

# COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

## PART TWO

### Chapter Six: passages from the Document

## HUMAN WORK

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| <p><b>I. BIBLICAL ASPECTS</b></p> <p><b>a. The duty to cultivate and care for the earth</b></p> | <p><b>* <i>The Old Testament presents God as the omnipotent Creator (cf. Gen 2:2; Job 38-41; Ps 104; Ps 147) who fashions man in his image and invites him to work the soil (cf. Gen 2:5-6), and cultivate and care for the garden of Eden in which he has placed him (cf. Gen 2:15). To the first human couple God entrusts the task of subduing the earth and exercising dominion over every living creature (cf. Gen 1:28). The dominion exercised by man over other living creatures, however, is not to be despotic or reckless; on the contrary he is to “cultivate and care for” (Gen 2:15) the goods created by God. These goods were not created by man, but have been received by him as a precious gift that the Creator has placed under his responsibility.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>In the Creator's plan, created realities, which are good in themselves, exist for man's use.</i></b> The wonder of the mystery of man's grandeur makes the psalmist exclaim: “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him little less than god, and crown him with glory and honour. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet” (Ps 8:5-7). (255)</p> <p><b>* <i>Work is part of the original state of man and precedes his fall; it is therefore not a punishment or curse. It becomes toil and pain because of the sin of Adam and Eve, who break their relationship of trust and harmony with God (cf. Gen 3:6-8). The prohibition to eat “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:17) reminds man that he has received everything as a gift and that he continues to be a creature and not the Creator. (256)</i></b></p> <p><b>* <i>Work has a place of honour because it is a source of riches, or at</i></b></p> |
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|                         | <p><i>least of the conditions for a decent life, and is, in principle, an effective instrument against poverty</i> (cf. Pr 10:4). But one must not succumb to the temptation of making an idol of work, for the ultimate and definitive meaning of life is not to be found in work. Work is essential, but it is God — and not work — who is the origin of life and the final goal of man. (257)</p> <p><b>* <i>The apex of biblical teaching on work is the commandment of the Sabbath rest.</i></b> For man, bound as he is to the necessity of work, this rest opens to the prospect of a fuller freedom, that of the eternal Sabbath (cf. Heb 4:9-10). The memory and the experience of the Sabbath constitute a barrier against becoming slaves to work, whether voluntarily or by force, and against every kind of exploitation, hidden or evident. (258)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| b. Jesus, a man of work | <p><b>* <i>In his preaching, Jesus teaches that we should appreciate work.</i></b> He himself, having “become like us in all things, devoted most of the years of his life on earth to <i>manual work</i> at the carpenter's bench” in the workshop of Joseph (cf. Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3), to whom he was obedient (cf. Lk 2:51). <b><i>He describes his own mission as that of working: “My Father is working still, and I am working” (Jn 5:17),</i></b> and his disciples as workers in the harvest of the Lord, which is the evangelization of humanity (cf. Mt 9:37-38). (259)</p> <p><b>* <i>In his preaching, Jesus teaches man not to be enslaved by work.</i></b> Before all else, he must be concerned about his soul; <i>gaining the whole world is not the purpose of his life</i> (cf. Mk 8:36). The treasures of the earth, in fact, are consumed, while those in heaven are imperishable. It is on these latter treasures that men and women must set their hearts (cf. Mt 6:19-21). (260)</p> <p><b>* <i>During his earthly ministry Jesus works tirelessly, accomplishing powerful deeds to free men and women from sickness, suffering and death.</i></b> The Sabbath — which the Old Testament had put forth as a day of liberation and which, when observed only formally, lost its authentic significance — is reaffirmed by Jesus in its original meaning: <b><i>“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27).</i></b> (261)</p> <p><b>* <i>Human activity aimed at enhancing and transforming the universe can and must unleash the perfections which find their origin and model in the uncreated Word.</i></b> (262)</p> <p><b>* <i>Work represents a fundamental dimension of human existence as participation not only in the act of creation but also in that of redemption.</i></b> Those who put up with the difficult rigours of work in union with Jesus cooperate, in a certain sense, with the Son of God in his work of redemption and show that they are disciples of Christ bearing his cross, every day, in the activity they are called to do. (263)</p> |
| c. The duty to work     | <p><b>* <i>The awareness that “the form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor 7:31) is not an exoneration from being involved in the world, and even</i></b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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|                                                                | <p>less from work (cf. 2 Thes 3:7-15), which is an integral part of the human condition, although not the only purpose of life. No Christian, in light of the fact that he belongs to a united and fraternal community, should feel that he has the right not to work and to live at the expense of others (cf. 2 Thes 3:6-12). <b>Rather, all are charged by the Apostle Paul to make it a point of honour to work with their own hands, so as to “be dependent on nobody” (1 Thes 4:12), and to practise a solidarity which is also material by sharing the fruits of their labour with “those in need” (Eph 4:28). (264)</b></p> <p>* <i>The Fathers of the Church do not consider work as an “opus servile” — although the culture of their day maintained precisely that such was the case — but always as an “opus humanum”, and they tend to hold all its various expressions in honour. (265)</i></p> <p>* By his work and industriousness, man — who has a share in the divine art and wisdom — makes creation, the cosmos already ordered by the Father, more beautiful. He summons the social and community energies that increase the common good, above all to the benefit of those who are neediest. <b>The religious fact confers on human work an enlivening and redeeming spirituality. Such a connection between work and religion reflects the mysterious but real alliance, which intervenes between human action and the providential action of God”. (266)</b></p> |
| <p><b>II. THE PROPHETIC<br/>VALUE<br/>OF RERUM NOVARUM</b></p> | <p>* <i>The course of history is marked by the profound transformation and the exhilarating conquests of work, but also by the exploitation of so many workers and an offence to their dignity. <b>The Industrial Revolution presented for the Church a critical challenge to which her social Magisterium responded forcefully and prophetically, affirming universally valid and perennially relevant principles in support of workers and their rights. (267)</b></i></p> <p>* <i><u>Rerum Novarum</u> is above all a heartfelt defence of the inalienable dignity of workers, connected with the importance of the right to property, the principle of cooperation among the social classes, the rights of the weak and the poor, the obligations of workers and employers and the right to form associations. (268)</i></p> <p>* <i>Starting with <u>Rerum Novarum</u>, the Church has never stopped considering the problems of workers within the context of a social question which has progressively taken on worldwide dimensions. <b>The Encyclical <u>Laborem Exercens</u> enhances the personalistic vision that characterized previous social documents, indicating the need for a deeper understanding of the meaning and tasks that work entails. (269)</b></i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>III. THE DIGNITY OF<br/>WORK</b></p>                     | <p>* <i><b>Human work has a twofold significance: objective and subjective.</b> In the <b>objective sense</b>, it is the sum of activities, resources, instruments and technologies used by men and women to produce things, to</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

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| <p><b>a. The subjective and objective dimensions of work</b></p> | <p><i>exercise dominion over the earth</i>, in the words of the Book of Genesis. In the <b>subjective sense</b>, work is the activity of the human person as a dynamic being capable of performing a variety of actions that are part of the work process and that correspond to his personal vocation: “Man has to subdue the earth and dominate it, because as the ‘image of God’ he is a person, that is to say, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself, and with a tendency to self-realization. As a person, man is therefore the subject of work” (270)</p> <p><b>* This subjectivity gives to work its particular dignity, which does not allow that it be considered a simple commodity or an impersonal element of the apparatus for productivity. The human person is the measure of the dignity of work:</b> “In fact there is no doubt that human work has an ethical value of its own, which clearly and directly remains linked to the fact that the one who carries it out is a person”. <b>The subjective dimension of work must take precedence over the objective dimension, because it is the dimension of the person himself who engages in work, determining its quality and consummate value.</b> (271)</p> <p><b>* Human work not only proceeds from the person, but it is also essentially ordered to and has its final goal in the human person.</b> Independently of its objective content, work must be oriented to the subject who performs it, because the end of work, any work whatsoever, always remains man. (272)</p> <p><b>* Human work also has an intrinsic social dimension.</b> A person's work, in fact, is naturally connected with that of other people. <b>Today “more than ever, work is work with others and work for others. It is a matter of doing something for someone else”.</b> (273)</p> <p><b>* Work is also “an obligation, that is to say, a duty on the part of man”.</b> Man must work, both because the Creator has commanded it and in order to respond to the need to maintain and develop his own humanity. (274)</p> <p><b>* Work confirms the profound identity of men and women created in the image and likeness of God:</b> “As man, through his work, becomes more and more the master of the earth, and as he confirms his dominion over the visible world, again through his work, he nevertheless remains in every case and at every phase of this process within the Creator's original ordering. <b>And this ordering remains necessarily and indissolubly linked with the fact that man was created, as male and female, ‘in the image of God’.</b> (275)</p> |
| <p><b>b. The relationship between labour and capital</b></p>     | <p><b>* Work, because of its subjective or personal character, is superior to every other factor connected with productivity; this principle applies, in particular, with regard to capital.</b> The term “capital” has different meanings today. Sometimes it indicates the material means of production in a given enterprise, sometimes the financial resources</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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| <p>c. Work, the right to participate</p> | <p>employed to bring about production or used in stock market operations. One can also speak of “<b>human capital</b>” to refer to human resources, that is, to man himself in his capacity to engage in labour, to make use of knowledge and creativity, to sense the needs of his fellow workers and a mutual understanding with other members of an organization. The term “<b>social capital</b>” is also used to indicate the capacity of a collective group to work together, the fruit of investments in a mutually-binding fiduciary trust. (276)</p> <p>* <i>The Church's social doctrine has not failed to insist on the relationship between labour and capital, placing in evidence both the priority of the first over the second as well as their complementarities. <b>Labour has an intrinsic priority over capital.</b></i> (277)</p> <p>* <i>In considering the relationship between labour and capital, above all with regard to the impressive transformations of our modern times, we must maintain that the “principal resource” and the “decisive factor” at man's disposal is man himself, and that “the integral development of the human person through work does not impede but rather promotes the greater productivity and efficiency of work itself”.</i> (278)</p> <p>* <i>The relationship between labour and capital often shows traits of antagonism that take on new forms with the changing of social and economic contexts. <b>In our present day, this conflict shows aspects that are new and perhaps more disquieting: scientific and technological progress and the globalization of markets, of themselves a source of development and progress, expose workers to the risk of being exploited by the mechanisms of the economy and by the unrestrained quest for productivity.</b></i> (279)</p> <p>* One must not fall into the error of thinking that the process of overcoming the dependence of work on material is of itself capable of overcoming alienation in the workplace or the alienation of labour. <b>The reference here is not only to the many pockets of non-work, concealed work, child labour, underpaid work, exploitation of workers — all of which still persist today — but also to new, much more subtle forms of exploitation of new sources of work, to over-working, to work-as-career that often takes on more importance than other human and necessary aspects, to excessive demands of work that makes family life unstable and sometimes impossible, to a modular structure of work that entails the risk of serious repercussions on the unitary perception of one's own existence and the stability of family relationships.</b> (280)</p> <p>* <i>The relationship between labour and capital also finds expression when workers participate in ownership, management and profits.</i> This is an all-too-often overlooked requirement and it should be given greater consideration. “On the basis of his work each person is fully entitled to consider himself a part-owner of the great workbench where he is working with everyone else. (281)</p> |
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| <p>b. The role of the State and civil society in promoting the right to work</p> | <p><b>not neglect human or technological formation, which are necessary for gainfully fulfilling one's responsibilities.</b> The ever more widespread necessity of changing jobs many times in one's lifetime makes it imperative that the educational system encourage people to be open to on-going updating and re-training. (290)</p> <p><i>* Employment problems challenge the responsibility of the State, whose duty it is to promote active employment policies,</i> that is, policies that will encourage the creation of employment opportunities within the national territory, providing the production sector with incentives to this end. (291)</p> <p><i>* Given the quickly developing global dimensions of economic-financial relationships and of the labour market, there is a need to promote an effective international cooperation among States by means of treaties, agreements and common plans of action that safeguard the right to work, even in the most critical phases of the economic cycle, at the national and international levels.</i> (292)</p> <p><i>* To promote the right to work it is important today, as in the days of <u>Rerum Novarum</u>, that there be “an open process by which society organize[s] itself”.</i> (293)</p> |
| <p>c. The family and the right to work</p>                                       | <p><i>* Work is “a foundation for the formation of family life, which is a natural right and something that man is called to”</i> It ensures a means of subsistence and serves as a guarantee for raising children. Family and work, so closely interdependent in the experience of the vast majority of people, deserve finally to be considered in a more realistic light, with an attention that seeks to understand them together, without the limits of a strictly private conception of the family or a strictly economic view of work. (294)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>d. Women and the right to work</p>                                            | <p><i>* The feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society, therefore the presence of women in the workplace must also be guaranteed.</i> The first indispensable step in this direction is the concrete possibility of access to professional formation. The recognition and defence of women's rights in the context of work generally depend on the organization of work, which must take into account the dignity and vocation of women, whose “true advancement ... requires that labour should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them”. <b>This issue is the measure of the quality of society and its effective defence of women's right to work.</b> (295)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>e. Child labour</p>                                                           | <p><i>* Child labour, in its intolerable forms, constitutes a kind of violence that is less obvious than others but it is not for this reason any less terrible.</i> This is a violence that, beyond all political, economic and legal implications, remains essentially a moral problem. Even with the knowledge that, at least for now, in certain countries the contribution made by child labour to family income and the national economy is indispensable, and that in any event certain forms of part-</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |



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| <p>b. The right to fair remuneration and income distribution</p> <p>c. The right to strike</p>                  | <p>compromise their health. (301)</p> <p>* <b>Remuneration is the most important means for achieving justice in work relationships. The “just wage is the legitimate fruit of work”.</b> They commit grave injustice who refuse to pay a just wage or who do not give it in due time and in proportion to the work done (cf. <i>Lv</i> 19:13; <i>Dt</i> 24:14-15; <i>Jas</i> 5:4). A salary is the instrument that permits the labourer to gain access to the goods of the earth. (302)</p> <p>* <b>The economic well-being of a country is not measured exclusively by the quantity of goods it produces but also by taking into account the manner in which they are produced and the level of equity in the distribution of income,</b> which should allow everyone access to what is necessary for their personal development and perfection. (303)</p> <p>* <b>The Church's social doctrine recognizes the legitimacy of striking “when it cannot be avoided, or at least when it is necessary to obtain a proportionate benefit”, when every other method for the resolution of disputes has been ineffectual.</b> (304)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>VI. SOLIDARITY AMONG WORKERS</b></p> <p>a. The importance of unions</p> <p>b. New forms of solidarity</p> | <p>* <b>The Magisterium recognizes the fundamental role played by labour unions, whose existence is connected with the right to form associations or unions to defend the vital interests of workers employed in the various professions. Unions “grew up from the struggle of the workers — workers in general but especially the industrial workers — to protect their just rights vis-à-vis the entrepreneurs and the owners of the means of production”.</b> (305)</p> <p>* <b>The Church's social doctrine teaches that relations within the world of work must be marked by cooperation: hatred and attempts to eliminate the other are completely unacceptable. This is also the case because in every social system both “labour” and “capital” represent indispensable components of the process of production.</b> (306)</p> <p>* <b>Beyond their function of defending and vindicating, unions have the duty of acting as representatives working for “the proper arrangement of economic life” and of educating the social consciences of workers</b> so that they will feel that they have an active role, according to their proper capacities and aptitudes, in the whole task of economic and social development and in the attainment of the universal common good. (307)</p> <p>* <b>The modern socio-economic context, characterized by ever more rapid processes of economic and financial globalization, prompts unions to engage in renewal. Today, unions are called to act in new ways, widening the scope of their activity of solidarity so that protection is afforded not only to the traditional categories of workers, but also to workers with non- standard or limited-time contracts. Given the changes that have taken place in the world of work, solidarity can be recovered, and perhaps with a firmer</b></p> |

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|                                                                                                               | <p><i>foundation in respect to the past, if the effort is made to rediscover the subjective value of work. (308)</i></p> <p><i>* Pursuing “new forms of solidarity”, workers' associations must focus their efforts on the acceptance of greater responsibilities not only in relation to the traditional mechanisms for redistribution but also in relation to the production of wealth and the creation of social, political and cultural conditions which will permit all who are able and willing to work to exercise their right to work in full respect for their dignity as workers. (309)</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p><b>VII. THE “NEW THINGS” OF THE WORLD OF WORK</b></p> <p><b>a. An epoch-making phase of transition</b></p> | <p><i>* <b>The phenomenon of globalization is one of the most important causes of the current change in the organization of work.</b> This phenomenon brings about new forms of production where plants are located away from where strategies are decided and far from the markets where the goods are consumed. (310)</i></p> <p><i>* <b>One of the most significant characteristics of the new organization of work is the physical fragmentation of the cycle of production,</b> promoted in order to obtain greater efficiency and greater profits. In this perspective, the traditional space-time coordinates within which the cycle of production formerly took place undergoes an unprecedented transformation that determines a change in the structure of work itself. (311)</i></p> <p><i>* <b>The globalization of the economy,</b> with the liberalization of markets, the stiffening of competition, the increase of specialized businesses in providing goods and services, requires greater flexibility in the labour market and in organizing and managing production processes. (312)</i></p> <p><i>* <b>Work, above all within the economic systems</b> of the more developed countries, is going through a phase that marks the passage from an industrial-type economy to an economy essentially built on services and technological innovations. (313)</i></p> <p><i>* <b>The transition currently underway signals the move from dependent work with no prescribed time limit,</b> understood as a stable job, to a series of jobs characterized by many kinds of work activities. <b>This uncertainty and instability involve not only the labour conditions</b> of workers in more developed countries but affect also, and above all, the less advanced economic realities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. (314)</i></p> <p><i>* <b>The decentralization of production, which assigns to smaller companies several tasks previously undertaken by larger production interests, gives vitality and new energy to the area of small and medium-sized businesses.</b> (315)</i></p> <p><i>* In developing countries, moreover, there has been an expansion in recent years of “informal” and “hidden” economic activities. This</i></p> |

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| <p>b. Social doctrine and the “new things”</p> | <p>represents a promising sign of economic growth and development, but it raises many ethical and legal problems. <b>In fact, the significant increase in job opportunities in the context of such activities is owed to the lack of specialization in a large segment of the local work force and to disorderly growth in formal economic sectors.</b> (316)</p> <p>* <i>Given these impressive “new things” in the world of work, the Church's social doctrine recommends first of all to avoid the error of insisting that the current changes take place in a deterministic manner. <b>The decisive factor and “referee” of this complex phase of change is once more the human person, who must remain the true protagonist of his work.</b></i> (317)</p> <p>* <b>Mechanistic and economistic interpretations of the activity of production</b>, however prevalent and influential they may be, have been outdated by scientific analysis of the problems connected with work. (318)</p> <p>* <i>The historical forms in which human work is expressed change, but not its permanent requirements, which are summed up in the respect of the inalienable human rights of workers. <b>Faced with the risk of denying these rights, new forms of solidarity must be envisioned and brought about, taking into account the interdependence that unites workers among themselves.</b></i> (319)</p> <p>* <i>Men and women of science and culture are called to make their particular contribution to solving the vast and complex problems connected with work, which in some areas take on dramatic proportions. This contribution is very important for coming up with the proper solutions.</i> (320)</p> <p>* <b>The present scenarios of profound transformation of human work call even more urgently for an authentically global development in solidarity that is capable of involving every region of the world including those less advantaged.</b> <i>Economic and social imbalances in the world of work must be addressed by restoring a just hierarchy of values and placing the human dignity of workers before all else. “The new realities that are having such a powerful impact on the productive process, such as the globalization of finance, economics, trade and labour, must never violate the dignity and centrality of the human person, nor the freedom and democracy of peoples.”</i> (321)</p> <p>* <b><i>There is an ever greater need for a careful consideration of the new situation of work in the present-day context of globalization, in a perspective that values people's natural tendency to establish relationships.</i></b> The negative aspects of the globalization of work must not damage the possibility opening up for all people: <i>that of giving expression to a humanism of work on a planetary scale, to solidarity in the world of work on this same level, so that working in similar contexts, spread throughout the world and interconnected, people will understand ever better their one, shared vocation.</i> (322)</p> |
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# Charismatic Reflection

## JUDGE:

let us use Charity as the measure of everything

**The second movement of “INSPICE” is JUDGING.** We judge the reality against what we hold to be true about the world about to our Scriptures, Church Teachings and the Canossian Charism. Our Canossian identity demands that our judging be grounded in the criteria of our Faith and our Charismatic heritage. We draw from those elements of Tradition that are relevant to a chosen situation in its personal and social dimensions, its symptoms and causes, its issues, structures and systems. **It is from this dialogue that we will be able to discern the action to which we are called.**

## The Ministries of Charity

**Magdalene lived in a period of transition** from centuries of great stability to radical social, political, economic and ecclesial changes brought about by the occupation of Verona by different political regimes. She judged the daily situation of an impoverished and hungry people, of a city crowded with the sick, of a world of illiterates and of abandoned children, as most devastating, in which the indignation of the Lord seems clearly to demand a reform of morals.

In seeing Jesus Crucified suffer again in the poor because of the new situation of war and its consequent economic and social degeneration, Magdalene grasped the **ultimate root of the evil of her times: sin in its many forms.** It is from this understanding that she addresses the needs arising from the situation. Initiating activities that became the seeds of her ministries of charity and indicating a will to transform the culture that conditioned the morality of her time, Magdalene discerned her vocation: **“to make Jesus known and loved.”**

**Her conformity and commitment to Jesus Crucified** determined her analysis and response. He became the basis of her guiding principles for action with regard to each person and the condition of the society in her time. Her vocation went through a long process of discernment and was affirmed by the local Church authority that mandated her to respond to the situation.

**Magdalene recognized that the basis for the dignity of each person is found in faith in the God** who created men and women in the Divine Likeness, not in one's nationality, socio-economic standing or talents. She welcomed everyone but she made a special **option to serve the poor** whose situation obscured their dignity as God's children. However, they remained **living images of Jesus:** thus she reminded all who share in her charism that they would be judged on the way they treat and serve them. **The poor of Magdalene were those in greatest need, the poorest economically, the most deprived of the means for full human development and the most abandoned in society.**

**The anthropological model that inspired Magdalene's works of charity** implied personal freedom by which the poor could be empowered by these very works, She desired that each person might realize his or her full human and Christian identity through the acquisition of:

- **the capacity** to contribute to society;
- **a sense of meaning and purpose** in order to value and appreciate life;
- **a serene acceptance and integration** of moments of sickness, suffering and even death.

**A careful analysis of the way** she engaged in her ministries reveals how she perceived that the person can become **the artisan of transformation** of oneself, one's family and society. This she intended to do through her concern for the integral formation of the person, giving particular attention to the spiritual dimension by **forming the heart and the conscience**.

In her works, she promoted those inalienable rights as we call them today:

- **Right to life,**
- **Right to education,**
- **Right to know and love God,**
- **Right to freedom of conscience,**
- **Right to be respected regardless of creed, culture, age, gender,**
- **Right to work,**
- **Rights of works.**

Although Magdalene's plan is centred in the service of the poor, since **charity embraces every kind of person**, she gave attention as well to **the ladies of the nobility**. Through the Spiritual Exercises, she formed those who have the capacity and resources to help the poor and whose good examples would create an impact in society for ministry. Magdalene also intuited **that young women, widows and married women from the country side and the city**, when formed and trained, are capable to help others in the same way as the ladies or her own companions.

Indeed, Magdalene spent much time to plan, organize and to train her companions for the work, giving attention to the environment in which human dignity can grow and develop: the family, school, parish, society. **She believed that the running of her ministries of charity should be participative**. She **entrusted to different Sisters responsibilities** for each ministries and for the internal duties of the house that supports the works. She also deemed it important that **all her pastoral workers should learn from within the cultural reality** of the people they minister to. Only in so doing, can true compassion and understanding be born that would enable them to appreciate and adapt to the conditions of the poor. All of these she offered gratuitously to the poorest, not seeking material rewards as the divine Glory and salvation of souls were enough.

- In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit  
- Amen

## Introduction

The work pace makes a great quantity of things, papers, practices, people ... flow before our eyes and through our hands.

## Song of Ascents . Psalm 127

**Happy, all those who fear Yahweh**  
and follow in his paths.

**You will eat what your hands have worked for,**  
happiness and prosperity will be yours.

**Your wife: a fruitful vine**  
on the inner walls of your house.

**Your sons: round your table**  
like shoots round an olive tree.

**Such are the blessings that fall**  
on the man who fears Yahweh.

**May Yahweh bless you from Zion**  
all the days of your life!

**May you see Jerusalem prosperous**  
And live to see your children's children!

**Peace to Israel!**

## The Word of God

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we urge you, brothers, to keep away from any of the brothers who refuses to work or to live according to the tradition we passed on to you.

You know how you are supposed to imitate us: now we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we ever have our meals at anyone's table without paying for them; no, we worked night and day, slaving and staining, so as not to be a burden on any of you. This was not because we had no right to be, but in order to make ourselves an example for you to follow.

We gave you a rule when we were with you: not to let anyone have any food if he refuses to do any work. Now we hear that there are some of you who are living in idleness, doing no work themselves but interfering with everyone else's. In the Lord Jesus Christ, we order and call on people of this kind to go quietly working and earning the food that they eat. 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

**"The hours of the day look for a soul"** – Dionigi Tettamanzi.

## Called to respond to God and others

*I feel an urgency to suggest to those who work in factories, in schools, at home, in hospitals, in offices, to carry out well and with passion their duty so as to be the soul also of the world of work.*

*I know it is not easy every morning to do so, I know it is not possible to do this in every situation. And yet I would like to recommend an attitude, almost a “spirituality”, that seems to me to be the principle of many possible and promising perspectives.*

*It is a sense of responsibility. Those, who are aware that one has to answer, sooner or later, about the quality of their own actions. One has to answer to God: He, in fact, will ask for an account about how the talents and natural resources which each one possesses, have been used. He will ask for an account about how workers have been treated, because He listens to the cry of those who are exploited and unjustly treated and He will give the right reward for the good that has been done with justice and generosity.*

*The sense of responsibility induces us also to help others as much as possible and according to one's competences. Politician and manager, worker and trade union representative, teacher and student: everyone has to be responsible, everyone is called to serve. Today is a time for greater responsibility in order to live our own daily commitment with boldness and originality, so as to give soul to the world of work, according to the various traditions of our countries. And this can happen not only by the effort of our own will, but by starting from Jesus' example and grace, who served the men and women of His time with passion and strength, because He saw in them “the blessed children of His Father.”*

As God's family, hand in hand, we pray: **OUR FATHER ...**

## Concluding Prayer

**He taught the people** in such a way that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did the man get this wisdom and these miraculous deeds? This is not the carpenter's son, surely?’

Mt 13,54 - 55

**Saint Joseph,**

model and patron of workers  
we turn to you with trust.

**Help us to find in our work**

not only our daily support,  
but also a source of merit for eternal life.

**You, who living close to Jesus, Son of God,**

and to Mary, His Mother,  
had the opportunity of sharing

their sublime intentions,

grant us to value work

and to love it as you did.

**Help us to work with a spirit of penance,**

with care and peace, aware  
of fulfilling God's Will,  
while He is asking us to continue  
and improve the work of His creation.  
Thus our lives will be a day of fatigue  
and sowing while waiting for rest and  
harvesting in eternity.

**AMEN!**

## Personal and Group Reflection

1. Read with attention and care the sixth 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 Lay Canossians, underlining the main interesting points.

3. . . . *"Human Work has also an intrinsic social dimension. Man's work, in fact, intertwines naturally with that of other men: « Today, more than ever, work means working with others and working for others: it is doing something for someone else.»*

How is this dimension important in our society?

4. *"Work is a fundamental right and is a good for man: it is a right, an useful good, worthy of him because it is an adequate way for him to express and increase his human dignity. The Church teaches the value of work not only because it is always personal, but also because it is a necessity."*

How can we, in our daily lives, become aware of real problems and needs of society so as to succeed in enhancing human dignity?

5.. . . *"Child labour, in its intolerable forms, constitutes a sort of violence which it is less visible than others but, not less terrible.*

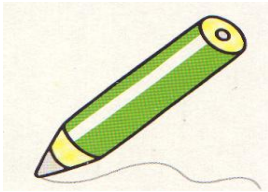
*A violence that, beyond all its political, economic and juridical implications, remains essentially a moral problem."*

At what point is our commitment for the defence of children, as individuals and as an Association?

6. Try to enter within yourself to bring to light your deepest aspirations and your sense of social responsibility.

**Try to enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ:** the Son in whom you are a son and a brother for others.

7. **Send to the Lay Canossian International Coordinating Team** your points of reflection that are the base of your practical orientations so as to share them with all the members of the Lay Canossian Association so as to promote greater commitment and solidarity and to create a civilization of love.



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