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CHAPTER 2

PAPAL TEACHINGS ON THE FAMILY, THE STATE, AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION: A SUMMARY

This chapter summarizes the main elements of Catholic social teaching, as derived primarily from the papal social encyclicals. These elements provide one of the main criteria by which we go on to approach and evaluate the different public questions we take up later in this book. The elements fall basically into five categories: the family, the obligations owed to human life, the role of the state, the “social question” (involving the moral issues concerning economic activity and the relationship between capital and labor and the taking care of the welfare of the needy), and the “international question” (relations among nations, war and peace, and human rights). The limits of this chapter do not permit a detailed examination of all the social encyclicals. Instead, the major ones of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—from the time of the earliest social encyclicals in the latter half of the nineteenth century—are focused on. The summarization of the social teachings, then, will come mostly from the following encyclicals: *Rerum Novarum* (*The Condition of Labor*) (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (*Reconstructing the Social Order*) (1931), *Divini Redemptoris* (*Atheistic Communism*) (1937), *Mater et Magistra* (*Christianity and Social Progress*) (1961), *Pacem in Terris* (*Peace on Earth*) (1963), *Populorum Progressio* (*On the Development of Peoples*) (1967), *Laborem Exercens* (*On Human Work*) (1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (*The Social Concern of the Church*) (1987), and *Centesimus Annus* (*The Hundredth Year*) (1991). Other Church documents, encyclicals, and secondary source materials will also be referred to at different points in the summary.

We are taking all these major encyclicals together as comprising the corpus of the Church’s social teaching. There is no change of the teaching from encyclical to encyclical, only a further development and application of it to new questions. The moral principles involved remain the same over time. Thus, to determine the Church’s social teaching it is necessary to look at all the major encyclicals, not just the most recent ones. These points were made well by Pope John XXIII in *Mater et Magistra*. Tracing the development of the Church’s social teaching from Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* through Pope Pius X’s *Quadragesimo Anno* to Pope Pius XII’s statements, he pointed out that *Rerum Novarum* “is known even to the present day as the Magna Carta for the reconstruction of the economic and social order,” and “the solidly grounded principles, the norms of action, and the potential admonitions” in it “retain their original worth,” and that *Quadragesimo Anno* “reaffirmed those [*Rerum Novarum*’s] principles and directives...clarif[ied] certain points of doctrine...but...also showed how the principles and directives themselves regarding social affairs

should be adapted to the changing times.”¹ The reason Pope John says he is writing *Mater et Magistra* is “to keep alive the torch lighted by our great predecessors...to confirm and explain more fully what...[they] taught, and to set forth the Church’s teaching regarding the new and serious problems of our day.”² We can thus see why one Catholic scholar of the social teachings instructs us to take the social encyclicals “*in toto*”—i.e., their cumulative teaching—in determining what the Church’s social doctrine is comprised of.³

The Family

The first area to be considered is the family. The central role of the family in the Church’s teaching is clear and does not need much elaboration here. It is appropriate that it is discussed first in this chapter because the Church has viewed the family as “the first and vital cell of society” and thus must be a necessary initial focus of attention before undertaking any consideration of the “social question.”⁴ Its importance to the larger society is seen clearly in Pope John Paul II’s apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*: “It is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of the social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself.”⁵

Catholic teaching, based in all cases on the natural moral law of which God is the Author, makes it clear that the family exists independently of the state and that parents do not depend upon the state for their authority. As Pope Leo XIII said in *Rerum Novarum*, “Parental authority can be neither abolished nor absorbed by the State; for it has the same source as human life itself.” He says this in conjunction with a condemnation of socialists for “setting aside the parent and setting up a State supervision.”⁶ The 1980 Synod of Bishops, which focused on the family, gave a long list of these rights of families in the contemporary world, which was repeated by the John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio*.⁷

One area in which parental authority over their children has been increasingly challenged has been in education. The Church, however, has constantly insisted that parents are the primary educators of their children. As *Familiaris Consortio* puts it, “The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life...it is irreplaceable and inalienable and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.”⁸

Sex education is singled out for particular attention in *Familiaris Consortio*. It calls it “a basic right and duty of parents” and says sex education “must always be carried out under their attentive guidance whether at home or in educational centers chosen and controlled by them.”⁹

Despite her emphasis on the rights and prerogatives of the family, the Church, in her concern about the rights and dignity of the individual person, has made clear that there are limits to family authority. In *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII set down the conditions for what today we might call state “intervention” into the family. It is “a great and pernicious error” to believe that the state “should at its option intrude into and exercise intimate control over the family.” The conditions for “intervention” are strict and limited: the state may aid the family if it is in “exceeding distress, utterly deprived of the counsel of friends, and without any prospect of extricating itself,” and it may intervene “if within the precincts of the household there occur grave disturbances of mutual rights.”¹⁰

In *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI said that “[t]he family’s influence may have been excessive at some periods of history and in some places when it was exercised to the detriment of the fundamental rights of the individual.”¹¹ *Familiaris Consortio* specifies the respect for the rights and dignity that must be had within the family context for its various members, especially those who are the weakest: women, children, and the elderly.¹² The Church has not taught that individual rights have primacy over family rights, but simply that individuals also have rights that must be respected in the family context.

Familiaris Consortio is particularly noteworthy for its attention to the situation of women in an era when this subject is discussed so much. John Paul II enunciates a reasonable and moderate position on this matter when he says

There is no doubt that the equal dignity and responsibility of men and women fully justifies women's access to public functions. On the other hand the true advancement of women requires that clear recognition be given to the value of their maternal and family role, by comparison with all other public roles and all other professions.¹³

In accordance with this position, the Holy Father speaks of ending “discrimination” in education and work, and also of structuring society “in such a way that wives and mothers are not in practice compelled to work outside the home.” He continues, “[T]he mentality which honors women more for their work outside the home than for their work within the family must be overcome.”¹⁴ These points are repeated in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*.¹⁵

Further, he speaks strongly against “offenses against women's dignity,” which include not only the above kinds of discrimination, but pornography, prostitution, and unfair treatment of childless wives, widows, separated or divorced women, and unmarried mothers.¹⁶

While calling for respect for these latter groups of women, papal teaching on moral matters involving marriage and sexuality has been clear and distinct. The modern encyclicals, for example, have strongly emphasized the Church's constant teaching about the immorality of divorce and contraception. Pope John XXIII stated in *Mater et Magistra*: “We strongly affirm that human life is transmitted and propagated through the instrumentality of the family, which rests on marriage, one and indissoluble.”¹⁷ In the twentieth century, of course, two major encyclicals specifically upheld the teaching on contraception: *Casti Connubi* (*Christian Marriage*) (1930) and *Humane Vitae* (*On the Regulation of Birth*) (1968). The subject of abortion is treated in the next section. The only thing that needs to be said here about it is that the Church emphasizes that the rights of women do not justify abortion. As was stated in the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's *Declaration on Procured Abortion*, “The movement for the emancipation of women, insofar as it seeks essentially to free them from all unjust discrimination, is on perfectly sound ground...But one cannot...exempt women, any more than men, from what nature demands of them.”¹⁸

The attempts in the contemporary world to eliminate the moral stigma of homosexual behavior and to view it as “normal”—which would be a terrible blow to the family if widely accepted—led to the Church's firmly restating its traditional teaching on homosexuality, also. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated this in its *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*: “[A]ccording to the objective moral order, homosexual relations are acts which lack an essential and indispensable finality...[H]omosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of.”¹⁹

In *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul II calls for a rejuvenation of the family, which he says requires that people accept marriage as a stable commitment to be characterized by mutual giving instead of self-gratification.²⁰ By making “a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity, beginning in the family,” people can “overcome today's widespread individualistic mentality.”²¹ The essentiality of the family dictates that public policy support the family; it should “assist the family by providing adequate resources and efficient means of support both for bringing up children and for looking after the elderly.”²²

Abortion and the Respect for Human Life

The Church, both from Rome and in the United States, has distinguished itself by speaking up against the legalization of abortion. It is a clear-cut example of a basic point of Christian morality that has become an important issue in the public forum.

In standing four-square against abortion, the Church is defending her age-old teaching. In his *Catholic Catechism*, Father John A. Hardon, S.J., a leading Catholic theologian, emphasizes this fact, telling us that the Church's teaching was first set out clearly in the Apostolic Era when the *Didache* instructed, "'You shall not procure abortion. You shall not destroy a newborn child.'"²³ The latter sentence, of course, meant that infanticide was also rejected. The most recent formal document of the Church that was specifically devoted to reaffirming the Church's teaching on abortion was the *Declaration on Procured Abortion* noted above, which was issued in 1974. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith followed this document in 1980 by issuing the *Declaration on Euthanasia*, which restated the Church's traditional teaching against so-called "mercy-killing."

In the *Declaration on Procured Abortion*, the Congregation also addressed the question of what civil law should do about abortion and what the response of the individual to the civil law should be. The *Declaration* clearly suggests that civil law should prohibit and punish abortion when it says the following:

One must...be attentive to what a change in legislation can represent. Many will take as authorization what is perhaps only the abstention from punishment. Even more, in the present case, this very renunciation seems at the very least to admit that the legislator no longer considers abortion a crime against human life, since murder is always severely punished. It is true that it is not the task of the law to choose between points of view or to impose one rather than another. But the life of the child takes precedence over all opinions. One cannot invoke freedom of thought to destroy this life.²⁴

The *Declaration* goes on to say that not only can medical personnel and others not take part in abortion procedures or the procurement of abortion, but an individual—this would seem to be especially pertinent to the individual carrying out his duties as citizen and legislator—"can never obey a law which is itself immoral, and such is the case of a law which would admit in principle the liceity of abortion," nor "can he take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law, or vote for it."²⁵ This would seem to preclude Catholic politicians taking positions on public policy about abortion that are contrary to the teaching of the Church.²⁶

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis and *Centesimus Annus* both strongly condemn "systematic" anti-childbearing campaigns undertaken in the name of controlling overpopulation. These campaigns, "often...the result of pressure and financing...from abroad," are against both the "cultural and religious identity of the countries" undertaking them—usually poor countries—and "true development" (development is discussed below). Such a campaign is a "new form of oppression" which "sometimes leads to a tendency toward a form of racism" or "racist forms of eugenics."²⁷

Another moral question involving respect for human life—war—is taken up in the section below on "The 'International Question.'"

The Role of the State

We here sketch papal teaching about the role and purposes of the state. The first, most basic point to take note of is that the popes hold firmly that God must be acknowledged to be at the foundation of every political order, and that the state must act positively to protect and favor religion.²⁸

Rerum Novarum presents us with the following definition of "the State" and statement of its basic purpose:

[T]he State...[is] not the particular form of government prevailing in this or that nation, but the State rightly apprehended, that is to say, any government conformable in its institutions to right reason and natural law...The foremost duty...of the rulers of the State should be to make sure that the laws and

institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth, shall be such as of themselves to realize public well-being and private prosperity....a State chiefly prospers and thrives through moral rule, well-regulated family life, respect for religion and justice, the moderation and fair imposing of public taxes, the progress of the arts and of trade, the abundant yield of the land—through everything, in fact, which makes the citizens better and happier.²⁹

Elsewhere, this encyclical tells us that “the safety of the commonwealth is not only the first law, but it is government’s whole reason for existence.” It further sets out the basis for the respect of human rights by government: “The State must not absorb the individual or the family; both should be allowed free and untrammelled action so far as is consistent with the common good and the interests of others.”³⁰ This was put another way by Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris*: “One of the fundamental duties of civil authorities...is to coordinate social relations in such a fashion that the exercise of one man’s rights does not threaten others in the exercise of their own rights nor hinder them in the fulfillment of their duties.”³¹ The purpose of government in promoting the dignity and ends of the individual and human rights is a theme frequently sounded by the popes. *Rerum Novarum* says, “[T]he end of society is to make men better.”³² *Pacem in Terris* contends that the civil authorities must understand that “the common good touches the whole man, the needs both of his body and of his soul” and “should promote simultaneously both the material and spiritual welfare of the citizens.”³³ In many places, *Centesimus Annus* stresses the state’s role of promoting and maintaining the common good.³⁴

The state’s responsibility, then, is the maintenance of the common good, which, as the above makes clear, relates not only to the good of the community as a whole but to that of the individuals in it as well. According to *Pacem in Terris*, “the very nature of the common good requires that all members of the political community be entitled to share in it, although in different ways according to each one’s tasks, merits and circumstances.”³⁵ The popes do not say that all persons in the community must be treated exactly alike, but instead there must be no undue preference shown on the basis of such criteria as race, ethnic group, religion, economic or occupational status, and so forth.³⁶ This dual responsibility of respecting both the whole community and the parts of it that is dictated by a true respect for the common good places on the state the special duty mentioned in *Populorum Progressio*: “If there should arise a conflict ‘between acquired private rights and primary community exigencies,’ it is the responsibility of public authorities ‘to look for a solution with the active participation of individuals and social groups.’”³⁷

Let us consider the rights of men further at this point. The basis for human rights, the popes state, is simply that man is a rational creature “endowed with intelligence and free will.” His rights and duties flow “directly and simultaneously from his very nature, which are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable.”³⁸ This emphasis on human rights is consistently coupled with an emphasis on duties. One of the themes of Part I of *Pacem in Terris* is that men must be equally conscious of both their rights and duties, both of which are mandated by the natural moral law and are oftentimes flip sides of the same matter, since whenever there are rights there must be a corresponding duty to respect them.³⁹

This encyclical lists the various natural rights and duties of man that public authority must respect and protect. The rights mentioned, by category, are the following: the right to life and a worthy manner of living (rights to life, bodily integrity, and to means necessary for the development of life, including food, shelter, rest, medical care, “necessary” social services, and the right to security when deprived of the means of subsistence through no fault of his own); rights “pertaining to moral and cultural values” (rights to respect for his person, his good reputation, freedom in searching for truth and in expressing and communicating his opinions, and in the pursuit of art, and related to these, “the right to be informed truthfully about public events”); the right to a basic education and to technical and professional training “in keeping with the stage of educational development in the country to which he belongs”); the “right to honor God according to the dictates of an upright conscience, and therefore the right to worship God privately and publicly”; the right to choose freely the state of life preferred (right to establish a family or to follow a vocation to the priesthood or religious life); rights pertaining to economic life (rights to

free initiative in the economic field, to work, to working conditions in which health, morals, and the special needs of women and the young are protected, to a proper wage, and to private property, including productive goods) (these economic rights will be discussed further in the next section); rights of meeting and association (the right to form and act in societies to achieve goals); the right to move freely about one's own country and to emigrate to other countries; and rights in the political order (the right to take an active part in public affairs, to contribute one's part to the common good of citizens, and to juridical protection of one's rights).⁴⁰

In connection with the rights of communication mentioned above, it must be noted that Vatican II's *Inter Mirifica* (*Decree on the Means of Social Communication* [1963]) states that “[i]t is for the civil authority...to defend and safeguard—especially in relation to the press—a true and just freedom of information, for the progress of modern society demands it...It should guarantee to those who use the media the free exercise of their lawful rights.”⁴¹

In mentioning duties in *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John singles out only a few specific ones, but says that all human rights have corresponding duties that are, in effect, the other side of the respective rights. As Pope John explains,

[T]he right of every man to life is correlative with the duty to preserve it; his right to a decent manner of living with the duty to live it becomingly; and his right to investigate truth freely, with the duty of seeking it and of possessing it ever more completely and profoundly...to one man's right there corresponds a duty in all other persons: the duty, namely, of acknowledging and respecting the right in question. For every fundamental human right draws its indestructible moral force from the natural law, which in granting it imposes a corresponding obligation...A well-ordered human society requires that men recognize and observe their mutual rights and duties...[and] that each contribute...to the establishment of a civic order in which rights and duties are...acknowledged and fulfilled.⁴²

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Pope John Paul II reiterates the various categories of rights above and, while he is not so exhaustive in his listing of specific rights, singles out several for mention, which he says are “especially” important: “the right to life at every stage of its existence; the rights of the family...; justice in employment relationships; the rights inherent in the life of the political community as such; [and] the rights based in the transcendent vocation of the human being, beginning with the right of freedom to profess and practice one's own religious belief.”⁴³ He also discusses the rights of entire nations and peoples, which are mentioned in the section on “The International Question” below.

Centesimus Annus spells out further dimensions of the state's role, pursuant to working to preserve the common good, in economic life. It says that the state's role includes the following: 1) establishing the “juridical framework” within which economic affairs take place in order to safeguard “human rights in the economic sector” and insure the necessary equality in economic relationships (i.e., commutative justice) (the “human rights” spoken of apparently range from the workers' rights spelled out in *Rerum Novarum* and other encyclicals to private property);⁴⁴ 2) protecting, *in conjunction with the private sector*, workers from unemployment⁴⁵ (as we see below, in *Laborem Exercens*, John Paul says that unemployment is always evil); 3) providing a stable currency and efficient public services in order to encourage honest and efficient work;⁴⁶ 4) guaranteeing, *in conjunction with the private sector*, a family wage⁴⁷ (see the section on “The ‘Social Question’” below); 5) preserving “common goods” (e.g., the environment and basic human rights) which the market cannot sufficiently protect.⁴⁸ All of these aspects of the state's role, of course, are carried out with reference to the limitations of the principle of subsidiarity.

Church teaching does not specify any one particular form of government that states must adopt to carry on the basic purposes above, so long as the common good (i.e., “public well-being and private prosperity”) is being promoted. This is so in spite of *Pacem in Terris* speaking above about the right to take an active part in public affairs, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* insisting that “nations need to reform...their political institutions, in order to replace corrupt, dictatorial, and authoritarian forms of government by *democratic* and *participatory* ones,” and *Centesimus Annus* saying that “a

society of...participation” is to be aimed for.⁴⁹ In saying this, the popes are simply referring to the requirement that governing authorities acknowledge that consent plays a vital part in any state. As Father Thomas J. Higgins, S.J., states in his solid Catholic ethics textbook, *Man as Man: The Science and Art of Ethics*, consent (at least tacit) is the juridic cause of any actually existing state and that a particular ruler’s authority to rule must rest ultimately upon the permanent consent of the people. These are both requirements of the natural law. In the modern world, particularly, “the development of the republican ideal and the increasing power of the masses...are gradually rendering the consent of the governed more and more indispensable, at least as a condition of rightful rule.”⁵⁰

A nation should have a form of government that takes into account its particular situation. *Pacem in Terris* states that, “In determining the structure and operation of government which a State is to have, great weight has to be given to the historical background and circumstances of the individual peoples.” The encyclical goes on to mention just one likely requirement of any type of government: “in keeping with the innate demands of human nature...the State should take a form which embodies the threefold division of powers corresponding to the three principal functions of public authority” (i.e., legislative, judicial, and executive).⁵¹

Pacem in Terris also makes clear that, contrary to what some, at different times, have accused the Church of, she is not opposed to democratic regimes. Even though she asserts that all political authority comes from God—and all human law, to be valid, must be derived from the eternal law and correspond to right reason—this does not preclude a regime in which the governed choose their rulers.⁵² In fact, even though the Church does not teach that any one form of government is absolutely the best or must be set up, her contemporary preference for democracy (i.e., representative government or a republican form) is seen in *Centesimus Annus*. This is because this form best guarantees human rights, citizen participation, accountability of those in governing positions, and peaceful changes of power. Like Leo XIII in *Libertas Praestantissimum (On Human Liberty)* (1888), however, John Paul notes the danger that in democracies truth will be suppressed because the majority will not accept it.⁵³ Echoing Leo, he says, “if there is not ultimate truth to guide and direct political activity, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power.” Even in democracies rights can be suppressed, which he observes has happened to some degree with the right to life (especially of the unborn child), various family rights, the right to pursue the truth, and the right to employment and to a just wage;⁵⁴ these are essentially the same rights he said above in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* were the “especially” important ones. He insists that “[a]uthentic democracy” requires commitment to the rule of law and “a correct conception of the human person.”⁵⁵

The “Social Question”

The papal social and economic teachings touch a substantial number of questions; we shall here only be able to present the major points. There are a number of areas that will be surveyed: the teachings about private property, the rights and duties of workers and employers, the role of the state in economic life, the structuring of industry, and the treatment of the agricultural sector.

Private Property and Private Enterprise

As already mentioned, the Church has stressed that men have a natural right to private property, including productive goods. This right includes the right of inheritance.⁵⁶ The Church has defended private property as a way of insuring human liberty generally.⁵⁷ She has also endorsed private economic activity for the same reason. In *Mater et Magistra*, Pope John states the following:

Experience...shows that where private initiative of individuals is lacking, political tyranny prevails. Moreover, much stagnation occurs in various sectors

of the economy, and hence all sorts of consumer goods and services, closely connected with needs of the body and more especially of the spirit, are in short supply. Beyond doubt, the attainment of such goods and services provides remarkable opportunity and stimulus for individuals to exercise initiative and industry.⁵⁸

Populorum Progressio refers to the “right of free commerce” and in different places speaks about the need to involve private bodies and stress private initiative in development efforts.⁵⁹ We saw above Pius XI’s reference to the legitimacy of profit. *Centesimus Annus* explains that earning a profit shows that “productive factors have been properly employed” and “human needs...satisfied.”⁶⁰ Besides restating and elaborating on these teachings of previous social encyclicals, *Centesimus Annus* gives an unprecedented emphasis to many of them. It strongly commends the “free market” or “business economy” or “capitalism” in a certain sense of the word (see the discussion below).⁶¹ In line with the above quotation from *Mater et Magistra*, it stresses the value of a balanced notion of self-interest. A stable social order is one that “seeks ways to bring...into fruitful harmony” “personal interest and the interests of society as a whole.” It insists that when self-interest is “violently suppressed,” as in Communist regimes, “it is replaced by a burdensome system of bureaucratic control which dries up the wellsprings of initiative and creativity.”⁶² It also singles out entrepreneurship for a special accolade. Entrepreneurship demands such “virtues” as diligence, industriousness, courage and prudence in taking risks, and so forth. The encyclical also underscores the importance of wealth creation for society.⁶³

The Church has also made clear, however, that the right of private property and the prerogatives attached to it are not absolute. Ownership has a “social or public aspect” as well as a private one that cannot be denied. This means that God has given men the right to own private property “not only that individuals may be able to provide for their own needs and those of their families, but also that by means of it, the goods which...[He] has destined for the human race may truly serve this purpose.”⁶⁴ *Centesimus Annus* restates the Church’s traditional teaching about the “social function” of private property, or “common use.”⁶⁵ In other words, private property must not be used only to help oneself, but also to further the common good. As *Populorum Progressio* puts it, “each man has...the right to find in the world what is necessary for himself... ‘Thus, as all men follow justice and unite in charity, created goods should abound for them on a reasonable basis.’ All other rights whatsoever, including those of property and of free commerce, are to be subordinated to this principle.”⁶⁶ It is no doubt in the spirit of this teaching that *Rerum Novarum* urges that, “The law...should favor ownership, and its policy should be to induce *as many as possible of the people to become owners.*”⁶⁷ In *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul, however, notes that there is another form of property that is becoming predominant in human economic affairs: “no less important than land [is] the possession of know-how, technology and skill.”⁶⁸

Obligations of Employers and Workers

The obligations of the possessors of private property, especially productive property, are spelled out in the encyclicals in the form of the duties of employers toward their workers and the rights of workers. The Church has clearly allied herself with the cause of workers who have been disadvantaged and oppressed by production arrangements and employment practices. As we shall see, however, she has also emphasized that workers likewise have obligations to their employers.

In *Mater et Magistra*, we are told that there is a two-fold dimension to justice in the economic order which affects the dignity of workers: one aspect relates to the distribution of wealth, the other to the conditions under which men engage in productive activity. Both must be operational in order for an economic order to be just, as the encyclical states:

There is...an innate need of human nature requiring that men engaged in productive activity have an opportunity to assume responsibility and to perfect themselves by their efforts. Consequently if the organization and structure of economic life be such that the human dignity of workers is compromised, or

their sense of responsibility is weakened, or their freedom of action is removed, then we judge such an economic order to be unjust, even though...[its] distribution conforms to the norms of justice and equity.⁶⁹

In *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II emphasizes that man's dignity requires that he not be treated as "an instrument of production"—as has so often happened in modern times—but rather as "the effective subject of work and its true maker and creator."⁷⁰ He attacks "the error of economism"—which is part of the more broadly encompassing "error of materialism"—that "consider[s] human labor solely according to its economic purpose."⁷¹

Probably the major duty of employers to their employees—which has been stressed over and over again and elaborated on in the social encyclicals—is the payment of a just wage. In *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pope Pius XI states that this is to consist of a wage which would be "sufficient for the support of...[the workingman] and his family." It should be "adequate to meet ordinary domestic needs," so that mothers do not have to neglect their children by working outside of the home and young children do not have to work.⁷² *Rerum Novarum* says that a workman's wages must "be sufficient to enable him to comfortably support himself, his wife, and his children," and to permit him, if he "practice[s] thrift...to put by some little savings and thus secure a modest source of income."⁷³ It holds that "[i]f in the present state of society this is not always feasible, social justice demands that reforms be introduced without delay which will guarantee every adult workingman just such a wage."⁷⁴ In *Mater et Magistra*, Pope John spells out further what a just wage requires and how it is to be derived:

[W]orkers [must] receive a wage sufficient to lead a life worthy of man and to fulfill family responsibilities properly. But in determining what constitutes an appropriate wage, the following must necessarily be taken into account: first of all, the contributions of individuals to the economic effort; the economic state of the enterprises within which they work; the requirements of each community, especially as regards over-all employment; finally, what concerns the common good of all peoples, namely of the various States associated among themselves, but differing in character and extent.⁷⁵

He emphasizes that "just as remuneration for work cannot be left entirely to unregulated competition, neither may it be decided arbitrarily at the will of the more powerful."⁷⁶ *Laborem Exercens* proposes two ways in which this just wage can be given: the "family wage," wherein "a single salary [is] given to the head of the family for his work, sufficient for the needs of the family without the other spouse having to take up gainful employment outside the home," or through "other social measures," "such as family allowances or grants to mothers devoting themselves exclusively to their families." This encyclical also mentions the obligation to provide "'social benefits'...to ensure the life and health of workers and their families," including cheap or free health insurance, especially in the case of work-related accidents, and pension rights and old-age insurance.⁷⁷

Another point involving obligations of employers to workers that the popes have consistently raised concerns unemployment. *Quadragesimo Anno* speaks of it being "necessary...that employment opportunities be provided those able and willing to work." Issued at the time of the worldwide Great Depression, it says that "unemployment, particularly if widespread and of long duration...is a dreadful scourge." It views the problem of unemployment as connected to the general level of wages, saying that wages either too high or too low cause it. It states that "[t]o raise or lower wages unduly, with a view to private profit, and with no consideration for the common good, is contrary to social justice."⁷⁸ By the time of *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II is referring to unemployment as "in all cases an evil."⁷⁹ We shall return to this subject shortly to discuss the obligations of the state to the unemployed.

There are other obligations of employer to employee that the popes have put forth. A listing of these obligations appears in *Rerum Novarum*: the worker must be given time for his religious duties (in *Laborem Exercens*, faced with a tendency in Western countries to treat Sundays like any

other business day, John Paul II asserted the existence of a “right to rest,” comprising Sunday and some vacation time.⁸⁰ The worker also has the right to be shielded from “corrupting influences and dangerous occasions,” not to be put in a position that leads him to neglect his home and family or squander his earnings, not to be taxed beyond his strength, and not to be assigned work unsuited to his sex or age.⁸¹ Further, workers have a right to form or join unions.⁸² These unions may employ “the strike or work stoppage” as “[o]ne method...in pursuing the just rights of their members.”⁸³

In *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II addresses the matter of the application of workers’ rights to new areas gaining attention in the contemporary world. He states that “disabled persons...should be helped to participate in the life of society in all its aspects and at all levels accessible to their capacities.” To do otherwise “would be to practice a *serious form of discrimination*, that of the strong and healthy against the weak and sick.”⁸⁴ They should be offered work according to their capabilities. John Paul also states that discrimination on the basis of nationality, religion, or race in determining remuneration for work has no place, and that those who emigrate to a new country in search of work “should not be *placed at a disadvantage* in comparison with the other workers in that [new] society in the matter of working rights.”⁸⁵

While concerned about protecting the woman’s unique, “irreplaceable” role as mother, John Paul also makes clear that women should not be discriminated against in consideration for or excluded from jobs they are capable of undertaking to the extent their nature will permit. They must be allowed to join men in their efforts to contribute “to the good of society.” He also says, however, that a society’s notion of work should take account of women’s “family aspirations” and, in fact, that work “should be structured in such a way” that they can still hope to advance in it even if they devote themselves to a family calling.⁸⁶

As mentioned, the popes have not only insisted on the obligations of employers to workers, but also of workers to their employers. The popes have stated both specific obligations to individual employers and obligations to respect the rights and system of private ownership. Leo XIII lists the following specific duties:

[To] fully and faithfully perform the work which has been freely and equitably agreed upon; never to injure the property, nor to outrage the person, of an employer; never to resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor to engage in riot or disorder; and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles, who work upon the people with artful promises of great results, and excite foolish hopes which usually end in useless regrets and grievous loss.⁸⁷

As far as respect for the system of private ownership is concerned, Pius XI says this:

By...[the] principles of social justice one class is forbidden to exclude the other from a share in the profits. This law is violated by an irresponsible wealthy class who...deem...that they should receive everything and the laborer nothing. It is violated also by the propertyless class, when, strongly aroused because justice is ignored and too prone to vindicate improperly the one right well known to them, they demand for themselves all the fruits of production. They are wrong in thus attacking and seeking the abolition of ownership and all profits deriving from sources other than labor.⁸⁸

Pope Pius XI is quick to make clear that respect for the rights of workers does not mean that idleness should be tolerated. He says that St. Paul’s teaching that “[i]f any man will not work, neither let him eat” means that we must “use diligently our time and our powers of body and mind, and not...become burdensome to others as long as we are able to provide for ourselves.” Additionally, this teaching is not to be taken as an endorsement of a “labor theory of value” as some contended.⁸⁹

Workers associations—i.e., unions—are similarly restricted in what they can do. As *Laborem Exercens* says, they must be viewed as “a *mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice*, for the just rights of working people,” but not a “reflection of the ‘class’ structure of society” or “a

mouthpiece for a class struggle.” It goes on to say that “[u]nion demands cannot be turned into a kind of *group or class ‘egoism’*” although they can aim at correcting defects in the economic system. Unions “do not have the character of political parties struggling for power...[and] they should not...have too close links with them [parties].” The strike “*must not be abused...especially for ‘political’ purposes...[and] essential community services...must in every case be ensured...*”⁹⁰ (The reference to union demands and the affirmation of the right to strike, of course, indicate *a fortiori* that workers and unions have a right to collective bargaining and other peaceful collective action.)

Agricultural Labor

While the earlier social encyclicals specifically addressed the plight of industrial workers, later ones have expanded upon this theme to address the needs of farmers and agricultural workers also. *Mater et Magistra*, concerned so much with the moral imperative of economic development, tells us that this development is best accomplished if it “proceed[s] in an orderly fashion...preserving appropriate balance between the various sectors of the economy,” including agriculture.⁹¹ This involves “public authorities giv[ing] heed and tak[ing] action in the following matters: taxes and duties, credit, insurance, prices, the fostering of requisite skills, and...improved equipment for rural enterprises.”⁹² Attention to the economic situation of those in the agricultural sector is morally required and the language of the encyclical on the above particular points indicates that they are, in some sense, also morally required or at least come close to being moral mandates in order to help a depressed sector of the economy.

On the other hand, the encyclical endorses the family farm concept as something desirable, not morally mandated. This means of organization is not mandated—the encyclical says “no person can lay down a universal rule” about this—although it suggests that it may be the most conducive to “hold[ing] man and the family in proper esteem.”⁹³ It is clear that it is a moral requirement that farmers be able to acquire “money income sufficient for decent and human family living.”⁹⁴ He also states, by way of “opinion” (i.e., it is not morally mandated), “that in rural affairs, the principal agents and protagonists of economic improvement, of cultural betterment, or of social advance, should be the men personally involved, namely, the farmers themselves.”⁹⁵ He also speaks of the need for farmers to join together in associations in order to “achieve an importance and influence in public affairs proportionate to their own role.”⁹⁶ He thus urges that they be involved in the decisions that affect their endeavors and way of life.

Laborem Exercens speaks of specific injustices and needs of persons in agriculture that must be addressed: the fact that in developing countries peasants are exploited by powerful landowners and can never gain land of their own, the lack of legal and social insurance protection, long hours and poor pay, poor training and equipment, the exclusion of these workers from decisions involving their services, and the denial to them of the right of free association.⁹⁷ Moreover, *Mater et Magistra* holds that rural dwellers must be provided with “the principal services needed by all,” including highway construction, transport services, marketing facilities, pure drinking water, housing, medical services, schools, things needed for religion and recreation, and furnishings and equipment needed in the modern farm home.⁹⁸ _

__Communism, Socialism, and Equality

Let us now survey the major points in the social encyclicals about the role of the state in economic matters, or, more broadly, its role in securing social justice.

Communism, of course, has been consistently condemned. This was first done in 1846 by Pope Pius IX and was the subject of Pope Pius XI’s entire encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* in 1937. In this encyclical, communism is attacked for its atheism; its gross materialism and rejection of anything spiritual; its exploitation of the antagonisms existing among classes in society and “consequent violent hate and destruction”; its “strip[ping of] man of his liberty, rob[bing of] the human personality of all its dignity, and remov[ing of]...all moral restraints”; its unwillingness to

recognize “any right of the individual in his relations to the collectivity”; its denunciation of private property; and its repudiation of the spiritual and natural origins of marriage and the family.⁹⁹ Regarding the latter, communism rejects “any link that binds the woman to the family and the home” and denies the inherent right of parents to educate their children.¹⁰⁰

In the document *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the “Theology of Liberation,”*¹⁰¹ the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith took a strongly critical view of the Marxist-inspired “liberation theology” that had been making gains in the underdeveloped world, especially Latin America. In the document written by the Congregation as a follow-up to this one, entitled *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*¹⁰²—the Congregation stated it wanted to delineate the chief aspects of a genuine Christian perspective on freedom and liberation¹⁰³—there is an implicit criticism of the view of liberation theology adherents and Marxists generally that “sin” is found basically in unjust social and political structures. The latter document does not specifically call this a Marxist perspective, even though its being stated in this particular document suggests that the Congregation had Marxism particularly in mind. Nevertheless, the document suggests that there may be some validity to the argument that there are “sinful structures”; it sees these, however, as reflections of “sinful man.” It puts it this way: “having become his own center, sinful man tends to assert himself and to satisfy his desire for the infinite by the use of things: wealth, power and pleasure, despising other people and robbing them unjustly and treating them as objects or instruments. Thus he makes his own contribution to the creation of those very structures of exploitation and slavery which he claims to condemn.”¹⁰⁴

Even while making it clear that Christian tradition understands that sin is something that issues forth from the hearts of men, however, it acknowledges that there can indeed be sinful structures due to the actions of sinful man.¹⁰⁵ Pope John Paul II takes up this point in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*:

[I]t is not out of place to speak of “structures of sin,” which...are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the *concrete acts* of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them, and make them difficult to remove. Thus they grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins, and so influence people’s behavior.¹⁰⁶

Some of the most profound papal reflection ever on communism and totalitarianism appears in *Centesimus Annus*. An entire chapter is devoted to the collapse of the Communist regimes in Europe in 1989. Pope John Paul says that the collapse resulted from the suppression of workers’ rights, economic inefficiency (caused by the violation of economic rights), and, most fundamentally, the spiritual void brought about by atheism.¹⁰⁷ The latter is the reason why communism could not be opposed merely by economic means—i.e., stressing the satisfaction of material needs while “excluding spiritual values.”¹⁰⁸ What is typical of all totalitarian regimes, John Paul says, is the repudiation of transcendent truth, the rejection of the Church, the tendency to absorb all lesser associations, and the claim that the state or party is the reposer of all truth.¹⁰⁹ In light of all this, the pope reiterates the consistent teaching of the Church in the modern age about how “impossible compromise between Marxism and Christianity” is.¹¹⁰ Further, as far as economics is concerned, he asserts that the extreme suppression of self-interest (see above) by communism reflected the ill-conceived utopian ambition to “make...evil impossible” by means of a purported “perfect social organization.”¹¹¹

Socialism also has been condemned repeatedly, in both its more extreme and moderate forms, because of its basic materialistic premises, essential opposition to private property, support for antagonism among classes in society, basic atheism, view of the individual as just a part of a socialized mass, and belief in compulsion to secure its objectives.¹¹² One recalls the well-known line from *Quadragesimo Anno*: “No one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and a true socialist.”¹¹³

In connection with this, we have already indicated that the Church says that all people in society must have their basic rights respected, all have an equal human dignity, and all must be guaranteed equal opportunity in society. She does not support the view that all must be treated exactly alike, or be entitled to the same station or the same amount of wealth or property, or be

insured equal results in whatever they undertake. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (*On Socialism* [1878]) says the following:

[T]he socialists...always...maintain that nature has made all men equal, and...therefore, neither honor nor respect is due to majesty...But, on the contrary, in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel, the equality of men consists in this: that all, having inherited the same nature, are called to the same most high dignity of the sons of God, and that, as one and the same end is set before all, each one is to be judged by the same law and will receive punishment or reward according to his deserts. The inequality of rights and of power proceeds from the very Author of nature...For, He who created and governs all things has, in His wise providence, appointed that the things which are lowest should attain their ends by those which are intermediate, and these again by the highest....He [has] appointed that there should be various orders in civil society, differing in dignity, rights, and power, whereby the State, like the Church, should be one body, consisting of many members, some nobler than others, but all necessary to each other and solicitous for the common good.¹¹⁴

and

For, while the socialists would destroy the “right” of property, alleging it to be a human invention altogether opposed to the inborn equality of man, and claiming a community of goods, argue that property and privileges of the rich may be rightly invaded, the Church, with much greater wisdom and good sense, recognizes the inequality among men, who are born with different powers of body and mind, inequality in actual possession, also, and holds that the right of property and of ownership, which springs from nature itself, must not be touched and stands inviolate. For she knows that stealing and robbery were forbidden in so special a manner by God...that He would not allow man even to desire what belonged to another...¹¹⁵

Later, Pope John XXIII will say that all human beings “are equal by reason of their natural dignity,”¹¹⁶ even though “there will ever be differences and inequalities of condition in the State” since “it should not be supposed that all can contribute in the like way and to the same extent.”¹¹⁷

It should be mentioned that, in spite of what the Church says about socialism and equality, she does not necessarily condemn redistribution of wealth by public authorities. As the Vatican Council II document *Gaudium et Spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*) says, “God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things must be shared fairly by all mankind” and “men are bound to come to the aid of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods.” The meaning of this age-old teaching of Christianity is that “[w]hen a person is in extreme necessity, he has the right to supply himself with what he needs out of the riches of others.”¹¹⁸ It specifies that “[i]n this case the old principle holds good: ‘In extreme necessity all goods are common, that is, they are to be shared.’” Certain “moral conditions...must be fulfilled” in the doing of this, however, and Church teaching would be violated if it were done in the wrong manner or done beyond a certain extent.¹¹⁹ On this latter point, the document refers to St. Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*.¹²⁰

Ordering Principles in Economic Affairs and the State’s Role in Economic Life

While condemning communism and socialism, the social encyclicals have made it clear that individualistic, laissez faire capitalism—a central aspect of classical or nineteenth-century liberalism—is also rejected. Pius XI instructs us as follows:

[T]he proper ordering of economic affairs cannot be left to the free play of rugged competition....Free competition...though justified and quite useful within certain limits, cannot be an adequate controlling principle in economic affairs...Still less can this function be exercised by the economic supremacy which...has taken the place of free competition.¹²¹ [Elsewhere, he refers to the latter as a “concentration of power” which has led to “domination.” In other words, he is condemning monopoly.¹²²]

In *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul says that if “capitalism” refers to “an economic system which recognizes the fundamental and positive role of business, the market, and private property and the resulting personal responsibility for the means of production as well as free human creativity in the economic sector,” it is desirable. If, however, it is to be understood as a “system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework which places it at the service of human freedom in its totality and which sees it as a particular aspect of that freedom, the core of which is ethical and religious,” then it is to be rejected.¹²³ *Centesimus Annus* repeats the teaching of previous encyclicals about the dangers of an *unrestrained* market, self-interest, and the profit motive. If unrestrained, they can create injustice, suppress human dignity, neglect certain fundamental needs (which the market would not be capable of addressing), make consumption the center of life (i.e., promote consumerism), and thwart the effort to establish dignified work as the main feature of the economic order (which is needed so that men can “express their creativity and develop their potential”).¹²⁴ The encyclical further emphasizes that “[i]n spite of the great changes which have taken place in the more advanced societies” which seem to have diminished or eliminated the injustices caused by an earlier version of capitalism (i.e., laissez faire), “the human inadequacies of capitalism and the resulting domination of things over people are far from disappearing.”¹²⁵

In spite of her repudiation of the various modern economic ideologies, the Church’s teaching must not be understood as just another approach or perspective. As *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* says,

The Church’s social doctrine is not a “third way” between *liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism*, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another...Nor is it an ideology, but rather the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church’s tradition....It therefore belongs to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology.¹²⁶

While the Church does not propose a “third way,” she *does* provide a vision for economic life that stands as an alternative to both socialism and the flawed version of capitalism spoken about above. *Centesimus Annus* tells us that this vision is “a society of free work, of enterprise and of participation.” This kind of society “demands that the market be controlled by the forces of society and by the state so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole society are satisfied.”¹²⁷

Pius XI tells us what should be looked to as the true controlling principles in economic matters and what the state must do:

More lofty and noble principles must...be sought...social justice and social charity...all institutions of public and social life must be imbued with the spirit of justice...It is the duty of the State to safeguard effectively and to vindicate promptly this order.¹²⁸

While the state, then, clearly has an important role to play, the role is limited. The basic principle limiting the state is subsidiarity. This principle is stated well in *Quadragesimo Anno*:

[I]t is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry. So, too, it is an injustice and...a grave evil and a disturbance of right order, to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies. Inasmuch as every social activity should...prove a help to members of the body social, it should never absorb them.

The State authorities should leave to other bodies the care and expediting of business and activities of lesser moment...¹²⁹

Taking this principle of subsidiarity as a starting point, the popes have addressed the general prerogatives and functions the state may assume in the economy as well as the specific duties it has to its citizens to insure their economic well-being. So, on the one hand, “complete collectivization” and “arbitrary planning such as has characterized Communist countries is condemned.”¹³⁰ On the other hand, the state has a duty, as “indirect employer,” to “make provision for *overall planning*” in order “to meet the danger of unemployment and to ensure employment for all.”¹³¹ *Mater et Magistra* tells us that “it is lawful for States and public corporations to expand their domain of ownership,” but only if the principle of subsidiarity is closely observed, the common good clearly requires it, and safeguards are taken to insure that the right of private property continues to be respected.¹³² *Quadragesimo Anno* also makes clear that the public authority may decide “what is licit and what is illicit for property owners in the use of their possessions,” so long as it follows the divine and natural law in such decisionmaking.¹³³

This right of the state is indicated by the principle that “*the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use*, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone.”¹³⁴ This principle also legitimizes “*socialization*, in suitable conditions, of certain means of production.”¹³⁵ By “socialization” is meant taking ownership of the means of production out of private hands and making them the property of organized society. *Laborem Exercens* makes it clear that this is not satisfied simply by the state taking possession, but when “on the basis of his work each person is fully entitled to consider himself a part-owner of the great workbench at which he is working with everyone else”—and when basic human rights are protected.¹³⁶ How this can be done is seen in our discussion of the popes’ recommendations for restructuring industry.

As mentioned above in the section on “The Role of the State,” *Centesimus Annus* spells out certain specific tasks for the state as respects the economy. In line with the limited character of this role, the encyclical makes clear that the state’s interventions must be: “supplementary,” only for “urgent reasons touching the common good,” and “as brief as possible.”¹³⁷ In line with these, it says that the state’s role involves “creating favorable conditions for the free exercise of economic activity” which “will lead to...employment and sources of wealth” and placing the necessary limits on economic autonomy so as to defend the weak and support the unemployed (as discussed below).¹³⁸

The state also may not levy excessive taxation on its citizens. It acts unjustly if it deprives a person of “more than is fair” by taxation, and it certainly cannot use taxation as an indirect means of violating the right of private property.¹³⁹ *Mater et Magistra* enunciates the general principle to be followed to insure a just taxing policy: “As regards taxation, assessment according to ability to pay is fundamental to a just and equitable system.”¹⁴⁰ This is based simply on the principles of distributive justice.

The popes have said that the law should give special protection to workers and to the poor because, as Leo XIII pointed out, the rich have their own resources to protect themselves, but the poor do not “and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State.”¹⁴¹

The state, Leo XIII also said, should act to eliminate the causes of labor-management problems before they develop by legislating proper standards for wages and working conditions, etc. (i.e., by

making sure that the duties owed to workers mentioned above are carried out). It must also, of course, safeguard private property, to protect it from being seized by others even “under the futile and shallow pretext of equality.” Indeed, the state has a duty to restrain those “firebrands” among the working class who seek violent, revolutionary change.¹⁴² It also has the right to prevent the forming of associations “which are evidently bad, unlawful, or dangerous” to it.¹⁴³

The popes mention a number of things that persons must have access to if their economic well-being is to be insured. They have said that the public authorities have a particular obligation to see that these are provided. The state may provide relief (i.e., welfare) for the poor, but its use of its laws to help alleviate the situation of the poor by other means should make this not so necessary. Also, its system of relief should not take precedence over the Church’s charitable works, and it should view the relief effort as a cooperative one with other human agencies.¹⁴⁴ *Laborem Exercens* tells us that there is a “duty to make suitable grants...for the subsistence” of the unemployed and their families. Besides unemployment benefits, this ostensibly also includes relief. The state, as “indirect employer,” is “responsible” for seeing that this is done in some way.¹⁴⁵ *Mater et Magistra* states that social insurance and social security (including old-age insurance) are necessary,¹⁴⁶ and what was stated above suggests that it views public authorities as especially responsible for this.

We have noted that the popes both emphasize the economic and social welfare role for the state and insist that it is limited by the principle of subsidiarity. In *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul makes clear that the implication of this teaching is that the Western-style “welfare state” or “social assistance state” is to be rejected. The welfare state results in a loss of human initiative, massive increases in public spending, and less concern with those being served than with “bureaucratic ways.” He states that “it would appear that needs are best met by people closest to...those in need” (specifically, greater reliance must be placed on the family, neighbors, and the Church). He commends “other intermediate communities” in addition to the family.¹⁴⁷

The Church consistently emphasizes her particular love of the poor, and has said that this must be shared by others and particular attention given to their plight. She has called this “the option or love of preference for the poor,”¹⁴⁸ and it is based directly on Jesus’ teaching.¹⁴⁹ By the poor, however, the Church has meant not just the economically impoverished, but also the culturally and spiritually impoverished.¹⁵⁰

Cooperation: The Basis for Reconstructing the Social Order

The social encyclicals have had running through them the theme of reconstructing the social order. The first point the popes have made clear is that there can be no reconstruction, nor any real solution to the social problem, without religion and the Church.¹⁵¹ It “must be preceded by a profound renewal of the Christian spirit.”¹⁵²

This reconstruction of the social order called for by the popes involves, most basically, a substitution of a cooperative spirit between labor and employers for the prevalent antagonistic and even hostile attitude. This cooperative spirit is based on the belief, as enunciated by Leo XIII, that “it is ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement...to maintain the balance of the body politic. Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital.”¹⁵³

This need for a partnership between capital and labor has led the popes to call for employees to “have an active part in the affairs of the enterprise wherein they work, whether...private or public,” especially in medium-size and large enterprises.¹⁵⁴ *Centesimus Annus* reaffirms such admonitions on the grounds that work is a naturally cooperative endeavor, undertaken in association with others and for the benefit, at least in part, of others.¹⁵⁵ A more fundamental restructuring of the economic order called for by the popes has involved the call for the establishment of functional or vocational groups. These would not be unions, but would involve the coming together into associations of all those involved in the same trade or profession, both from the side of labor and of ownership and management. These common associations would enable all those involved in a profession to work for its common benefit and for the common good of society. Joining such associations must be a free choice of individuals and, in so doing, they retain their right to join

other associations.¹⁵⁶ (The popes make it clear that both workers and employers have a right to organize their own groups to promote their objectives.)¹⁵⁷ *Rerum Novarum* states that these associations can be the means of correcting unjust or unsatisfactory conditions in industries and protecting workers' rights "in order to supersede undue interference on the part of the State," although, if circumstances dictate, the state can be appealed to "for its sanction and protection."¹⁵⁸

The "International Question"

Finally, let us consider what the social encyclicals have said about the moral rules governing the relations between nations, war and peace, and international human rights questions.

Building a Just International Order

The first point of the popes that should be noted in building a just international order is the same as for building a just domestic social order: God and "a moral law rooted in religion" must be the basis of it.¹⁵⁹ *Centesimus Annus* pointedly states, "[T]here can be no genuine solution" to social questions and problems "apart from the Gospel."¹⁶⁰ While the popes vigorously defend human freedom, they also say that it can be self-destructive unless it is tied to the truth.¹⁶¹ Although, as we shall see, the popes point to many international problems—economic injustice, warfare, suppression of human rights—the most basic problem, as Pope Paul VI tells us, in a "world [that] is sick" is "the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples."¹⁶² Individual countries can no longer just be concerned about indigenous social problems and divorce themselves from these problems as they afflict other nations. Both Paul VI and John Paul II declare that the "social question has become worldwide in scope. John Paul states that economic conditions and problems in particular nations and regions of the world "are not to be considered as isolated cases with no connection" since "they depend more and more on the influence of factors beyond regional boundaries and national frontiers."¹⁶³ "First, Second, Third, and even Fourth World...*interdependence* remains close...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."¹⁶⁴

International Economic Matters and International Cooperation

We now consider the popes' teachings on the international economic question, most of which has been put forth from the time of John XXIII (John's *Pacem in Terris*, Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, and John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* all deal primarily with questions concerning the international community). Much of this teaching deals with the treatment of poor countries by rich ones and the matter of the economic development of the poor countries. John Paul's *Centesimus Annus* devotes a considerable amount of attention to it.

John Paul says that all peoples have the "right...to share in the process of full development,"¹⁶⁵ and insists that there be "an ever greater degree of rigorous respect for justice and consequently a fair distribution of the results of true development."¹⁶⁶ Paul VI admonishes us to understand that development does not have "increased possession" or wealth as the "ultimate goal of nations"; it must permit "man to develop as a man," to make "the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human." Less human conditions include insufficient material necessities, moral deficiencies, oppressive social structures, and exploitation of workers. Conditions which are more human include the opposite of these and greater respect for others' dignity, cooperation for the common good, the desire for peace, and, most of all, "the acknowledgement...of supreme values, and of God as their source...[and] faith...and unity in the charity of Christ."¹⁶⁷ True development, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* insists, "respect[s] and promote[s] *human rights*...including the *rights of nations and of peoples*."¹⁶⁸ Along with the latter in the shaping of "a real

international system” must go an acknowledgement of “the *equality* of all peoples” and a “respect for their legitimate differences,”¹⁶⁹ which include “the identity of each people, with its own historical and cultural characteristics.”¹⁷⁰ (By “identity,” John Paul II seems to mean a national and ethnic or racial uniqueness, with particular traditions developing as part of it.) He tells us further that development—and human freedom—can be hindered by “manipulation by...mass communication...impos[ing] fashions and trends of opinion.”¹⁷¹

The popes instruct that the developed and economically better-off nations have an obligation to assist the poorer nations in their development efforts. “Every nation must...contribute to the common development of the human race...the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations.” They should devote some of their production to them and should train persons to be available to them to assist in their needs.¹⁷² Private enterprises and organizations should assist them also.¹⁷³ The popes have said that not only must nations work together to bring about development—both rich and poor nations and poor nations in concert—but there must be a truly cooperative effort by public authorities, private persons and organizations, and international bodies.¹⁷⁴ As Paul VI says, the situation demands “concerted planning”; he even calls for the creation of a “World Fund” to be established from part of the money spent on arms to help the most destitute of the world.¹⁷⁵ He insists that the aid given to developing nations, either by nations or other institutions, be truly disinterested: “receiving countries could demand that there be no interference in their political life or subversion of their social structures.” They could be held accountable, however, for the legitimate use of the aid: “Guarantees could be given to those who provide...capital that it will be put to use according to an agreed plan and with a reasonable measure of efficiency.”¹⁷⁶

As far as international organizations are concerned, it must be noted that the popes have frequently spoken well of them. In fact, in *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII talks of the need for an international public authority to further the universal common good that is not being sufficiently promoted in the present international order. He says this authority would have to be entered into freely by governments, and he does not specify if it should have the same power as a national government. He does make it clear that it is not to be a substitute for individual political communities—i.e., not a world government—but its actions would be governed by the principle of subsidiarity and it would be concerned only with world-wide problems.¹⁷⁷

By the time of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, twenty-five years later, Pope John Paul II says that “[i]n the opinion of many, the *International Organizations* seem to be at a stage of their existence when their operating methods, operating costs and effectiveness need careful review and possible correction.” He demonstrates a regretful awareness that these organizations have been manipulated for national and political reasons. He nevertheless endorses such organizations, as John XIII did, and says that the world actually needs “a greater degree of international ordering, at the service of the societies, economies, and cultures of the whole world.”¹⁷⁸ In other words, international organizations are an obvious way of bringing about necessary unity amidst a desirable diversity. In *Centesimus Annus*, he tells us that a concerted effort by the world’s most powerful countries and the efforts of international agencies are needed to direct international economics toward the common good.¹⁷⁹ Aid decisions by international agencies must “always give sufficient consideration” to nations that have the greatest need but have “little weight in the international market.”¹⁸⁰

John Paul also elaborates on a particular form of international cooperation that Paul VI briefly mentioned in *Populorum Progressio*: regional cooperation. Both urge especially underdeveloped nations in the same geographical areas to join together to promote the economic and material advancement of each. This sharing can aid them in achieving economic independence, promoting trade with each other, and distributing productive capital among them. While Paul VI seems to speak mostly about bilateral and multilateral agreements among countries to accomplish this, John Paul goes beyond just this to suggest their setting up “new regional organizations.”¹⁸¹

The popes address specific economic rights and prerogatives in the international sphere. They tell us that the same standards that apply in the domestic realm—regarding considerations of justice taking precedence over free contractual agreement, “the law of free competition,” and prices set by the market—apply also in economic relations among nations. The rule of free trade

cannot be a dogma. Trade must be “subject to the demands of social justice,” and “[w]ithout abolishing the competitive market, it should be kept within limits which make it just and moral, and therefore human.”¹⁸² Areas which are part of this that are singled out for particular concern in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* are the world monetary and financial system which hurts the debt situation of the poor countries, the discrimination of the international trade system against those of the latter countries that would be capable of being raw materials producers, and problems with technology transfer that often result in these countries not receiving the kind of technology they desperately need.¹⁸³ *Centesimus Annus* says that if “hunger and despair” and “unbearable sacrifices” will result from requiring underdeveloped nations to repay international debts, the debts should “be lighten[ed], defer[red], or even cancel[led].”¹⁸⁴ Also, expropriation of property is permissible in the following circumstances:

If certain landed estates impede the general prosperity because they are extensive, unused or poorly used, or because they bring hardship to peoples or are detrimental to the interests of the country, the common good sometimes demands their expropriation.¹⁸⁵

Also, people cannot use available revenue in whimsical or speculative ways. Furthermore, if people have abundant incomes, they should not transfer substantial amounts of their money out of their country when it needs their investment.¹⁸⁶ A further indigenous problem in some of the underdeveloped countries that stands in the way of true progress of their people is the existence of “unjust structures,” such as corrupt and authoritarian political institutions.¹⁸⁷

Colonialism and International Human Rights

Populorum Progressio presents a balanced view of colonialism, stating that “a certain type” of it caused damage, but acknowledging benefits resulting from it for many of the former colonies.¹⁸⁸ It states that “racism” and “nationalism” in the former colonies stand in the way of international cooperation (although nationalism can be a positive force if it is a moderate, not extreme, expression of pride in a certain cultural patrimony).¹⁸⁹ This assertion, obviously, is based on the Church’s teaching (above) about the inherent equality of all human beings.

There is also a condemnation of revolution (which had been contemplated or tried in many former colonies), except in an extreme case, which the popes see as causing new injustices.¹⁹⁰

The various human rights the popes have enunciated and defended have already been mentioned. When examining the encyclicals, we see two additional points that need to be mentioned on the subject of human rights on the international plane. One, closely related to the above, is that the rights of ethnic minorities must be respected. This is stated along with an exhortation to these minorities to not exalt themselves and their culture or to view what is advantageous to them as advantageous to everyone.¹⁹¹ The other point concerns political refugees. Refugees retain their human rights even though they have left their native states. They should be accepted and these rights acknowledged by the states they seek to enter.¹⁹² (We have already mentioned that the employment rights of *emigres* must be fully respected.)

In *Mater et Magistra*, John XXIII addresses the purported problem of an imbalance between population growth and the means of subsistence in the whole world or at least in some countries (i.e., that the growth in population is outstripping the growth in food and resources necessary for maintaining it). He contends that the facts to back up this theory are inconclusive. He says, however, that even if it is the case, the population policies developed to address it would have to follow “the moral law laid down by God,” “regard the life of man as sacred,” and avoid the use of “methods and procedures which may indeed be permissible to check the life of plants and animals” but not man.¹⁹³ This means that such methods as contraception, abortion, and infanticide would be morally unacceptable. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II singles out for “the most forceful condemnation” the launching of “*systematic campaigns* against birth.” These are against both the “cultural and religious identity of the countries” they are directed at—usually, he notes,

poor countries—and “true development.” He says further that “this sometimes leads to a tendency towards a form of racism.”¹⁹⁴

The Environment

Pursuant to, or in conjunction with, his discussion of underdevelopment, Pope John Paul II addresses the question of the physical environment. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, he says that natural resources cannot be treated as if man has absolute dominion over them, as if they are inexhaustible, and that we must be concerned about the pollution of the environment and the health dangers of it. “[T]he way in which resources are used must include respect for moral demands....The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power...[W]hen it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity.”¹⁹⁵

Pope John Paul II devoted one of his last statements of the 1980’s to environmental concerns. This December 8, 1989 statement, called “Peace With God the Creator, Peace With All of Creation,”¹⁹⁶ speaks about the “ecological crises” as a “moral problem.”¹⁹⁷ He states that it is a consequence, most fundamentally, of man “turn[ing] his back on the Creator’s plan.”¹⁹⁸ It has been caused by such factors as “the indiscriminant application of advances in science and technology”; a concern for “the interests of production” over human dignity (the same theme as is sounded in the social encyclicals in talking about labor) resulting in an ensuing disregard for physical nature; the “uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life” and “a reckless exploitation of natural resources” often “in the name of progress”; and subsistence farming in underdeveloped countries—caused because of deep-seated conditions of rural poverty and unjust land distribution—that leads to exhaustion of the soil and “accelerating uncontrolled deforestation.”¹⁹⁹

Also, the not-so-distant future holds the grave threats of “biological disturbance...from indiscriminant genetic manipulation” and warfare—either conventional, thermonuclear, or chemical-biological—on a worldwide or even more localized scale that can massively harm the environment.²⁰⁰ John Paul II calls upon men to realize that the earth is their common heritage, the fruits of which all should partake of—not just the wealthy—and all should be responsible for.²⁰¹ He insists that, while not seeking to escape the modern world, men must seek a more restrained “lifestyle” which is characterized by “[s]implicity, moderation...discipline...[and] a spirit of sacrifice.”²⁰² He charges governments with particular responsibility to do the following:

[M]ake or facilitate necessary socio-economic adjustment within...[their] own borders, giving special attention to the most vulnerable sectors of society....[A]ctively endeavor within...[their] own territory to prevent destruction of the atmosphere and biosphere, by carefully monitoring, among other things, the impact of new technological or scientific advances....[And] ensuring that...[their] citizens are not exposed to dangerous pollutants or toxic wastes.²⁰³

This language, of course, does not say that governments must actually do all these things themselves, but must insure that they be effectively done. They also have the responsibility of joining with other states in cooperative efforts to work for a better environmental situation; the need for cooperation between developed and underdeveloped states is especially crucial. The latter “are not morally free to repeat the errors made in the past” by the former as they industrialize, but the former must not expect the latter to follow “restrictive environmental standards” if they (the developed countries) do not adopt them first.²⁰⁴ A truly “internationally coordinated approach” is needed for “the management of the earth’s goods” (just as we have seen the popes call for in other areas). John Paul even suggests that “[t]he right to a safe environment...be included in an updated Charter of Human Rights.”²⁰⁵

War and Peace

We now briefly consider war and peace. It is first necessary to consider the general moral teaching of the Church about warfare. The Church has never had a pacifist tradition, in spite of what some have said in recent decades. She has always taught that the Christian may bear arms and may participate in a just war.²⁰⁶ In order for a war to be just, the Church in modern times has set out these four conditions: it must be on the sovereign's authority; the cause must be just, the belligerents should have a rightful intention, and the war must be waged by "proper means." The second of these conditions has been further elaborated: for the cause to be just the nation's rights, independence, or possession of vital national resources must have been unjustly violated or imminently threatened, other means of preventing the aggression against it have been tried and failed, and there has to be a proportion between the foreseen evils of the conflict and the hoped-for benefits from it.²⁰⁷

The Second Vatican Council addresses the matter of means in warfare in the contemporary world: "Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation."²⁰⁸ Higgins writes that "[c]ivilians, who only remotely and indirectly promote military effort, are not to be classified as combatants and their persons and homes may not be the objects of direct attack."²⁰⁹

Pacem in Terris tells us that nations possess various rights that other nations may not violate, including their freedom, integrity, and security. Smaller states, as much as larger ones, have a right to economic development and to neutrality in the case of conflicts between other states. No state may unjustly involve itself in another's affairs.²¹⁰ Pope Paul reiterates this position in speaking particularly of developing countries: "sovereign states...have the right to conduct their own affairs, to decide on their policies, and to move freely towards the kind of society they choose."²¹¹ Pope John maintains also that nations have an obligation to try to settle their differences amicably, through negotiation and agreement instead of warfare.²¹² Pope John Paul II has emphasized that in the absence of the kind of supranational authority spoken of by Pope John, "the only realistic response to the threat of war is...*negotiation*."²¹³ Looking in the direction contemplated here by Pope John, however, John Paul calls for steps to be taken to insure that the rule of law be allowed to regulate international affairs as it does domestic affairs.²¹⁴

Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Summi Pontificatus (The Function of the State in the Modern World)* (1939) holds that nations have a moral obligation to live up to treaties they have entered into, even when they become "unjust, impracticable, or too burdensome for one of the parties." If such a situation of inconvenience occurs—perhaps not being foreseeable when the treaty was made—"recourse should be had in good time to a frank discussion with a view to modifying the treaty or making another in its stead." For nations "tacitly to assume the authority of rescinding them unilaterally when they are no longer to one's advantage, would be to abolish all mutual trust among States."²¹⁵

Pacem in Terris also calls for an end to the arms race: "the stockpiles which exist in various countries should be reduced *equally and simultaneously by the parties concerned*."²¹⁶ Echoing this, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council say that "[r]ather than eliminat[ing] the causes of war, the arms race serves only to aggravate that position."²¹⁷ *Pacem in Terris* also advocates the banning of nuclear weapons and says, "a general agreement should eventually be reached about progressive disarmament and an effective method of control."²¹⁸ Pope John Paul II later speaks of the need for a "general verifiable disarmament."²¹⁹ Pope John was realistic about these possibilities, however, as can be seen from his words in *Pacem in Terris*:

All must realize that there is no hope of putting an end to the building up of armaments, nor of reducing the present stocks, nor still less, of abolishing them altogether, unless the process is complete and thorough and unless it proceeds from inner conviction: unless, that is, everyone sincerely co-operates to banish the fear and anxious expectations of war...the true and valid peace of nations consists not in equality of arms but in mutual trust alone.²²⁰

Pope John Paul II, writing almost twenty years later (but not in an encyclical), echoes what Pope John says above. He states that “[n]o negotiations about armaments would be complete if they were to ignore the fact that 80 percent of the expenditures for weapons are devoted to conventional arms” and calls for “[e]very step to limit...[their] production and traffic.”²²¹ Calling also for “progressive disarmament,” he says that “[i]n current conditions ‘deterrence’ based on balance [of forces on each side], certainly not as an end in itself but as a step toward [this] may still be judged morally acceptable.” To insure peace, however, nations cannot “be satisfied with this minimum which is always susceptible to the real danger of explosion.”²²²

Father Hardon tells us that there is today substantial agreement among Catholic moralists that although nuclear war is defensible in theory, it is almost impossible to justify in practice.²²³ The above statements of the popes make us wonder if it is even justified in theory.

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis decries the division of the world during the Cold War into two blocs “each suspicious and fearful of the other’s domination.” There was a military opposition based on an ideological opposition between a system in the West “historically inspired” by liberal capitalism and one in the East “inspired by...Marxist collectivism.”²²⁴ The result was both a kind of imperialism on the part of both sides toward the underdeveloped countries—referring basically to the latter being put in a position of being subverted to the objectives of the former—and “an unacceptably exaggerated concern *for security*” that both “deadens” the cooperation of men toward achieving the common good and impedes the development of the other, weaker countries.²²⁵

Terrorism, which became increasingly frequent in the twenty years between *Populorum Progressio* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, is singled out, not surprisingly, for specific condemnation in the latter.²²⁶ John Paul also calls attention to the intolerance of “new forms of religious fundamentalism,” which poses a threat to religious liberty.²²⁷ We have seen the connection between this and the phenomenon of terrorism.

While the popes realize that stopping men’s tendencies to resort to warfare is not easy, they do not hold that it is impossible. John Paul II said, “never again war.”²²⁸ The popes have also understood what peace in its fullest sense consists of. Paul VI says this in *Populorum Progressio*: “Peace cannot be limited to a mere absence of war...[I]t is something...built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice among men.”²²⁹

Notes

¹ Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, #9, 28. (Hereinafter cited as “MM”.)

² *Ibid.*, #50.

³ Anne Fremantle, ed., *The Social Teachings of the Church* (N.Y.: New American Library, 1963), her Introduction, 17 (emphasis is in the book).

⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (*The Social Concern of the Church*), #33. (Hereinafter cited as “SRS.”)

⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (Apostolic Exhortation on the Family) (1982), III, 3. (Hereinafter cited as “FC.”)

⁶ Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, #14, in Etienne Gilson, ed., *The Church Speaks to the Modern World: The Social Teachings of Leo XIII* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday [Image Bks.], 1954), 212. (Hereinafter cited as “RN.”)

⁷ The list appears in *FC*, III, 3. The rights are as follows:

The right to exist and progress as a family, that is to say, the right of every human being, even if he or she is poor, to found a family and to have adequate means to support it;

The right to exercise its responsibility regarding the transmission of life and to educate children;

The right to the intimacy of conjugal and family life;

The right to believe in and profess one’s faith and to propagate it;

The right to bring up children in accordance with the family’s own traditions and religious and cultural values, with the necessary instruments, means, and institutions;

The right, especially of the poor and the sick, to obtain physical, social, political, and economic security;

The right to housing suitable for living family life in a proper way;

The right to expression and to representation, either directly or through association, before the economic, social, and cultural public authorities and lower authorities;

The right to form associations with other families and institutions in order to fulfill the family's role suitably and expeditiously;

The right to protect minors by adequate institutions and legislation from harmful drugs, pornography, alcoholism, etc.;

The right to wholesome recreation of a kind that also fosters family values;

The right of the elderly to a worthy life and a worthy death;

The right to emigrate as a family in search of a better life.

⁸ *FC*, III, 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 3.

¹⁰ *RN*, #14, in Gilson, 212.

¹¹ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, #36. (Hereinafter referred to as “*PP*.”)

¹² See *FC*, III, 1. In Pope Paul VI's apostolic letter, *Octogesima Adveniens (The Coming Eightieth)* (1971), he opposes a “false equality which would deny the distinctions [between men and women] laid down by the Creator Himself and which would be in contradiction with woman's proper role...at the heart of the family,” but says at the same time that legislation should be directed not only to protecting this role but also to “recognizing her independence as a person, and her equal rights to participate in cultural, economic, social and political life” (#13).

¹³ *Ibid.* This basically reiterates what Paul VI said (note 11 above).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, #19. (Hereinafter referred to as “*LE*.”)

¹⁶ *FC*, III, 1.

¹⁷ *MM*, #193.

¹⁸ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on Procured Abortion* (1974), #15.

¹⁹ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* (1975), #8.

²⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus (The Hundredth Year)*, #39. (Hereinafter cited as “*CA*.”)

²¹ *CA*, #49.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Hardon, John A., S.J., *The Catholic Catechism* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 334, quoting *Didache*, II, 2.

²⁴ *Declaration on Procured Abortion*, #20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, #22.

²⁶ The issue of the actual excommunication of such politicians has been raised repeatedly during the past few decades. For example, it was mentioned by the late John Cardinal O'Connor when he was Archbishop of New York (see *The Wanderer*, June 28, 1990, 1, 7). In this same article, Fr. Joseph Penna, a canon lawyer and professor at St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, N.Y., was quoted as saying that Canon 1399 of the new Code of Canon Law would justify the excommunication of a Catholic politician who supported abortion legislation if (upon the determination of his ordinary) scandal was being caused perhaps by his action giving someone else occasion to sin (*ibid.*, 7). In 2007, the cardinal-archbishop of Mexico City, Norberto Rivera Carrera, excommunicated—with Pope Benedict XVI's support—the city's mayor after he signed a bill legalizing abortion (see *The Wanderer*, May 10, 2007, 1,6).

²⁷ *SRS*, #25. See also *CA*, #39.

²⁸ Pope Leo XIII, *Libertas Praestantissimum (On Human Liberty)*, #21, in Gilson, 71. (Hereinafter cited as “*LP*.”)

²⁹ *RN*, #32. In his encyclical *Immortale Dei (On the Christian Constitution of States)* [1885], Pope Leo XIII says that government must “be of a nature to insure the general welfare” (#4, in Gilson, 163). In *Mater et Magistra*, Pope John XXIII says “The State[’s]...purpose is the realization of the common good in the temporal order...” (*MM*, #20). These are all different ways of making the same point.

³⁰ *RN*, #35, in Gilson, 224.

³¹ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, #62. (Hereinafter referred to as “*PT*.”)

³² *RN*, #34, in Gilson, 223.

³³ *PT*, #57.

³⁴ See, e.g., *CA*, #11, #47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, # 56.

³⁶ See *RN*, #34, in Gilson, 223; *PT*, #43-44.

³⁷ *PP*, #23, quoting a letter he had written to the 52nd Session of the French Social Weeks in 1965.

³⁸ *PT*, #9.

³⁹ For a philosophical discussion of how rights and duties are inextricably intertwined, see Father Thomas J. Higgins, S.J.'s solid Catholic ethics textbook, *Man as Man: The Science and Art of Ethics* (rev. edn.; Milwaukee: Bruce, 1958), chap. XV. The book bears the imprimatur of the late Archbishop Albert G. Meyer of Milwaukee. Much of Higgins's discussion of rights is summarized in Chapter One of the current book.

⁴⁰ *PT*, #11-27.

⁴¹ Second Vatican Council, *Inter Mirifica* (*Decree on the Means of Social Communication* [1963], #12. (Hereinafter referred to as "*IM*."))

⁴² *PT*, #29-31. In connection with the matter of social communication, *Inter Mirifica* holds that while the media has rights, as mentioned, it also has a duty to respect the moral law. Civil authorities also have a duty "to ensure...that public morality and social progress are not greatly endangered through misuse of these media" (*IM*, #11-12).

⁴³ See *SRS*, #33.

⁴⁴ *CA*, #15, #48.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, #15.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, #48.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, #15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, #40.

⁴⁹ See *SRS*, #44 (emphasis is in the encyclical); *CA*, #35.

⁵⁰ Higgins, 434-436, 457-458. The quote is from 457-458. By "juridic cause" of the state, Higgins means the free agreement of families—whose joining together is the source of every state—to come together into a bond of civic justice whereby they assume the rights and duties necessary to constitute a sovereign state.

⁵¹ *PT*, #68.

⁵² *Ibid.*, #51-52.

⁵³ See Pope Leo's discussion in *LP*, #16, in Gilson, 67.

⁵⁴ *CA*, #46-47.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, #46.

⁵⁶ *RN*, #13, in Gilson, 211; Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, #49. (Hereinafter referred to as "*QA*."))

⁵⁷ See *MM*, #109.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, #57.

⁵⁹ *PP*, #22, 33

⁶⁰ *CA*, #35.

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, #19, 34, 42.

⁶² *Ibid.*, #25.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, #15, 32, 43.

⁶⁴ *QA*, #45.

⁶⁵ *CA*, #30.

⁶⁶ *PP*, #22. He is quoting from the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* [1965]), #69. (Hereinafter referred to as "*GS*."))

⁶⁷ *RN*, 46, in Gilson, 230. Emphasis is added.

⁶⁸ *CA*, #32.

⁶⁹ *MM*, #82-83.

⁷⁰ *LE*, #7.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, #13. See also *CA*, #39.

⁷² *QA*, #71.

⁷³ *RN*, #46, in Gilson, 230.

⁷⁴ *QA*, #71.

⁷⁵ *MM*, #71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *LE*, #19. Emphasis is in the encyclical.

⁷⁸ *QA*, #74.

⁷⁹ *LE*, #18.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, #19.

⁸¹ *RN*, #20, in Gilson, 215.

⁸² *Ibid.*, #49-51, in *ibid.* 231-233.

⁸³ *LE*, #20. Emphasis is in the encyclical.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, #22. Emphasis is in the encyclical.

- ⁸⁵ Ibid., #23. Emphasis is in the encyclical.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., #19.
- ⁸⁷ RN, #20, in Gilson, 215.
- ⁸⁸ QA, #57. On profit, see also QA, #65, 72.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁹⁰ LE, #20. Emphasis is in the encyclical.
- ⁹¹ MM, #128.
- ⁹² Ibid., #131.
- ⁹³ Ibid., #142.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., #143.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., #144.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., #146.
- ⁹⁷ LE, #21.
- ⁹⁸ MM, #127.
- ⁹⁹ *Divini Redemptoris*, #9-11.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., #11.
- ¹⁰¹ Issued under the signature of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation, on August 6, 1984.
- ¹⁰² Issued under Ratzinger's signature on March 22, 1986.
- ¹⁰³ See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, #1-2.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., #42.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid., #37-42.
- ¹⁰⁶ SRS, #36. Emphasis is in the original.
- ¹⁰⁷ CA, #23-24. The entire chapter spans #22-29.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., #19.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., #26.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., #25.
- ¹¹² See RN, #14-15, in Gilson, 212-213; QA, #111-126; MM, #34.
- ¹¹³ QA, #120.
- ¹¹⁴ *Quod Apostolici Muneris*, #5-6, in Gilson, 192-193.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., #9, in Gilson, 195-196.
- ¹¹⁶ PT, #44.
- ¹¹⁷ RN, #34, in Gilson, 223.
- ¹¹⁸ GS, #69.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid., n. 11.
- ¹²⁰ Aquinas says (at II-II, q. 66, a. 7) that "according to the natural order...[of] Divine Providence, inferior things are ordained for the purpose of succoring man's needs...Hence whatever certain people have in superabundance is due, by natural law, to the purpose of succoring the poor...each one is entrusted with the stewardship of his own things, so that out of them he may come to the aid of those who are in need. Nevertheless, if the need be so manifest and urgent, that it is evident that the present need must be remedied by whatever means be at hand (for instance when a person is in some imminent danger, and there is no other possible remedy), then it is lawful for a man to succor his own by means of another's property, by taking it either openly or secretly: nor is this properly speaking theft or robbery." (Benziger Bros. Edn.; N.Y.: 1947, vol. II, pp. 1480-1481.)
- ¹²¹ QA, #88.
- ¹²² Ibid. #108.
- ¹²³ CA, #42.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid., #17, 35, 34, 36, 33.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid., #41, 33, 35.
- ¹²⁶ SRS, #41. Emphasis is in the encyclical.
- ¹²⁷ CA, #35.
- ¹²⁸ QA, #88. In order to make sure that the crucial terms "social justice" and "social charity" are clearly understood, it is best to define them. "Social justice" is defined by Higgins as follows: "the virtue which moves the individual to contribute his due share to society by promoting the common good. Since there is a quasi identification between the social part and the community, justice demands that the part support the

whole in due measure. Hence social justice looks toward an equilibrium of duty toward the social whole which each part must maintain.” This definition is elaborated on by Johannes Messner in his massive *Social Ethics: Natural Law in the Western World* (rev. edn.; tr. J.J. Doherty; St. Louis: B. Herder, 1949, 1965, carrying the imprimatur of the late Joseph Cardinal Ritter of St. Louis): “‘social justice’ refers especially to the economic and social welfare of ‘society,’ in the sense of the economically cooperating community of the state. Owing to the division of labor, the national economy constitutes a cooperative economic unit, whose members in their various groups and classes are all interdependent in their work, making provision for their sustenance. The national economy, therefore, constitutes a socio-economic community whose common good demands for all groups and for their members a due share in the fruits of their cooperation which is commensurate with their contribution. These shares are distributed in the form of prices, wages, interest, dividends, rents, and social and private insurance benefits. Economic cooperation in society and the consequent distribution of its fruits give rise to obligations of natural justice...In the negotiations and agreements of the various groups, these must allow one another their due share in the output of their socio-economic cooperation. Social justice, therefore, imposes obligations on employer and on employee in the course of negotiations of collective labor agreements. It not only demands a just distribution of the social product, but also binds the groups cooperating in society to make the efforts in rendering their services, necessary for the firm establishment and development of the common good in all spheres and for economic and social progress...The obligations of social justice also relate to the will and to the cooperation of the social groups in creating the social institutions necessary for the most perfect fulfillment of the demands mentioned...” (320-321). “Social charity,” according to Messner, “demands ‘community sense above all.’” He approvingly cites theologian J. Hoffner’s definition, which does not see a basic difference between social charity and simply the theological virtue of charity. He includes as an important part of social charity a true attitude of love toward our country and our fellow citizens. Some “special expressions” of social charity are “readiness for self-sacrifice for the common good values of religion and morality.” Another “sphere of duties” associated with social charity involves the relations of professions, groups, classes, and individuals to help others as members of society, and not just as individual men. Benevolence—the positive esteem for the state community and its citizens—is the basic feature of social charity (338, citing J. Hoffner, *Soziale Gerechtigkeit and Soziale Liebe* [1935], 93-102.)

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, #79-80.

¹³⁰ *PP*, #33.

¹³¹ *LE*, #18. Emphasis is in the encyclical.

¹³² *MM*, #117.

¹³³ *QA*, #49.

¹³⁴ *LE*, #14. Emphasis is in the encyclical. See also *SRS*, #42.

¹³⁵ *LE*, #14. Emphasis is in the encyclical.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *CA*, # 48.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, #15.

¹³⁹ *RN*, #47, in Gilson, 231.

¹⁴⁰ *MM*, #132.

¹⁴¹ *RN*, #37, in Gilson, 225-226.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, #38, in *ibid.*, 226.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, #52, in *ibid.*, 233.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, #30-43, in *ibid.*, 221-222.

¹⁴⁵ *LE*, #18.

¹⁴⁶ *MM*, #135-136.

¹⁴⁷ *CA*, #48-49.

¹⁴⁸ *SRS*, #42. See also *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, #66-68.

¹⁴⁹ *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, #66-68.

¹⁵⁰ *CA*, #57.

¹⁵¹ *RN*, #16, in Gilson, 213.

¹⁵² *QA*, #127.

¹⁵³ *RN*, #19, in Gilson, 214.

¹⁵⁴ *MM*, #91.

¹⁵⁵ See *CA*, #31-32, 43.

¹⁵⁶ See *QA*, #81-87.

¹⁵⁷ *RN*, #48-49, 50, in Gilson, 231-233.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, #45, in *ibid.*, 230.

¹⁵⁹ *MM*, #208.

- ¹⁶⁰ *CA*, #5.
- ¹⁶¹ See *CA*, #4, referring to *LP*.
- ¹⁶² *PP*, #66.
- ¹⁶³ *SRS*, #9.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, #17. Emphasis is in the encyclical.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, #33.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, #26.
- ¹⁶⁷ *PP*, #19-21.
- ¹⁶⁸ *SRS*, #33. Emphasis is in the encyclical.
- ¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, #39. Emphasis is in the encyclical.
- ¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, #33.
- ¹⁷¹ *CA*, #41.
- ¹⁷² *PP*, #48-49. John Paul II calls for the same sort of thing in *SRS*, #39.
- ¹⁷³ *MM*, #165.
- ¹⁷⁴ See *MM*, #202; *PP*, #35.
- ¹⁷⁵ *PP*, #50-51.
- ¹⁷⁶ *PP*, #54.
- ¹⁷⁷ *PT*, #132-141.
- ¹⁷⁸ *SRS*, #43. Emphasis is in the encyclical.
- ¹⁷⁹ *CA*, #58.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸¹ See *PP*, #64; *SRS*, #45. The quote is from the latter. Emphasis is in the encyclical.
- ¹⁸² *PP*, #58-61.
- ¹⁸³ *SRS*, #43.
- ¹⁸⁴ *CA*, #35.
- ¹⁸⁵ *PP*, #24. There would have to be a just amount of compensation given for any expropriation, however.
- (See *GS*, III, #71.)
- ¹⁸⁶ *PP*, #24.
- ¹⁸⁷ *SRS*, #44.
- ¹⁸⁸ *PP*, #7.
- ¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, #62-63.
- ¹⁹⁰ *PP*, #31.
- ¹⁹¹ *PT*, #94-97.
- ¹⁹² *Ibid.*, #103-108.
- ¹⁹³ *MM*, #85-194. Pope John was prescient in doubting the validity of the claim about population outstripping food and resources. In spite of much propaganda to this effect in the 1960's and 1970's, there appears to be little evidence that such a population "crisis" is upon us. See Colin Clark, *Population Growth: The Advantages* (Santa Ana, Calif.: A Life Quality Paperback, 1975); Robert L. Sassone, *Handbook on Population* (4th ed.; self-published, 1978); and Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1981).
- ¹⁹⁴ *SRS*, #25. Emphasis is in the encyclical.
- ¹⁹⁵ *SRS*, #34.
- ¹⁹⁶ Pope John Paul II, "Peace With God the Creator, Peace With All of Creation", World Day of Peace Statement (Dec. 8, 1989), published in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English language edn.), Dec. 18-26, 1989, reprinted in *The Wanderer*, Jan. 4, 1990, 1, 7.
- ¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Sec. II, p. 7.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 7.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, II, IV, p. 7.
- ²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 7.
- ²⁰² *Ibid.*, IV, p. 7. See also *CA*, #58.
- ²⁰³ *Ibid.*, III, p. 7.
- ²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 7.
- ²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, III, p. 7.
- ²⁰⁶ See Hardon, 346-347.
- ²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 348.
- ²⁰⁸ *GS*, #80.
- ²⁰⁹ Higgins, 548.
- ²¹⁰ *PT*, #120, 124.

²¹¹ *PP*, #54.

²¹² *PT*, #93.

²¹³ Pope John Paul II, *Negotiation: The Only Realistic Solution to the Continuing Threat of War* (Letter to the U.N. General Assembly; June 11, 1982) (Boston: St. Paul Edns.), 11. Emphasis is in the document. (Hereinafter cited as “*Negotiation*.”)

²¹⁴ *CA*, #52.

²¹⁵ Pope Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus (The Function of the State in the Modern World)*, section entitled “Proud Illusions” (Boston: St. Paul Edns.), 31-32. By “treaty” is meant any agreement between nations. Higgins notes that there are caveats to this general teaching of the Church (which is also, of course, a part of the natural moral law): “[A] nation’s obligations cannot ask too much of it, for example, to observe terms which would lead to a loss of independence, acute misery of its people, or spoliation of the fundamental means of development.” (This does not, however, involve *rescinding* a treaty.) The grounds upon which a treaty ceases to bind a party are “mutual consent [to abrogate a treaty], impossibility of performance, extinction of one party, and the like.” He cites favorably another authority who says there is only one circumstance in which “a nation may upon its own initiative declare itself freed of treaty obligation...when an implied condition, necessary to impose obligations at the time the treaty is made, no longer holds good.” Two examples are: “when one party has substantially failed to live up to its part, the other party may declare itself free of all obligation...[and] when fulfillment would involve loss of independence for one party” (unless the treaty was meant specifically to apply even then) (541-542).

²¹⁶ *PT*, #112. Emphasis is added.

²¹⁷ *GS*, #81.

²¹⁸ *PT*, #112.

²¹⁹ *Negotiation*, 9.

²²⁰ *PT*, #113.

²²¹ *Negotiation*, 11.

²²² *Ibid.*, 10-11.

²²³ Hardon, p. 349.

²²⁴ *SRS*, #20. It should be emphasized here that even though the encyclical is critical of the actions of both blocs and of the economic ideologies of each, there is no presumption of a *moral equivalence* between the two. This is clear from the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, the instruction on liberation theology, and many other papal pronouncements over the years. Papal social teaching builds on itself; new documents or pronouncements expand upon previous ones; they do not repudiate them. Nevertheless, John Paul here makes clear, as every social encyclical since *Rerum Novarum* has, that liberal capitalism (i.e., *laissez faire*) is not compatible with Church teaching. It is incompatible as Marxist collectivism is incompatible; whether it is not as bad on a number of points is irrelevant to the fact of its being incompatible in the final analysis. (Something is not partially in the condition of being incompatible; its basic principles or its essential aspects are either compatible or incompatible—in the case of liberal capitalism it is the latter.) The argument could be made that the West does not any longer follow the tenets of liberal capitalism as they were originally put forth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, that changes have occurred in the twentieth century. Indeed, John Paul seems to acknowledge this by using the adverb “historically” before “inspired” when discussing liberal capitalism in the West. (He uses the present tense “is inspired” when speaking about Marxist collectivism in the East; he writes before the developments of 1989, although communism has certainly not disappeared from the face of the earth even in our own time.) Nevertheless, a serious analysis of the economics of the West today would show it still to be basically built around these principles.

²²⁵ *SRS*, #22. Emphasis is in the encyclical.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, #24.

²²⁷ *CA*, #29.

²²⁸ *CA*, #52.

²²⁹ *PP*, #76.