

## SOCIAL JUSTICE REFLECTIONS

### REFLECTION 3: CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING 1969 - 1979



In the earlier reflection, we were able to note a development of Catholic social teaching in the areas of

- Working conditions
- Religious freedom where Catholics were being persecuted
- The peace efforts of Pope Benedict XV during World War One.

The election of Pope John XXIII would bring a wider focus on human rights and duties, the convening of the [Second Vatican Council](#), the concept of collegiality and the opening of social teaching to all people of goodwill. Two Council documents in particular are studied in Catholic Social Teaching - [The Church in the Modern World](#) and [Religious Freedom](#).

All the [16 documents](#) are relevant to such social teaching.

For example, in the [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy](#), it states that the Church *“earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people... is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit; and therefore pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it, by means of the necessary instruction, in all their pastoral work.”* #14

Pope Paul VI introduced an annual reflection of peace in 1968.

I remember when studying Catholic Social Teaching in the Seminary in the mid-1970s, and our lecturer, Fr Morgan Howe shared his opinion that the [1971 Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World](#) was a highlight in social justice teaching, but the response by sections of church curia was reactionary. One such example are articles 42 and 43.

The Bishops urged in article 42, that women *“should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church.”* This was an opportunity to move forward and tackle the discrimination against women in the church. Article 43 proposed that *“this matter be subjected to a serious study employing adequate*

*means: for instance, a mixed commission of men and women, religious and lay people, of differing situations and competence.”* However, this serious study never developed at that time.

## LIST OF IMPORTANT MILESTONES

This reflection lists some of the important milestones from 1960 to 1979, in the development of Catholic Social Teaching.

### 1960

- Fr John Courtney Murray SJ 1904-1967, featured on the front page of Time Magazine on December 12. Its title was U.S. Catholics and the State. He became a key figure in the Vatican Council discussions on church/state relations and on religious freedom.
- Papal document 5 June for establishment for Vatican Council secretariats and preparatory commissions

### 1961

- Pope John XXIII's encyclical [\*Mater et Magistra \(On Social Progress\)\*](#)

Pope John XXIII taught that the fundamental principle of Catholic Social Teaching was that *“individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution”*. *“On this basic principle, which guarantees the sacred dignity of the individual, the Church constructs her social teaching.”*

He advocated that Catholic Social Teaching needed to be well-known and applied to life's situations.

He recommended it to all people of goodwill.

*“But today, more than ever, it is essential that this doctrine be known, assimilated, and put into effect in the form and manner that the different situations allow and demand... First, we must reaffirm most strongly that this Catholic social doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life.... It is therefore Our urgent desire that this doctrine be studied more and more. First of all, it should be taught as part of the daily curriculum in Catholic schools of every kind, particularly seminaries, although We are not unaware that in some of these latter institutions, this has been done for a long time now and in an outstanding way. We would also like to see it added to the religious instruction programs of parishes and of Association of the Lay Apostolate. It must be spread by every modern means at our disposal: daily newspapers, periodicals, popular and scientific publications, radio and television... the laity, can do much to help this diffusion of Catholic social doctrine by studying it themselves and putting it into practice, and by zealously striving to make others understand it.”*

*“It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the Church's social doctrine, the light of which is Truth, Justice its objective, and Love its driving force... The transition from theory to practice is of its very nature difficult; and it is especially so when one tries to reduce to concrete terms a social doctrine such as that of the Church... People must also be shown ways in which they can properly fulfill these obligations... It is practice which makes perfect, even in such matters as the right use of liberty. Thus one learns Christian behavior in social and economic matters by actual Christian action in those fields.”*

1962-65

- **Second Vatican Council and Helder Camara**

On January 25 1959, Pope John XXIII announced his decision to convene a council - Vatican II.

Of the many influential women and men who could be included in this reflection, I have chosen one whose writings and advocacy had most impact on me. **Helder Camara**, a Brazilian bishop, lobbied keenly during the Second Vatican Council and up to his death in 1999. The concept of a Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) had received Vatican approval in 1954 and it held its first meeting in 1955 to coincide with the International Eucharistic Congress in Rio. Camara was a major organiser of both events that year. He would advocate later for continental conferences. During the Vatican II sessions, he stayed at the **Domus Mariae** in Rome, and encouraged national and regional bishops' conferences. Their secretary was **Roger Etchegaray**, who would later become the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (1984-1998).

Camara sent his views and recommendations, titled "*An Exchange of Ideas with Our Brothers in the Episcopate*", to 200 bishops before the beginning of the second session of the Council.

His long letter, over many pages, called for dialogue, collegiality, establishing continental episcopal conferences which would have nominate representatives to a new body to assist the Pope in church governance, add an action focus to catechetics, closer collaboration between bishops and clergy, local joint pastoral letters from bishops together with lay and clergy experts,

closer collaboration between lay people and bishops, the abolition of titles like eminence and excellency and of symbols and insignia that portray bishops as princes.

Another group was the "**church of the poor**". Its number increased over the years of Vatican II. Helder Camara and others were able to promote several issues in the 1965 document *Gaudium et spes (The Church in the Modern World)* Unable to convince the majority of the world's bishops to accept poverty as a central theme, Camara asked Pope Paul VI for such a document. The Pope issued the encyclical *Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples)* in 1967.

Camara would continue to be a leading church advocate until his death.

- **Second Vatican Council and the participation of women.**

In June 2019, Gudrun Sailer interviewed Regina Heyder about her recent book about Catholic women at the Council.

Her book was titled **Katholikinnen und das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil: Petitionen, Berichte, Fotografien**

The following quote is from the *Vatican News article 18 June 2019* on the interview.

*"Pope Paul VI was the first pope to appoint lay auditors at a larger scale. In 1963, 13 male lay auditors took part in the Council. Even before the beginning of the Council, Catholic women had asked to be allowed to participate. Now they intensified their activities: they wrote letters to bishops and to the Council Secretariat, suggested participants, asked subversive questions during press conferences and succeeded in winning supporters for this*

idea. In his famous speech in October 1963, Cardinal Suenens from Mecheln observed that women make up half of mankind and therefore should be invited as auditors. Thus, the idea of female lay auditors gained more and more plausibility. When in 1964, women were welcomed by the Pope at the opening of the third session of the Council, members of the General Secretariat were still discussing who should be invited. It was not until a week later that the respective letters of nomination were written. A few days later the first women auditors arrived in the Council Hall.”

**[An article from the Pontifical Council for the Laity newsletter "Notiziario" lists the women who were auditors in 1964.](#)**

*“In 1964 nine religious sisters were nominated, most of them being superior generals of their institutes, and some of them being leaders in international unions of women religious. They were: Costantina Baldinucci (Italy), Claudia Feddish (United States), Cristina Estrada (Spain), Marie Henriette Ghanem (Lebanon), Mary Luke Tobin (United States), Marie de la Croix Khouzam (Egypt), Sabine de Valon (France), Juliana Thomas (Germany), Suzanne Guillemin (France). In 1965 these were joined by Jerome M. Chimy (Canada). In 1964, eight lay women were nominated. Of these, six were single and two were war widows. The six single women held leadership roles in international lay associations. They were: Pilar Belosillo (Spain), Rosemary Goldie (Australia), Marie-Louise Monnet (France), Anne Marie Roeloffzen (Netherlands), Alda Micheli (Italy), Amalia Dematteis Cordero Lanza di Montezemolo (Italy), Ida Marengi Grillo (Italy). In 1965 they were joined by Margarita Moyano Llerena (Argentina), Gladys Parentelli (Uruguay) Gertrud Ehrle (Germany), Hedwig von Skoda (Switzerland) and a married couple: José and Luz María Álvarez Icaza (Mexico).”*

Osservatore Romano 26 September 2020 carries an article **[“When women entered the Council”](#)** with a more complete list for the period.

**[An article about Rosemary Goldie in CathNews 23 February 2013](#)**

*“Ms Goldie served as undersecretary for the Pontifical Council for the Laity from 1967-76... Before serving on the laity council, Ms Goldie was one of the first women appointed to attend the Second Vatican Council as an auditor and was an official observer at its last two sessions in 1964 and 1965. She had previously served as the executive secretary for the International Congresses of the Lay Apostolate and as a staff member of Pax Romana, one of the oldest international lay Catholic movements... ”*

**The book [The Rich Nations and the Poor Nations](#) by economist [Barbara Ward](#) had a timely impact on the Vatican Council. Her influence later in the Vatican Council, and in the 1971 Synod of Bishops, were important in understanding poverty, international justice and development issues.**

## 1962

- **Radio Message of Pope John XXIII on 11 September 1962**

*“Face to face with the under developed nations, the Church presents itself such as she is, and as she wants to be, the church of all people, but in particular the Church of the poor.”*

- First Session of the Second Vatican Council. 11 October – 8 December
- Opening Address of Pope Jon XXIII to the Second Vatican Council

- **On October 11, 1962, the first day of the Council, Pope John delivered this address in St. Peter's Basilica.**
- Pope John XXIII's background diplomacy for peace during the **Cuban Missile Crisis**.
- **Cardinal Suenens** addressed the Vatican Council on 4 December, raising several issues, including social justice and peace.
- **Italian Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro** on 6 December addressed the Council

\* He asked for the establishment of *"an ecclesiastical primate for the evangelization of the poor"*,

\* He advocated that, as a priority, *"the evangelical doctrine on the eminent dignity of the poor in the Kingdom of God and the Church"* be formulated.

\* He spoke of *"the Mystery of Christ in the poor, the eminent dignity of the poor in the Kingdom of God and the Church, and announcing the gospel to the poor"*.

\* He believed that *"This is the hour of the poor, of the millions of poor throughout the earth; this is the hour of the Mystery of the Church mother of the poor, this is the hour of the Mystery of Christ in the poor."*

## 1963

- Pope John XXIII's peace encyclical [\*Pacem in terris \(Peace on Earth\)\*](#).

*"It is generally accepted today that the common good is best safeguarded when personal rights and duties are guaranteed. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are recognized, respected, co-ordinated, defended and promoted, and that each individual is enabled to perform his duties more easily... Thus any government which refused to recognize human rights or acted in violation of them, would not only fail in its duty; its decrees would be wholly lacking in binding force."*

Pope John XXIII outlined *three* conditions for governments in respecting people's rights in society.

1. *that the exercise of their rights by certain citizens does not obstruct other citizens in the exercise of theirs;*
2. *that the individual, standing upon his own rights, does not impede others in the performance of their duties;*
3. *that the rights of all be effectively safeguarded, and completely restored if they have been violated."*

- **Pope John XXIII died 3 June. Pope Paul VI was elected on 21 June.**
- Second session of the Second Vatican Council. 29 September – 4 December.
- First documents of the Second Vatican Council Documents issued 4 December. [\*Sacrosanctum concilium \(Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy\)\*](#), and [\*Inter Mirifica \(Decree On the Means of Social Communication\)\*](#)
- Fr Louis-Joseph **Lebret**, a French Dominican and sociologist, at the request of the Vatican, wrote a paper on the church in the world, and made available to Vatican Council members.

## 1964

- Pope Paul VI inaugurated the modern era on international papal apostolic journeys. He visited the Holy Land and India that year

- In January, **Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras** met at the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

They sought to heal centuries of division. One of the outcomes decades later, was the celebration the Season of Creation and a commitment to caring for the earth.

- Third session of the Second Vatican Council. 14 September – 21 November
- Further Vatican Council Documents released 21 November. [Lumen Gentium \(Dogmatic Constitution On the Church\)](#), [Orientalium Ecclesiarum \(Decree On the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite\)](#), and [Unitatis Redintegratio \(Decree on Ecumenism\)](#)

- Address of Pope Paul VI to the Members of the Non-Christian Religions. 3 December 1964 **India**.

Pope Paul VI called for an interfaith *“mutual understanding and friendship”*, a *“sacred communion”*, built not on a *“universal terror or fear of mutual destruction”*, but on common love, with its roots in God, who is love. He spoke of the common challenges around the world *“against poverty, hunger and illness; you too are fighting the relentless battle for more food, clothing, housing, for education, for a just distribution of the wealth of this world”*. He addressed the need for *“peace and stability in our world, we need food, clothing and housing for millions, we need honesty and devotion and untiring work”*.

- Barbara Ward wrote her memorandum **“World Poverty and the Christian Conscience”**

It was distributed at the Vatican council. In her briefing on poverty and inequality of wealth, she proposed

*“The Vatican Council should establish a small, permanent, highly competent Secretariat to coordinate action in the attack on world poverty. Its first task would be to arrange, for 1965 or as soon as possible, an ecumenical Conference on World Poverty; the sponsors would be the heads of all the Christian communions and the invitation would be sent out in their name... “*

*‘The creation of a permanent lobby. It is impossible to underline too strongly the need to engage Christians deeply and permanently in the attack on world poverty... “*

## 1965

- Address of Pope Paul VI to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See. 7 January
- Paul Gauthier’s influential book **Christ, The Church and the Poor** was published by Newman Press
- Fourth session of the Vatican Council. 14 September – 8 December.
- Pope Paul VI issued the apostolic constitution, [Apostolica Sollicitudo](#), 15 September.

This enabled the formation of episcopal synods on major church issues.

- Discussion at the Vatican Council of a **Memorandum on the Holy Father’s Secretariat for World Poverty** written by Monsignor Gremillion.
- Vatican Council documents released on the 28 October.
  - [Christus Dominus \(Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church\)](#),
  - [Perfectae Caritatis \(Decree On Renewal of Religious Life\)](#),
  - [Optatam Totius \(Decree On Priestly Training\)](#),

- [Gravissimum Educationis \(Declaration On Christian Education\)](#),
- [Nostra Aetate \(Declaration On the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions\)](#).
- Vatican Council documents released on the 18 November.
  - [Dei Verbum - Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation](#),
  - [Apostolicam Actuositatem - Decree On the Apostolate of the Laity](#).
- Vatican Council documents released on the 7 December.
  - [Dignitatis Humanae - Declaration On Religious Freedom](#),
  - [Ad Gentes - Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church](#),
  - [Presbyterorum Ordinis - Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests](#),
  - [Gaudium et Spes - Pastoral Constitution on the Church In the Modern World](#).

- On Religious Freedom the Vatican Council says in [Dignitatis Humanae](#)

*“This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits. The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right. #2*

- **Spanish Cardinal Benjamin Arriba y Castro’s** intervention at the Vatican Council
 

He stated *“I then dare to demand again and again – what I already did in the Second Session – that among the dicasteries of the Roman Curia there should be instituted some office whose task it would be do diffuse and put into practice the social doctrine of the Gospel. Different offices have been instituted such as the Secretariat for dialogue with non-Catholics and another for dialogue with non-Christians. I think it would be very useful to set up a special office for social matters.”*

- **Bishop Swanstrom** called for an addition to the Vatican draft document on the church in the world.
 

*“In order to call with persistence, the attention of the People of God and in fact all men of the human family to the sad plight of a majority of God’s children, and to teach the Message of Christ’s life for the poor and His justice in and out of season, this Sacred Synod proposes that a Secretariat of the Holy See for promoting world justice and development be established.”*

He also called upon national bodies of bishops, religious orders, lay associations and others to work together and to find ways to open *“the minds and hearts of all to the cries of the poor over the whole world wherever possible.”*

- **English Bishop William Wheeler** supported the call for a new Vatican secretariat on justice.

*“We all know how much within a few years has been promoted by the Secretariat for Christian Unity and how it has changed the mind of the Church in Ecumenical matters. The Secretariat for worldwide justice, while it need not have the same structure and function could in the same way change the way of feeling and acting of the Church, and in that clear way which such an urgent problem needs.”*

- **English Bishop Charles Grant** advocated for an expanded body, linking human need, justice, development and peace.

*“a top level body in the heart of the Church to study all the complicated problems associated with human need; to promote economic and monetary development among the poor and to promote peace in tandem with this.”*

- Some of the Vatican Council participants gathered for a **Pact of the Catacombs** on November 16. They committed themselves to implementing it in their local churches. The 13 points of the Pact are listed in the last section of this reflection.
- **Vatican Council Document [Gaudium et Spes \(The Church in the Modern World\)](#)** was finalised and released.

Some key introductory passages are #1, #2 and #4.

The Council stated in its opening paragraph # 1 that *“the joy and hope, the grief and anguish” of the people of our time*

*“especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find our echo in their hearts.”*

In #2, the term “world” for the purpose of this pastoral document is defined as *“the whole human family seen in the context of everything which envelopes... ”*. Responsibility of the Church was described as *“At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task.”* #4

Topics in the documents included:

#6 Changes in the social order, #8 Imbalances in the world of today, #9 broader aspirations of humanity,  
#26 the Common Good, #27 Respect for the human person, #29 Essential equality for all people: social justice,  
#31 Responsibility and Participation, The Word made flesh and human solidarity, #33-39 Activity of people in the universe,  
#35 Regulation of human activity, #47-52 Marriage and the family in the modern world, #57-62 Some principles for proper cultural development, # 64 economic development in the service of people; #66 an end to excessive economic and social differences, #67 Work, working conditions, leisure, #70 Investment and money, #71 Ownership, private property, large estates, #78 The nature of peace, #79 Curbing the savagery of war, #80 total warfare, #81 The arms race, # Total outlawing of war: international action to prevent war, #83 Causes of discord: remedies, #84 The Community of nations and international organisations, #86 Some useful norms, #88 Role of Christians in international aid, #90 Role of Christians in international organisations



1966

- An **Ad Hoc Working Group on Gaudium et Spes, Article 90** was established. The group was convened in May. It consisted of Bishops, Barbara Ward, lay men, Curia, clergy and religious. Chairing the gathering were Bishop Swanstrom and Monsignor Rodhain, and secretary was Monsignor Gremillion. Pope Paul VI then established a Provisional committee.
- The World Council of Churches Conference on Church and Society was held in Geneva in July.

1967

- Pope Paul VI's encyclical **Populorum Progressio (The Progress of People)** on development and justice.

In #5, Pope Paul VI spoke about the Commission.

*"The name of this commission, Justice and Peace, aptly describes its program and its goal."*

- Pope Paul VI established the **Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission** with the **motu proprio Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam** on January 6. Its purpose was to fulfil the 1965 Vatican Council Document *Gaudium et Spes* decision "to arouse the Catholic community to promote the progress of areas which are in want and foster social justice between nations."#9.

Many years later, **the Commission became a Council and explained its origins.**

*"The Second Vatican Council had proposed the creation of a body of the universal Church whose role would be "to stimulate the Catholic Community to foster progress in needy regions and social justice on the international scene" (Gaudium et Spes, No. 90). It was in reply to this request that Pope Paul VI established the Pontifical Commission "Justitia et Pax" by a Motu Proprio dated 6 January 1967 (Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam). Two months later, in Populorum Progressio, Paul VI succinctly stated of the new body that "its name, which is also its programme, is Justice and Peace" (No. 5). Gaudium et Spes and this Encyclical, which "in a certain way... applies the teaching of the Council" (Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, No. 6), were the founding texts and points of reference for this new body. After a ten-year experimental period, Paul VI gave the Commission its definitive status with the Motu Proprio Justitiam et Pacem of 10 December 1976. When the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus of 28 June 1988 reorganized the Roman Curia, Pope John Paul II changed its name from Commission to Pontifical Council and reconfirmed the general lines of its work."*

- Letter of the Cardinal Cicognani, Secretary of State, to Cardinal Roy, President of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace. June 1967

*"The Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace... shall orient its work according to the norms given by the Holy Father last April 20th: "It is therefore study which is the specific aim of the Committee: study for action. We wished to publish an encyclical letter on the development of peoples which would be a basic text for you, capable of usefully orienting your thought and your action." "*

1968

- **First World Day for Peace 1968 The Day of Peace**

*“... Peace is not pacifism; it does not mask a base and slothful concept of life, but it proclaims the highest and most universal values of life: truth, justice, freedom, love.”*

- Message of Pope Paul VI to the Teheran Conference on the Occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> **Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM)** was convened in **Medellin, Columbia**.

Among its insights, it stressed that:

- \* The Christian quest for justice *“is a demand arising from biblical teaching”*.
- \* All people *“are merely humble stewards of material goods.*
- \* We are people of hope. *“We have faith that our love for Christ and our brethren will not only be the great force liberating us from injustice and oppression, but also the inspiration for social justice, understood as a whole of life and as an impulse toward the integral growth of our countries.”*
- \* Authentic liberation. *“Thus, for our authentic liberation, all of us need a profound conversion so that “the kingdom of justice, love and peace”, might come to us.”*
- \*The need of conversion and structural change. *“We will not have a new continent without new and reformed structures”* and with new people above all, *“who know how to be truly free and responsible according to the light of the Gospel”*.
- \* Participation of all. *“The Latin American Church encourages the formation of national communities that reflect a global organization, where all of the peoples but more especially the lower classes have, by means of territorial and functional structures, an active and receptive, creative and decisive participation in the construction of a new society.”*
- \*Participation and the common good. *“Those intermediary structures—between the person and the state—should be freely organized, without any unwarranted interference from authority or from dominant groups, in view of their development and concrete participation in the accomplishment of the total common good.”*

1969

- [World Day of Peace Message, by Pope Paul VI The Promotion of Human Rights, the Road to Peace.](#)
- Address of Pope Paul to the General Audience. 9 July

1970

- [World Day for Peace 1970 To be reconciled with each other, to educate themselves for Peace](#)
- [Pilgrimage of Pope Paul VI to Asia: To the Bishops of Asia, Manila, Philippines, \(November 28, 1970\)](#)

*“... The Church, conscious of human aspirations towards dignity and well-being, pained by the unjust inequalities which still exist and often become more acute between nations and within nations, while respecting the competence of States, must offer her assistance for promoting «a fuller humanism», that is to say «the full development of the whole man and of every man» (Populorum progressio. 42). It is a logical consequence of our Christian faith.”*

Pope Paul outlined several aspects, including the following.

- \* the basic principle is the *“respect for the dignity and value of the human person”*

*\* “in the name of this principle that the Church must support as best she can the struggle against ignorance, hunger, disease and social insecurity.”*

*\* the Church’s place is “in the vanguard of social action, she must bend all her efforts to support, encourage and push forward initiatives working for the full promotion” of people.*

*\* the Church is the witness of human conscience and of divine love for people.*

*She “must take up the defence of the poor and the weak against every form of social injustice”.*

*\* peoples so painfully and for so long afflicted by war be able at last, in justice and in peace, to lead a happy and peaceful life!”*

1971

- [World Day for Peace 1971 Every man is my brother](#)
- [Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World](#) raised consciousness of social justice in the church.

This document is one of the most important Catholic Church documents on understanding justice within the church and in the world. We remember the contributions of Vincent Cosmao OP, Philip Land SJ, Juan Alfaro SJ, Barbara Ward and others.

Some of the issues include –

action on behalf of justice, participation, care for the environment, the arms race, pollution and dumping, love and justice, dignity of the human person and fundamental human rights, justice and example and rights within the church, responsibility and sharing of women in the church, a proposed mixed commission, freedom of expression, right to dialogue, right to a proper defence, examination of conscience, lifestyle witness, education and communications.

Let us read from some of the articles of the Synod Statement.

*\* “... Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.” #6*

*\* “... people are beginning to grasp a new and more radical dimension of unity; for they perceive that their resources, as well as the precious treasures of air and water--without which there cannot be life-- and the small delicate biosphere of the whole complex of all life on earth, are not infinite, but on the contrary must be saved and preserved as a unique patrimony belonging to all human beings.” #8*

*\* “... The arms race is a threat to our highest good, which is life; it makes poor peoples and individuals yet more miserable, while making richer those already powerful; it creates a continuous danger of conflagration, and in the case of nuclear arms, it threatens to destroy all life from the face of the earth. At the same time new divisions are being born to separate people from their neighbors. Unless combated and overcome by social and political action, the influence of the new industrial and technological order favors the concentration of wealth, power and decision-making in the hands of a small public or private controlling*

*group. Economic injustice and lack of social participation keep people from attaining their basic human and civil rights.” #9*

*\* “Furthermore, such is the demand for resources and energy by the richer nations, whether capitalist or socialist, and such are the effects of dumping by them in the atmosphere and the sea that irreparable damage would be done to the essential elements of life on earth, such as air and water, if their high rates of consumption and pollution, which are constantly on the increase, were extended to the whole of humanity.” #11*

*\* “In the face of the present-day situation of the world, marked as it is by the grave sin of injustice, we recognize both our responsibility and our inability to overcome it by our own strength. Such a situation urges us to listen with a humble and open heart to the word of God, as he shows us new paths towards action in the cause of justice in the world.” #29*

*\* “According to the Christian message, therefore, our relationship to our neighbor is bound up with our relationship to God; our response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in his love and service of people. Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love. #34*

*\* “Of itself it does not belong to the Church, insofar as she is a religious and hierarchical community, to offer concrete solutions in the social, economic and political spheres for justice in the world. Her mission involves defending and promoting the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.” #37*

*\* “Many Christians are drawn to give authentic witness on behalf of justice by various modes of action for justice, action inspired by love in accordance with the grace which they have received from God. For some of them, this action finds its place in the sphere of social and political conflicts in which Christians bear witness to the Gospel by pointing out that in history there are sources of progress other than conflict, namely love and right. This priority of love in history draws other Christians to prefer the way of non-violent action and work in the area of public opinion.” #39*

*\* “While the Church is bound to give witness to justice, she recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes. Hence we must undertake an examination of the modes of acting and of the possessions and life style found within the Church herself.” #40*

*\* “Within the Church rights must be preserved. No one should be deprived of his ordinary rights because he is associated with the Church in one way or another. Those who serve the Church by their labor, including priests and religious, should receive a sufficient livelihood and enjoy that social security which is customary in their region. Lay people should be given fair wages and a system for promotion. We reiterate the recommendations that lay people*

*should exercise more important functions with regard to Church property and should share in its administration.” #41*

*\* “We also urge that women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church. #42*

*\* “We propose that this matter be subjected to a serious study employing adequate means: for instance, a mixed commission of men and women, religious and lay people, of differing situations and competence.” #43*

*\* “The Church recognizes everyone's right to suitable freedom of expression and thought. This includes the right of everyone to be heard in a spirit of dialogue which preserves a legitimate diversity within the Church.” #44*

*\* “The form of judicial procedure should give the accused the right to know his accusers and also the right to a proper defense. To be complete, justice should include speed in its procedure. This is especially necessary in marriage cases.” #45*

*\* “Finally, the members of the Church should have some share in the drawing up of decisions, in accordance with the rules given by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and the Holy See, for instance with regard to the setting up of councils at all levels.” #46*

*\* “In regard to temporal possessions, whatever be their use, it must never happen that the evangelical witness which the Church is required to give becomes ambiguous. The preservation of certain positions of privilege must constantly be submitted to the test of this principle. Although in general it is difficult to draw a line between what is needed for right use and what is demanded by prophetic witness, we must certainly keep firmly to this principle: our faith demands of us a certain sparingness in use, and the Church is obliged to live and administer its own goods in such a way that the Gospel is proclaimed to the poor. If instead the Church appears to be among the rich and the powerful of this world its credibility is diminished.” #47*

*\* “Our examination of conscience now comes to the life style of all: bishops, priests, religious and lay people. In the case of needy peoples it must be asked whether belonging to the Church places people on a rich island within an ambient of poverty. In societies enjoying a higher level of consumer spending, it must be asked whether our life style exemplifies that sparingness with regard to consumption which we preach to others as necessary in order that so many millions of hungry people throughout the world may be fed.” #48*

*\* “Christians' specific contribution to justice is the day-to-day life of individual believers acting like the leaven of the Gospel in their family, their school, their work and their social and civic life. Included with this are the perspectives and meaning which the faithful can give to human effort. Accordingly, educational method must be such as to teach people to live their lives in its entire reality and in accord with the evangelical principles of personal and social morality which are expressed in the vital Christian witness of one's life.” #49*

\* *“The obstacles to the progress which we wish for ourselves and for humankind are obvious. The method of education very frequently still in use today encourages narrow individualism. Part of the human family lives immersed in a mentality which exalts possessions. The school and the communications media, which are often obstructed by the established order, allow the formation only of people desired by that order, that is to say, people in its image, not new people but a copy of people as they are.” #50*

\* *“But education demands a renewal of heart, a renewal based on the recognition of sin in its individual and social manifestations. It will also inculcate a truly and entirely human way of life in justice, love and simplicity. It will likewise awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values; it will make people ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all people. In the developing countries, the principal aim of this education for justice consists in an attempt to awaken consciences to a knowledge of the concrete situation and in a call to secure a total improvement; by these means the transformation of the world has already begun. #51*

\* *“Since this education makes people decidedly more human, it will help them to be no longer the object of manipulation by communications media or political forces. It will instead enable them to take in hand their own destinies and bring about communities which are truly human. #52.*

- Declaration on Conscientious Objection and Selective Conscientious Objection, October 21, 1971 **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**
- The Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI [Octogesima Adveniens \(A Call to Action\)](#)

In #48 invites us to examine ourselves, to see what we have done until now, and what we ought to do. It speaks of a thirst for justice and peace in each person.

It says:

*“It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action. It is too easy to throw back on others responsibility for injustice, if at the same time one does not realize how each one shares in it personally and how personal conversion is needed first. This basic humility will rid action of all inflexibility and sectarianism; it will also avoid discouragement in the face of a task which seems limitless in size. The Christian’s hope comes primarily from the fact that he knows that the Lord is working with us in the world, continuing in His Body which is the Church and, through the Church, in the whole of mankind—the Redemption which was accomplished on the cross and which burst forth in victory on the morning of the resurrection.”*

1972

- [World Day for Peace 1972 If you want Peace, work for Justice](#)

- Address of **Pope Paul VI to the Secretary General of the United Nations** 5 February 1972

*“... The cause of peace and law is sacred. The obstacles it meets with must not discourage those dedicated to it. Whether they come from adverse circumstances or from the malice of men, they can and must be overcome. What may seem beyond human forces becomes possible with God’s help.”*

- The Pontifical Commission began a series of brochures on Justice in the World. The first brochure was titled **An Overview** by Philip Land SJ.

On its inside back cover, it explained that

*“The regional and national Conferences of Catholic Bishops throughout the world have been asked to establish or to authorize bodies comparable to Justice and Peace within their respective territories. Some fifty of these now exist, and forty more are in process of formation.”*

- Approval of statutes for the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences FABC.

## 1973

- [World Day for Peace 1973 Peace is possible!](#)
- **Joint Declaration by the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace and the World Council of Churches** 10 December, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Cardinal Roy’s statement on the **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Encyclical Pacem in terris** in 1963.
- Message of Pope Paul VI to the President of the 28th General Assembly of the **United Nations**, H.E. Leopold Benites, on the 25th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1973)

## 1974

- [World Day for Peace 1974: Peace depends on you too](#)
- Address of Pope Paul VI to the **United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid**. 22 May 1974.

## 1975

- [World Day for Peace 1975 Reconciliation - the way to peace](#)
- Pope Paul VI - [Evangelii Nuntiandi On Evangelization in the Modern World](#). 8 December

#15 *‘... The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself’*

#24 *‘... Evangelization... is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative.’*

#26 *‘... to evangelize is first of all to bear witness’*

#30 *‘...The Church... has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings’*

The teaching speaks about the relationship between development and liberation #31, that liberation must envisage the whole person #33, that the Church cannot accept violence #37, liberation #38, structures #36, and the necessity of ensuring fundamental human rights #39.

1976

- [World Day for Peace 1976 The real weapons of peace](#)

Pope Paul VI spoke of a twofold reality.

- Progress on the idea of Peace and structures for Peace, for example, *“journeys, congresses, assemblies, trade-links, studies, friendships, collaboration, aid”*

-and phenomena contrary to peace, for example, a rebirth of nationalism *“which exaggerates national expression to the point of collective egoism and exclusivist antagonism”*.

He spoke of powerful and fiercely organized irreconcilable ideologies dividing the current world

*“when they are allowed free rein, subdivide those Peoples within themselves, into factions and parties that find their reason for existence and activity in poisoning their ranks with irreconcilable hatred and systematic struggle within the very fabric of society itself”*.

He said that *“we cannot conceal the precariousness of a Peace which is merely a truce of already clearly defined future conflicts, that is, the hypocrisy of a tranquillity which is called peaceful only with cold words of simulated reciprocal respect.”*

He proposed moral weapons, such as international law and pacts. When the pacts do not reflect justice, there is the justification *“for the new international Institutions, the mediators for consultations, studies and deliberations, which must absolutely exclude the ways of the so-called fait accompli... Arms and wars are, in a word, to be excluded from civilization's programmes.”*

- *“The Gospel of Peace and Justice”* was published by Msgr John Gremillion.

He compiled social justice teachings from the time of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI, and he added his own overview. Orbis Books Maryknoll NY published this work in 1976.

- Message of Pope Paul VI to H.E. Mr. Gamani Corea, Secretary-General of **UNCTAD IV**
- Message of Pope Paul VI to Mr. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of **UNESCO**, on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Organization.

*“We are convinced that the promotion of free, exact and widely spread information, as well as the international exchanges it calls for, are quite compatible with the authority and responsibility of rulers, rightly concerned with the common good of their own countries, and with the elimination of all propaganda in favor of war, violence, racism and apartheid.”*

- Message of Pope Paul VI to the President of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements.

1977

- [World Day for Peace 1977 If you want peace, defend life](#)

- [Address of Pope Paul VI to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps](#) accredited to the Holy See. 15 January

*“... Let us give our societies a social fabric which is living and diversified, in which genuine solidarity is created and tensions can be eliminated in a common effort for improvement. It is then that political authority will find its true grounds for legitimacy, which consists in disposing «the energies of the whole citizenry towards the common good, not mechanically or despotically, but primarily as a moral force which depends on freedom and the conscientious discharge of the burdens of any office which has been undertaken» (Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 74) The constraint which political authority must at times*



*exercise, and which normally pertains to it as an exclusive right, so as to prevent a concatenation of private revenge and the exploitation of the weak by the strong, is then based on the real demands of the common good, which prohibit any denial of justice or any arbitrary action. All the more must it take care not to allow other bodies in the nation to arrogate to themselves undue authority and to exercise such authority absolutely and unjustly.”*

## 1978

- This year was the year of three Popes, with the death of Pope Paul VI, the brief papacy of Pope John Paul I and his sudden death, and the election of Pope John Paul II. I have chosen a text from each of them for 1978.

- Pope Paul VI - [World Day for Peace 1978: No to violence, yes to peace](#)

*“Violence is not courage. It is the explosion of a blind energy that degrades the person who gives in to it, lowering him from the rational level to the level of passion. And even when violence preserves a certain mastery of itself, it looks for ignoble ways of expressing itself: insidious attacks, surprise, physical supremacy over a weaker and perhaps defenceless adversary. It takes advantage of his surprise and terror and of its own madness; and if this is the relationship between the two contenders, which is the more despicable? As regards an aspect of violence that has been made into a system "for settling accounts": does not this violence have recourse to contemptible forms of hatred, rancour and enmity which imperil society and shame the community in which they decompose the very sentiments of humanity that form the primary and essential fabric of any society - family, tribe, community or whatever it may be? Violence is antisocial by reason of the very methods that allow it to be organized into group complicity, in which a conspiracy of silence forms the binding cement and the protective shield. A dishonouring sense of honour gives it a palliative of conscience. And this is one of the distortions, widespread today, of the true social sense, a distortion which clothes with secrecy and with the threat of pitiless revenge certain associated forms of collective selfishness...”*

*“Remember: it is a harmful vanity to want to appear stronger than your brothers and sisters and friends by quarrelling, fighting, and giving way to anger and revenge. Everybody does it, you answer. No, it is wrong, we say to you. If you want to be strong, be so in spirit and in behaviour. Learn to control yourselves; learn how to forgive and quickly make friends again with those who have offended you. In this way you will really be Christians.*

*Do not hate anybody. Do not be proud, comparing yourself with others of your own age, with people from different social backgrounds or with people of different nations. Do not act out of selfish motives, out of contempt or - we repeat - out of revenge...”*

- **Urbi Et Orbi Radio Message of Pope John Paul I** on Sunday, 27 August 1978

To gain a social justice insight into his very short pontificate, two quotes are provided from his message to the world. He was elected as Pope on 26 August, and died 28 September 1978.

He spoke of the danger to modern humanity if were to

*“...reduce the earth to a desert, the person to an automaton, brotherly love to planned collectivization, often introducing death where God wishes life.”*

*“... We extend a particular greeting to all who are now suffering, to the sick, to prisoners, to exiles, unemployed, or who have bad fortune in life; to all upon whom restraints are placed*

*in their practice of the Catholic faith, which they cannot freely profess except at the cost of the basic human rights of freemen and of willing, loyal citizens... My brothers and sisters—all people of the world! We are all obliged to work to raise the world to a condition of greater justice, more stable peace, more sincere cooperation. Therefore we ask and beg all—from the humblest who are the connective fibres of nations to heads of state responsible for each nation—to work for a new order, one more just and honest. A dawn of hope spreads over the earth, although it is sometimes touched by sinister merchants of hatred, bloodshed, and war with a darkness which sometimes threatens to obscure the dawn... We make no distinction as to race or ideology but seek to secure for the world the dawn of a more serene and joyful day.”*

- Message of Pope John Paul II to the **Secretary General of the United Nations**

*“... I now wish to speak of these rights themselves as sanctioned by the Declaration, and especially of one of them which undoubtedly occupies a central position: the right to freedom of thought, of conscience and of religion.*

*Allow me to call the attention of the Assembly to the importance and the gravity of a problem still today very keenly felt and suffered. I mean the problem of religious freedom, which is at the basis of all other freedoms and is inseparably tied to them all by reason of that very dignity which in the human person.*

*True freedom is the salient characteristic of humanity: it is the fount from which human dignity flows; it is "the exceptional sign of the divine image within man". It is offered to us and conferred on us as our own mission.”*

1979

- Pope John Paul II - [World Day for Peace 1979, "To reach peace, teach peace"](#)
- Message of Pope John Paul II to the **European Commission for Human Rights and the European Court for Human Rights** on the occasion of their anniversaries.

*“... We must not lose heart when confronted by the apparently insuperable difficulties that emerge from the examination of so many flagrant situations in which human rights are mocked. We must remain convinced that any assault on human dignity, even the most remote one, has repercussions, imperceptible but real ones, on the life of everyone, for an indelible bond unites all human beings.”*

- Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II [Redemptor Hominis](#)

*“17. ... human rights are being violated in various ways, if in practice we see before us concentration camps, violence, torture, terrorism, and discrimination in many forms, this must then be the consequence of the other premises, undermining and often almost annihilating the effectiveness of the humanistic premises of these modern programmes and systems. This necessarily imposes the duty to submit these programmes to continual revision from the point of view of the objective and inviolable rights of man.*

*The Declaration of Human Rights linked with the setting up of the United Nations Organization certainly had as its aim not only to depart from the horrible experiences of the last world war but also to create the basis for continual revision of programmes, systems and regimes precisely from this single fundamental point of view, namely the welfare of man-or, let us say, of the person in the community-which must, as a fundamental factor in the common good, constitute the essential criterion for all programmes, systems and regimes. If the opposite happens, human life is, even in time of peace, condemned to various*

*sufferings and, along with these sufferings, there is a development of various forms of domination, totalitarianism, neocolonialism and imperialism, which are a threat also to the harmonious living together of the nations... “*

- Founding of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Social Justice in Canada
- The **Third Latin American Bishops Conference** was convened in **Puebla**.

The notion of *‘preferential option for the poor’* led to a new focus in some parts of the world.

On 3 October 2019, [Pope Francis addressed the International Conference for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Puebla conference.](#)

Looking back on Puebla, he said

*“... to take as a starting point the intuitions and prophetic options of the Medellín Conference so that in Puebla, a step forward could be taken on the Latin American Church’s path towards maturity... I remember some of the most significant: the novelty of a historical self-awareness of the Church in Latin America; a good ecclesiology that takes up again the image and the way of the people of God in Vatican Council II; a well inculturated Mariology; the richest and most creative chapters on the evangelization of culture and popular piety in Latin America; courageous criticism of the lack of knowledge of human rights and freedoms in those times in the region, and the options for the young, the poor and the builders of society. It may be said that Puebla laid the foundations and opened the way to Aparecida.”*

#### LIFESTYLE COMMITMENTS

Another development in Catholic Social Teaching, including the principle of solidarity, and guided by Biblical texts, has been the issue of personal and communal lifestyle. As we conclude this reflection on the 1960s and 1970s, let us recall the thirteen commitments of the **1965 Pact of the Catacombs**. A minority of Catholic Bishops believed that they needed to make a common commitment to change their lifestyle and ways of governance. They undertook this commitment before returning to their local dioceses and church communities. After reading and reflecting on them, we might take the opportunity to compose a list or statement about our own commitments today.

1. *We will try to live according to the ordinary manner of our people in all that concerns housing, food, means of transport, and related matters. See Matthew 5,3; 6,33ff; 8,20.*
2. *We renounce forever the appearance and the substance of wealth, especially in clothing (rich vestments, loud colors) and symbols made of precious metals (these signs should certainly be evangelical). See Mark 6,9; Matthew 10,9-10; Acts 3.6 (Neither silver nor gold).*
3. *We will not possess in our own names any properties or other goods, nor will we have bank accounts or the like. If it is necessary to possess something, we will place everything in the name of the diocese or of social or charitable works. See Matthew 6,19-21; Luke 12,33-34.*
4. *As far as possible we will entrust the financial and material running of our diocese to a commission of competent lay persons who are aware of their apostolic role, so that we can be less administrators and more pastors and apostles. See Matthew 10,8; Acts 6,1-7.*

5. *We do not want to be addressed verbally or in writing with names and titles that express prominence and power (such as Eminence, Excellency, Lordship). We prefer to be called by the evangelical name of "Father." See Matthew 20,25-28; 23,6-11; John 13,12-15).*
6. *In our communications and social relations we will avoid everything that may appear as a concession of privilege, prominence, or even preference to the wealthy and the powerful (for example, in religious services or by way of banquet invitations offered or accepted). See Luke 13,12-14; 1 Corinthians 9,14-19.*
7. *Likewise we will avoid favoring or fostering the vanity of anyone at the moment of seeking or acknowledging aid or for any other reason. We will invite our faithful to consider their donations as a normal way of participating in worship, in the apostolate, and in social action. See Matthew 6,2-4; Luke 15,9-13; 2 Corinthians 12,4.*
8. *We will give whatever is needed in terms of our time, our reflection, our heart, our means, etc., to the apostolic and pastoral service of workers and labor groups and to those who are economically weak and disadvantaged, without allowing that to detract from the welfare of other persons or groups of the diocese. We will support lay people, religious, deacons, and priests whom the Lord calls to evangelize the poor and the workers by sharing their lives and their labors. See Luke 4,18-19; Mark 6,4; Matthew 11,4-5; Acts 18,3-4; 20,33-35; 1 Corinthians 4,12; 9,1-27.*
9. *Conscious of the requirements of justice and charity and of their mutual relatedness, we will seek to transform our works of welfare into social works based on charity and justice, so that they take all persons into account, as a humble service to the responsible public agencies. See Matthew 25,31-46; Luke 13,12-14; 13,33-34.*
10. *We will do everything possible so that those responsible for our governments and our public services establish and enforce the laws, social structures, and institutions that are necessary for justice, equality, and the integral, harmonious development of the whole person and of all persons, and thus for the advent of a new social order, worthy of the children of God. See Acts 2,44-45; 4,32-35; 5,4; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; 1 Timothy 5,16.*
11. *Since the collegiality of the bishops finds its supreme evangelical realization in jointly serving the two-thirds of humanity who live in physical, cultural, and moral misery, we commit ourselves: a) to support as far as possible the most urgent projects of the episcopacies of the poor nations; and b) to request jointly, at the level of international organisms, the adoption of economic and cultural structures which, instead of producing poor nations in an ever richer world, make it possible for the poor majorities to free themselves from their wretchedness. We will do all this even as we bear witness to the gospel, after the example of Pope Paul VI at the United Nations.*
12. *We commit ourselves to sharing our lives in pastoral charity with our brothers and sisters in Christ, priests, religious, and laity, so that our ministry constitutes a true service. Accordingly, we will make an effort to "review our lives" with them; we will seek collaborators in ministry so that we can be animators according to the Spirit rather than dominators according to the world; we will try to be make ourselves as humanly present and welcoming as possible; and we will show ourselves to be open to all, no matter what their beliefs. See Mark 8,34-35; Acts 6,1-7; 1 Timothy 3,8-10.*

*13. When we return to our dioceses, we will make these resolutions known to our diocesan priests and ask them to assist us with their comprehension, their collaboration, and their prayers.*

The above documents and selected quotes are not an exhaustive treatment of Catholic Social Teaching during this period.

These are offered as insights and highlights, and many of the issues are developed further over time.

The next reflection focusses on the period between [1980](#) and [1999](#).

Thank you.

Father Gerry Hefferan  
15 October 2022