

**COMPENDIUM  
OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE  
OF THE CHURCH**

Chapter Four: passages from the Document

**PRINCIPLES OF THE CHURCH'S SOCIAL DOCTRINE**

<p><b>I. MEANING AND UNITY</b></p>	<p>* <b>The permanent principles of the Church's social doctrine constitute the very heart of Catholic social teaching.</b> These are the principles of: the <b>dignity of the human person</b>, which has already been dealt with in the preceding chapter, and which is the foundation of all the other principles and content of the Church's social doctrine; the common good; <b>subsidiarity</b>; and <b>solidarity</b>. These principles, the expression of the whole truth about man known by reason and faith, are born of “the encounter of the <b>Gospel message</b> and of its demands summarized in the supreme commandment of love of God and neighbour in justice with the problems emanating from the life of society”. (160)</p> <p>* These are principles of a general and fundamental character, since they concern the reality of society in its entirety. Because of their permanence in time and their universality of meaning, the Church presents them as the primary and fundamental parameters of reference for interpreting and evaluating social phenomena, which is the necessary source <b>for working out the criteria for the discernment and orientation of social interactions</b> in every area. (161)</p> <p>* <b>The principles</b> of the Church's social doctrine must be appreciated in their <b>unity, interrelatedness and articulation</b>. These fundamental principles of the Church's social doctrine, moreover, represent much more than a permanent legacy of reflection, which is also an essential part of the Christian message, since they indicate <b>the paths possible for building a good, authentic and renewed social life</b>. (162)</p> <p>* The principles of the social doctrine, in their entirety, constitute that <b>primary articulation of the truth of society</b> by which every conscience is challenged and invited to interact with every other conscience in truth, in responsibility shared fully with all people and also regarding all people. In</p>
--	---



<p>c. <b>Tasks of the political community</b></p>	<p>though it were one's own good. (167)</p> <p>* <b>The responsibility</b> for attaining the common good, besides falling to <b>individual persons</b>, belongs also to <b>the State</b>, since the common good is the reason that the political authority exists. (168)</p> <p>* To ensure the common good, the government of each country has the specific duty <b>to harmonize the different sectorial interests with the requirements of justice</b>. The proper reconciling of the particular goods of groups and those of individuals is, in fact, one of the most delicate tasks of public authority. (169)</p> <p>* <b>The common good of society is not an end in itself; it has value only in reference to attaining the ultimate ends of the person and the universal common good of the whole of creation.</b> God is the ultimate end of his creatures and for no reason may the common good be deprived of its transcendent dimension, which moves beyond the historical dimension while at the same time fulfilling it. This perspective reaches its fullness by virtue of faith in Jesus' Passover, which sheds clear light on the attainment of humanity's true common good. Our history — the personal and collective effort to elevate the human condition — begins and ends in <b>Jesus: thanks to him, by means of him and in light of him every reality, including human society, can be brought to its Supreme Good, to its fulfilment.</b> A purely historical and materialistic vision would end up transforming the common good into a simple socio-economic well-being, without any transcendental goal, that is, without its most intimate reason for existing. (170)</p>
<p><b>III. THE UNIVERSAL DESTINATION OF GOODS</b></p> <p>a. <b>Origin and meaning</b></p>	<p>* Among the numerous implications of the common good, immediate significance is taken on by the principle of the universal destination of goods: “God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that <b>all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind</b> under the guidance of justice tempered by charity. <b>God gave the earth to the whole human race</b> for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone. This is the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's goods. The earth, by reason of its fruitfulness and its capacity to satisfy human needs, is God's first gift for the sustenance of human life”. The human person cannot do without the material goods that correspond to his primary needs and constitute the basic conditions for his existence; <b>these goods are absolutely indispensable if he is to feed himself, grow, communicate, associate with others, and attain the highest purposes to which he is called.</b> (171)</p> <p>* <b>The universal right to use the goods of the earth is based on the principle of the universal destination of goods. Each person must have access to the level of well-being necessary for his full development.</b> The right to the common use of goods is the “first principle of the whole ethical and social order” and “the characteristic principle of Christian social doctrine”. For this reason the Church feels bound in duty to specify the nature and characteristics of this principle. It is first of all <b>a natural right,</b></p>

<p>b. The universal destination of goods and private property</p>	<p>inscribed in human nature and not merely a positive right connected with changing historical circumstances; moreover it is an “inherent” right. It is innate in individual persons, in every person, and has priority with regard to any human intervention concerning goods, to any legal system concerning the same, to any economic or social system or method. (172)</p> <p>* Putting the principal of the universal destination of goods into concrete practice, according to the different cultural and social contexts, means that methods, limits and objects must be precisely defined. Universal destination and utilization of goods do not mean that everything is at the disposal of each person or of all people, or that the same object may be useful or belong to each person or all people. If it is true that everyone is born with the right to use the goods of the earth, it is likewise true that, <b>in order to ensure that this right is exercised in an equitable and orderly fashion, regulated interventions are necessary, interventions that are the result of national and international agreements, and a juridical order that adjudicates and specifies the exercise of this right.</b> (173)</p> <p>* The principle of the universal destination of goods is an invitation to develop <b>an economic vision inspired by moral values</b> that permit people not to lose sight of the origin or purpose of these goods, so as to bring about a world of fairness and solidarity, in which the creation of wealth can take on a positive function. (174)</p> <p>* <b>The universal destination of goods requires a common effort to obtain for every person and for all peoples the conditions necessary for integral development, so that everyone can contribute to making a more humane world,</b> “in which each individual can give and receive, and in which the progress of some will no longer be an obstacle to the development of others, nor a pretext for their enslavement”. This principle corresponds to the call made unceasingly by the Gospel to people and societies of all times, <b>tempted as they always are by the desire to possess,</b> temptations which the Lord Jesus chose to undergo (cf. Mk 1:12-13; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13) in order to teach us how to overcome them with his grace. (175)</p> <p>* By means of work and making use of the gift of intelligence, people are able to exercise dominion over the earth and make it a fitting home: “In this way, he makes part of the earth his own, precisely the part which he has acquired through work; this is the origin of individual property”[ Private property is an essential element of an authentically social and democratic economic policy, and it is the guarantee of a correct social order. <b>The Church's social doctrine requires that ownership of goods be equally accessible to all, so that all may become, at least in some measure, owners, and it excludes recourse to forms of “common and promiscuous dominion.</b> (176)</p> <p>* Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute and untouchable: “On the contrary, it has always understood this right within the broader context of the right common to all to use the goods of the whole of creation: the right to private property is subordinated to the</p>
---	---

right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone.” **Private property**, in fact, regardless of the concrete forms of the regulations and juridical norms relative to it, is in its essence only an instrument for respecting the principle of the universal destination of goods; in the final analysis, therefore, it **is not an end but a means.** (177)

\* **The Church's social teaching moreover calls for recognition of the social function of any form of private ownership that clearly refers to its necessary relation to the common good.** Man “should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others”. **The universal destination of goods entails obligations on how goods are to be used by their legitimate owners.** Individual persons may not use their resources without considering the effects that this use will have, rather they must act in a way that benefits not only themselves and their family but also the common good. From this there arises the duty on the part of owners not to let the goods in their possession go idle and to channel them to productive activity, even entrusting them to others who are desirous and capable of putting them to use in production. (178)

\* The present historical period has placed at the disposal of society new goods that were completely unknown until recent times. This calls for a fresh reading of the principle of the universal destination of the goods of the earth and makes it necessary to extend this principle so that it includes the latest developments brought about by economic and technological progress. **New technological and scientific knowledge must be placed at the service of mankind's primary needs, gradually increasing humanity's common patrimony.** (179)

\* If forms of property unknown in the past take on significant importance in the process of economic and social development, nonetheless, traditional forms of property must not be forgotten. Individual property is not the only legitimate form of ownership. The ancient form of community property also has a particular importance; though it can be found in economically advanced countries, it is particularly characteristic of the social structure of many indigenous peoples.

**An equitable distribution of land remains ever critical, especially in developing countries and in countries that have recently changed from systems based on collectivities or colonization.** (180)

\* To the subjects, whether individuals or communities, that exercise ownership of various types of property accrue a series of objective advantages: better living conditions, security for the future, and a greater number of options from which to choose. On the other hand, property may also bring a series of deceptive promises that are a source of temptation. **Only by recognizing that these goods are dependent on God the Creator and then directing their use to the common good, is it possible to give material goods their proper function as useful tools for the growth of individuals and peoples.** (181)

<p><b>c. The universal destination of goods and the preferential option for the poor</b></p>	<p>* The principle of the universal destination of goods requires that the poor, the marginalized and in all cases those whose living conditions interfere with their proper growth should be the focus of particular concern. To this end, <b>the preferential option for the poor</b> should be reaffirmed in all its force. “This is an option, <b>or a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity</b>, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our social responsibilities and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods. Today, furthermore, given the worldwide dimension which the <b>social question</b> has assumed, this love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, <b>cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without health care and, above all, those without hope of a better future.</b> (182)</p> <p>* <b>Human misery is a clear sign of man's natural condition of frailty and of his need for salvation. Christ the Saviour</b> showed compassion in this regard, identifying himself with the “least” among men (cf. Mt 25:40,45). “It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. When ‘the poor have the good news preached to them’ (Mt 11:5), it is a sign of Christ's presence”.</p> <p>Jesus says: <b>“You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me”</b> (Mt 26:11; cf. Mk 14:7; Jn 12:8). He makes this statement not to contrast the attention due to him with service of the poor. Christian realism, while appreciating on the one hand the praiseworthy efforts being made to defeat poverty, is cautious on the other hand regarding ideological positions and Messianistic beliefs that sustain the illusion that it is possible to eliminate the problem of poverty completely from this world. This will happen only upon Christ's return, when he will be with us once more, for ever. <b>In the meantime, the poor remain entrusted to us and it is this responsibility upon which we shall be judged at the end of time</b> (cf. Mt 25:31-46): “Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren.” (183)</p> <p>* <b>The Church's love for the poor is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, by the poverty of Jesus and by his attention to the poor. This love concerns material poverty and also the numerous forms of cultural and religious poverty.</b> Prompted by the Gospel injunction, “You have received without paying, give without pay” (Mt 10:8), the Church teaches that one should assist one's fellow man in his various needs and fills the human community with countless <i>works of corporal and spiritual mercy</i>. “Among all these, <b>giving alms to the poor</b> is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a <b>work of justice</b> pleasing to God”[391], even if the practice of charity is not limited to alms-giving but implies <b>addressing the social and political dimensions of the problem of poverty</b>. In her teaching the Church constantly returns to this relationship between charity and justice: “When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of</p>
--	---



<p>b. Participation and democracy</p>	<p>This cannot be confined or restricted to only a certain area of social life, given its importance for growth — above all human growth — in areas such as the world of work and economic activity, especially in their internal dynamics; in the sectors of information and culture; and, more than anything else, in the fields of social and political life even at the highest levels. The cooperation of all peoples and the building of an international community in a framework of solidarity depends on this latter area. <b>In this perspective it becomes absolutely necessary to encourage participation above all of the most disadvantaged, as well as the occasional rotation of political leaders</b> in order to forestall the establishment of hidden privileges. Moreover, strong moral pressure is needed, so that the administration of public life will be the result of the shared responsibility of each individual with regard to the common good. (189)</p> <p>* <b>Participation in community life</b> is not only one of the greatest aspirations of the citizen, called to <b>exercise freely and responsibly his civic role with and for others</b>, but is also one of the pillars of all democratic orders and one of the major guarantees of the permanence of the democratic system. Democratic government, in fact, is defined first of all by the assignment of powers and functions on the part of the people, exercised in their name, in their regard and on their behalf. It is therefore clearly evident that every democracy must be participative. <b>This means that the different subjects of civil community at every level must be informed, listened to and involved in the exercise of the carried-out functions.</b> (190)</p> <p>* <b>Participation can be achieved in all the different relationships between the citizen and institutions:</b> to this end, particular attention must be given to the historical and social contexts in which such participation can truly be brought about. The overcoming of cultural, juridical and social obstacles that often constitutes real barriers to the shared participation of citizens in the destiny of their communities' calls for work in the areas of information and education.</p> <p>In the area of participation, a further source of <b>concern</b> is found in those countries ruled by totalitarian or dictatorial regimes, where the fundamental right to participate in public life is denied at its origin, since it is considered a threat to the State itself. <b>In some countries where this right is only formally proclaimed while in reality it cannot be concretely exercised while, in still other countries the burgeoning bureaucracy de facto denies citizens the possibility of taking active part in social and political life.</b> (191)</p>
<p>VI. THE PRINCIPLE OF SOLIDARITY</p> <p>a. Meaning and value</p>	<p>* <b>Solidarity</b> highlights in a particular way the <b>intrinsic social nature</b> of the human person, the <b>equality</b> of all in dignity and rights and the <b>common path</b> of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity. Never before has there been such a widespread awareness of the <b>bond of interdependence between individuals and peoples</b>, which is found at every level.</p> <p>In the presence of the phenomenon of interdependence and its constant expansion, however, there persist in every part of the world <b>stark</b></p>

<p><b>b. Solidarity as a social principle and a moral virtue</b></p>	<p><b>inequalities between developed and developing countries.</b> The acceleration of interdependence between persons and peoples <b>needs to be accompanied by equally intense efforts on the ethical-social plan</b>, in order to avoid the dangerous consequences of perpetrating injustice on a global scale. This would have very negative repercussions even in the very countries that are presently more advantaged. (192)</p> <p>* The new relationships of interdependence between individuals and peoples, which are de facto forms of solidarity, have to be transformed into relationships tending towards genuine <b>ethical-social solidarity</b>. This is a moral requirement inherent within all human relationships. <b>Solidarity is seen therefore under two complementary aspects: that of a social principle and that of a moral virtue.</b></p> <p>Solidarity must be seen above all in its value as a moral virtue that determines the order of institutions. On the basis of this principle the “structures of sin” that dominate relationships between individuals and peoples must be overcome. They must be purified and transformed into <b>structures of solidarity</b> through the creation or appropriate modification of laws, market regulations, and juridical systems.</p> <p><b>Solidarity is also an authentic moral virtue</b>, not a “feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a <b>firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good</b>. That is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all”. Solidarity rises to the rank of fundamental social virtue since it places itself in the <b>sphere of justice</b>. It is a virtue directed par excellence to the common good, and is found in “a commitment to the good of one's neighbour with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to ‘lose oneself’ for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to ‘serve him’ instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. Mt 10:40-42, 20:25; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 22:25-27)”. (193)</p>
<p><b>c. Solidarity and the common growth of mankind</b></p>	<p>* The message of the Church's social doctrine regarding solidarity clearly shows that there exists <b>an intimate bond between solidarity and the common good, between solidarity and the universal destination of goods, between solidarity and equality among men and peoples, between solidarity and peace in the world.</b> The term “solidarity”, widely used by the Magisterium, expresses in summary fashion the need to recognize in the composite ties that unite men and social groups among themselves, the space given to human freedom for common growth in which all share and in which they participate. (194)</p> <p>* The principle of solidarity requires that men and women of our day cultivate a <b>greater awareness that they are debtors</b> of the society of which they have become part. (195)</p>
<p><b>d. Solidarity in the life and message of Jesus Christ</b></p>	<p>* The unsurpassed apex of the perspective indicated here is the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the New Man, who is one with humanity even to the point of “death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). In him it is always possible to</p>

	<p>recognize the living sign of that measureless and transcendent love of God-with-us, who takes on the infirmities of his people, walks with them, saves them and makes them one.</p> <p><b>Jesus of Nazareth makes the connection between solidarity and charity shine brightly before all, illuminating the entire meaning of this connection.</b> (196)</p>
<p><b>VII. THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUES OF SOCIAL LIFE</b></p> <p><b>a. The relationship between principles and values</b></p> <p><b>b. Truth</b></p> <p><b>c. Freedom</b></p>	<p>* Besides the principles that must guide the building of a society worthy of man, <b>the Church's social doctrine also indicates fundamental values.</b> All social values are inherent in the dignity of the human person, whose authentic development they foster. Essentially, these values are: truth, freedom, justice, love. Respect for the legitimate autonomy of earthly realities prompts the Church not to claim specific competence of a technical or temporal order, but it does not prevent her from intervening to show how, in the different choices made by men and women, these values are either affirmed or denied. (197)</p> <p>* Men and women have the specific duty to move always towards the truth, to respect it and bear responsible witness to it. <b>Living in the truth has special significance in social relationships.</b> In fact, when the coexistence of human beings within a community is founded on truth, it is ordered and fruitful, and it corresponds to their dignity as persons. <b>The more people and social groups strive to resolve social problems according to the truth, the more they distance themselves from abuses and act in accordance with the objective demands of morality.</b></p> <p><b>Modern times call for an intensive educational effort and a corresponding commitment on the part of all</b> so that the quest for truth cannot be ascribed to the sum of different opinions, nor to one or another of these opinions — will be encouraged in every sector and will prevail over every attempt to relativize its demands or to offend it. This is an issue that involves the world of public communications and that of the economy in a particular way. In these areas, the unscrupulous use of money raises ever more pressing questions, which necessarily call for greater transparency and honesty in personal and social activity. (198)</p> <p>* <b>Freedom is the highest sign in man of his being made in the divine image</b> and, consequently, is a sign of the sublime dignity of every human person[435]. “Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings. <b>Every human person, created in the image of God,</b> has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. <b>The right to the exercise of freedom,</b> especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person”[436]. The meaning of freedom must not be restricted, considering it from a purely individualistic perspective and reducing it to the arbitrary and uncontrolled exercise of one's own personal autonomy. (199)</p> <p>* <b>The value of freedom,</b> as an expression of the singularity of each human person, is respected when every member of society is permitted to fulfil his personal vocation.</p>

<p>d. <b>Justice</b></p>	<p><b>On the other hand, freedom must also be expressed as the capacity to refuse what is morally negative, in whatever guise it may be presented.</b> (200)</p> <p>* <b>Justice</b> is a value that accompanies the exercise of the corresponding <b>cardinal moral virtue</b>. According to its most classic formulation, it “<b>consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour</b>”. From a subjective point of view, justice is translated into behaviour that is based on the will to recognize the other as a person, while, from an objective point of view, it constitutes the decisive criteria of morality in the intersubjective and social sphere.</p> <p>The Church's social Magisterium constantly calls for the most <b>classical forms</b> of justice to be respected: <b>commutative, distributive and legal justice</b>. Ever greater importance has been given to social justice, which represents a real development in general justice, the justice that regulates social relationships according to the criterion of observance of the law. (201)</p> <p>* <b>Justice</b> is particularly important in the present-day context, where the individual value of the person, his dignity and his rights — despite proclaimed intentions — are seriously threatened by the widespread tendency to make exclusive use of criteria of utility and ownership. (202)</p> <p>* The full truth about man makes it possible to move beyond a contractualistic vision of justice, which is a reductionist vision, and <b>to open up also for justice the new horizon of solidarity and love</b>. “<b>By itself, justice is not enough</b>. Indeed, it can even betray itself, unless it is open to that deeper power which is love.” In fact, the Church's social doctrine places alongside the value of <b>justice</b> that of <b>solidarity</b>, in that it is the privileged way of <b>peace</b>. The goal of peace, in fact, “will certainly be achieved through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practice of the virtues which favour togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity, so as to build in unity, by giving and receiving, a new society and a better world.” (203)</p>
<p><b>VIII. THE WAY OF LOVE</b></p>	<p>* Among the virtues in their entirety, and <b>in particular between virtues, social values and love, there exists a deep bond</b> that must be ever more fully recognized. Love, often restricted to relationships of physical closeness or limited to merely subjective aspects of action on behalf of others, must be reconsidered in its authentic value as the highest and universal criterion of the whole of social ethics. Among all paths, even those sought and taken in order to respond to the ever new forms of current social questions, the “<b>more excellent way</b>” (cf. 1 Cor 12:31) <b>is that marked out by love</b>. (204)</p> <p>* <b>It is from the inner wellspring of love that the values of truth, freedom and justice are born and grow</b>. Human life in society is ordered, bears fruits of goodness and responds to human dignity when it is founded on <b>truth</b>; when it is lived in <b>justice</b>, that is, in the effective <b>respect of</b></p>

**rights and in the faithful carrying out of corresponding duties**; when it is brought about in the freedom that befits the dignity of men and women, prompted by their rational nature to accept responsibility for their actions, when it is animated by selflessness, which makes the needs and requirements of others seem as one's own and intensifies the communion of spiritual values and the concern for material necessities. (205)

\* **Love presupposes and transcends justice**, which “must find its fulfilment in charity”. If justice is “in itself suitable for ‘arbitration’ between people concerning the reciprocal distribution of objective goods in an equitable manner, **love and only love (including that kindly love that we call ‘mercy’) is capable of restoring man to himself**”. Human relationships cannot be governed solely by the measure of justice: “The experience of the past and of our own time demonstrates that justice alone is not enough, that it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself ... (206)

\* No legislation, no system of rules or negotiation will ever succeed in persuading men and peoples to live in unity, brotherhood and peace; no line of reasoning will ever be able to surpass the appeal of love. In order that all this may take place, however, it is necessary that care be taken **to show love not only in its role of prompting individual deeds but also as a force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today's world, of profoundly renewing structures, social organizations, legal systems from within**. In this perspective **love takes on the characteristic style of social and political charity: “Social charity makes us love the common good”[457], it makes us effectively seek the good of all people, considered not only as individuals or private persons but also in the social dimension that unites them**. (207)

\* Social and political charity is not exhausted in relationships between individuals but spreads into the network formed by these relationships, which is precisely the social and political community; it intervenes in this context seeking the greatest good for the community in its entirety. In so many aspects the neighbour to be loved is found “in society”, such that to love him concretely, assist him in his needs or in his indigence may mean something different than it means on the mere level of relationships between individuals. **To love him on the social level means, depending on the situations, to make use of social mediations to improve his life or to remove social factors that cause his indigence**. It is undoubtedly an act of love, the work of mercy by which one responds here and now to a real and impelling need of one's neighbour, **but it is an equally indispensable act of love to strive to organize and structure society so that one's neighbour will not find himself in poverty, above all when this becomes a situation within which an immense number of people and entire populations must struggle, and when it takes on the proportions of a true worldwide social issue**. (208)

# Charismatic Reflection

The challenges of justice, peace and love, require a profound living of contemplation and action: “**inspice et fac**”. This distinct inspiration of our Mother Foundress, St. Magdalene of Canossa, beckons us not only to an awareness of the issues, but a deeper understanding of them from a Christian/Charismatic perspective and an effective, transformative response. In this change we realize the great concern of Magdalene for the poor:

**I recommend to you my beloved poor,  
for charity’s sake see to it that they all go one day to enjoy the Lord  
through your holy instructions, prayers, charity and labours.**

The method of “**see, judge, act**” guides our efforts as individuals and groups.

**SEE:** The first movement of “inspice” is **to look at our reality** and identify what we see. We ask, “What are the **problems, poverties** and **issues** of our time and place?” In this process, seeing includes a **sense of empathy** for those affected by these situations, immersing ourselves in **solidarity with them**. It also includes looking for the **root causes**. We analyse and seek to understand the underlying structures and systems that give rise to the problems we see.

**JUDGE:** The second movement of “inspice” is the **contemplation in faith**. We engage the **analysed reality** in dialogue with the our Christian and Charismatic tradition, and ask: “In what ways, and at which level, does the reality call for **transformation of systems and structures** in the light of the ideal proposed by faith?” “What does God, the Greatest Love, say about this situation?”

**ACT:** Our “fac” is the **discerned response to the analysed reality** guided by the insights of our **Christian and Charismatic tradition**. Our questions are: “What can we do to transform the systems and structures of the reality?” “How should our response be designed in order to be most effective not only in the short term, but also in the long term?”

While Magdalene calls us to look and do likewise in reference to the imitation of the Crucified One, adopting “inspice et fac” as a lifestyle leads us to contemplate deeply what we see and then allow that reality to move us to **faithful and courageous action**.

## **“SEEING” AS CANOSSIANs ... IN THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CRUCIFIED**

The Charism of the Greatest Love that shines from the Cross shapes Magdalene’s vision. As Canossians, we see and analyse reality through the “lens” of that charism. Modelled by our Foundress, **the charism focuses our attention on specific aspects of the world around us**, and exhorts us to see these from **the perspectives of the love expressed in Christ Crucified**.

In her own life, under the wise guidance of Don Libera, Magdalene grew into her identity as a contemplative in action. She first learned the mystery of God’s will for her in the realities of her own life and situation. As she responded to God’s call to manifest the Greatest Love in her own

time, this stance helped her to see the many aspects of society and how it was affected by the historical events. **With clarity of vision, she perceived the structural causes and dimension of sin that resulted in the degradation of moral life.**

It is this comprehensive vision that gave rise to the ministries of charity that are the means of manifesting the love of the Crucified One among the poorest.

## **THE POOREST OF THE POOR**

**Magdalene was above all a woman of deep faith.** Her attentiveness to the Word of God and life of contemplation allowed her to see every person, rich or poor, young or old, as sister and brother. **Her union with Christ Crucified** led her to see **his image in those who suffer.** It is with deep compassion and love, as well as with keen insight and wisdom, that Magdalene saw these persons as well as the complexities of the situation that gave rise to their suffering.

While she recognized **various kinds of poverty**, her vision intentionally focused on the **most poor**, those who suffer material or economic poverty that **blocks full human development.**

We are still called in our day to **search for the poorest**, especially the poor women, youth and families, and to meet them where they are. Like Magdalene, **we strive to see the world around us from the perspective of the poorest.** Above all, we are challenged to see **“those whose abandonment obscures the paternal love of God.”** In some cases, this search may take us beyond our current areas and ministries, and invite us to **new experiences of solidarity.**

We recognize the need for a “greater openness, individually and as groups, in our relationship with the poor people of our territory, so that we may be challenged by their needs and be evangelised by them.”

## **EMERGING NEEDS AND CHANGING REALITIES**

Deeply immersed in a time of social upheaval and crisis, Magdalene **observed new needs emerging in Verona.** She was especially sensitive to how the radical social changes impact the poor.

**We experience the same reality, now on a global scale.** We are called to **an attentive reading of the signs of our times**, especially in the context of such rapid and global changes. **Such changes bring with them new needs and new forms of poverty.**

*JPIC, Canossian Basic Guidelines*

*There is no act of charity towards our neighbour  
more perfect than that  
of helping him  
love God*

Magdalene of Canossa

# CELEBRATION

**Behold, I come, O Lord, to do Your Will!**

In the world the Church promotes justice at both the national and international level: many Catholic people offer their time to the service of those most vulnerable and organize assistance for those who, in other regions, are without food, clothes and medicines.

Mercy and justice are the same for God and so it must be for us.

Psalm 40 reflects Jesus' life (Hebrews 10: 5-8).

How many times do you tell Him: "Behold, I come, O Lord, to do Your Will?"

**Let us pray together** with the following words and then with **the original Psalm**.

**At the end write a Psalm** with your own words, according to what you feel in your heart.

***We are here!***

**We come to follow Jesus,**  
because He keeps us united,  
while sending us to carry  
through the street of the world  
His Love to whom feels lost.

***We are here!***

**To renew the world with You,**  
to give to the unhappy  
joy and hope, peace and love  
and give lively witness  
that You are still alive today.

***We are here!***

**We heard Your voice,**  
which makes us your disciples,  
which makes us build history  
with all our life  
according to Your holy projects.

***We are here!***

**Make us Your prophets,**  
to continue Your mission,  
to bring everywhere  
that hope that humanity  
desires so much to have.

**PSALM 40**

# PERSONAL AND GROUP REFLECTION

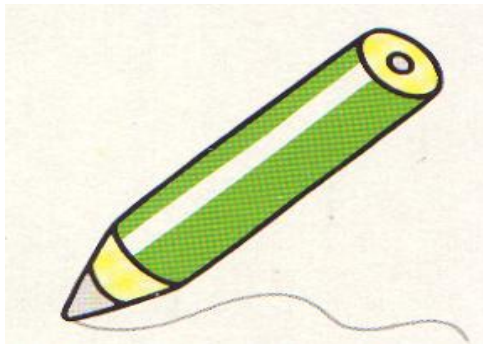
1. **Read with attention and care** the First Chapter of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church or the above passages of the same Document.
2. **Reflect personally and with your Group of the Lay Canonists**, underlining the main interesting points.
3. **This fourth chapter of the Social Doctrine defines clearly the meaning of the three permanent principles which are the hinges of Catholic social teaching: the principle of the common good, of subsidiarity and of solidarity.**
  - To be citizens of the world while we are citizens of God's Kingdom asks for a discernment, capable of considering the concrete circumstances in which the Gospel must be put into practice.  
Do I believe that the Social Doctrine of the Church is a help which the Church gives to all the faithful and to those people of good will in order to do those difficult and relevant discernments, which involve the decisions which they are called to ponder?
4. **The Social Doctrine of the Church has a fundamental inspiration in the Sacred Scripture. It is a way of evangelizing with proclamation, of encouragement to anyone who already walks on the way of justice, of a call and declaration of the unrecognized and violated rights, especially the rights of the poor, the least and the weak**
  - I am called too to witness charity, through a generous and concrete love to every human beings. Do I dedicate part of my time working in Caritas, in social voluntary organization, in the work often hidden

of my parish, my association, because I am moved by the love of Christ and my brothers and sisters?

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

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

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



---

---

---

---

---

---

---