

# Scheda 11.1

## “I Recommend to You My Beloved Poor ...”

Magdalene of Canossa

### پیش What process of change?

The process of change is very important because God has imposed some limitations on our choices. Some means are better than others. Some means actually help us live the future before it gets here. Some means have to be given to us, we cannot get them for ourselves. Therefore, we also have to answer the question: “To what process of change do we aspire?”

There is a variety of choices. Some look to governments as the means of transformation. Some believe that hard work and a free market are the best tools for change. Others believe transformation depends only on the work of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Still others look to human reason and technology. Some believe the resources lie within us, while others believe we must get the resources for change by taking them from others, through government taxation or even more direct means.

### ض Affirming the role of God

A Christian process of change must begin with an affirmation that, at the fundamental level, transformation takes place because God wants it and is enabling it. At the end of the day, any transformation, justice and peace will be because God made it so. We are not the authors of change, nor the primary actors. It is the action of God, the triune God, of God the Father who is ceaselessly at work in all creation and in the hearts and minds of all human beings whether acknowledge Him or not, graciously guiding history toward its true end; of the God the Son who has become part of this created history in the incarnation; and of God the Holy Spirit who is given as a foretaste of the end to empower and teach the Church and to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.

### ض Affirming the role of human beings

Change takes place because human beings commit themselves to the process of change and invest whatever gifts and resources they have to the process. God gives us real choices over all elements

of our lives. People must make the choice to seek transformation and then invest themselves in making it happen. A Christian understanding of the process of change centres on the decisions and actions of human beings. This has several implications.

1. First, the change process belongs to those who are in need of change. If God will not impose change, then neither should we. The beginning of healing the marred image of the poor is to insist that they alone have the right to describe their current reality and to shape the vision of their better future.

2. Second, since not all the choices made by people are good ones, and since broken relationships are part of the problem, any Christian process of change must include processes of repentance and forgiveness.

3. Finally, a process dependent on human beings can only go as fast as human beings can go. The pace must be set by people.

### ض Focusing on relationships

This should not be a surprise. Yet sometimes we are unclear as to importance of beginning at the right place. There is a temptation to begin with the problem or with the research that allows us to understand the problem. We must begin with people, not abstractions, data, analysis or technique. Without transforming relationships there is unlikely to be much transformation.

### ض Keeping the end in mind

When we focus on the process of change, there can be a temptation to value effectiveness over everything else. We need to remember that the goal of human transformation is the discovery of true identity and vocation. Meaning matters more than efficiency. Valuing efficiency or effectiveness over discovery meaning creates poverty.

### ص Recognising pervasive evil

While God will have the final say and the Kingdom of God will prove to be the only unshakable Kingdom at the end of time, getting there will not be easy. To get to the joy of Easter morning, Christ had to suffer through Good Friday. The Evil One is in the world working actively against life and peace, shalom. This evil works through the sin of human beings, encouraging bad choices by promoting a web of lies. In societies in which fear of spirits and the unseen is pervasive, the deception of the Evil One assumes a deeper, more pernicious role. People test the gods and spirits, and those who claim to speak for them. The spirits who respond to sacrifice are moved up to the hierarchy of power and receive more sacrifices, money and attention. This is a framework of lies, a deceptive order that disempowers the poor and enriches and empowers those who claim to be the intermediaries linking this world to the next. Such a deceptive framework undermines human initiative and takes the place of the true God. This is evil at work against life.

### ض Seeking truth, justice and righteousness

If the most fundamental cause of poverty is the impact of sin then dealing with sin must be part of the Christian process of change. While we must deal with the individual nature of this sin, we must also address its consequences as expressed in relationships that are based on a web of lies and

that promote disempowerment of the poor and domination by the non-poor. This means that a Christian process of change must centre on truth-telling and the promotion of justice and righteousness. The truth must be discovered about the way the poor contribute to their own poverty and the truth must be discovered about how poverty is created by the god-complexes of the non-poor, inadequacies of world view, and deception by the principalities and powers. Only in repenting in the face of God's truth can relationships be restored so that life, justice and peace, shalom, can be restored. Thus, in a Christian process of change, every development action and process must be tested for its contribution to truth and justice.

## جس Affirming the role of the Church

All of us understanding of transformational developments must take this fact seriously and accept that God has already put a living sign of God's Kingdom in the community. Our goal must be to help the Church be what it is intended to be, not to judge it or relegate it to the transformational development sidelines. Everyone is in need of transformation: ourselves, the poor, and the Church. We are all on a journey. If we are willing to love and accompany the poor toward transformation, why should we not be willing to love and accompany our brothers and sisters in Christ on their journey toward the same goal? How does the idea of building people's capacity to plan and manage their own development relate to the establishment and sustainability of a local Church and the believer's spiritual life?

There are several critical contributions to transformational development that only the Church can provide.

First, the role of the Church in transformational development is the same as ours: to be a servant and a source of encouragement, not a commander or a judge.

Second, the Church can and must be a source of value formation within the community. While not an exclusive source of values, people who are reading and living the Word under the disciplining of the Holy Spirit should be a significant source of inspiration working for life and shalom. When the Church is at its best, it is a sign of the values of the Kingdom and is contributing holistic disciples to the community for its well-being. The Church is more important as a source of people than as a source of instruction or prophetic word.

Finally, the Church is the community that reads the Biblical story as its story and applies this story to the concrete circumstances of its time, place and culture. This is the community within the community from which the Word of God is heard, lived and revealed.

## پس Mission Orientation (motivation and direction)

- Consider poverty not as the inevitable result of circumstances, but as the product of unjust situations that can be changed, focusing on actions that will break the circle of poverty
- Design projects, creative strategies, policies and guidelines
- Evangelize and inculturate Christian values and charism, by maintaining a profound respect for the local culture

## پس Task Orientation (organization)

- Start with a serious analysis of the local reality, flowing from concrete data, and tailor all projects to this reality
- Have a holistic vision, addressing a series of basic human needs — individual and social, spiritual and physical, especially jobs, health care, housing, education, spiritual growth — with an integral approach toward prevention and sustainable development
- Implement coherent strategies, starting modestly, delegating tasks and responsibilities, and providing quality services respectful of human dignity
- Systematize, institutionalize and evaluate the project and its procedures, describing measurable indicators and results
- Make the project self-sustaining by guaranteeing that it will have the human and economic resources needed for it to last
- Be transparent, inviting participation in preparing budgets and in commenting on financial reports. Maintain careful controls over money management.

## پس People Orientation

**(focusing on the poor as the persons who are most capable of changing their own situation)**

- Listen carefully and seek to understand the needs and aspirations of the poor, creating an atmosphere of respect and mutual confidence and fostering self-esteem among the people
- Involve the poor themselves, including the young and women, at all stages: identification of needs, planning, implementation, evaluation and revision
- Educate, train, and offer spiritual formation to all participants in the project  
Promote horizontal learning processes, forming effective multiplying agents and visionary leaders in the local community, to be servant leaders
- Construct structural and institutional models, where communities can identify their resources and needs, make informed decisions, and exchange information and effective strategies within the community and among various communities
- Promote engagement in political processes, through civic education of individuals and communities
- Support and respect the mechanisms for promoting solidarity that exist among the community members

## پس Co-responsibility, networking and political action

- Promote social co-responsibility and networking, sensitizing society at all levels — local, national and international — about changing the unjust conditions that affect the lives of the poor
- Construct a shared vision with diverse stakeholders: poor communities, interested individuals, donors, churches, governments, the private sector, unions, the media, international organizations and networks, etc.
- Struggle to transform unjust situations and to have a positive impact, through political action, on public policy and laws

- Have a prophetic attitude: announce, denounce, and, by networking with others, engage in actions that exert pressure for bringing about change.

## پس Prayer for Systemic Change

**We praise and thank you, O God, Creator of the universe.**

You have made all things good and have given us the earth to cultivate.

**Grant that** we may always use created things gratefully,  
and share them generously with those in need.

**Give us creativity** in helping the poor meet their basic human needs.

**Open our minds and hearts** so that we might stand at their side  
and assist them to change whatever unjust structures keep them poor.

**Enable us** to be brothers and sisters to them, friends who walk with them  
in their struggle for fundamental human rights.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

**Amen!**

## پس Rereading the Beatitudes

**Lord, help us to be truly poor,**

not searching for our own glory and living in simplicity of life.

**Lord, help us to be gentle, meek and**

non-violent in our way of living,  
and promote actively non-violence.

**Lord, make us sad when we see evil committed on earth**

and work to alleviate this evil by our sincere care  
for the suffering and the oppressed.

**Lord, help us to be merciful,**

through our active compassion for those who are  
victims of violence and war: refugees and displaced persons.

**Lord, help us to be peacemakers,**

like mediators and instruments of peace,  
among people, nations, religions and cultures.

**Lord, help us to be just,**

to do all in our power to promote just relations  
with God, with all people and Creation.

