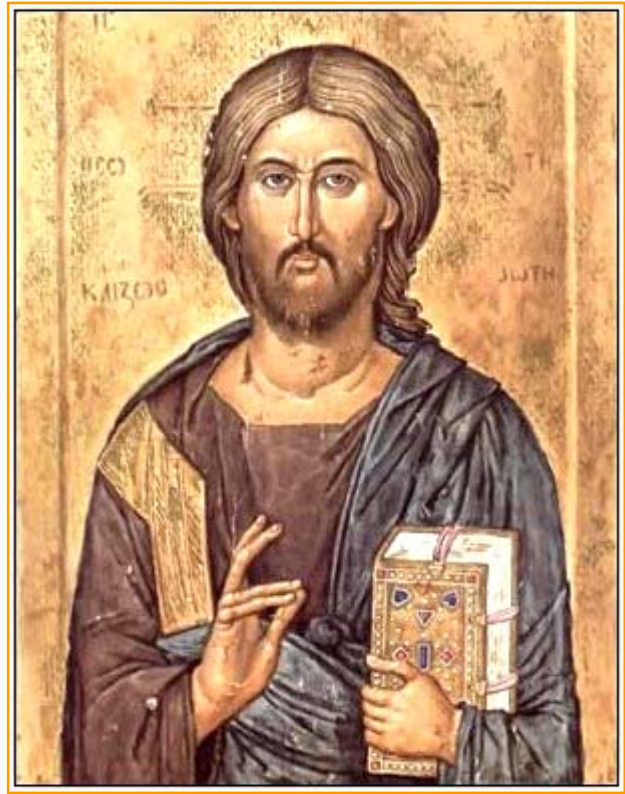


Social Doctrine



Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Chapter One: passages from the Document

GOD'S PLAN OF LOVE FOR HUMANITY

I. GOD'S LIBERATING ACTION IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL a) God's gratuitous presence	* On the one hand, God is seen as the origin of what exists, as the presence that guarantees to men and women organized in a society the basic conditions of life, placing at their disposal the goods that are necessary. On the other hand, he appears as the measure of what should be, as the presence that challenges human action — both at the personal and at the social levels — regarding the use of those very goods in relation to other people (n 20). * Lord speaks these words to Moses: “I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry ... I have come down to deliver them out ... to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land ...” (Ex 3:7-8). These become historical action, which is the origin of the manner in which the Lord's people collectively identify themselves, through the acquisition of freedom and the land that the Lord gives them ... (n 21). * The Ten Commandments (Ex 19-24) ... teach us the true humanity of man. They bring to light the essential duties, and therefore, indirectly, the fundamental rights inherent in the nature of the human person. They describe universal human morality ... (n 22). * There comes from the Decalogue a commitment that concerns not only fidelity to the one true God, but also the social relations among the people of the Covenant. These relations are regulated, in particular, by what has been called the right of the poor (Dt 15:7-8; Lev 19:33-34). The gift of freedom and the Promised Land, and the gift of the Covenant on Sinai and the Ten Commandments are therefore intimately linked to the practices which must regulate, in justice and solidarity, the development of Israelite society (n 23). * The law of the sabbatical year and that of the jubilee year is designed to ensure that the salvific event of the Exodus and fidelity to the Covenant represents not only the founding principle of Israel's social, political and economic life, but also the principle for dealing with questions concerning economic poverty and social injustices ... (n 24).
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b. The principle of creation and God's gratuitous action	* The precepts of the sabbatical and jubilee years constitute a kind of social doctrine in miniature. They show how the principles of justice and social solidarity are inspired by the gratuitousness of the salvific event wrought by God, and that they do not have a merely corrective value for practices dominated by selfish interests and objectives, but must rather become, as <i>a prophecy of the future</i>, the normative points of reference to which every generation in Israel must conform if it wishes to be faithful to its God. These principles become the focus of the Prophets' preaching, which seeks to internalize them ... This <i>process of internalization</i> gives rise to greater depth and realism in social action, making possible the <i>progressive universalization of attitudes of justice and solidarity</i>, which the people of the Covenant are called to have towards all men and women of every people and nation (n 25). * The reflection of the Prophets and that found in the Wisdom Literature, in coming to the formulation of the principle that all things were created by God, touch on the first manifestation and the source itself of God's plan for the whole of humanity ... In fact, God freely confers being and life on everything that exists (n 26). * It is in the free action of God the Creator that we find the very meaning of creation, even if it has been distorted by the experience of sin ... It is in this original estrangement that are to be sought the deepest roots of all the evils that afflict social relations between people, of all the situations in economic and political life that attack the dignity of the person, that assail justice and solidarity (n 27).
II. JESUS CHRIST THE FULFILMENT OF THE FATHER'S PLAN OF LOVE a. In Jesus Christ the decisive event of the history of God with mankind is fulfilled b. The revelation of Trinitarian love	* Jesus therefore places himself on the frontline of fulfilment, not only because he fulfils what was promised and what was awaited by Israel, but also in the deeper sense that in him the decisive event of the history of God with mankind is fulfilled (<i>Lk 4:18-19</i>; cf. <i>Is 61:1-2</i>) ... Jesus, in other words, is the tangible and definitive manifestation of how God acts towards men and women (n 28). * The love that inspires Jesus' ministry among men is the love that he has experienced in his intimate union with the Father ... For Jesus, recognizing the Father's love means modelling his actions on God's gratuitousness and mercy; it is these that generate new life. It means becoming — by his very existence — the example and pattern of this for his disciples (29). * “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (<i>1 Jn 4:10</i>) (30). * The Face of God, progressively revealed in the history of salvation, shines in its fullness in the Face of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. God is Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; truly distinct and truly one, because God is an infinite communion of love ... By his words and deeds, and fully and definitively by his death and resurrection[, Jesus reveals to humanity that God is Father and that we are all called by grace to become his children in the Spirit, and therefore brothers and sisters among ourselves (n 31).

	* “Beloved, if God so loves us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us” (1 Jn 4:11-12) (n 32). * The commandment of mutual love, which represents the law of life for God's people must inspire, purify and elevate all human relationships in society and in politics ... The modern cultural, social, economic and political phenomenon of interdependence, which intensifies and makes particularly evident the bonds that unite the human family, accentuates once more, in the light of Revelation, “a new model of the unity of the human race, which must ultimately inspire our solidarity” (33) .
III. THE HUMAN PERSON IN GOD'S PLAN OF LOVE a. Trinitarian love, the origin and goal of the human person	* The revelation in Christ of the mystery of God as Trinitarian love is at the same time the revelation of the vocation of the human person to love. This revelation sheds light on every aspect of the personal dignity and freedom of men and women, and on the depths of their social nature (n 34). * ...Every person is created by God, loved and saved in Jesus Christ, and fulfils himself by creating a network of multiple relationships of love, justice and solidarity with other persons while he goes about his various activities in the world. Human activity, when it aims at promoting the integral dignity and vocation of the person, the quality of living conditions and the meeting in solidarity of peoples and nations, is in accordance with the plan of God, who does not fail to show his love and providence to his children (n 35). * The pages of the first book of Sacred Scripture ... tell us that the creation of man and woman is a free and gratuitous act of God ... and that only in relationship with him can they discover and fulfil the authentic and complete meaning of their personal and social lives ... (n 36). * The Book of Genesis provides us with certain foundations of Christian anthropology: - the inalienable dignity of the human person, the roots and guarantee of which are found in God's design of creation; - the constitutive social nature of human beings, the prototype of which is found in the original relationship between man and woman ... - the meaning of human activity in the world, which is linked to the discovery and respect of the laws of nature that God has inscribed in the created universe, so that humanity may live in it and care for it in accordance with God's will. This vision of the human person, of society and of history is rooted in God and is ever more clearly seen when his plan of salvation becomes a reality (n 37).
b. Christian salvation: for all people and the whole person	* it is universal and integral salvation. It concerns the human person in all his dimensions: personal and social, spiritual and corporeal, historical and transcendent (n 38).

c. The disciple of Christ as a new creation	* The salvation offered by God to his children requires their free response and acceptance (39). * Inextricably linked in the human heart are the relationship with God — recognized as Creator and Father, the source and fulfilment of life and of salvation — and openness in concrete love towards man, who must be treated as another self, even if he is an enemy (cf. <i>Mt</i> 5:43-44). In man's inner dimension are rooted, in the final analysis, the commitment to justice and solidarity, to the building up of a social, economic and political life that corresponds to God's plan (n 40). * Christ's disciple adheres, in faith and through the sacraments, to Jesus' Paschal Mystery, so that his <i>old self</i>, with its evil inclinations, is crucified with Christ (n 41). * The acknowledged priority of the conversion of heart in no way eliminates but on the contrary imposes the obligation of bringing the appropriate remedies to institutions and living conditions when they are an inducement to sin, so that they conform to the norms of justice and advance the good rather than hinder it” (n 42). * It is not possible to love one's neighbour as oneself and to persevere in this conduct without the firm and constant determination to work for the good of all people and of each person, because we are all really responsible for everyone ... (n 43). * Even the relationship with the created universe and human activity aimed at tending it and transforming it, activity which is daily endangered by man's pride and his inordinate self-love, must be purified and perfected by the cross and resurrection of Christ (n 44).
d. The transcendence of salvation and the autonomy of earthly realities	* Jesus Christ is the Son of God made man in whom and thanks to whom the world and man attain their authentic and full truth ... Vatican Council: “If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. This ... harmonizes also with the will of the Creator” (n45). * and man as the one who, in Christ, receives everything from God as gift, humbly and freely, and who truly possesses everything as his own when he knows and experiences everything as belonging to God, originating in God and moving towards God (n 46). * ... As a person, man can give himself to another person or to other persons, and ultimately to God, who is the author of his being and who alone can fully accept his gift ... A society is alienated if its forms of social organization, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer this gift of self and to establish this solidarity between people (n 47). * The human person cannot and must not be manipulated by social,

	economic or political structures, because every person has the freedom to direct himself towards his ultimate end. On the other hand, every cultural, social, economic and political accomplishment, in which the social nature of the person and his activity of transforming the universe are brought about in history, must always be considered also in the context of its relative and provisional reality, because “the form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor 7:31). Any totalitarian vision of society and the State, and any purely intra-worldly ideology of progress are contrary to the integral truth of the human person and to God's plan in history (n 48).
IV. GOD'S PLAN AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH a. The Church, sign and defender of the transcendence of the human person b. The Church, the Kingdom of God and the renewal of social relations	* The Church has received “the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that Kingdom” (n 49). * ... The Church is not to be confused with the political community and is not bound to any political system. In fact, the political community and the Church are autonomous and independent of each other in their own fields, and both are, even if under different titles, “devoted to the service of the personal and social vocation of the same human beings” (n 50). * At the level of concrete historical dynamics, therefore, the coming of the Kingdom of God cannot be discerned in the perspective of a determined and definitive social, economic or political organization. Rather, it is seen in the development of a human social sense which for mankind is a leaven for attaining wholeness, justice and solidarity in openness to the Transcendent as a point of reference for one's own personal definitive fulfilment (n 51). * God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person but also the social relations existing between men ... In this perspective, Church communities, brought together by the message of Jesus Christ and gathered in the Holy Spirit round the Risen Lord (cf. <i>Mt</i> 18:20, 28:19-20; <i>Lk</i> 24:46-49), offer themselves as places of communion, witness and mission, and as catalysts for the redemption and transformation of social relationships (n 52). * It is the same Spirit of the Lord, leading the people of God while simultaneously permeating the universe, who from time to time inspires new and appropriate ways for humanity to exercise its creative responsibility ... The dynamics of this renewal must be firmly anchored in the unchangeable principles of the natural law, inscribed by God the Creator in each of his creatures (cf. <i>Rom</i> 2:14-15), and bathed in eschatological light through Jesus Christ (n 53). * Jesus Christ reveals to us that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8) and he teaches us that “the fundamental law of human perfection, and consequently of the transformation of the world, is the new commandment of love” (n 54). * The transformation of the world is a fundamental requirement of our time

c. New heavens and a new earth	also. To this need the Church's social Magisterium intends to offer the responses called for by the signs of the times, pointing above all to the mutual love between human beings, in the sight of God, as the most powerful instrument of change, on the personal and social levels (n 55). * God's promise and Jesus Christ's resurrection raise in Christians the well-founded hope that a new and eternal dwelling place is prepared for every human person, a new earth where justice abides (cf. 2 Cor 5:1-2; 2 Pet 3:13) (n 56). * The good things — such as human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, all the good fruits of nature and of human enterprise ... belong to the Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, of love and of peace that Christ will present to the Father, and it is there that we shall once again find them cf Mt 25:34-36,40 (n 57). * Being conformed to Christ and contemplating his face [70] instil in Christians an irrepressible longing for a foretaste in this world, in the context of human relationships, of what will be a reality in the definitive world to come; thus Christians strive to give food, drink, clothing, shelter, care, a welcome and company to the Lord who knocks at the door (58).
d. Mary and her “fiat” in God's plan of love	* Heir to the hope of the righteous in Israel and first among the disciples of Jesus Christ is Mary, his Mother ... The God of the Covenant, whom the Virgin of Nazareth praises in song as her spirit rejoices, is the One who casts down the mighty from their thrones and raises up the lowly, fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty, scatters the proud and shows mercy to those who fear him (cf. <i>Lk</i> 1:50-53). Looking to the heart of Mary, to the depth of her faith expressed in the words of the Magnificat, Christ's disciples are called to renew ever more fully in themselves “the awareness that the truth about God who saves, the truth about God who is the source of every gift, cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love of preference for the poor and humble, that love which, celebrated in the Magnificat, is later expressed in the words and works of Jesus”. Mary is totally dependent upon God and completely directed towards him by the impetus of her faith. She is “the most perfect image of freedom and of the liberation of humanity and of the universe” (n 59).

Charismatic Reflection

1. THE LOVE OF JESUS CRUCIFIED SOURCE OF THE CHARISM OF MAGDALENE

Magdalene realized that her life and work are deeply influenced and directed by the paradoxical contrast that she contemplated in Jesus Christ:

- while Jesus seemed externally reduced by historical circumstances to **the powerlessness of the cross**, struck down by rejection and by the absence of love,
- his inner life was very active, as **He exercised virtue to the highest degree and practised charity toward God and neighbor in an unsurpassable manner.**

The Lord Jesus did not allow to be conditioned by external forces, but continued to live life interiorly moved by **his most amiable, most generous and most patient Spirit** (UR Preface). The freedom to love, freeing a person from slavery, constitutes the apex of the revelation of God, and becomes the great attraction as well as the grace that inspired Magdalene: **“I felt transported to love Jesus with the heart of Jesus as I could not do so by myself”** (M. XIII, 10).

In Jesus Crucified and in the revelation and fulfilment of his love on the cross, Magdalene finds the integration of motivations, yearnings and tensions she has sought and struggled to achieve in her youth. From her “Memoirs” we can identify five such yearnings:

- * **The search to please God**, the desire to anchor her life in the one only God, and “God alone “ is the path that leads her, at the beginning of her spiritual life, toward the cloister.
- * **The need to help the poor**, those who are marginalised and deprived of the opportunities that society offers. These are the **“neighbors in need”**, those whose abandonment does not help to show that God is the Father of all.
- * **The commitment to counteract evil** and to foster all that is life-giving, so as to release the salvific energies of the Gospel.
- * **The missionary thrust**, the understanding of the universality of the Gospel as the unconditional love of God for all people.
- * **The search for the glory of God**, of the divine Glory (M. 1, 29), the desire to “*seek only the glory of God and the salvation of souls, surrendering to him the thought of everything else*” (M. II,50).

These five yearnings, which spurred Magdalene to look for possible solutions to lessen one or the other of the tensions, find their source of integration in the two-fold commandment of love, expressed by the Lord Jesus on the cross. There He shows **his love for the Father** by giving his life for **the love of people**, thus giving glory to God as well as sanctifying men and women. In the cross of Jesus, Magdalene sees indivisible integration of the religious thrust and the empowering-missionary thrust that she feels deep within her being. In this source of integration, Magdalene

recognizes the configuration of her charism. This has become the path for her, the purpose that leads her to planning and implementation.

2. THE FULLNESS OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

The contemplation of the love of Jesus Crucified leads Magdalene to understand three inter-related aspects:

^ **The full and definitive revelation of the merciful love of the Father for evryone**, of the “effusion pf the Divine Mercies”, of “Divine Charity”, “Divine Goodness”.

In a historical period condioned by structures that create discriminations and gaps, situations of poverty and emargination, God intervenes by coming among us, bringing healing and reconciliation. Through his mercy, God resores the dignity of the human person through fraternal relationships.

Fidelity to “God alone” and the search for his glory led Magdalene toward contemplation and the three branches of Charity: to be “alone with God alone” and “ most zealous in working for the Lord” (M. XIII, 13).

^ **The revelation of the way in which God is moved by love to come to us.**

In Jesus, God becomes one of us, subjecting himself to humiliation, to poverty, to the lowliest condition, to the point of being “*stripped of everything except love*”, “*breathing nothing but charity*”. “*Our Divine Savior, when he appeared visibly on this earth for our salvation, even though He was Omnipotent and God most High, he stated that he had come to serve and not to be served*”.

It is the way that Magdalene herself embarks upon, not limiting herself to shower the poor with charity as a noble lady, byt making herself a servant of the poor, becoming poor to serve the poor. Magdalene understood that she could not love the poor as a rich lady, but it was the love of Jesus Crucified which gave her the honor of serving them.

^ **The revelation of the same purpose that God had when he came to meet us along the way of love.**

It was to enkindle the same love in us because it is there that we find life, the salvation of life and the fullness of life in God.

But making Jesus Christ known, “*first of all, we arouse holu charity in the heart, and then teach them how to practise it*” (UR, Rule for Doctrine, Introduction).

Long only for God alone

and no one else

since our good

is only to be found

in Jesus Crucified.

Magdalene of Canossa

CELEBRATION

“I came that they might have life and have it to the full”

John 10:1-10

In the Gospel **the Good Shepherd** is described as the **gate** that opens the sheepfold. He is the one who allows us to enter into intimacy and communion of life with the Father. Jesus is the gate through which it is necessary to enter: **the gate of salvation, of life, of hope**. Asking Him for his help in our needs, let us pray:

Lord, infinite communion of love, listen to our prayer.

O Lord of Life, in the canticle of all created things, receive the praise of all the living beings whom You created for love, and in love you maintain their existence; You, who are love that gives life to everyone, help us to recognize life from the moment of conception, and always defend human life that is more and more exposed to dangers and exploitation, let us pray:

Lord, infinite communion of love, listen to our prayer.

O Lord, Shepherd of the Church, You, Who for love and for the salvation of humanity desired to entrust to your disciples the mandate of proclaiming and witnessing your Word and to allow every baptized person to participate in your priesthood and in your mission, help us not to tire in being faithful and zealous in the mission of evangelization starting from reciprocal communion and sharing our being Church in union with our Pope Benedict XVI, let us pray:

Lord, infinite communion of love, listen to our prayer.

O Lord, merciful toward the marginalized, You, Who have loved everyone without distinction, and yet you have a great love for the poor and the suffering; You, who wanted to heal the and the misery of the poor and the excluded, help us in our culture, our society and our parish communities to be witnesses of your love by showing with concrete care towards those in need, let us pray:

Lord, infinite communion of love, listen to our prayer.

PRAYER

Lord, enlighten my mind's eyes, so that I may see the Church in the light of faith which reveals what it really is. I believe, Lord, that the Christian community, despite appearances, has origin and life from the Holy Spirit and not from human will. I believe that the reality of the Church is greater than the people who compose it: Jesus is present in it with its Spirit. I believe that the Holy Spirit opens the way to faith and unites believers in a community of love.

Come, Holy Spirit, take possession of my heart and give me the strength to serve my Christian community.

Amen.

Personal and Group Reflection

1. Read with attention and care the First Chapter of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church or the above passages of the same Document.

2. Reflect personally and with your Group of the Lay Canossians, underlining the main interesting points.

3. The Compendium suggests a NEW HUMANISM, which helps us to live the insuperable richness of the love of Christ in our times; it is a NEW HUMANISM, rooted in integrity and solidarity, that wells up from an everlasting spring: the unfathomable mystery of the world's creation and its redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Question: What are the elements of this NEW HUMANISM that you could implement in your daily personal life, or in the life of the Group of Lay Canossians, for a better world?

4. The NEW HUMANISM, that our society needs, has its aim and its inspiring model in the unique community: the Trinity. Every person is an icon of the Trinity, where the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in infinite communion of love.

As images of God, every man and every woman, are called to live in communion, in the reciprocity of their gifts, committing themselves to serve their brothers and sisters with generosity and gratuitousness.

Two Questions: Is this communion lived in our families, in our place of work, in our Parish, in our group of the Lay Canossians and any other place?

Should the communities of believers be, in the various environments, places where people go beyond themselves and live the experience of

giving themselves totally in the formation of a human and authentic community, walking towards its ultimate destiny that is God?

5. Question: Does the Love of the Crucified Lord, Source of the charism of our Foundress, commit all of us, Lay Canossians, to implement in our environment "**the five yearnings**" that compelled Magdalene to search for a solution?

6. Try to enter your innerself, to discover your deepest aspirations, your social responsibilities.

Meet with Jesus Christ: the Son in Whom you are the son, a brother/sister for others.

7. Please, send to the Lay Canossian International Coordinating Team your reflections that help to implement our actions. We will share them with all our Lay Canossians for greater commitment and solidarity towards a civilization of love.

