

From “Rerum Novarum” to “Caritas in Veritate”: A Journey of 120 Years of Catholic Social Teaching in Modern Times

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The year 2011 will mark the 120th anniversary of the publication of Pope Leo XIII’s famous encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. This encyclical ushered in a new era of social concern on the part of the Catholic Church for the problems of the world. From then on, Catholic Social Teaching became a special stream of thinking within the Catholic Church, and the Church has been enriched by its concern for humanity’s problems. In this paper, I will first make a brief introduction to Catholic Social Teaching, and then elaborate on the issue of globalization in light of the latest Catholic Social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*.

Pope Leo XIII stated his main purpose for writing *Rerum Novarum* in the Introduction:

That the spirit of revolutionary change...should have passed beyond the sphere of politics and made its influence felt in the cognate sphere of practical economics is not surprising. The elements of the conflict now raging are unmistakable, in the vast expansion of industrial pursuits and the marvelous discoveries of science; in the changed relations between masters and workmen; in the enormous fortunes of some few individuals, and the utter poverty of the masses; in the increased self-reliance and closer mutual combination of the working classes; as also, finally, in the prevailing moral degeneracy. The momentous gravity of the state of things...fills every mind with painful apprehension; wise men are discussing it; practical men are proposing schemes; popular meetings, legislatures, and rulers of nations are all busied with it — actually there is no question which has taken a deeper hold on the public mind. (RN 1)

In 1991, on the 100th anniversary of the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope John Paul II commemorated it in his own papal letter, *Centesimus Annus*. In it he pointed out the importance of the former encyclical:

The centenary of the promulgation of the encyclical, which begins with the words "*Rerum Novarum*", by my predecessor of venerable memory Pope Leo XIII, is an occasion of great importance for the present history of the Church and for my own Pontificate. It is an encyclical that has the distinction of having been commemorated by solemn Papal documents from its fortieth anniversary to its ninetieth. It may be said that...the other documents paid tribute to it and applied it to the circumstances of their day.
(CA 1)

We should not forget, however, that in the first years after its publication, *Rerum Novarum* was not given the attention that it deserved. It was not much known inside or outside the Church.

Although people at that time did not much appreciate the importance of the encyclical, its prophetic meaning was so strong that over decades people came to treasure it. Pope John Paul II wrote:

Pope Leo foresaw the negative consequences — political, social and economic — of the social order proposed by "socialism", which at that time was still only a social philosophy and not yet a fully structured movement. It may seem surprising that "socialism" appeared at the beginning of the Pope's critique of solutions to the "question of the working class" at a time when "socialism" was not yet in the form of a strong and powerful State, with all the resources which that implies, as was later to happen. (CA 12)

Rerum Novarum was issued 26 years before the first socialist country was established. Pope Leo XIII, however, with his unparalleled insight accurately predicted the emergence of such regimes. Moreover he pointed out the danger of the new ideology. Pope John Paul II praised him in this way:

He correctly judged the danger posed to the masses by the

attractive presentation of this simple and radical solution to the “question of the working class” of the time. (CA 12)

In *Centesimus Annus* Pope John Paul II made a clear definition of Catholic Social Teaching, pointing out at the same time its limitations:

The present encyclical (CA) seeks to show the fruitfulness of the principles enunciated by Leo XIII, which belong to the Church’s doctrinal patrimony and, as such, involve the exercise of her teaching authority...It goes without saying that part of the responsibility of Pastors is to give careful consideration to current events in order to discern the new requirements of evangelization. However, such an analysis is not meant to pass definitive judgments since this does not fall *per se* within the Magisterium’s specific domain. (CA 3)

Socialists may be sincere, but they fail to solve the problems

Leo XIII, followed by his successors, did not question the sincerity of the socialists in attempting to solve the problems of the newly emerging industrial world. But he wanted to emphasize that the socialists’ approach could not solve all the problems. Leo wrote:

Hence, it is clear that the main tenet of socialism, a community of goods, must be utterly rejected, since it only injures those whom it would seem meant to benefit, is directly contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and would introduce confusion and disorder into the commonweal...The first and most fundamental principle, therefore, if one would undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property. This being established, we proceed to show where the remedy sought for must be found. (RN 15)

Pope John Paul II expressing agreement with Pope Leo XIII, wrote:

Equal clarity in recognizing the evil of a solution which, by appearing to reverse the positions of the poor and the rich,

was in reality detrimental to the very people whom it was meant to help. The remedy would prove worse than the sickness. By defining the nature of the socialism of his day as the suppression of private property, Leo XIII arrived at the crux of the problem. (CA 12)

Today, even socialist leaders in the world admit that the confiscation of private property did not contribute to the well being of their countries and societies. This shows that the insights of Leo XIII were both prophetic and admirable.

The *Rerum Novarum* series

In 1931, on the 40th anniversary of its publication, Pope Pius XI made an unprecedented move to remind the world of the importance of *Rerum Novarum*: he wrote another encyclical to commemorate it. Pope Pius XI issued *Quadragesimo Anno* to praise Leo's encyclical, and to reflect on the world situation of his day, the 1930s. Later on, other Pontiffs followed this practice, and as a result reflections on *Rerum Novarum* have developed into a series, as can be seen below:

1891	Leo XIII	<i>Rerum Novarum</i>
1931	Pius XI	<i>Quadragesimo Anno</i> , in commemoration of the 40 th anniversary of RN
1941	Pius XII	Radio Message to the world on the Pentecost, in commemoration of the 50 th anniversary of RN
1961	John XXIII	<i>Mater et Magistra</i> , in commemoration of the 70 th anniversary of RN
1971	Paul VI	<i>Octogesima Adveniens</i> , in commemoration of the 80 th anniversary of RN
1981	John Paul II	<i>Laborem Exercens</i> , in commemoration of the 90 th anniversary of RN
1991	John Paul II	<i>Centesimus Annus</i> , in commemoration of the 100 th anniversary of RN

In 1961, when Pope John XXIII, on the 70th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, issued the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, he tried to further elaborate on *Rerum Novarum* and make it more complete. The subtitle of *Rerum Novarum* was “On Capital and Labour”, and it did not pay too much attention to the agricultural sector. John XXIII, however, seeing the need to speak out for the undeveloped agricultural field, spent a whole chapter (Chapter 2) spelling out the rights and privileges of farmers and of the farming industry. *Mater et Magistra* also highlighted the importance of maintaining a balance in international economic relations among nations. Some 16 years had passed since World War II, and many Asian and other emerging nations had experienced dramatic modernization and industrialization, leading to situations of trans-national economic conflict. The Holy Father found it necessary to make the problems fully known.

In 1971, Pope Paul VI promulgated the Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* in honor of the 80th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. He expressed the opinion that in the midst of a long list of social problems in the modern world, the most severe one was none other than discrimination. Examples were discrimination of race, nationality, color of skin, culture, sex and religion. Pope Paul VI reaffirmed that the solution to the problem of discrimination laid not only in legislation and regulation, but also in an appeal to human reason. In this apostolic letter, the Holy Father first used the term “Option for the Poor”.

In 1981, Pope John Paul II wrote the encyclical *Laborem Exercens* to commemorate the 90th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. In it, he discussed the problems facing labor arising from the rapid development of technology.

In 1991, when Eastern European countries overthrew their socialist governments and created a new world order, Pope John Paul II wrote *Centesimus Annus* to commemorate the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. He also took the opportunity to analyze for believers the new world situation. He pointed out that although socialism proved to be a failure, capitalism should not thus

consider itself to be the sole feasible economic system. He reminded people not to overlook potential difficulties and dangers in the future. In Chapter III of the encyclical he wrote:

Many individual, social, regional and national injustices were committed during and prior to the years in which Communism dominated; much hatred and ill-will have accumulated. There is a real danger that these will re-explode after the collapse of dictatorships, provoking serious conflicts and casualties, should there be a lessening of the moral commitment and conscious striving to bear witness to the truth, which were the inspiration for past efforts. (CA 27)

The Holy Father was prophetic enough to see that the later outbreak of civil wars in the Balkan countries and in the former USSR territory did not just happen accidentally. If people had listened to the Holy Father, such tragedies could have been avoided. He re-emphasized that Church people should make "an option for the poor".

The *Populorum Progressio* series

In 1967, Pope Paul VI wrote the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. The beginning was somewhat like that of both *Quadragesimo Anno* and *Mater et Magistra*. In section 2, Pope Paul VI wrote:

Our recent predecessors did not fail to do their duty in this area. Their noteworthy messages shed the light of the Gospel on contemporary social questions. There was Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI's encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pius XII's radio message to the world, and John XXIII's two encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*. (PP 2)

In this encyclical, Pope Paul noted many polarized interconnected phenomena in the world. On the one hand, a great number of new countries had successfully won independence from their colonial rulers. On the other hand, quite a number of these

new countries failed to solve problems of poverty, and of internal or external conflicts. Civil wars and international wars took place one after the other. Therefore, the Holy Father expressed a very important concept: "Development is the New Name for Peace". He declared that support for poor nations in their struggle to attain sustainable development is the authentic method for achieving world peace.

In December 1987, Pope John Paul II published the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* to commemorate the 20th anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*. Besides reaffirming the timely warnings and the trans-temporal prophetic insights of *Populorum Progressio*, John Paul II made a thorough review of the impact of the global economic crisis on the poor as well as on the rich countries.

In 2009, when the world was in the midst of another global economic crisis, Pope Benedict XVI wrote the lengthy encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, to offer a possible solution to the crisis and to pay tribute to his two distinguished predecessors, Paul VI and John XXIII. Benedict XVI wrote:

In 1967, when he issued the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, my venerable predecessor Pope Paul VI illuminated the great theme of the development of peoples with the splendour of truth and the gentle light of Christ's charity. He taught that life in Christ is the first and principal factor of development and he entrusted us with the task of travelling the path of development with all our heart and all our intelligence, that is to say with the ardour of charity and the wisdom of truth. It is the primordial truth of God's love, grace bestowed upon us, that opens our lives to gift and makes it possible to hope for a "development of the whole man and of all men", and to hope for progress "from less human conditions to those which are more human".

At a distance of over forty years from the encyclical's publication, I intend to pay tribute and to honor the memory of the great Pope Paul VI, revisiting his teachings on integral human development and taking my place within the path that they marked out, so as to apply them to

the present moment. This continual application to contemporary circumstances began with the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, with which the Servant of God Pope John Paul II chose to mark the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *Populorum Progressio*. (CV 8)

Therefore we can say that *Populorum Progressio* started a new series parallel to that of *Rerum Novarum*. Benedict XVI valued the idea very much and wrote that, "Until that time, only *Rerum Novarum* had been commemorated in this way." (CV 8) Thus the reflections on *Populorum Progressio* have also developed into the series shown below:

1967	Paul VI	<i>Populorum Progressio</i>
1987	John Paul II	<i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> in honor of the 20 th anniversary of PP
2009	Benedict XVI	<i>Caritas in Veritate</i> in honor of the 42 nd anniversary of PP

The core idea of *Caritas in Veritate*

Caritas in Veritate is Pope Benedict XVI's 3rd encyclical, and is the first in the category of Catholic Social Teachings since the issuance of *Centesimus Annus* in 1991. This new encyclical was signed on June 29, 2009 and made public on July 7 in various languages including Italian, French, English, German, Portuguese and Spanish. Thanks to the great effort of Cardinal Joseph Zen and his collaborators, the Chinese version was published in September of the same year.

In *Caritas in Veritate* Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that to solve the problem of poverty and to promote real development in the midst of the current global economic crisis, we must pay attention to moral values. Christians should carry out works of charity so as to let the world know that Christian values are indispensable for attaining authentic and sustainable social global development.

The new encyclical deals with two main points: the good of every man and the development of the whole man. (CV 18) For Benedict XVI these two points are closely interrelated. Therefore, the dignity of individual life and the right to life are the foundations for social justice. In this context, Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of 1975 have become important influences on this new encyclical. (CV 15)

Caritas in Veritate includes several important themes, such as "profit", "freedom of economy", "technology and economy", as well as of the contribution of Christian faith to human development. Besides these main lines, some excellent sideline discussions take place. These include:

- How abortion and euthanasia spoil real economic development (CV 28);
- The relationship between religious freedom and economic development (CV 29);
- The role of civil society in the process of economic development (CV 38);
- The problem of aid agencies exploiting aid resources (CV 47);
- A condemnation of immoral tourism (CV 61);
- The promotion of the concept of "decent work" (CV 63);
- The promotion of the principle of "fair trade" (CV 66).

***Caritas in Veritate* and Globalization**

One of the most important themes covered by this new encyclical is definitely "the phenomenon of globalization". Unlike many other non-governmental organizations and pressure groups, the Catholic Church does not consider globalization as necessarily a bad thing.

Benedict XVI quoted a sentence from John Paul II's Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences on April 27, 2001:

Despite some of its structural elements, which should neither be denied nor exaggerated, globalization, *a priori*,

is neither good nor bad. It will be what people make of it.
(CV 42)

Pope Benedict did not neglect to point out one of the most common misunderstandings:

Sometimes globalization is viewed in fatalistic terms, as if the dynamics involved were the product of anonymous impersonal forces or structures independent of the human will. (CV 42)

Rather, globalization can have a positive effect:

Underneath the more visible process (of globalization), humanity itself is becoming increasingly interconnected; it is made up of individuals and peoples to whom this process should offer benefits and development, as they assume their respective responsibilities, singly and collectively. (CV 42)

Therefore the Holy Father warns us:

Blind opposition would be a mistaken and prejudiced attitude, incapable of recognizing the positive aspects of the process, with the consequent risk of missing the chance to take advantage of its many opportunities for development. (CV 42)

The Holy Father elaborates on the pros and cons of globalization. His words deserve our deep reflection:

The processes of globalization, suitably understood and directed, open up the unprecedented possibility of large-scale redistribution of wealth on a world-wide scale; if badly directed, however, they can lead to an increase in poverty and inequality, and could even trigger a global crisis. It is necessary to correct the malfunctions, some of them serious, that cause new divisions between peoples and within peoples, and also to ensure that the redistribution of wealth does not come about through the redistribution or increase of poverty: a real danger if the present situation were to be badly managed. (CV 42)

Pope Benedict pointed out:

The breaking-down of borders is not simply a material fact: it is also a cultural event both in its causes and in its effects. If globalization is viewed from a deterministic standpoint, the criteria with which to evaluate and direct it are lost. As a human reality, it is the product of diverse cultural tendencies, which need to be subjected to a process of discernment. (CV 42)

Problems emerging from globalization

A prominent purpose of globalization should be to give a helping hand to peoples in need. Nevertheless, as Benedict XVI pointed out:

For a long time it was thought that poor peoples should remain at a fixed stage of development, and should be content to receive assistance from the philanthropy of developed peoples. Paul VI strongly opposed this mentality in *Populorum Progressio*. (CV 42)

Today the material resources available for rescuing these peoples from poverty are potentially greater than before, but they have ended up largely in the hands of people from developed countries, who have benefited more from the liberalization that has occurred in the mobility of capital and labour. (CV 42)

Benedict XVI does not underestimate the inequality between the rich and poor countries in the context of globalization.

Here budgetary policies, with cuts in social spending often made under pressure from international financial institutions, can leave citizens powerless in the face of old and new risks; such powerlessness is increased by the lack of effective protection on the part of workers' associations. (CV 25)

Benedict XVI reaffirms John Paul II's observation that:

The demarcation line between rich and poor countries is no longer as clear as it was at the time of *Populorum Progressio*. The world's wealth is growing in absolute terms, but inequalities are on the increase. In rich countries,

new sectors of society are succumbing to poverty and new forms of poverty are emerging. In poorer areas some groups enjoy a sort of "superdevelopment" of a wasteful and consumerist kind, which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation. (CV 22)

When we look at mainland China, the average annual income per person is as low as 2,500 US dollars, but some millionaires can afford hundreds of thousands of dollars for a single meal. This inequality severely undermines ecological and human values. Such inequality in the distribution of resources is what the Holy Father condemns in his encyclical.

The Holy Father found that:

The transition inherent in the process of globalization presents great difficulties and dangers that can only be overcome if we are able to appropriate the underlying anthropological and ethical spirit that drives globalization towards the humanizing goal of solidarity. Unfortunately this spirit is often overwhelmed or suppressed by ethical and cultural considerations of an individualistic and utilitarian nature. (CV 42)

Globalization also creates other kinds of problems. Pope Benedict wrote:

There are certain religious cultures in the world today that do not oblige men and women to live in communion but rather cut them off from one another in a search for individual well-being, limited to the gratification of psychological desires. Furthermore, a certain proliferation of different religious "paths", attracting small groups or even single individuals, together with religious syncretism, can give rise to separation and disengagement. One possible negative effect of the process of globalization is the tendency to favour this kind of syncretism by encouraging forms of "religion" that, instead of bringing people together, alienate them from one another and distance them from reality. (CV 55)

Globalization and the responsibility of the media

Amidst all the new events, Pope Benedict XVI paid special attention to the relationship between the means of social communication and globalization. He said:

Given the media's fundamental importance in engineering changes in attitude towards reality and the human person, we must reflect carefully on its influence, especially in regard to the ethical-cultural dimension of globalization and the development of peoples in solidarity. (CV 73)

Regarding the Catholic Church's most recent attitude towards the means of social communication, three documents should not be overlooked. The first one is the Vatican II document "*Inter Mirifica: a Decree on the Means of Social Communication*" in 1963. The second one is "*Communio et Progressio: a Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication*", written by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in 1971. The third one is the Papal Message "The Media: At the Crossroads between Self-Promotion and Service. Searching for the Truth in order to Share it with Others", released on World Communications Day in 2008.

Inter Mirifica has been in existence for more than forty years. It should already be very well known and need no further introduction. *Communio et Progressio*, however, is less well known among church people. Section 21 of this Pastoral Instruction raises eight questions, which are worthy of our attention. Such questions are still valid and meaningful today. They are:

- How can we ensure that this swift, haphazard and endless stream of news is properly evaluated and understood?
- How, in a society that is committed to the rights of dissent, is the distinction between right and wrong, or true and false, to be made?
- How in the face of competition to capture a large, popular audience are the media to be prevented from appealing to and inflaming the less admirable tendencies of human nature?

- How can one avoid the concentration of the power to communicate in too few hands so that any real dialogue is killed?
- How can one avoid allowing communications made indirectly and through machinery to weaken direct human contact — especially when these communications take the form of pictures and images?
- When the media invite people to escape into fantasy, what can be done to bring them back to present reality?
- How can one stop the media from encouraging mental idleness and passivity?
- How can one be certain that the incessant appeal to emotion does not sap reason?

(Communio et Progressio 21)

In the Papal Message on the 42nd World Communications Day in 2008, Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that while claiming to represent reality, the media can tend to legitimize or impose distorted models of personal, family or social life.

Today, social communications seems increasingly to claim not simply to represent reality, but to determine it, owing to the power and the force of suggestion that it possesses. (Papal Message 2008, 3)

They (the media) can and must contribute to making known the truth about humanity, and defending it against those who tend to deny or destroy it. One might even say that seeking and presenting the truth about humanity constitutes the highest vocation of social communications. (Papal Message 2008, 5)

Benedict XVI follows in the footsteps of his predecessors, and clearly discerns the difference between "the revealing of facts" and "the revealing of truth". He asks media practitioners to transmit more of the truth and more about human dignity. If we appreciate this point, we can better understand the following paragraphs in *Caritas in Veritate*.

Given the media's fundamental importance in engineering changes in attitude towards reality and the human person, we must reflect carefully on its influence, especially in regard to the ethical-cultural dimension of globalization and the development of peoples in solidarity. Mirroring what is required for an ethical approach to globalization and development, so too the meaning and purpose of the media must be sought within an anthropological perspective. (CV 73)

Just because social communications increases the possibilities of interconnection and the dissemination of ideas, it does not follow that it promotes freedom or internationalizes development and democracy for all. To achieve goals of this kind, it needs to focus on promoting the dignity of persons and peoples, it needs to be clearly inspired by charity and placed at the service of truth, of the good, and of natural and supernatural fraternity. (CV 73)

The media can make an important contribution towards the growth in communion of the human family and to the ethos of society when it is used to promote universal participation in the common search for what is just. (CV 73)

Revealing facts is a question of technology; revealing truth, however, is a question of morality. The Holy Father clearly pointed out that the future of social communications media in the process of human development lies not in technology but in morality.

Conclusion

Benedict XVI declared:

The truth of globalization as a process and its fundamental ethical criterion are given by the unity of the human family and its development towards what is good. Hence a sustained commitment is needed so as to promote a person-based and community-oriented cultural process of world-wide integration that is open to transcendence. (CV 42)

Although not at the end of the encyclical, Paragraph 33 of

Caritas in Veritate can be seen as a conclusion to the topic of globalization. It reads:

More than forty years after *Populorum Progressio*, its basic theme, namely progress, remains an open question, made all the more acute and urgent by the current economic and financial crisis. If some areas of the globe, with a history of poverty, have experienced remarkable changes in terms of their economic growth and their share in world production, other zones are still living in a situation of deprivation comparable to that which existed at the time of Paul VI, and in some cases one can even speak of a deterioration. It is significant that some of the causes of this situation were identified in *Populorum Progressio*, such as the high tariffs imposed by economically developed countries, which still make it difficult for the products of poor countries to gain a foothold in the markets of rich countries. Other causes, however, mentioned only in passing in the encyclical, have since emerged with greater clarity. A case in point would be the evaluation of the process of decolonization, then at its height. Paul VI hoped to see the journey towards autonomy unfold freely and in peace. More than forty years later, we must acknowledge how difficult this journey has been, both because of new forms of colonialism and continued dependence on old and new foreign powers, and because of grave irresponsibility within the very countries that have achieved independence. (CV 33)

The principal new feature has been the explosion of worldwide interdependence, commonly known as globalization. Paul VI had partially foreseen it, but the ferocious pace at which it has evolved could not have been anticipated. Originating within economically developed countries, this process by its nature has spread to include all economies. It has been the principal driving force behind the emergence from underdevelopment of whole regions, and in itself it represents a great opportunity. Nevertheless, without the guidance of charity in truth, this global force could cause unprecedented damage and create new divisions within the human family. Hence charity and truth confront us with an altogether new and creative challenge,

one that is certainly vast and complex. It is about broadening the scope of reason and making it capable of knowing and directing these powerful new forces, animating them within the perspective of that “civilization of love” whose seed God has planted in every people and in every culture. (CV 33)

As a world leader in the 21st century, Pope Benedict XVI bravely pointed out that the success of globalization is deeply related to the aspect of faith.

Globalization is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon which must be grasped in the diversity and unity of all its different dimensions, including the theological dimension. (CV 42)

The negative result of generally neglecting the aspect of faith is the true source of most problems emerging regarding globalization.

After reviewing these important documents in the field of Catholic Social Teaching, we can say that they are precious gifts from God to all believers and to all peoples the world. It is a shame that these documents are not given their due respect both inside and outside the Church. While some people consider the documents of the Church’s social teachings important, others think that they are too important to be read by ordinary people. In fact, some scholars joked that Catholic Social Teaching is the Church’s “Best Kept Secret” (DeBerri et al, 2004).

Actually, since lay Catholics are living “within” society, they have more opportunity to experience directly all the impacts of social development. They are also on the front line of social affairs. Therefore, the Popes have frequently called upon the lay people to take part in realizing social justice in the world. Pope John Paul II wrote:

At the beginning of industrialized society, it was “a yoke little better than that of slavery itself” which led my Predecessor to speak out in defence of man. Over the past hundred years the Church has remained faithful to this duty.

Indeed, she intervened in the turbulent period of class struggle after the First World War in order to defend man from economic exploitation and from the tyranny of the totalitarian systems. After the Second World War, she put the dignity of the person at the centre of her social messages, insisting that material goods were meant for all, and that the social order ought to be free of oppression and be based on a spirit of cooperation and solidarity. The Church has constantly repeated that the person and society need not only material goods but spiritual and religious values as well. (CA 61)

One hundred years after the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, the Church finds herself still facing "new things" and new challenges. The centenary celebration should therefore confirm the commitment of all people of good will and of believers in particular. (CA 61)

Many years ago when I was first appointed as a member of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission, I strongly felt that lay Catholics should take responsibility for promoting Catholic Social Teaching. According to Pope Paul VI:

We appeal, first of all, to Our sons and daughters. In the developing nations and in other countries, lay people must consider it their task to improve the temporal order. While the hierarchy has the role of teaching and authoritatively interpreting the moral laws and precepts that apply in this matter, the laity have the duty of using their own initiative and taking action in this area-without waiting passively for directives and precepts from others. They must try to infuse a Christian spirit into people's mental outlook and daily behavior, into the laws and structures of the civil community. Changes must be made; present conditions must be improved. And the transformations must be permeated with the spirit of the Gospel. (PP 81)

We especially urge Catholic men and women living in developed nations to offer their skills and earnest assistance to public and private organizations, both civil and religious, working to solve the problems of developing nations. They will surely want to be in the first ranks of those who spare

no effort to have just and fair laws, based on moral precepts, established among all nations. (PP 8)

Let's work with our Holy Father to create the better world he envisions.

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