lord’s Paschal Mystery. . . . A woman (Mary) is to be found at the center of this

⁵¹¹Ibid.

⁵¹²Blessed John Paul II, Mulieris Dignitatem, August 15, 1988, no. 1.

salvific event. The self revelation of God, who is the inscrutable unity of the Trinity, is outlined in the Annunciation of Nazareth.⁵¹³

At the Annunciation, Mary responds to the words of the Angel Gabriel with her “Yes” saying, “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord.” (Luke 1:38) In accepting God’s invitation to be His servant, Mary makes possible a new covenant with God and humanity. This is the first time that we find in Scripture the beginning of a covenant with a woman. In accepting the grace given from God, Mary returns woman to her original state of goodness.

b. The Image and Likeness of God

Pope John Paul begins his reflection on the dignity of woman in God’s plan with the original creation account of humans, as male and female, in the Book of Genesis. (Gen 1:26-27) For him, this account is the basis of all Christian understanding of the value of all human beings (Christian anthropology).

‘God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them.’ (Gen 1: 27) This concise passage contains the fundamental anthropological truths: man is the highpoint of the whole order of creation in the visible world; the human race, which takes its origin from the calling into existence of man and woman, crowns the whole work of Creation; both man and woman are human beings to an equal degree, both are created in God’s image.⁵¹⁴

The personal characteristics and gifts of women are certainly no less than the personal characteristics and gifts of men: they are just different, they are complementary in all things.⁵¹⁵ When a man oppresses a woman, whenever he is responsible for offending a woman’s personal dignity, he does not fulfill God’s will but rather sins. This is a consequence of original sin and a man must struggle daily to overcome this

⁵¹³Ibid., no. 3.

⁵¹⁴Ibid., no. 6.

⁵¹⁵Ibid., no. 10.

sinfulness so that he will be respectful of the fundamental equality of the woman, the person God has given man as his partner.

c. Jesus Christ and Women

John Paul continues his meditation on the gospel narratives to help us enter into the experience of Christ revealing to women the dignity and vocation that they have in God's plan. This is at a time and in a culture where women faced prejudice, mistreatment, and injustice in their daily lives.

It is universally admitted—even by people with a critical attitude towards the Christian message—that in the eyes of his contemporaries Christ became a promoter of women's true dignity and of the vocation corresponding to this dignity. At times this caused wonder, surprise, often to the point of scandal: "They marveled that he was talking with a woman" (Jn 4:27), because this behavior differed from that of his contemporaries. Even Christ's own disciples "marveled." The Pharisee to whose house the sinful woman went to anoint Jesus' feet with perfumed oil "said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.'" (Lk 7:39). Even greater dismay, or even "holy indignation," must have filled the self-satisfied hearers of Christ's words: "the tax collectors and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you." (Mt 21: 31)⁵¹⁶

Reviewing the scriptures through the eyes of John Paul II, one is inspired, encouraged, and enlightened by Christ's encounters with women.

Jesus' attitude to the women whom he meets in the course of his Messianic service reflects the eternal plan of God, who, in creating each one of them, chooses her and loves her in Christ (cf. Eph 1:1-15). . . . Jesus of Nazareth confirms this dignity, recalls it, renews it, and makes it a part of the Gospel and of the Redemption for which he is sent into the world. Every word and gesture of Christ about women must therefore be brought into the dimension of the Paschal Mystery. In this way everything is completely explained.⁵¹⁷

I. Evangelium Vitae

Being totally confident of the blessings that God has given to women and conscious of her unique role as an instrument of change, John Paul II in his encyclical

⁵¹⁶Ibid., no. 12.

⁵¹⁷Ibid., no. 13.

Evangelium Vitae, written in 1995, emphasizes:

In transforming culture so that it supports life, women occupy a place, in thought and action, which is unique and decisive. It depends on them to promote a “new feminism” which rejects the temptation of imitating models of “male domination,” in order to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of the life of society, and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation. . . . You are called to bear witness to the meaning of genuine love, of that gift of self and of that acceptance of others which are present in a special way in the relationship of husband and wife, but which ought also to be at the heart of every other interpersonal relationship. . . . Motherhood involves a special communion with the mystery of life, as it develops in the woman’s womb. . . . A mother welcomes and carries in herself another human being, enabling it to grow inside her, giving it room, respecting it in its otherness. Women first learn and then teach others that human relations are authentic if they are open to accepting the other person: a person who is recognized and loved because of the dignity which comes from being a person and not from other considerations, such as usefulness, strength, intelligence, beauty or health. This is the fundamental contribution which the Church and humanity expect from women. And it is the indispensable prerequisite for an authentic cultural change.⁵¹⁸

J. Letter to Women

In June 1995, Pope John Paul II broke with tradition and wrote the Letter to Women. It was a letter he wrote “to every woman, to reflect with her on the problems and prospects of what it means to be a woman in our time. In particular, I wish to consider the essential issue of the dignity and rights of women, as seen in the light of the Word of God.”⁵¹⁹

In this letter, John Paul states that history has conditioned us to accept offences against women and their dignity as part of human existence and not something that humanity should be terribly concerned about.

Women’s dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even

⁵¹⁸Blessed John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no. 99.

⁵¹⁹Blessed John Paul II, “Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women,” (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1995), no. 1, p. 10.

reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity.⁵²⁰

Not willing to blame others for this great error, John Paul II emphasizes:

And if objective blame, especially in particular historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry. May this regret be transformed on the part of the whole Church, into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision.⁵²¹

To overcome past errors and inconsistencies in the Church's behavior and treatment of women, John Paul returns to the Gospel and the attitude of Jesus Himself for inspiration.

Transcending the established norms of his own culture, Jesus treated women with openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness. In this way he honored the dignity which women have always possessed according to God's plan and in his love. As we look to Christ at the end of this Second Millennium, it is natural to ask ourselves: how much of his message has been heard and acted upon?⁵²²

In order to help the Church to learn from its past errors and omissions, John Paul writes:

It is time to examine the past with courage, to assign responsibility where it is due in a review of the long history of humanity. Women have contributed to that history as much as men and, more often than not, they did so in much more difficult conditions. . . . Sadly, very little of women's achievements in history can be registered by the science of history.⁵²³

Even though John Paul II points out the contribution of women in history and their many gifts, he notes that

. . . many women have been and continue to be valued more for their physical appearance than for their skill, their professionalism, their intellectual abilities, their deep sensitivity; in a word, the very dignity of their being!⁵²⁴

Looking for a solution to this great challenge, the Holy Father recognizes great progress has been made, but there is much yet to do both in society and in the Church.

⁵²⁰Ibid., no. 3, p. 11.

⁵²¹Ibid., no. 3, p. 12.

⁵²²Ibid.

⁵²³Ibid.

⁵²⁴Ibid., no. 3, p. 13.

This journey must go on! But I am convinced that the secret of making speedy progress in achieving full respect for women and their identity involves more than simply the condemnation of discrimination and injustices, necessary though this may be. Such respect must first and foremost be won through an effective and intelligent campaign for the promotion of women, concentrating on all areas of women's life and beginning with a universal recognition of the dignity of women. Our ability to recognize this dignity, in spite of historical conditioning, comes from the use of reason itself, which is able to understand the law of God written in the heart of every human being. More than anything else, the word of God enables us to grasp clearly the ultimate anthropological basis of the dignity of women, making it evident as a part of God's plan for humanity.⁵²⁵

K. Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds all Catholics of the equal dignity of man and woman when it states:

“In creating men ‘male and female,’ God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity. Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God.⁵²⁶

Returning to the Creation Narrative found in Genesis 1:27, the Catechism reminds us

“By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept their sexual identity.”⁵²⁷

⁵²⁵Ibid., no. 6, pp. 15 and 16.

⁵²⁶Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2334.

⁵²⁷Ibid., no. 2393.