

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Charter Two: passages from the Document

THE CHURCH'S MISSION AND SOCIAL DOCTRINE

I. EVANGELIZATION AND SOCIAL DOCTRINE a) The Church, God's dwelling place with men and women b) Enriching and permeating society with the Gospel	❖ <i>The Church, sharing in mankind's joys and hopes, in its anxieties and sadness, stands with every man and woman to bring them the good news of the Kingdom of God, which in Jesus Christ has come and continues to be present among them. She is the sacrament of God's love which inspires and sustains every authentic undertaking for and commitment to human liberation and advancement; she is present among mankind as God's tent of meeting, so that man is not alone in his task of making the world more human, but finds support in the redeeming love of Christ; she is minister of salvation in the context of the history and of the world in which man lives.</i> (60) ❖ <i>Unique and unrepeatable in his individuality, every person is a being who is open to relationships with others in society. These are the reasons for which society originates and takes shape, with its array of structures, that is to say its political, economic, juridical and cultural constructs. To man, “as he is involved in a complex network of relationships within modern societies”, the Church addresses her social doctrine. As an expert in humanity, she is able to understand man and to speak a word of life that reverberates in the historical and social circumstances of human existence.</i> (61) ❖ <i>With her social teaching the Church seeks to proclaim the Gospel and make it present in the complex network of social relations. It is important to enrich and permit society itself with the Gospel. The way people live together in society often determines the quality of life and therefore the conditions in which every man and woman understand</i>
---	--

c) Social doctrine, evangelization and human promotion	themselves and make decisions concerning themselves and their vocation. For this reason, the Church is not indifferent to what is decided, brought about or experienced in society; she is attentive to the moral quality — that is, the authentically human and humanizing aspects — of social life. (62) ❖ In proclaiming the Gospel, the Church “bears witness to man, in the name of Christ, to his dignity and his vocation to the communion of persons. She teaches him the demands of justice and peace in conformity with divine wisdom”. Evangelizing the social sector, then, means infusing into the human heart the power of meaning and freedom found in the Gospel, in order to promote a society befitting mankind because it befits Christ. (63) ❖ <i>With her social doctrine not only does the Church not stray from her mission but she is rigorously faithful to it.</i> The redemption wrought by Christ and entrusted to the saving mission of the Church is certainly of the supernatural order. The supernatural is not to be understood as an entity or a place that begins where the natural ends, but as the raising of the natural to a higher plane. (64) ❖ <i>Redemption begins with the Incarnation, by which the Son of God takes on all that is human, except sin, according to the solidarity established by the wisdom of the Divine Creator, and embraces everything in his gift of redeeming Love. Man is touched by this Love in the fullness of his being: a being that is corporeal and spiritual, that is in a solidary relationship with others. The whole is involved in the salvific economy of the Gospel.</i> (65) ❖ <i>The Church's social doctrine is an integral part of her evangelizing ministry. Nothing that concerns the community of men and women — situations and problems regarding justice, freedom, development, relations between peoples, peace — is foreign to evangelization. Profound links exist between evangelization and human promotion:</i> “These include links of an anthropological order, because the man who is to be evangelized is not an abstract being but is subject to social and economic questions. They also include links in the theological order, since one cannot
---	---

d) The rights and duties of the Church	disassociate the plan of creation from the plan of Redemption. They include links of the eminently evangelical order, which is that of charity. (66) ❖ <i>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.</i> 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. With her social doctrine the Church “proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself”. This is a ministry that stems not only from proclamation but also from witness. (67) ❖ “Christ did not bequeath to the Church a mission in the political, economic or social order; the purpose he assigned to her was a religious one. This means that the Church does not intervene in technical questions with her social doctrine, nor does she propose or establish systems or models of social organization. The Church's competence comes from the Gospel: from the message that sets man free, the message proclaimed and borne witness to by the Son of God made man. (68) ❖ <i>With her social doctrine, the Church aims “at helping man on the path of salvation.”</i> This is her primary and sole purpose. There is no intention to usurp or invade the duties of others. This mission serves to give an overall shape to the Church's right and at the same time her duty to develop a social doctrine of her own and to influence society and societal structures with it by means of the responsibility and tasks to which it gives rise. (69) ❖ <i>The Church has the right to be a teacher for mankind, a teacher of the truth of faith.</i> The word of the Gospel, in fact, is not only to be heard but is also to be observed and put into practice: Consistency in behaviour shows what one truly believes and is not limited only to things strictly church-related or spiritual but involves men and women in the entirety of their life experience and in the context of all their responsibilities. For this reason the Church has the right to proclaim the Gospel in the context of society, to make the liberating word of the Gospel resound in the
---	--

	complex worlds of production, labour, business, finance, trade, politics, law, culture, social communications, where men and women live. (70) ❖ “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16). The warning that St. Paul addresses to himself rings in the Church's conscience as a call to walk all paths of evangelization, not only those that lead to individual consciences but also those that wind their way into public institutions. <i>The Church cannot remain indifferent to social matters: “To the Church belongs the right always and everywhere to announce moral principles, including those pertaining to the social order, and to make judgments on any human affairs to the extent that they are required by the fundamental rights of the human person or the salvation of souls.”</i> (71)
II. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL DOCTRINE a) Knowledge illuminated by faith	❖ <i>The Church's social doctrine was formed over the course of time, through the numerous interventions of the Magisterium on social issues.</i> With significant allusions already being made in <i>Laborem Exercens</i>, a decisive clarification in this regard was made in the Encyclical <i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i>: the Church's social doctrine “belongs to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology.” It is “the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to guide Christian behaviour.” (72) ❖ <i>The Church's social doctrine is therefore of a theological nature, specifically theological-moral,</i> “since it is a doctrine aimed at <i>guiding people's behaviour.</i>” In fact, this social doctrine reflects three levels of theological-moral teaching: the foundational level of motivations; the directive level of norms for life in society; the deliberative level of consciences, called to mediate objective and general norms in concrete and particular social situations. (73)

b) In friendly dialogue with all branches of knowledge	❖ <i>The Church's social doctrine finds its essential foundation in biblical revelation and in the tradition of the Church</i> From this source, which comes from above, it draws inspiration and light to understand, judge and guide human experience and history. <i>Faith, which receives the divine word and puts it into practice, effectively interacts with reason. The understanding of faith, especially faith leading to practical action, is structured by reason and makes use of every contribution that reason has to offer. Social doctrine too, insofar as it is knowledge applied to the circumstantial and historical aspects of praxis, brings “fides et ratio” together and is an eloquent expression of that rich relationship. (74)</i> ❖ <i>Faith and reason represent the two cognitive paths of the Church's social doctrine: Revelation and human nature. The “knowing” of faith understands and directs the life of men and women according to the light of the historical-salvific mystery, God's revelation and gift of himself to us in Christ. This understanding of faith includes reason, by means of which — insofar as possible — it unravels and comprehends revealed truth and integrates it with the truth of human nature, found in the divine plan expressed in creation. This is the integral truth of the human person as a spiritual and corporeal being, in relationship with God, with other human beings and with other creatures. The Church's social doctrine is knowledge enlightened by faith. (75)</i> ❖ <i>The Church's social doctrine avails itself of contributions from all branches of knowledge, whatever their source, and has an important interdisciplinary dimension.</i> “In order better to incarnate the one truth about man in different and constantly changing social, economic and political contexts, this teaching enters into dialogue with the various disciplines concerned with man. The social doctrine makes use of the significant contributions of philosophy as well as the descriptive contributions of the human sciences. (76) ❖ <i>Above all, the contribution of philosophy is essential. By means of reason, the Church's social doctrine espouses philosophy in its own internal logic, in other words, in the argumentation that is proper to it. In fact, philosophy is a</i>
---	---

c) An expression of the Church's ministry of teaching	<i>suitable and indispensable instrument for arriving at a correct understanding of the basic concepts of the Church's social doctrine, concepts such as the person, society, freedom, conscience, ethics, law, justice, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, the State. This understanding is such that it inspires harmonious living in society. It is philosophy once more that shows the reasonableness and acceptability of shining the light of the Gospel on society, and that inspires in every mind and conscience openness and assent to the truth. (77)</i> ❖ A significant contribution to the Church's social doctrine comes also from human sciences and the social sciences. In view of that particular part of the truth that it may reveal, no branch of knowledge is excluded. The Church recognizes and receives everything that contributes to the understanding of man in the ever broader, more fluid and more complex net work of his social relationships. <i>This attentive and constant openness to other branches of knowledge makes the Church's social doctrine reliable, concrete and relevant.</i> This interdisciplinary dialogue also challenges the sciences to grasp the perspectives of meaning, value and commitment that the Church's social doctrine reveals. (78) ❖ <i>The social doctrine belongs to the Church because the Church is the subject that formulates it, disseminates it and teaches it. The whole of the Church community — priests, religious and laity — participates in the formulation of this social doctrine,</i> each according to the different tasks, charisms and ministries found within her. <i>These many and varied contributions are taken up, interpreted and formed into a unified whole by the Magisterium, which promulgates the social teaching as Church doctrine. To the Church's Magisterium belongs those who have received the “munus docendi”, or the ministry of teaching in the areas of faith and morals with the authority received from Christ. (79)</i> ❖ <i>In the Church's social doctrine the Magisterium is at work in all its various components and expressions. Of primary importance is the universal Magisterium of the Pope and the Council:</i> this is the Magisterium that determines the direction and gives marks of the development of this social doctrine. This doctrine in turn is integrated into the
--	--

d) For a society reconciled in justice and love	Magisterium of the Bishops who, in the concrete and particular situations of the many different local circumstances, give precise definition to this teaching, translating it and putting it into practice. There is a circulating at work that in fact expresses the collegiality of the Church's Pastors united to the Pope in the Church's social teaching. Insofar as it is part of the Church's moral teaching, the Church's social doctrine has the same dignity and authority as her moral teaching. It is authentic Magisterium, which obligates the faithful to adhere to it (80) ❖ The object of the Church's social doctrine is: the human person. By means of her social doctrine, the Church shows her concern for human life in society. In this perspective, the Church's social doctrine has the task of proclamation, but also of denunciation. In the first place it is the proclamation of what the Church possesses as proper to herself: “a view of man and of human affairs in their totality”[118]. This is done not only on the level of principles but also in practice. With her social doctrine the Church guides and forms consciences. This social doctrine also entails a duty to denounce, when sin is present: the sin of injustice and violence that in different ways moves through society and is embodied in it. By denunciation, the Church's social doctrine becomes judge and defender of unrecognized and violated rights. (81) ❖ The intent of the Church's social doctrine is of the religious and moral order. Religious because the Church's evangelizing and salvific mission embraces man “in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being.” Moral because the Church aims at a “complete form of humanism”, that is to say, at the “liberation from everything that oppresses man” and “the development of the whole man and of all men” (82)
e) A message for the sons and daughters of the Church and for humanity	❖ The first recipient of the Church's social doctrine is the Church community in its entire membership, because everyone has social responsibilities that must be fulfilled. The conscience is called by this social teaching to recognize and fulfil the obligations of justice and charity in society. This social doctrine implies as well responsibilities regarding the building, organization and functioning of society, that is to say, political, economic and administrative obligations — obligations of a secular nature — which belong to the lay faithful, not to priests or religious. These responsibilities belong to the laity in a distinctive manner, by reason of the <i>secular condition</i> of their state of

	life, and of the <i>secular nature</i> of their vocation (83)
f) Under the sign of continuity and renewal	❖ The light of the Gospel that the Church's social doctrine shines on society illuminates all men and women, and every conscience and mind is in a position to grasp the human depths of meaning and values expressed in it and the potential of humanity and humanization contained in its norms of action. This social doctrine is a teaching explicitly addressed to all people of good will, and in fact is heard by members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, by followers of other religious traditions and by people who belong to no religious group. (84) ❖ Guided by the perennial light of the Gospel and ever attentive to evolution of society, the Church's social doctrine is characterized by continuity and renewal. It shows above all the <i>continuity</i> of a teaching that refers to the universal values drawn from Revelation and human nature. On the other hand, in its constant turning to history and in engaging the events taking place, the Church's social doctrine shows a capacity for continuous renewal. Standing firm in its principles does not make it a rigid teaching system, but a Magisterium capable of opening itself to <i>new things</i>, without having its nature altered by them. (85) ❖ The Church's social doctrine is presented as a “work site” where the work is always in progress, where perennial truth penetrates and permeates new circumstances, indicating paths of justice and peace. Faith does not presume to confine changeable social and political realities within a closed framework. Rather, the contrary is true: faith is the leaven of innovation and creativity. Mother and Teacher, the Church does not close herself off nor retreat within herself but is always open, reaching out to and turned towards man, whose destiny of salvation is her reason for being. (86)
III. THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL DOCTRINE IN OUR TIME: HISTORICAL NOTES	❖ The Church's concern for social matters certainly did not begin with that document, for the Church has never failed to show interest in society. Nonetheless, the Encyclical Letter <u>Rerum Novarum</u> marks the beginning of a new path. Grafting itself onto a tradition hundreds of years old, it signals a new beginning and a singular development of the Church's teaching in the area of social matters. In her

a) The beginning of a new path	<i>continuous attention to men and women living in society, the Church has accumulated a rich doctrinal heritage.</i> This has its roots in Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels and the apostolic writings, and takes on shape and body beginning from the Fathers of the Church and the great Doctors of the Middle Ages, constituting a doctrine in which, even without explicit and direct Magisterial pronouncements, the Church gradually came to recognize her competence. (87) ❖ <i>In the nineteenth century, events of an economic nature produced a dramatic social, political and cultural impact. Events connected with the Industrial Revolution profoundly changed centuries-old societal structures, raising serious problems of justice</i> and posing the first great social question — <i>the labour question</i> — prompted by the conflict between capital and labour. In this context, the Church felt the need to become involved and intervene in a new way: the <i>res novae</i> (“new things”) brought about by these events represented a challenge to her teaching and motivated her special pastoral concern for masses of people. (88)
b) From <i>Rerum Novarum</i> to our own day	❖ <i>In response to the first great social question, Pope Leo XIII promulgated the first social Encyclical, <u>Rerum Novarum</u>. It became the document inspiring Christian activity in the social sphere and the point of reference for this activity.</i> The Encyclical's central theme is the just ordering of society, in view of which there is the obligation to identify criteria of judgment that will help to evaluate existing socio-political systems and to suggest lines of action for their appropriate transformation. (89) ❖ <i><u>Rerum Novarum</u> dealt with the labour question using a methodology that would become “a lasting paradigm” [146] for successive developments in the Church's social doctrine. The principles affirmed by Pope Leo XIII would be taken up again and studied more deeply in successive social encyclicals. The whole of the Church's social doctrine can be seen as an updating, a deeper analysis and an expansion of the original nucleus of principles presented in <u>Rerum Novarum</u>.</i> (90)

- ❖ At the beginning of the 1930s, following the grave economic crisis of 1929, Pope Pius XI published the Encyclical **Quadragesimo Anno**, commemorating the fortieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum. **The Pope reread the past in the light of the economic and social situation** in which the expansion of the influence of financial groups, both nationally and internationally, was added to the effects of industrialization. Quadragesimo Anno confirms **the principle that salaries should be proportional not only to the needs of the worker but also to those of the worker's family**. The State, in its relations with the private sector, should apply the **principle of subsidiarity**, a principle that will become a permanent element of the Church's social doctrine. The Encyclical **rejects liberalism**, understood as unlimited competition between economic forces, and reconfirms the value of private property, recalling its social function. (91)

- ❖ *Pope Pius XI did not fail to raise **his voice against the totalitarian regimes** that were being imposed in Europe during his pontificate.* Already on 29 June 1931 he had protested against the abuse of power by the totalitarian fascist regime in Italy with the Encyclical **Non Abbiamo Bisogno**. He published the Encyclical **Mit Brennender Sorge**, on the situation of the Catholic Church, on 14 March 1937. In 1938, with the spreading of **anti-Semitism**, Pope Pius XI affirmed: “Spiritually we are all Semites”. With the Encyclical Letter **Divini Redemptoris**, on **atheistic communism** and Christian social doctrine, Pope Pius XI offered a systematic criticism of communism, describing it as “**intrinsically perverse**”, and indicated that the principal means for correcting the evils perpetrated by it could be found in the renewal of Christian life, the practice of evangelical charity, the fulfilment of the duties of justice at both the interpersonal and social levels in relation to the common good. (92)

- ❖ In the ***Christmas Radio Messages*** of **Pope Pius XII**, **together with other important interventions in social matters**, Magisterial reflection on a new social order guided by morality and law, and focusing on justice and peace, become deeper. With his moral authority and prestige, Pope Pius XII brought the light of **Christian wisdom** to countless men of every category and social level. *One of the characteristics of Pope Pius XII's interventions is **the importance he gave to the relationship between morality and law**.* Pope Pius XII can be

	considered the immediate precursor of Vatican Council II and of the social teaching of the Popes who followed him. (93) ❖ The 1960s bring promising prospects: recovery after the devastation of the war, the beginning of decolonization, and the first timid signs of a <i>thaw</i> in the relations between the American and Soviet blocs. This is the context within which Blessed Pope John XXIII reads deeply into the “signs of the times”. <i>The social question is becoming universal and involves all countries</i>. Blessed Pope John XXIII, in his Encyclical <u><i>Mater et Magistra</i></u>, “aims at updating the already known documents, and at taking a further step forward in the process of involving the whole Christian community”. The key words in the Encyclical are community and socialization. (94) ❖ With the Encyclical <u><i>Pacem in Terris</i></u>, Blessed Pope John XXIII brings to the forefront the problem of peace in an era marked by nuclear proliferation. Moreover, <u><i>Pacem in Terris</i></u> contains one of the first in-depth reflections on rights on the part of the Church; it is the Encyclical of peace and human dignity. <u><i>Pacem in Terris</i></u> dwells on the public authority of the world community, called to “tackle and solve problems of an economic, social, political or cultural character which are posed by the universal common good. (95) ❖ The Pastoral Constitution <u><i>Gaudium et Spes</i></u> of the Second Vatican Council is a significant response of the Church to the expectations of the contemporary world. <u><i>Gaudium et Spes</i></u> presents the face of a Church that “cherishes a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history” that travels the same journey as all mankind and shares the same earthly lot with the world, but which at the same time “is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God.” <u><i>Gaudium et Spes</i></u> presents in a systematic manner the themes of culture, of economic and social life, of marriage and the family, of the political community, of peace and the community of peoples, in the light of a Christian anthropological outlook and of the Church's mission. Everything is considered from the starting point of the person and with a view to the person. (96)
--	--

- ❖ Another very important document of the Second Vatican Council in the corpus of the Church's social doctrine is the Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, in which ***the right to religious freedom*** is clearly proclaimed. (97)

- ❖ Development is the new name for peace”, Pope **Paul VI** solemnly proclaims in his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. The Pope presents development as ‘**the transition from less humane conditions to those which are more humane**’ and indicates its characteristics. **Development that benefits everyone** responds to the demands of justice on a global scale that guarantees worldwide peace and makes it possible to achieve a “**complete humanism**” guided by spiritual values. (98)

- ❖ In this regard, in **1967**, **Pope Paul VI** establishes the **Pontifical Commission “*Iustitia et Pax*”**, thus fulfilling the wishes of the Council Fathers who considered it “most opportune that an organism of the Universal Church be set up in order that both the justice and love of Christ toward the poor might be developed everywhere. By initiative of Pope Paul VI, beginning in **1968**, the Church celebrates the first day of the year as the ***World Day of Peace***. (99)

- ❖ **At the beginning of the 1970s**, in a climate of turbulence and strong ideological controversy, Pope **Paul VI** returns to the social teaching of Pope Leo XIII and updates it, on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, with his Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*. Challenges: urbanization, the condition of young people, the condition of women, unemployment, discrimination, emigration, population growth, the influence of the means of social communications, the ecological problem. (100)

- ❖ Ninety years after *Rerum Novarum*, **Pope John Paul II** devoted the Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* to **work, the fundamental good of the human person**, the primary element of economic activity and the key to the entire social question. **The work has all the dignity** of being a context in which the person's natural and supernatural vocation must find fulfilment. (101)

c) In the light and under the impulse of the Gospel	❖ With the Encyclical <u><i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i></u>, Pope John Paul II commemorates the twentieth anniversary of <u><i>Populorum Progressio</i></u> and deals once more with the theme of development along two fundamental lines: “on one hand, the dramatic situation of the modern world, under the aspect of the failed development of the Third World, and on the other, the meaning of, conditions and requirements for a development worthy of man. <i>Opus solidaritatis pax, peace is the fruit of solidarity.</i> (102) ❖ On the hundredth anniversary of <u><i>Rerum Novarum</i></u>, Pope John Paul II promulgates his third social encyclical, <u><i>Centesimus Annus</i></u>, whence emerges the doctrinal continuity of a hundred years of the Church's social Magisterium. Pope John Paul II demonstrates how the Church's social teaching moves along the axis of reciprocity between God and man: recognizing God in every person and every person in God is the condition of authentic human development. (103) ❖ The documents referred to here constitute the milestones of the path travelled by the Church's social doctrine from the time of Pope Leo XIII to our own day. In the formulation and teaching of this social doctrine, the Church has been, and continues to be, prompted not by theoretical motivation but by pastoral concerns. She is spurred on by the repercussions that social upheavals have on people, on multitudes of men and women, on human dignity itself, in contexts where “man painstakingly searches for a better world, without working with equal zeal for the betterment of his own spirit. The Church, in the fullness of the word revealed by Christ Jesus and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 14:16,26; 16:13-15), reads events as they unfold in the course of history.” (104)
--	--

The Twofold Commandment of Love

The contemplation of Love in Jesus Crucified led Magdalene to understand the meaning of the twofold commandment of love in a very special way, as the synthesis of life according to the Gospel.

***Charity towards God and towards neighbour
is enlightened by the example of the
Spirit of Jesus Crucified.***

The imperative

“Look and do as the Exemplar”

indicates the way that leads to the fulfilment of the twofold commandment of love.

The contemplation of the virtues of Jesus Crucified spurs us to love God in response to the love which God reveals to us in human form in our history.

The same love contemplated in Jesus Crucified **guides us in our love** for neighbour, not by our own efforts but as God’s sharing of his love towards all, in a particular way towards the poor.

Our love is the “active imitation”, or following of the Lord in **his dedication** to every sister and brother, **especially the poorest**.

I recognising and sharing the love of God shown to us through Jesus Crucified, every person can reach fulfilment and thus celebrate the glory of God and of his love.

The Eucharist as the Place where Jesus Crucified reveals his Love in the Church

The Eucharist has the most outstanding place in the charismatic experience of Magdalene. It is the **spiritual “climate”** which permeates her entire life journey.

From the Eucharist, she draws **“deep peace, joy, the desire for heaven; but at the same time, the desire to work much.”** The reason for this is “the love which the Lord manifested for his people, in the act of instituting the Holy Eucharist.”

In the celebration of the Eucharist, Magdalene perceives the **constant availability of the love of Jesus Crucified** and finds the grace to live this love through generous service to those who have not known this love.

In a very special way, the Eucharist reminds her of the moment and the way in which the Lord has entrusted us with the commandment of love. The Last Supper and the handing on of “his” commandment to the disciples are so closed linked together that they can be experienced as

effective union of hearts and sharing

In turn, the close connection between the Last Supper and the passion of the Lord

underscores the **absolutely unconditional and immeasurable nature of his love.**

St. Magdalene says: “Having read something about the Last Supper and especially of the love which the Lord manifested for his people, in the act of instituting the Holy Eucharist ... made me enter into myself to the point that I became recollected ...; this insight into the love of Jesus for men and women ... gave me a great longing to make him known and loved”.

** Above all , make Jesus known.*

** I have always wished to place myself
and all that I own
at the service of God
and for the benefit of the poor.*

** All souls have the same value;
that is why we have to work for all of them
in the same way
without making any exception.*

** God wants us to serve him with all our heart.*

Magdalene of Canossa

CELEBRATION

“ THE LORD WILL ALWAYS GUIDE YOU...”

We call upon the Holy Spirit, in order to help us welcome the will of God and to give us the strength to listen to people around us, to situations and to history, thus acting with wisdom.

*Wisdom is love
that tastes, experiments the sweetness of God.
Intellect is love
careful to penetrate the beauty of the truth of faith.
Science is love
It enables us to remain attentive in order to look for God.
Advice is love
that enables us to be solicit with the will of God.
Strength is love
That submerges the heart with the warmth towards the Father.
The fear of God is love
That enables us to listen in order to act with delicacy.
God, you are fires that burns,
that burns me,
the light that illuminates my darkness,
the life that animates me.
You are the presence that fills my intelligence,
my affections and my willingness.*

(p. Monier)

We now listen to the word of God. The prophet Isaiah, in this difficult historical period where the Jewish population is discouraged and is not in union, has always a word of hope and optimism. To his eyes Jerusalem appears a city of joy and peace where the population, in the name of God, takes care of the oppressed.

Isaiah 58,9-11

“Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer,
you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!
If you remove from your midst oppression,
false accusation and malicious speech;
If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted;
Then light shall rise for you in the darkness,
and the gloom shall become for you like midday;
Then the LORD will guide you always and
give you plenty even on the parched land.
He will renew your strength, and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring whose water never fails.

Reflect in silence.

The Word is a continuous invitation to open ourselves to others, to share with our brothers and

sisters the necessities, the sufferings, the joys, the desires, the worries, the doubts that live in their hearts. We entrust these people to the Lord Jesus and the particular situations that they have in their hearts.

Final Prayer

*Lord, you are my light;
without you I walk in the darkness,
without you I cannot even take one step,
without you I do not know where I am going,
I am a blind man pretending to guide another blind person.
If you open my eyes, Lord,
I will see your light,
my feet will walk on the life's path.
Lord, if you light me
I would be able to light others:
you make us light of the world.*

(Carlo Maria Martini)

Personal and Group Reflection

- 1. Read with attention and care** the Second 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 of the Social Doctrine, in this second charter, defines the rights and duties of the Church to elaborate a proper doctrine affecting the society and its structures. Often, especially during this period, an "invasion" of the Church in areas that are, according to some, considered lay matters can be reported.

Two questions: Can the Church be silent about certain situations and omit its duty of reporting? What can we do, in our every day life, to recognize the problems and the real needs of the society in order that the Bible be taken into every day life?

The Social Doctrine is a teaching addressed, not only to believers, but to men and women of good will. Can we dialogue, in our territorial areas and in our professional work environments, with those that have different opinions from ours? Are there positive experiences of collaboration with non believers in projects that are finalized to the common good and the well being of the person?

4. In the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council, the Church's profile is traced as follows: "intimately in union with human kind and its history".

Two questions: Do you retain the profile of the Church that is traced to be true and current? In which areas the Church should primarily commit itself to entrust solidarity with humanity? The Social Doctrine implies responsibility for the construction, organization and the functioning of the society belonging to the faithful lay. In the political, economical and administrative commitment, are we able to understand the responsibility of the lay to set in work the social teaching and the secular mission of the Church?

John Paul II dedicates the encyclical "*Laborem exercens*" to work. Do we live our professional occupation as a total expression of the person that realizes its natural or supernatural vocation? Do we consider employment, as it is presented in the document, fundamental well being of the person, primary factor of the economical activity and key to all the social questions?

5. 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.

6. 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.


