

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

SECOND PART

Chapter Seven: passages from the Document

ECONOMIC LIFE

<p>I. BIBLICAL ASPECTS</p> <p>a. Man, poverty and riches</p>	<p>* <i>In the Old Testament a twofold attitude towards economic goods and riches is found. On one hand, an attitude of appreciation sees the availability of material goods as necessary for life. On the other hand, economic goods and riches are not in themselves condemned so much as their misuse.</i> The prophetic tradition condemns fraud, usury, exploitation and gross injustice, especially when directed against the poor (cf. <i>Is</i> 58:3-11; <i>Jer</i> 7:4-7; <i>Hos</i> 4:1-2; <i>Am</i> 2:6-7; <i>Mic</i> 2:1-2). This tradition, however, although looking upon the poverty of the oppressed, the weak and the indigent as an evil, also sees in the condition of poverty a symbol of the human situation before God, from whom comes every good as a gift to be administered and shared. (323)</p> <p>* <i>Those who recognize their own poverty before God, regardless of their situation in life, receive particular attention from him: when the poor man seeks, the Lord answers; when he cries out, the Lord listens. When sought or accepted with a religious attitude, poverty opens one to recognizing and accepting the order of creation.</i> In this perspective, the “rich man” is the one who places his trust in his possessions rather than in God, he is the man who makes himself strong by the works of his own hands and trusts only in his own strength. Poverty takes on the status of a moral value when it becomes an attitude of humble availability and openness to God, of trust in him. This attitude makes it possible for people to recognize the relativity of economic goods and to treat them as divine gifts to be administered and shared, because God is the first owner of all goods. (324)</p> <p>* <i>Jesus takes up the entire Old Testament tradition even with regard to economic goods, wealth and poverty, and he gives them great clarity and fullness (cf. <i>Mt</i> 6:24, 13:22; <i>Lk</i> 6:20-24, 12:15-21;</i></p>
---	--

<p>b. Wealth exists to be shared</p>	<p><i>Rom 14:6-8; 1 Tim 4:4</i>). Freed from evil and being placed once more in communion with God, man is able to continue the work of Jesus, with the help of his Spirit. In this, man is called to render justice to the poor, releasing the oppressed, consoling the afflicted, actively seeking a new social order in which adequate solutions to material poverty are offered and in which the forces thwarting the attempts of the weakest to free themselves from conditions of misery and slavery are more effectively controlled. When this happens, the Kingdom of God is already present on this earth, although it is not of the earth. It is in this Kingdom that the promises of the Prophets find final fulfilment. (325)</p> <p>* <i>In the light of Revelation, economic activity is to be considered and undertaken as a grateful response to the vocation which God holds out for each person.</i> Man is placed in the garden to till and keep it, making use of it within well specified limits (cf. <i>Gen 2:16-17</i>) with a commitment to perfecting it (cf. <i>Gen 1:26-30, 2:15-16; Wis 9:2-3</i>). Good administration of the gifts received, and of material goods also, is a work of justice towards oneself and towards others. What has been received should be used properly, preserved and increased, as suggested by the parable of the talents (cf. <i>Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:12-27</i>). <i>Economic activity and material progress must be placed at the service of man and society.</i> If people dedicate themselves to these with the faith, hope and love of Christ's disciples, even the economy and progress can be transformed into places of salvation and sanctification. Jesus sums up all of revelation in calling the believer to <i>become rich before God</i> (cf. <i>Lk 12:21</i>). The economy too is useful to this end, when its function as an instrument for the overall growth of man and society, of the human quality of life, is not betrayed. (326)</p> <p>* <i>Faith in Jesus Christ makes it possible to have a correct understanding of social development, in the context of an integral and solidary humanism.</i> A part of this divine plan, which begins from eternity in Christ, the perfect 'image' of the Father, and which culminates in him, 'the firstborn from the dead' (v. 15-18), <i>in our own history</i>, marked by our personal and collective effort to raise up the human condition and to overcome the obstacles which are continually arising along our way. It thus prepares us to share in the fullness which 'dwells in the Lord' and which he communicates 'to his body, which is the Church' (v. 18; cf. <i>Eph 1:22-23</i>). At the same time sin, which is always attempting to trap us and which jeopardizes our human achievements, is conquered and redeemed by the 'reconciliation' accomplished by Christ (cf. <i>Col 1:20</i>)" (327)</p> <p>* Goods, even when legitimately owned, always have a universal destination; any type of improper accumulation is immoral, because it openly contradicts the universal destination assigned to all goods by the Creator. "For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith" (1 Tim 6:10). The Fathers of the</p>
--------------------------------------	--

	<p>Church insist more on the need for the conversion and transformation of the consciences of believers than on the need to change the social and political structures of their day. They call on those who work in the economic sphere and who possess goods to consider themselves administrators of the goods that God has entrusted to them. (328)</p> <p>* <i>Riches fulfil their function of service to man when they are destined to produce benefits for others and for society.</i> (329)</p>
<p>II. MORALITY AND THE ECONOMY</p>	<p>* <i>The Church's social doctrine insists on the moral connotations of the economy.</i> Pope Pius XI, in a passage from the Encyclical <i>Quadragesimo Anno</i>, speaks of the relationship between the economy and morality. “Even though economics and moral science employs each its own principles in its own sphere, it is, nevertheless, an error to say that the economic and moral orders are so distinct from and alien to each other that the former depends in no way on the latter.” (330)</p> <p>* <i>The relation between morality and economics is necessary, indeed intrinsic: economic activity and moral behaviour are intimately joined one to the other. The necessary distinction between morality and the economy does not entail the separation of these two spheres but, on the contrary, an important reciprocity. For man is the source, the centre, and the purpose of all economic and social life</i>”. The purpose of the economy is not found in the economy itself, but rather in its being destined to humanity and society. The economy, in fact, whether on a scientific or practical level, has not been entrusted with the purpose of fulfilling man or of bringing about proper human coexistence. Its task, rather, is partial: the production, distribution and consumption of material goods and services. (331)</p> <p>* The moral dimension of the economy shows that economic efficiency and the promotion of human development in solidarity are not two separate or alternative aims but one indivisible goal. Morality, which is a necessary part of economic life, is neither opposed to it nor neutral: if it is inspired by justice and solidarity, it represents a factor of social efficiency within the economy itself. The production of goods is a duty to be undertaken in an efficient manner, otherwise resources are wasted. On the other hand, it would not be acceptable to achieve economic growth at the expense of human beings, entire populations or social groups, condemning them to indigence. (332)</p> <p>* <i>If economic activity is to have a moral character, it must be directed to all men and to all peoples.</i> Everyone has the right to participate in economic life and the duty to contribute, each according to his own capacity, to the progress of his own country and to that of the entire human family. If, to some degree,</p>

	<p>everyone is responsible for everyone else, then each person also has the duty to commit himself to the economic development of all. This is a duty in solidarity and in justice, but it is also the best way to bring economic progress to all of humanity. (333)</p> <p><i>* The economy has as its object the development of wealth and its progressive increase, not only in quantity but also in quality; this is morally correct if it is directed to man's overall development in solidarity and to that of the society in which people live and work. The Church's social Magisterium warns against the treachery hidden within a development that is only quantitative, for the "excessive availability of every kind of material goods for the benefit of certain social groups, easily makes people slaves of 'possession' and of immediate gratification ... This is the so-called civilization of 'consumption' or 'consumerism' (334)</i></p> <p>* In the perspective of an integral and solidary development, it is possible to arrive at a proper appreciation of the moral evaluation that the Church's social doctrine offers in regard to the market economy or, more simply, of the free economy: "If by 'capitalism' is meant an economic system which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, private property and the resulting responsibility for the means of production, as well as free human creativity in the economic sector, then the answer is certainly in the affirmative, even though it would perhaps be more appropriate to speak of a 'business economy', 'market economy' or simply 'free economy'. (335)</p>
<p>III. PRIVATE INITIATIVE AND BUSINESS INITIATIVE</p>	<p><i>* The Church's social doctrine considers the freedom of the person in economic matters a fundamental value and an inalienable right to be promoted and defended. "Everyone has the right to economic initiative; everyone should make legitimate use of his talents to contribute to the abundance that will benefit all, and to harvest the just fruits of his labour". This teaching warns against the negative consequences that would arise from weakening or denying the <i>right of economic initiative</i>: "Experience shows us that the denial of this right, or its limitation in the name of an alleged 'equality' of everyone in society, diminishes, or in practice absolutely destroys the spirit of initiative, that is to say the <i>creative subjectivity of the citizen</i>". Such initiative, then, should be given <i>ample leeway</i>. (336)</i></p> <p><i>* The creative dimension is an essential component of human activity, even in the area of business, and it is especially manifested in the areas of planning and innovation. "Organizing such a productive effort, planning its duration in time, making sure that it corresponds in a positive way to the demands which it must satisfy, and taking the necessary risks — all this too is a source of wealth in today's society. In this way, the role of disciplined and creative human work and, as an essential part of</i></p>

<p>a. Business and its goals</p>	<p>that work, <i>initiative and entrepreneurial ability</i> becomes increasingly evident and decisive”. At the basis of this teaching we can see the belief that “man's principal resource is man himself. His intelligence enables him to discover the earth's productive potential and the many different ways in which human needs can be satisfied”. (337)</p> <p><i>Businesses should be characterized by their capacity to serve the common good of society through the production of useful goods and services.</i> In seeking to produce goods and services according to plans aimed at efficiency and at satisfying the interests of the different parties involved, businesses create wealth for all of society, not just for the owners but also for the other subjects involved in their activity. Besides this typically economic function, <i>businesses also perform a social function, creating opportunities for meeting, cooperating and the enhancement of the abilities of the people involved. A business' objective must be met in economic terms and according to economic criteria, but the authentic values that bring about the concrete development of the person and society must not be neglected.</i> In this personalistic and community vision, “a business cannot be considered only as a ‘society of capital goods’; it is also a ‘society of persons’ in which people participate in different ways and with specific responsibilities, whether they supply the necessary capital for the company's activities or take part in such activities through their labour.” (338)</p> <p>* <i>All those involved in a business venture must be mindful that the community in which they work represents a good for everyone and not a structure that permits the satisfaction of someone's merely personal interests.</i> A very important and significant example in this regard is found in the activity of so-called cooperative enterprises, small and medium-sized businesses, commercial undertakings featuring hand-made products and family-sized agricultural ventures. The Church's social doctrine has emphasized the contribution that such activities make to enhance the value of work, to the growth of a sense of personal and social responsibility, a democratic life and the human values that are important for the progress of the market and of society. (339)</p> <p>* <i>The social doctrine of the Church recognizes the proper role of profit as the first indicator that a business is functioning well: “when a firm makes a profit, this means that productive factors have been properly employed”. But this does not cloud her awareness of the fact that a business may show a profit while not properly serving society. For example, “it is possible for the financial accounts to be in order, and yet for the people — who make up the firm's most valuable asset — to be humiliated and their dignity offended”. This is what happens when businesses are part of social and cultural systems marked by the exploitation of people, tending to avoid the obligations of social justice and to violate the rights of</i></p>
---	--

	<p>workers.</p> <p><i>It is essential that within a business the legitimate pursuit of profit should be in harmony with the irrenounceable protection of the dignity of the people who work at different levels in the same company. A business enterprise must be a community of solidarity, that is not closed within its own company interests. It must move in the direction of a “social ecology” of work and contribute to the common good also by protecting the natural environment.</i> (340)</p> <p>* <i>Although the quest for equitable profit is acceptable in economic and financial activity, recourse to usury is to be morally condemned: “Those whose usurious and avaricious dealings lead to the hunger and death of their brethren in the human family indirectly commit homicide, which is imputable to them”.[This condemnation extends also to international economic relations, especially with regard to the situation in less advanced countries, which must never be made to suffer “abusive if not usurious financial systems”. More recently, the Magisterium used strong and clear words against this practice, which is still tragically widespread, describing usury as “a scourge that is also a reality in our time and that has a stranglehold on many peoples' lives.”</i> (341)</p> <p>* <i>Businesses today move in economic contexts that are becoming ever broader and in which national States show limits in their capacity to govern the rapid processes of change that effect international economic and financial relations. This situation leads businesses to <i>take on new and greater responsibilities with respect to the past.</i> Never has their role been so decisive with regard to the authentic integral development of humanity in solidarity. Equally decisive in this sense is their level of awareness that “development either becomes shared in common by every part of the world or it undergoes a process of regression even in zones marked by constant progress. This tells us a great deal about the nature of <i>authentic</i> development: either all the nations of the world participate, or it will not be true development.”</i> (342)</p>
<p>b. Role of business owners and management</p>	<p>* <i>Economic initiative is an expression of human intelligence and of the necessity of responding to human needs in a creative and cooperative fashion.</i> Creativity and cooperation are signs of the authentic concept of business competition: a “<i>cumpetere</i>”, that is, a seeking together of the most appropriate solutions for responding in the best way to needs as they emerge. The sense of responsibility that arises from free economic initiative takes not only the form of an <i>individual virtue</i> required for individual human growth, but also of a <i>social virtue</i> that is necessary for the development of a community in solidarity.” (343)</p>

	<p>* <i>The roles of business owners and management have a central importance from the viewpoint of society, because they are at the heart of that network of technical, commercial, financial and cultural bonds that characterizes the modern business reality. Business owners and management must not limit themselves to taking into account only the economic objectives of the company, the criteria for economic efficiency and the proper care of “capital” as the sum of the means of production. It is also their precise duty to respect concretely the human dignity of those who work within the company. These workers constitute “the firm's most valuable asset” and the decisive factor of production. In important decisions concerning strategy and finances, in decisions to buy or sell, to resize, close or to merge a site, financial and commercial criteria must not be the only considerations made. (344)</i></p> <p>* <i>The Church's social doctrine insists on the need for business owners and management to strive to structure work in such a way so as to promote the family, especially mothers, in the fulfilment of their duties; to accede, in light of an integral vision of man and development, to the demand for the quality. (345)</i></p>
<p>IV. ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS AT THE SERVICE OF MAN</p> <p>a. Role of the free market</p>	<p>* One of the higher priority issues in economics is the utilization of resources, that is, of all those goods and services to which economic subjects — producers and consumers in the private and public spheres — attribute value because of their inherent usefulness in the areas of production and consumption. Resources in nature are quantitatively scarce, which means that each individual economic subject, as well as each individual society, must necessarily come up with a plan for their utilization in the most rational way possible, following the logic dictated by the “principle of economizing”. (346)</p> <p>* <i>The free market is an institution of social importance because of its capacity to guarantee effective results in the production of goods and services. There are good reasons to hold that, in many circumstances, “the free market is the most efficient instrument for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs”. A truly competitive market is an effective instrument for attaining important objectives of justice: moderating the excessive profits of individual businesses, responding to consumers' demands, bringing about a more efficient use and conservation of resources, rewarding entrepreneurship and innovation, making information available so that it is really possible to compare and purchase products in an atmosphere of healthy competition preferences of another person.” (347)</i></p> <p>* <i>The free market cannot be judged apart from the ends that it seeks to accomplish and from the values that it transmits on a societal level.</i> Indeed, the market cannot find in itself the principles</p>

<p>b. Action of the State</p>	<p>for its legitimization; it belongs to the consciences of individuals and to public responsibility to establish a just relationship between means and ends The individual profit of an economic enterprise, although legitimate, must never become the sole objective. Together with this objective there is another, equally fundamental but of a higher order: <i>social usefulness, which must be brought about not in contrast to but in keeping with the logic of the market.</i> (348)</p> <p>* <i>The Church's social doctrine, while recognizing the market as an irreplaceable instrument for regulating the inner workings of the economic system, points out the need for it to be firmly rooted in its ethical objectives, which ensure and at the same time suitably circumscribe the space within which it can operate autonomously.</i> Faced with the concrete “risk of an ‘idolatry’ of the market”, the Church's social doctrine underlines its limits, which are easily seen in its proven inability to satisfy important human needs, which require goods that “by their nature are not and cannot be mere commodities”, goods that cannot be bought and sold according to the rule of the “exchange of equivalents” and the logic of contracts, which are typical of the market. (349)</p> <p>* <i>The market takes on a significant social function in contemporary society, therefore it is important to identify its most positive potentials and to create the conditions that allow them to be put concretely into effect.</i> “Economic freedom is only one element of human freedom. When it becomes autonomous, when man is seen more as a producer or consumer of goods than as a subject who produces and consumes in order to live, then economic freedom loses its necessary relationship to the human person and ends up by alienating and oppressing him.” (350)</p> <p>* The action of the State and of other public authorities must be consistent with the principle of subsidiarity and create situations favourable to the free exercise of economic activity. It must also be inspired by the principle of solidarity and establish limits for the autonomy of the parties in order to defend those who are weaker. The State's intervention in the economic environment must be neither invasive nor absent, but commensurate with society's real needs. “The State has a duty to sustain business activities by creating conditions which will ensure job opportunities, by stimulating those activities where they are lacking or by supporting them in moments of crisis. (351)</p> <p>* <i>The fundamental task of the State in economic matters is that of determining an appropriate juridical framework for regulating economic affairs,</i> in order to safeguard “the prerequisites of a free economy, which presumes a certain equality between the parties, such that one party would not be so powerful as practically to reduce the other to subservience”. Economic activity, above all in a free market context, cannot be conducted in an institutional,</p>
-------------------------------	--

<p>c. Role of intermediate bodies</p>	<p>juridical or political vacuum. To fulfil this task, the State must adopt suitable legislation. (352)</p> <p><i>* It is necessary for the market and the State to act in concert, one with the other, and to complement each other mutually. In fact, the free market can have a beneficial influence on the general public only when the State is organized in such a manner that it defines and gives direction to economic development. (353)</i></p> <p><i>* The State can encourage citizens and businesses to promote the common good by enacting an economic policy that fosters the participation of all citizens in the activities of production. With a view to the common good, it is necessary to pursue always and with untiring determination the goal of a proper equilibrium between private freedom and public action, understood both as direct intervention in economic matters and as activity supportive of economic development. (354)</i></p> <p><i>* Tax revenues and public spending take on crucial economic importance for every civil and political community. The goal to be sought is public financing that is itself capable of becoming an instrument of development and solidarity. Just, efficient and effective public financing will have very positive effects on the economy, because it will encourage employment growth and sustain business and non-profit activities and help to increase the credibility of the State as the guarantor of systems of social insurance and protection that are designed above all to protect the weakest members of society. Public spending is directed to the common good when certain fundamental principles are observed: the payment of taxes as part of the duty of solidarity; a reasonable and fair application of taxes; precision and integrity in administering and distributing public resources. In the redistribution of resources, public spending must observe the principles of solidarity, equality and making use of talents. It must also pay greater attention to families, designating an adequate amount of resources for this purpose. (355)</i></p> <p><i>* The social-economic system must be marked by the twofold presence of public and private activity, including private non-profit activity. In this way sundry decision-making and activity-planning centres come to take shape. The use of certain categories of goods, collective goods and goods meant for common utilization, cannot be dependent on mechanisms of the market, nor does their use fall under the exclusive competence of the State. The State's task relative to these goods is that of making use of all social and economic initiatives promoted by intermediate bodies that produce public effects. (356)</i></p> <p><i>* Private non-profit organizations have their own specific role to play in the economic sphere. These organizations are marked by the fearless attempt to unite efficiency in production with</i></p>
---------------------------------------	---

<p>d. Savings and consumer goods</p>	<p><i>solidarity.</i> (357)</p> <p>* Consumers, who in many cases have a broad range of buying power well above the mere subsistence level, exercise significant influence over economic realities by their free decisions regarding whether to put their money into consumer goods or savings. In fact, the possibility to influence the choices made within the economic sector is in the hands of those who must decide where to place their financial resources. (358)</p> <p>* <i>Purchasing power must be used in the context of the moral demands of justice and solidarity, and in that of precise social responsibilities. One must never forget “the duty of charity ..., that is, the duty to give from one's ‘abundance’, and sometimes even out of one's needs, in order to provide what is essential for the life of a poor person”.</i> This responsibility gives to consumers the possibility, thanks to the wider circulation of information, of directing the behaviour of producers, through preferences — individual and collective — given to the products of certain companies rather than to those of others, taking into account not only the price and quality of what is being purchased but also the presence of correct working conditions in the company as well as the level of protection of the natural environment in which it operates. (359)</p> <p>* <i>The phenomenon of consumerism maintains a persistent orientation towards “having” rather than “being”.</i> To counteract this phenomenon it is necessary to create “lifestyles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments”. It is undeniable that ways of life are significantly influenced by different social contexts, for this reason the cultural challenge that consumerism poses today must be met with greater resolve, above all in consideration of future generations, who risk having to live in a natural environment that has been pillaged by an excessive and disordered consumerism. (360)</p>
<p>V. THE “NEW THINGS” IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR</p> <p>a. Globalization: opportunities and risks</p>	<p>* <i>Our modern era is marked by the complex phenomenon of economic and financial globalization.</i> The role of financial markets is becoming ever more decisive and central. Following the liberalization of capital exchange and circulation, these market dimensions have increased enormously and with incredible speed, to the point that agents can “in real time”, transfer large quantities of capital from one part of the globe to another. This is a multifaceted reality that is difficult to decipher, since it expands at different levels and is in continuous evolution along paths that cannot easily be predicted. (361)</p>

* ***Globalization gives rise to new hopes while at the same time it poses troubling questions. Globalization is able to produce potentially beneficial effects for the whole of humanity.*** In other words, the two phenomena of economic-financial globalization and technological progress have mutually strengthened each other, making the whole process of this present phase of transition extremely rapid. *In analyzing the present context, besides identifying the opportunities now opening up in the era of the global economy, one also comes to see the risks connected with the new dimensions of commercial and financial relations.* In fact, there are indications aplenty that point to a trend of *increasing inequalities*, both between advanced countries and developing countries, and within industrialized countries. The growing economic wealth made possible by the processes described above is accompanied by an increase in relative poverty. (362)

* *Looking after the common good means making use of the new opportunities for the redistribution of wealth among the different areas of the planet, to the benefit of the underprivileged that until now have been excluded or cast to the sidelines of social and economic progress.* **“The challenge, in short, is to ensure a globalization in solidarity, a globalization without marginalization”.** (363)

* *Trade represents a fundamental component of international economic relations, making a decisive contribution to the specialization in certain types of production and to the economic growth of different countries.* Today more than ever, international trade — if properly oriented — promotes development and can create new employment possibilities and provide useful resources. and the widening of the gap between rich and poor countries has prompted the social Magisterium to point out the importance of ethical criteria that should form the basis of international economic relations: the pursuit of the common good and the universal destination of goods; equity in trade relationships; and attention to the rights and needs of the poor in policies concerning trade and international cooperation. Otherwise, “the poor nations remain ever poor while the rich ones become still richer”. (364)

* ***An adequate solidarity in the era of globalization requires that human rights be defended.*** In this regard, the Magisterium points out that not only the “vision of an effective international public authority at the service of human rights, freedom and peace has not yet been entirely achieved, but there is still in fact much hesitation in the international community about the obligation to respect and implement human rights. **This duty touches all fundamental rights: the right to food and drinkable water, to housing and security, to self-determination and independence.** (365)

<p>d. An integral development in solidarity</p>	<p>* <i>The more the worldwide economic-financial system reaches high levels of organizational and functional complexity, all the more priority must be given to the task of regulating these processes, directing them towards the goal of attaining the common good of the human family. There is the clear need not just for States but for the international community to take on this delicate chore with adequate and effective political and juridical instruments. In international agencies it is necessary that the interests of the whole human family be equally represented. It is necessary moreover that “in evaluating the consequences of their decisions, these agencies always give sufficient consideration to peoples and countries which have little weight in the international market. (371)</i></p> <p>* <i>The sphere of politics too, just like that of the economy, must be in a position to extend its range of action beyond national boundaries, quickly taking on an operative worldwide dimension which alone will permit it to direct the processes now underway not only according to economic parameters but also according to moral criteria. The basic goal is to guide economic processes by ensuring that the dignity of man and his complete development as a person are respected, in the context of the common good. (372)</i></p> <p>* <i>One of the fundamental tasks of those actively involved in international economic matters is to achieve for mankind an integral development in solidarity, that is to say, “it has to promote the good of every person and of the whole person”. To achieve this task requires a vision of the economy that, on the international level, guarantees an equitable distribution of resources and that is responsive to awareness of the interdependence — economic, political and cultural — that today unites people definitively among themselves and makes them feel linked by a sole destiny. Social problems increasingly take on a global dimension. No State can face these alone and find a solution. The present generations have direct experience of the need for solidarity and are concretely aware of the necessity to move beyond an individualistic culture. (373)</i></p> <p>* <i>A more human development in solidarity will also bring benefit to the richer countries themselves. In these countries “one frequently observes a sort of existential confusion, an inability to live and to experience properly the meaning of life, even though surrounded by an abundance of material possessions. A sense of alienation and loss of their own humanity has made people feel reduced to the role of cogs in the machinery of production and consumption and they find no way to affirm their own dignity as persons made in the image and likeness of God”. Rich countries have shown the ability to create material well-being, but often at the expense of man and the weaker social classes. “One cannot ignore the fact that the frontiers of wealth and poverty</i></p>
---	---

<p>e. Need for more educational and cultural formation</p>	<p>intersect within societies themselves, whether developed or developing. In fact, just as social inequalities — even to the point of lives of misery and poverty — exist in rich countries, so, in parallel fashion, in the less developed countries one often sees manifestations of selfishness and a flaunting of wealth which is as disconcerting as it is scandalous”.[(374)</p> <p>* <i>For the Church's social doctrine, the economy “is only one aspect and one dimension of the whole of human activity. If economic life is absolutized, if the production and consumption of goods become the centre of social life and society's only value, not subject to any other value, the reason is to be found not so much in the economic system itself as in the fact that the entire socio-cultural system, by ignoring the ethical and religious dimension, has been weakened, and ends up limiting itself to the production of goods and services alone”. The life of man, just like the social life of the community, must not be reduced to its materialistic dimension, even if material goods are extremely necessary both for mere survival and for improving the quality of life. “An increased sense of God and increased self-awareness are fundamental to any full development of human society. (375)</i></p> <p>* <i>Faced with the rapid advancement of technological and economic progress, and with the equally rapid transformation of the processes of production and consumption, the Magisterium senses the need to propose a great deal of educational and cultural formation. Thus a great deal of educational and cultural work is urgently needed, including the education of consumers in the responsible use of their power of choice, the formation of a strong sense of responsibility among producers and among people in the mass media in particular, as well as the necessary intervention by public authorities.” (376)</i></p>
---	---

Charismatic Reflection

It is common to speak of God's special love for the poor, the **anawim**, the ones who are oppressed and kept down by the powerful. But God does not idealized the poor. God's not against the rich and powerful either. What God is against is the structures of society that place the rich and powerful against the poor and dispossessed of the earth.

The demand for just and compassion treatment of the vulnerable is addressed not only to individuals but to the community along with its political, economic and cultural structures.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Israel's obligation of justice towards the vulnerable is an integral part of the Covenant. In the light of their own experience of oppression and poverty in Egypt, they are reminded again and again of God's desire for compassion. Recorded in the Books of Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus are various precepts regarding:

- **Just and hospitable treatment of strangers**, and their equal inclusion in nearly every aspect of social life,
- **Particular consideration of the poor**, especially widows and orphans, with regard to money lending, the practice of leaving for gleaning at harvest time, making provisions for less expensive offerings required by religious law, the collection of a special tithe, the practice of forgiving all debts in the jubilee year.
- **Respectful and compassionate treatment** of the weak and those who have limitations.
- **Equal treatment of all**: neighbour and enemy.
- **Impartial justice**, ensuring that the poor are not denied their rights.
- **Matter of labour and trade**: fair measurements and just wages, honesty in property boundaries.

Indistinguishable from specifically religious precepts, **these emphasize that social and economic justice is an integral part of the Covenant.**

Throughout the Scriptures, however, we see that the Israelites neglect their obligation of justice. In times of crisis and infidelity to the Covenant through short-sighted political alliances, idolatry, practices of oppression and indifference to the plight of the poor, **the ministry of the prophets arises.**

The prophet is one who speaks from “**an intimate knowledge and deep sympathy for God who suffers because God is a compassionate God. The prophets words are charged with the feelings of God.**” (R. Guevara). Addressed to the people, and especially their political and religious leadership, **their message is a stern reminder of the Covenant and its obligations of justice and fidelity, and the promise of the restoration of justice and peace.** For them, the religious, social, political and economic dimensions of the community and its structures are indivisible. Temple worship, liturgical celebrations, prayers and burnt offerings are inextricably connected with compassion and justice. **The treatment of the poor is the litmus test for Israel's fidelity to the Lord.**

Jesus:

- **models the fullness of justice;**
- **excludes no one**, regardless of the social, political and even religious consequences He might face;
- **demonstrates his regard for social constructs**, even those that claimed to be for the sake of religious purity;

- **rather than the condemnation**, He expresses compassion and acceptance of others in their weakness and sin; This attitude stands in contrast to his stern response to those who maintain a stance of self-righteousness and intolerance;
- **in His human relationships**, turns social, political and religious conventions upside down;
- **legitimate human needs** hold absolute primacy over any other consideration even those of the Sabbath and other religious laws.

The peace, that Jesus models in His relationships, is brought to full realization in the Paschal Mystery. Jesus Himself is our peace.

As He broke through the barriers of division in His relationships, through His blood, He also united us all not to Him, but to each other.

Peace like justice requires deep love. This love leads to an assiduous practice of **solidarity** in which human beings share not only their goods but of themselves with one another. **Peace is a gift and a task. It is promised us by Jesus, and achieved by the blood of the cross.** Our earthly peace can only partially reflect the full peace of the Reign of God. Nonetheless, “as task, it is something for which we are to work unceasingly.” This task requires the practices of **peacemaking and reconciliation, and active non-violence in thought and in deed.**

Jesus lived as if the Reign was already present, and in doing so ushered it in as reality. But for the Reign to be realized, there must be a transformation of not only individuals, but of communities and of society as a whole. This **transformation is also called conversion**, and is what we must undergo in order to credibly proclaim belief in God’s Reign.

The implications of the prayer that Jesus taught us, “... your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven” demand that **we work for a different:**

- **economic order,**
- **political order,**
- **cultural order,**
- **religious order.**

The radical living of the Reign of God ultimately led to Jesus’ death. The love for all humanity that shone from the cross is the same love that so threatened the interests of the powerful that their own recourse was to have him killed. And it is the same love, stronger than death and hell itself, which breaks forth in the Resurrection. The “shalom” of the **Resurrection** speaks of the fullness of peace and wholeness. Jesus’ greeting is more than a desire, it is the communication of his very peace made possible through his dying and rising. **This ultimate liberation makes of Jesus the bearer of radically new life** in which all creation can partake. The gift of the Spirit, the Risen Christ who is active in the world, releases among us the same liberating power of the Resurrection.

Mary is a model for us of following Jesus and understanding the implications of his Reign. Even in the announcement of the angel, Mary recognizes that the birth of **her Son will usher in a new social order in which the poor and lowly will be blessed and favoured.** It is Mary who calls for action from Jesus in response to the need of the human community. It is Mary who stands by her Son in the humiliating violence of the cross. And Mary is the first disciple among others sharing the gift of the Spirit.

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, Canossian Basic Guidelines.

CELEBRATION

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

INTRODUCTION

People, who constructed the walls and the houses in Jerusalem, “work with one hand and hold their weapon in the other hand” (Nehemiah 4:11.)

They worked together, being vigilant against selfishness, indifference and possible foreign invaders, and gave witness of solidarity.

Can even economy be inspired by communion?

People gave a messianic and prophetic perspective to Psalm 72 which was written during the monarchy and after the exile. It declares hope in the Messiah, the universal and eternal King, who will reign for endless ages, “from one generation to another”. (Psalm 72:5)

Jesus announces that the Kingdom of justice and peace is already “in their midst.” (Lk 17:21)

He will defend the poorest (Psalm 72,4), crush the oppressor and save those in need (vv. 12-13). Yet God reigns only when a person, a social group or a nation, live according to the values, which were proclaimed by Jesus:

- Love as the fundamental law
- Justice as the foundation of the economy and politics
- Freedom as the foundation of personal and social development
- Truth as the source of the meaning of life
- Peace as the foundation of all social relationships.

We, Christians, enter the Kingdom of God through Baptism. From that moment we have the mission to build His Kingdom, day by day, together with all people of good will, who live and promote his values.

MAY HIS NAME LAST FOREVER – PSALM 72

God, give your own justice to the king,
your own righteousness to the royal son,
so that he may rule your people rightly
and your poor with justice.

Let the mountains and hills
bring a message of peace for the people.
Uprightly he will defend the poorest,
he will save the children of those in need
and crush their oppressors.

Like sun and moon he will endure,
age after age,
welcome as rain that falls on the pastures,
and showers to thirsty soil.

In his days virtue will flourish,
a universal peace till the moon is no more;
his empire shall stretch from sea to sea,
from the river to the ends of the earth.

He will free the poor man who calls to him,
and those who need help,
he will have pity on the poor and feeble,
and save the lives of those in need.

Prayer will be offered for him constantly,
Blessings invoked on him all day long.
Grain everywhere in the country,
Even on the mountain tops.

Blessed be his name forever,
enduring as long as the sun!
May every race in the world be blessed in him,
and all the nations call him blessed!

THE WORD OF GOD

Jesus told them a parable: “There was a rich man who, having had a good harvest from his land, thought to himself: “What am I to do, I have not enough room to store my crops.” Then he said: “This is what I will do: I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and store all my grain and my goods in them, and I will say to my soul: My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time.” But God said to him: “Fool! This very night the demand will be made for your soul; and this hoard of yours, whose will be it then?” So it is when a man stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God. (Lk 12: 16-21)

BENEDICT XVI CARITAS IN VERITATE

36. Economic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of *commercial logic*. This needs to be *directed towards the pursuit of the common good*, for which the political community in particular must also take responsibility. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that grave imbalances are produced when economic action, conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation, is detached from political action, conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution.

The Church has always held that economic action is not to be regarded as something opposed to society. In and of itself, the market is not, and must not become, the place where the strong subdue the weak. Society does not have to protect itself from the market, as if the development of the latter were *ipso facto* to entail the death of authentically human relations. Admittedly, the market can be a negative force, not because it is so by nature, but because a certain ideology can make it so. It must be remembered that the market does not exist in the pure state. It is shaped by the cultural configurations which define it and give it direction. Economy and finance, as instruments, can be used badly when those at the helm are motivated by purely selfish ends. Instruments that are good in themselves can thereby be transformed into harmful ones. But it is man's darkened reason that produces these consequences, not the instrument *per se*. Therefore it is not the instrument that must be called to account, but individuals, their moral conscience and their personal and social responsibility.

The Church's social doctrine holds that authentically human social relationships of friendship, solidarity and reciprocity can also be conducted within economic activity, and not only outside it or “after” it. The economic sphere is neither ethically neutral, nor inherently inhuman and opposed to

society. It is part and parcel of human activity and precisely because it is human, it must be structured and governed in an ethical manner.

The great challenge before us, accentuated by the problems of development in this global era and made even more urgent by the economic and financial crisis, is to demonstrate, in thinking and behaviour, not only that traditional principles of social ethics like transparency, honesty and responsibility cannot be ignored or attenuated, but also that in *commercial relationships* the *principle of gratuitousness* and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must *find their place within normal economic activity*. This is a human demand at the present time, but it is also demanded by economic logic. It is a demand both of charity and of truth.

37. The Church's social doctrine has always maintained that *justice must be applied to every phase of economic activity*, because this is always concerned with man and his needs. Locating resources, financing, production, consumption and all the other phases in the economic cycle inevitably have moral implications. *Thus every economic decision has a moral consequence*. The social sciences and the direction taken by the contemporary economy point to the same conclusion. (...)

In the global era, the economy is influenced by competitive models tied to cultures that differ greatly among themselves. The different forms of economic enterprise to which they give rise find their main point of encounter in commutative justice. *Economic life* undoubtedly requires *contracts*, in order to regulate relations of exchange between goods of equivalent value. But it also needs *just laws* and *forms of redistribution* governed by politics, and what is more, it needs works redolent of the *spirit of gift*. The economy in the global era seems to privilege the former logic, that of contractual exchange, but directly or indirectly it also demonstrates its need for the other two: political logic, and the logic of the unconditional gift.

OUR FATHER

FINAL PRAYER

WE ARE HERE!

We come to follow Jesus, because He keeps us united.
He sends us to spread His love along the roads of the world
to those who feel lost.

WE ARE HERE!

May we renew the world with You, give joy, hope and love to suffering people
and strong witness that You are still alive today.

WE ARE HERE!

We have heard your voice that makes us your disciples and builds our history,
with our life according to your holy projects.

WE ARE HERE!

Make of us your prophets so that we may continue your mission,
and bring hope everywhere.

WE ARE HERE!

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 Canossians**, underlining the main interesting points.
3. **The evaluation of our lifestyle** includes a personal and community revision of our economic situation. In the administration of goods (personal, family, profession goods) do we believe we need to be transparent and credible? Lay Canossians are formed to become apostles of charity, committed in sustaining the rights and duties of the person, together with the values of justice, solidarity, harmony and peace. Do we dedicate time to our formation on this topic?
4. At an individual and group level do we publicly oppose ourselves against structures and practices that cause and perpetrate injustices at an economic level? Do we support the rights of the poor and the voiceless? In what way?
5. We are invited to evaluate our needs and our lifestyle, being aware that the choices we make in our daily life, are signs and a prophecy for the world. Do we live the "spirituality of the bare necessity", avoiding waste and using things with care, gratitude and respect? Do we avoid the accumulation of things in order not to deprive others who have nothing to live on?
6. **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.
7. **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.

CELEBRAZIONE

- **Nel nome del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo.**
- **Amen**

INTRODUZIONE

Le persone che costruivano le mura e le case di Gerusalemme “con una mano lavoravano e con l'altra tenevano la loro arma” (Neemia 4,11)

Lavoravano assieme, vigilando contro l'egoismo, l'apatia e i possibili invasori stranieri e davano testimonianza di solidarietà.

Anche l'economia può avere un'anima di comunione?

Il salmo 72 fu scritto durante una monarchia e dopo l'esilio gli si diede una prospettiva messianica e profetica. Dichiara la speranza nel Messia, re universale ed eterno, che regnerà per tutti i secoli, “di generazione in generazione” (Sal. 72,5)

Gesù annuncia che il Regno di giustizia e di pace è già “in mezzo a loro” (Lc. 17,21).

E' Lui il difensore dei poveri (Sal. 72,4) che fa giustizia contro l'oppressore e ha compassione del debole (vv.12-13). Dio però regna soltanto quando una persona, un gruppo sociale o una nazione vivono secondo i valori proclamati da Gesù:

- L'amore come legge fondamentale
- La giustizia come base dell'economia e della politica
- La libertà come base dello sviluppo personale e sociale
- La verità come fonte di significato nella vita
- La pace come fondamento delle relazioni sociali.

Noi cristiani entriamo nel Regno di Dio con il nostro Battesimo. Da quel momento abbiamo la missione di costruire il suo Regno giorno per giorno, in unione ad ogni persona di buona volontà, che vive e promuove i suoi valori.

IL SUO NOME DURI IN ETERNO – SALMO 72

O Dio, affida al re il tuo diritto,

al figlio di re la tua giustizia:

egli giudichi il popolo secondo giustizia

e i tuoi poveri secondo il diritto.

Le montagne portino pace al popolo

E le colline giustizia

Ai poveri del popolo renda giustizia,

salvi i figli del misero

e abbatta l'oppressore.

Ti faccia durare quanto il sole.

Come la luna, di generazione in generazione

Scenda come pioggia sull'erba,

come acqua che irrori la terra.

Nei suoi giorni fiorisca il giusto

E abbondi la pace,

finché non si spenga la luna.

E d'omini da mare a mare,

dal fiume sino ai confini della terra.

Egli libera il misero che invoca

E il povero che non trova aiuto.

Abbia pietà del debole e del misero
E salvi la vita dei miseri.
Li riscatti dalla violenza e dal sopruso.

Si preghi sempre per lui,
sia benedetto ogni giorno.
Abbondi il frumento nel paese,
ondeggi sulle cime dei monti.

Il suo nome duri in eterno,
davanti al sole germogli il suo nome.
In lui siano benedette tutte le stirpi della terra
E tutte le genti lo dicano beato.

PAROLA DI DIO

Gesù disse loro una parabola: “La campagna di un uomo ricco aveva dato un raccolto abbondante. Egli ragionava tra sé: “Che farò, poiché non ho dove mettere i miei raccolti? Farò così: demolirò i miei magazzini e ne costruirò altri più grandi e vi raccoglierò tutto il grano e i miei beni, Poi dirò a me stesso: Anima mia, hai a disposizione molti beni, per molti anni, riposati, mangia, bevi e divertiti”. Ma Dio gli disse “Stolto, questa notte stessa ti sarà richiesta la tua vita. E quello che hai preparato, di chi sarà?”. Così è di chi accumula tesori per sé e non si arricchisce presso Dio

(Luca 12, 16-21)

BENEDETTO XVI
CARITAS IN VERITATE

N. 36-37

36. L'attività economica non può risolvere tutti i problemi sociali mediante la semplice estensione della *logica mercantile*. Questa va *finalizzata al perseguimento del bene comune*, di cui deve farsi carico anche e soprattutto la comunità politica. Pertanto, va tenuto presente che è causa di gravi scompensi separare l'agire economico, a cui spetterebbe solo produrre ricchezza, da quello politico, a cui spetterebbe di perseguire la giustizia mediante la redistribuzione.

La Chiesa ritiene da sempre che l'agire economico non sia da considerare antisociale. Il mercato non è, e non deve perciò diventare, di per sé il luogo della sopraffazione del forte sul debole. La società non deve proteggersi dal mercato, come se lo sviluppo di quest'ultimo comportasse *ipso facto* la morte dei rapporti autenticamente umani. È certamente vero che il mercato può essere orientato in modo negativo, non perché sia questa la sua natura, ma perché una certa ideologia lo può indirizzare in tal senso. Non va dimenticato che il mercato non esiste allo stato puro. Esso trae forma dalle configurazioni culturali che lo specificano e lo orientano. Infatti, l'economia e la finanza, in quanto strumenti, possono esser mal utilizzati quando chi li gestisce ha solo riferimenti egoistici. Così si può riuscire a trasformare strumenti di per sé buoni in strumenti dannosi. Ma è la ragione oscurata dell'uomo a produrre queste conseguenze, non lo strumento di per sé stesso. Perciò non è lo strumento a dover essere chiamato in causa ma l'uomo, la sua coscienza morale e la sua responsabilità personale e sociale.

La dottrina sociale della Chiesa ritiene che possano essere vissuti rapporti autenticamente umani, di amicizia e di socialità, di solidarietà e di reciprocità, anche all'interno dell'attività economica e non soltanto fuori di essa o « dopo » di essa. La sfera economica non è né eticamente neutrale né di sua natura disumana e antisociale. Essa appartiene all'attività dell'uomo e, proprio perché umana, deve essere strutturata e istituzionalizzata eticamente.

La grande sfida che abbiamo davanti a noi, fatta emergere dalle problematiche dello sviluppo in questo tempo di globalizzazione e resa ancor più esigente dalla crisi economico-finanziaria, è di mostrare, a livello sia di pensiero sia di comportamenti, che non solo i tradizionali principi dell'etica sociale, quali la trasparenza, l'onestà e la responsabilità non possono venire trascurati o attenuati, ma anche che nei *rapporti mercantili il principio di gratuità* e la logica del dono come espressione della fraternità possono e devono *trovare posto entro la normale attività economica*. Ciò è un'esigenza dell'uomo nel momento attuale, ma anche un'esigenza della stessa ragione economica. Si tratta di una esigenza ad un tempo della carità e della verità.

37. La dottrina sociale della Chiesa ha sempre sostenuto che la *giustizia riguarda tutte le fasi dell'attività economica*, perché questa ha sempre a che fare con l'uomo e con le sue esigenze. Il reperimento delle risorse, i finanziamenti, la produzione, il consumo e tutte le altre fasi del ciclo economico hanno ineluttabilmente implicazioni morali. *Così ogni decisione economica ha una conseguenza di carattere morale*. Tutto questo trova conferma anche nelle scienze sociali e nelle tendenze dell'economia contemporanea. (...)

Nell'epoca della globalizzazione l'economia risente di modelli competitivi legati a culture tra loro molto diverse. I comportamenti economico-imprenditoriali che ne derivano trovano prevalentemente un punto d'incontro nel rispetto della giustizia commutativa. *La vita economica ha senz'altro bisogno del contratto*, per regolare i rapporti di scambio tra valori equivalenti. Ma ha altresì bisogno di *leggi giuste* e di *forme di redistribuzione* guidate dalla politica, e inoltre di opere che rechino impresso lo *spirito del dono*. L'economia globalizzata sembra privilegiare la prima logica, quella dello scambio contrattuale, ma direttamente o indirettamente dimostra di aver bisogno anche delle altre due, la logica politica e la logica del dono senza contropartita.

PADRE NOSTRO

PREGHIERA CONCLUSIVA

SIAMO QUI!

Veniamo per seguire Gesù, perché egli ci mantiene uniti.

Mentre ci invia a portare sulle strade del mondo

Il suo amore a chi si sente perduto.

SIAMO QUI!

Per rinnovare il mondo con te, per dare agli infelici gioia e speranza, pace e amore

E dare testimonianza viva che tu oggi ancora sei vivo.

SIAMO QUI!

Abbiamo udito la tua voce, che ci rende tuoi discepoli, che ci fa costruire la storia, con tutta la nostra vita, secondo i tuoi santi progetti.

SIAMO QUI!

Fa' di noi tuoi profeti, per continuare la tua missione,

per portare in ogni luogo la speranza.

SIAMO QUI!

Riflessione personale e di gruppo

- 1. Leggi attentamente e con calma** il settimo capitolo del Compendio della Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa e gli stralci sopra citati del medesimo.
- 2. Rifletti personalmente e con il gruppo dei Laici Canossiani**, sottolineando ciò che vi colpisce.
- 3. La verifica del nostro stile di vita** include una revisione personale e comunitaria della nostra vita economica. Nell'amministrazione dei beni (personali, di famiglia, professionali) siamo convinti che bisogna usare trasparenza e credibilità? I laici canossiani sono formati a diventare apostoli di carità, impegnati a sostenere i diritti e i doveri della persona, insieme ai valori della giustizia, della solidarietà, dell'armonia e della pace. Dedichiamo del tempo per la nostra formazione su quest'argomento?
- 4. A livello individuale e di gruppo** ci opponiamo pubblicamente alle strutture e alle pratiche che causano e perpetuano le ingiustizie in ambito economico? Sosteniamo i diritti dei deboli e dei senza voce? In che modo?
- 5. Siamo invitati a valutare i nostri bisogni e il nostro stile di vita**, consapevoli che le scelte che facciamo nella vita quotidiana sono segno e profezia per il mondo. Abbracciamo la "spiritualità del solo necessario", evitando lo spreco e usando le cose con cura, gratitudine e rispetto? Evitiamo l'accumulo delle cose, per non privare gli altri che vivono alla giornata?
- 6. Cerca** di incontrare te stesso, le tue aspirazioni più profonde, le tue responsabilità sociali.
Incontra Cristo Gesù: il Figlio di cui sei figlio, fratello per l'altro.
- 7. Invia o inviate** al Coordinamento Internazionale Laici Canossiani i principi di riflessione che sostengono i vostri orientamenti pratici, da condividere con tutti i Laici Canossiani dell'Associazione, per un maggior impegno e solidarietà comune verso una civiltà dell'amore.