

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

Magdalene of Canossa

☞ **Remain with the poor and know that what is extra is not ours**

* **Charity in the Church - Caritas, charity**, does not mean almsgiving. There is the risk of great ambiguity because even in the Church this interpretation is widespread. “Instead ‘caritas’ has another meaning; it is important to understand the true meaning of this word, which is **love**. This term is exquisitely Christian even though it is exposed to misunderstanding.” **To carry out “caritas” means to express love in action.** It is necessary to remember this even in our parish communities so that the organization Caritas is not identified as a “charitable group”. Regarding words and terms, we need to understand and pay attention to their real meaning.

* **Solidarity**, for example, does not always mean altruism. John Paul II affirms in “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis”, that **solidarity is the determination to commit oneself for the good of others because we are all responsible for the good of each person.** In the Church, charity and justice should always be connected; a teaching not to be taken for granted. Paul VI was very clear: we should not give as charity what is due according to justice. (Quadragesimo Anno) Charity without justice is false. This brings up the problem of surplus and lifestyle. Surplus is not that which is left over: there is need to change perspective and put ourselves the shoes of those who have nothing in order to understand that **surplus is not ours and that whatever is useful to us must be shared.** Most people think that charity means almsgiving, but not sharing.

Thus, what sort of solidarity is necessary?

- . **The first fair form** is not voluntary service, but **doing our own work well.**
- . **The second is to pay taxes and manage well the common good.**
- . **The third is to render available our gifts in managing the common good** if one has this capacity.

We must be careful of mystifications, an excess in “over valuing” voluntary service: voluntary is an adjective to be connected with a person and a job. Voluntary service has value first of all because it is human work and not because it is gratuitous: this gives it an added value, what makes it important is human work.

* **Charity in politics** - “Educate for legality”, a document published in 1991, forerunner of Justice and Peace, helps to orientate us. Civil society must re-appropriate its political function, often delegated to professional people. We must act politically even outside political parties, **taking on responsibility**, control, stimulus, **the struggle to remove socially unjust structures**. We need an “extensive” solidarity, made of laws and structures. We are moving towards to social cooperation, non profit: is this wrong? I believe not, it is a way of rejuvenating social solidarity; non profit also creates jobs and interests the young. However, I ask myself: on what is it founded? What is the reason? Be careful: if there is not even voluntary service, social solidarity and love, very quickly non profit will slip into profit, and profit for someone.

* **“Factories that make poor people”** - People should be helped to reflect: if companies and the market are the source of values, solidarity cannot emerge from here. They are factories of marginalization. Let us listen to the observations of **Cardinal Martini**: time is reduced for the family, work is too tiring and full of uncertainty. **And terrorism?** The factory is not perhaps mainly in the arsenals of Saddam or Bin Laden, but rather in the misery in which two thirds of the world population live. We must get to the roots: the **Pope** has said this. The Church did not stress sufficiently what the Pope indicated. And yet, the President of the **World Bank affirmed** that the best way to fight against terrorism is to help poor countries. We must say this at least to the people who frequent the Church. Abbé Pierre said that the destruction of the world will not come about through terrorism neither by the “communist block”, but by the anger of the poor.

* **The choice of the poor** – It is important to choose to stay on the side of the poor. It is the evangelical choice of the Lord, it is the trademark of an authentic commitment. It is also the duty of everyone: all citizens are equal in their social dignity ... It is the duty of every Country to remove the obstacles, at an economic and social level, which prevent the full development of the human person ... and yet **we must pay attention that the “preferential choice of the poor” may not be only a rhetorical way**. Here some guidelines in order to verify it in every ecclesial reality.

- _ **What space do the problems of the poor have in your family and the agenda of the Parish Pastoral Meeting?**
- _ **Are the poor among the priorities in the Parish Budget?**
- _ **How do we accept the poor in our Church, in our parish activities?**
- _ **Do we remember the poor in our prayer?**
- _ **Which initiatives for the formation of Christians are committed in social and civil activities?**

We would like to point out: “We do not intend only to speak about the poor who need money, but also about families who have a drug-addicted son, a couple of parents who are going to separate with a son to be helped ...”.

Sustainability

We need to be careful how we think about the idea of sustainability:

- **First of all**, we must recognize that even the poorest community already has some level of sustainability. If the community were not sustainable before the development agency came, it could not exist. There is considerable evidence that poor communities are quite sophisticated in sustainable survival strategies in terms of food, water, housing and living within the constraints of a marginal natural environment.

- **The second caution** is that the ultimate source of sustainable life is not ours to control. It is God, through Christ, who sustains life. Psalm 104 is a parable of this:

**From your palace You water the uplands
until the ground has had all that your heavens have to offer;
you make fresh grass for cattle and those plants made use of by man, for them
to get food from the soil; wine to make them cheerful, oil to make them happy
and bread to make them strong.**

Psalm 104: 14-16

Most communities are already sustainable in some manner because God has been and is still at work through them.

- **Third**, we need to ask whether the idea of sustainability is enough. If sustainable simply means things are being maintained or that the project activities and impacts continue after we leave, is this a high enough goal? Don't we really seek sustainable growth, learning and continuing transformation? I think we do, but we need to say so.
- **Finally**, we need to define sustainability in two ways. We do not want the transformational development process to be dependent on us. This is a negative definition, but it is essential that the development agency keeps such a definition clearly in mind. The community's understanding of sustainability must include the physical, mental, social and spiritual dimension.

Physical sustainability This dimension of sustainability includes all the basics things that people need to live: food, water, health, economics and a sustainable environment. Adequate food and nutrition require sustainable agriculture, an approach to increasing agricultural production that is not dependent on chemicals that are costly and that damage the land and the water. Adequate water means sustainable water development that emphasizes more effectively managing rainfall run-off and ground water in ways that are sustainable.

Physical sustainability also means people who are able to manage their own health care to the greatest extent possible. This can be done by utilizing local indigenous knowledge and traditional sources of health care, with minimal dependence on the high-cost, expensive health-care systems we are dependent upon in the West.

Physical sustainability means enabling the poor to create wealth. Micro-enterprise development programs, that promote the formation of capital in poor communities and that teach the people to run small businesses and to save money, form the economic foundation without which sustainability is impossible.

Mental sustainability We must seek the healing of the marred identity of the poor. We must treat them as valuable human beings, made in the image of God, loved by God. We must listen to them as if they have something to contribute, because they do. We must encourage the belief that God is for them and that God has given everyone something to contribute. The poor must come to believe in themselves, not in us. If they believe we are the true instruments of development, then we have failed to create mental sustainability. Helping people discover that they can study and make sense out of their world, that they can identify their capabilities and vulnerabilities, is part of a mental transformation that changes the people from the inside.

Social sustainability Recently, social sustainability has come to include a concern for building *civil society*, a term used to refer to non-profit groups or voluntary associations as development agencies, environmental groups, service groups, sports clubs, church groups, peasant associations, self-help groups, and the like. Civil society is the point at which micro-enterprise development, political empowerment, and nurturing social organizations come together. These groups are the social capital that, along with economic and human capital, constitute the productive capital of the community. Civil society can also be the bridge between the micro- and macro-levels of development action, between the work of the community and the regional, national and global political and economic structures in which the community is embedded.

Spiritual sustainability It begins with what seems to be a contradiction. While the community needs to believe that it is not dependent on the development agency, it must also believe passionately that it is dependent on God. No one is independent; we are all dependent on God, whether we acknowledge this fact or not. Another dimension of spiritual sustainability has to do with the contribution of faith-based organizations in the community. Churches, mosques and temples are the location of value traditions without which human society cannot function. Decisions to include women in community decision-making, to stop killing baby girls, to work cooperatively with those formally demonized as “others”; all this requires a value change that most often finds its roots in the transformative power of faith traditions. At the heart of this kind of change is repentance and forgiveness, the twin foundations of reconciliation. At its best, this is the work of the religious community.

پس Listen to the voices ...

Lonely Voices

*Oh that I was an angel, I would sing to my God
But look at what I got: a human body, not an angel!*

*Here I am in the world, singing songs of sorrow
Lonely voices join with me
In honesty we've seen what's mean.*

*Now that I am a Sudanese, who will hear me in this mess?
I am one lonely voice
One of many lonely voices!*

*As an African, voices come and go at will,
In my dreams I see faces and hear them talk,
All of them mutter to themselves!*

*Lonely voices in our streets. Oh! Who hears us when we sigh?
Who hears when we cry out every moment, in loneliness?
Lonely voices around us, unheard
Ears are blocked, hearts closed.
Oh! God, why is man not angelic?
Why? Do you like the lonely voices?*

*Now that I am human more than that a Sudanese,
I hear myself mumbling, humming
A song, alone, with this lonely voice.*

*In Africa a voice is power:
The voices of the poor are never heard, never respected
Rich ones have the voice, and respected.*

*In Sudan, the land of free birds
Chirping and singing is heard.
The voices of the women and children,
Lonely as usual, none is heard.*

*Oh that I was an angel, I would catch these voices,
In fair glamour deliver solace and peace without vices.*

*Keep calling, yowl, lonely voices,
Yonder comes the time, without vices,
When these voices will never sound
Lonely, derelict or hoarse.*

Lonely voices, Abe Enosa

پس Word of God

Hymn to the God of help

Alleluia! Praise the Lord my soul!
I mean to praise the Lord all my life,
I mean to sing to my God as long as I live.

Do not put your trust in men in power, or in any mortal man, he cannot save,
he yields his breathe and goes back to the earth he came from,
and on that day all his schemes perish.

Happy the man who has the God of Jacob to help him,
whose hope is fixed on the Lord his God, maker of heaven and earth,
and the sea, and all that these hold!

The Lord, forever faithful, gives justice to those denied it,
gives food to the hungry, gives liberty to prisoners.
The Lord restores sight to the blind, the Lord straightens the bent,
the Lord protects the stranger, he keeps the orphan and widow.

The Lord loves the virtuous, and frustrates the wicked.
The Lord reigns forever, your God, Zion, from age to age.

Psalm 146