

Social Doctrines of the Catholic Church

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God created human beings as individuals with social orientation endowed with freedom, compassion, the capacity to know truth and the power to make relationship. He continues to exist by receiving from the common wealth and by contributing to common good, of the society and nature. Man can participate in social life only by delimiting his personal likes and dislikes, by surrendering himself to the pursuit of truth. If man not constrict his desires, he cannot maintain the equilibrium of nature. Nature can afford to satisfy even the basic needs of humanity through agricultural activity. This means that without limiting setting oneself (meaning, everyone in society) to the limits of personal desires by surrendering himself to objective norms based on truth, man cannot achieve freedom. Freedom is life in accordance with truth. It's by living harmoniously with society and nature thereby fulfilling the vocation of his Creator that man attains happiness. "God calls us to participate in God's creative activity and to contribute to the common good by using our endowments given by God (Pope Francis, Christ Lives, 253). Man responds to this call and attains happiness by participating in the process of transforming the society and nature. It's by such responsiveness to God's call; man can contribute to common good.

Current World Scenario

However, contemporary social scenario of the world shows certain gloomy realities. Billions are away from the possibilities of attaining happiness. Poverty, natural calamities, pandemics, lack of availability of food and clean water etc rob the livelihood of billions. The storage houses, arsenal and armory, of nuclear weapons are wombs of impending global wars which can erase all creations from earth. Many individuals as well as nations are in the bondage of irresolvable indebtedness. People all over are migrating from their mother lands in search of better prospects and future. Thus they are torn off from their cultural heritage, their organic and life-giving environment. Simultaneously we also witness that religious fundamentalists, racists, and the autocratic governments deny the fundamental human rights in various nations. Human trafficking, drug trafficking, sex tourism etc deprive man of his human dignity and create disharmony among people. Women and children are oppressed in home itself. Environment is polluted, climate is changed and natural resources are depleted to the extent that existence of future generations is in danger. Who is responsible for this alarming situation? "Am I responsible? Am I the custodian of my neighbor?"

Taking upon oneself the responsibility for this precarious situation, many philosophers, social scientists, political thinkers and religious leaders have contributed to the exploration of the causes of the social problems confronting the world and suggested many theoretical models to analyze and understand thereby suggesting remedies for reclaiming harmony and happiness. Catholic Church also has made many attempts to

achieve the above end (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 1991, p.5). In 1891 Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* inaugurated a new era in the history of the Catholic Church. Through this encyclical he made a remarkable attempt to frame an analytical model for comprehending, analyzing, judging and providing solutions for social problems. The Popes after him continued the practice of creating models for scrutinizing the social scenario based on the revealed truths regarding the nature of God, man and nature. The collection of such teachings together is generally known as the social doctrines of the church. The list of different documents of the church in this regard is given in the appendix.

Church teaches that the root cause of every evil in this world is Man's actions (Genesis 3:17). "God saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on earth", and that every inclination of the thoughts of human heart was evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5). In the words of the Lord evil generates from human heart (Mathew 15:10-20). Therefore, the social doctrines of the church begin and proceed by seeking answers to the following questions: (1) Who is man? What is his dignity and what is his vocation? (2) What is the root cause for the loss of human dignity? How did the deprivation of human dignity lead to social problems? (3) How did Jesus Christ redeem man and restore his dignity? (4) What are the different steps in the action plan of the Church to for remedying social problems?

1) Who is Man?

The entire social doctrines of the church is based on the revealed truth that man is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 21). According to above statement every revelation related to God's nature is also is the revelation about human nature. Pope Paul VI quotes the prayer of St. Catherine of Sienna "In your nature, oh God, I find my own nature" (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, p.55).

Church teaches that fullness of the divine image is seen only in Jesus Christ (Colossos 2:9). For Christians, Jesus is perfect man (Catechism of Catholic Church, 520). In the words of Second Vatican Council, Jesus reveals man to himself (Church in the Modern world, 22). The nature of God revealed by Jesus Christ is not the same as the nature of God revealed by other religions, including Jewish religion. Following are some of the characteristics of God revealed by Jesus Christ.

Firstly, God is Trinity. For Christians, God is a relationship between the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. This relationship is holiness. God's creation of man is the creation of this relationship, i.e., God created man and poured Holy Spirit into man's heart and thus created a relationship between man and God (Genesis 2:7; John Paul II, *Dominum Vivificantum*, 34; *Dei Verbum*, 2; also cf. the Inaugural Address of the Latin Holy Mass). God calls man to make the same relationship of (the Holy Trinity) with man and this relationship is synonymous with holiness. Thus man's social nature is not an appendage to his existence; instead his social relationship is an integral part of the divine nature itself. Hence, it is evil or not-good to be alone (Genesis 2: 18). To be a human being, therefore, is a call to make Trinitarian relationship between and among

human beings. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three free Individuals but are, simultaneously, One and single reality. Similarly, all human beings in the world should become one reality and the realization of this reality is called the Church.

Secondly, God is love. If God is love man is love. Love means fullness of compassion. Compassion grants first reference and preference to the other in human relationship. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking on your interest but each of you the interest of others” (Philippians 2:3-4). Jesus has revealed the meaning of love through his life. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends (John 15:13). It’s on the basis of the above statement, Church defines the terms ‘maximum love’ and ‘minimum love’ (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 6 and 7). Minimum love signifies doing mere justice. Justice means fulfilling the law, in the Jewish context while, it is the fulfilling of contract in Greco-Roman jurisprudence. In simple terms, justice is work in accordance with rules or laws. The call to holiness is lived through love, by loving God and loving man. Jesus Calls Peter, “Peter do you love me?” The reply of Peter is a commitment to love both God and Man (Feed my lambs, Take care of my sheep and Feed my sheep: John 21: 15-17) because Jesus is both Perfect God and Perfect Man.

From this perspective, Church says that there is only one and one vocation in life, that is, the call to love. This vocation is fulfilled through A) labor B) creating family and society and C) through priesthood (Pope Francis, *Christ Lives*, chapter 8).

Thirdly, God is eternal. Jesus reveals that God is eternal life. Man is created by sharing the eternity of God. “For, God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of His own “eternity”(Wisdom 2:23). Since man is created in the image of eternity, man’s dreams and desires are boundless and limitless. In other words, man has unlimited desires (Buddhism and economic theory attest to the above statement). Unlimited desire is an existential part of any human being and due to this, man naturally aspires for eternal life. That is why every man internally asks the question what good should I do to gain eternal life? The yearning for eternity can be quenched by Eternity only that is, God alone. St. Thomas Aquinas exclaims, “God alone satisfies”. In other words, only by responding to God’s call to love other human beings, one can ever find satisfaction, fulfillment and happiness.

Fourthly, God created man and creatures from matter which is He created out of nothing. This indicates that Man is a creature integral to universe. Philosophers have clarified differences between man and animal and termed these differences as species or class identity. Rather than highlighting the differences, as philosophers and scientists normally do, the church identifies and attributes the God-given dignity in human beings. God created all animals from earth (Genesis 2:19) and God created man from earth (Genesis 2:7). God gave his Holy Spirit to man and thus ‘he is more dignified than animals’ (Mathew 6: 26). This dignity is his divine image which is a gift from God. Can anyone boast of himself by stating that he is more dignified than any other man, if that

is a gift from God? So, church says that all creatures including man are the object of God's love, while God occupies the subject-position in the act of love. However, among the creatures only man can attain the fullness of divine nature. For example, animals may have (com) passion prompted by instinct, but only man can achieve consciously 'maximum love' that is, fullness of divine nature. Animals have intelligence – again, driven by instinct - but only human beings can consciously strive after and attain knowledge of truth.

Fifthly, everything in this universe is holy. We cannot classify and categorize holy and unholy. After every creation God said "it is good" (Genesis). Jews considered themselves as holy and all others (the so-called pagans and the natural world) as unholy. Muslims too categorize people and creatures as holy and unholy. But church disallows such a position (Acts 10:28). Christians cannot claim any superiority (due to the holiness received through death and resurrection of Jesus) over other castes, creeds, religion or ethnicity, because he received it as free gift (Romans 3:27-31).

Sixthly, God is truth and Jesus Christ is the embodied truth – the Word made flesh. Jesus teaches that truth will set you free. Church denies the possibility of absolute freedom, if freedom means dictatorship and tyranny. Freedom is the realization of the supreme nature of a human being. In that sense, true freedom implies that we are choosing a good without constraint. In the words of St John Paul II, "freedom is not simply the absence of tyranny or oppression. Nor is freedom a license to do whatever we like. Freedom has an inner logic that distinguishes it, ennobles it: freedom is ordered to the truth and is fulfilled in humanity's quest for truth and in humanity's living truth" (John Paul II, *Go in Peace*, St. Pauls, 2009, Mumbai, p.79; Wisdom 3:9; 1 Peter 1:21). If any one denies truth, he himself becomes the norm of truth. This is the root of autocratic and despotic behavior of individuals and all types of power-wielding authorities in this world. Man has to surrender himself to truth and limit himself for the sake of the other, then only social life is will become possible. Various modern ideologies have proclaimed mistakenly that freedom is the freedom from the Father or Father-Figures. Marxism, Existentialism, Freudianism and Feminism, all alike, advocated an emancipation that the prodigal son supposedly enjoys by going away from the house of the father. But the church campaigns for the kind of freedom that can be termed as not freedom from, but freedom to. In the words of Walter Kasper (formerly, the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), "Man's salvation consists not in a departure that is meant as a protest and an assertion of emancipation, but in a return to the house of the Father – though admittedly a Father who does not humiliate the prodigal but restores him to his rights as son. God's reign does not suppress man's freedom; rather it raises it up from degradation and restores it to its rightful place" (*The God of Jesus Christ*, New Edition, New York: Continuum, 2012, p.141).

Based on the above delineated nature of human beings revealed by Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, Church develops her social doctrines.

2) Dignity of Man and Divine Vocation

Dignity of man, the divine image, is a gift from God. It is the participation in God's life through Holy Spirit. Man can speak as God speaks, man can think as God thinks, and man can act as God acts and this divine life is possible for man only if the Holy Spirit abides in him. In Genesis we read that God breathed the Spirit into man (Genesis 2:7). St. Paul says that human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God made relationship with man through the Holy Spirit, and the presence of the Holy Spirit fills the divine love in man (Romans 5:6), and this love impels man to love others. Any act of man due to the compulsion of divine love is the fulfillment of the original vocation of God.

It means that divine image in man is not a static one but a dynamic force to love. If God created the universe out of His love, this love compels man to imitate God by participating in the divine act of creation. God created the world from nothing and man has to recreate and build upon this world through the gifts he received from God, and this divine gift is known as labor (Pope Francis, *Christ Lives*). In the book of Genesis God asks man to (a) to work in the garden and (b) to multiply and subdue the earth. These two divine tasks are the original divine vocation embedded and ingrained in man.

However, for centuries Church has been teaching that the divine vocation means nothing but to become a priest and thus to take leadership in the redemptive mission of Christ. Recently in the exhortation of Pope Francis to the youth interpreted the divine vocation differently. He says that love is the fundamental vocation and man selects an area of work through labor to express love in this world. The second (though not secondary) field of love is marriage and forming of family. The third (though not tertiary) opportunity for expressing love is to follow the mission of Christ with an undivided heart (Pope Francis, *Christ Lives* 8th chapter). Moreover he says that celibacy has no meaning in itself and priestly vocation is in no way superior to the vocation to build family consequently, "it is not a matter of diminishing the value of matrimony in favour of continence". "There is no basis for playing one off against the other... If, following a certain theological tradition, one speaks of a 'state of perfection' (*status perfectionis*), this has to do not with continence in itself, but with the entirety of a life based on the evangelical counsels". A married person can experience the highest degree of charity and thus "reach the perfection which flows from charity, through fidelity to the spirit of those counsels. Such perfection is possible and accessible to every man and woman". (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 160,161).

Through labor man transforms nature and thereby he transforms himself (Church in the Modern World, 35). In other words, the first divine call is to work in the garden. Through labor man creates roads, bridges, communication systems, church buildings, vehicles, medicines, music, art, dress, language etc.

The second divine call is to "multiply and subdue the earth" (Genesis). Many interprets this statement meaning to marry and have more and more children. On the

other hand, the social doctrines of the church have given a new import to this phrase. Thus this statement is to be seen as a call not only as to marry and procreate but also to develop the society or city. City is a term seldom used in the Old Testament and the gospels but is frequently used in the epistles. Jewish tradition calls a just society as the kingdom of God but in Greek culture it is termed as city (in the sense that man through his constructive labor should create and develop a manmade space from his ideals of what the Kingdom of God should be. Confer such titles as *The City of God* by St. Augustine, *The City of God* by the Spanish mystic, Venerable Mary of Agreda, *the Republic* by Plato and *Utopia* by St. Thomas More, among various others).

The first form of society is family where an individual is trained to limit his desires in order to realize himself as a being who has not only rights but also duties. Gradually, he learns to extend this relationship into other people outside his family, by producing, exchanging, consuming things, because no one in the world is self-sufficient. These interactions between and among the individuals should be just; otherwise, harmony in the society will be disrupted and eventually will be lost. Justice is maintained through contracts and contracts need law. Law should be based on truth. Therefore, man begins his search of truth. Man in history has created various systems to establish justice, and totality of these manmade systems for the sake of manmade space is known as city. Different cities join together to form a state.

The different systems in a nation referred to here include political system, economic system, communication system, transportation system, monetary system, judicial system, system of policing, system for maintaining internal peace or policing, system for defense, system for maintaining international relations etc. Every individual has the duty to maintain and contribute to the above systems in one way or other. At least we are indebted to pay tax. This is one way of participation in the building up of city. The participation in the building up of city is defined as the institutional path of charity or love (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 6 and 7, Pope Francis, *Lumen Fides*, 4th chapter). “Precisely because it is linked to love (cf. Gal 5:6), the light of faith is concretely placed at the service of justice, law and peace. Faith is born of an encounter with God’s primordial love, wherein the meaning and goodness of our life become evident; our life is illumined to the extent that it enters into the space opened by that love, to the extent that it becomes, in other words, a path and praxis leading to the fullness of love. The light of faith is capable of enhancing the richness of human relations, their ability to endure, to be trustworthy, to enrich our life together. Faith does not draw us away from the world or prove irrelevant to the concrete concerns of the men and women of our time. Without a love which is trustworthy, nothing could truly keep men and women united. Human unity would be conceivable only on the basis of utility, on a calculus of conflicting interests or on fear, but not on the goodness of living together, not on the joy which the mere presence of others can give. Faith makes us appreciate the architecture of human relationships because it grasps their ultimate foundation and definitive destiny in God, in his love, and thus sheds light on the art of building; as such it becomes a service to the common good. Faith is truly a good for everyone; it is a common good. Its light does not

simply brighten the interior of the Church, nor does it serve solely to build an eternal city in the hereafter; it helps us build our societies in such a way that they can journey towards a future of hope. The Letter to the Hebrews offers an example in this regard when it names, among the men and women of faith, Samuel and David, whose faith enabled them to “administer justice” (Heb 11:33). This expression refers to their justice in governance, to that wisdom which brings peace to the people (cf. 1 Sam 12:3-5; 2 Sam 8:15). The hands of faith are raised up to heaven, even as they go about building in charity a city based on relationships in which the love of God is laid as a foundation”(Pope Francis, *Lumen fidei*,51).

The third divine call is to take leadership in order to contribute to the task of redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. Catholic social doctrines are deeply rooted in the understanding regarding sin and redemption. As we found earlier, the Catholic faith begins with the basic revelation in the bible that everything created by God is holy because of the fact that it is the labor of God Himself. Anything that is of God is holy. Anything that is detached from God is unholy. When man, the only creature endowed with freedom, detaches himself from the relationship with God i.e., the Truth, he becomes unholy. The center of every action of a holy man is the will of God and the center of the action of an unholy man is his own will or self-interest. St. Augustine defines sin as self-love that reaches to the extent of an active denial of God. This extreme self-love is Narcissism.

The above definition of holy and unholy has led to the misunderstanding that Christians are also classifying people into holy and unholy or sinner and saint or the faithful and the pagans. Resisting such an approach, St. Paul has said that everyone in this world sinned and became sinner or unholy. If someone claims that he has consecrated himself to God and become holy, that is not out of his merit but because of the free gift from God. This divine gift is free only if it comes irrespective of the differences in gender, color or religion. Therefore, there is nothing to boast of in the name of free gift obtained from God. However, sin creates following problems in individual and social life

a) Struggle between the spirit and the flesh

When man becomes unholy or breaks the relationship with God, he is deprived of the cohabitation with Holy Spirit and his divine image is tarnished. The absence of Holy Spirit creates an internal division in man. This is the division between longings of the spirit and the longings of the flesh. In this struggle when the longings of the flesh win, all the relationships of man with other men and nature are damaged . This internal alienation in man’s heart is identified by the church as the root of all social evils in the world (John Paul II, *Dominum Vivificantum*, 55-57).

b) Feeble voice of conscience and autocracy in public life

The above process develops through many steps. First of all, denial of God leads to denial of a truth above him, truth that is to be obeyed by him. This darkens his conscience. Conscience is the place where God’s voice is heard. If there is no truth to

guide his actions, he himself becomes the norm of truth of his actions and thus loses all his moral bearing. Man is the measure of all moral laws, but only if he obeys the laws of God inscribed in him. If he says that he cannot find such laws within him, his self-interest becomes the norm for every action of his (Genesis 3:5). This is termed as autonomy of moral law. John Paul II states that, when man disrupts his relationship with God, that is denying truth above him, he himself becomes truth. And this is the root of autocratic political regimes. Then a man in power acts arbitrarily according to his selfish interest. Rule of law which is the basis of modern democracy does exist in a society where people surrender themselves to a truth above them (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 44; *Go in Peace*, chapter 6). Jesus has come down from heaven to announce that this truth above, the hitherto transcendent God (in Judaism), actually dwells within each one's heart (Coloss.1:27; I Cor. 6:13-20).

c) Structural sin and the resultant creation of the marginalized

Sin takes away man's capacity for divine love (John 6:5). The preceding statement can be understood only by analyzing such terms as love, maximum love, minimum love and less than minimum love. Love or *caritas* or charity means giving first preference to the other in all relationships (Philippians 2:3-4, 1 Cor. 10:24), maximum love means loving the other unto sacrificing one's own life (John 15:13) minimum love means doing mere justice or merely fulfilling laws or merely fulfilling contract (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 6 and 7). Less than minimum love means breaking a contract or unfulfilling a law or doing injustice or, in other words, committing sin in Jewish sense of the term. With the help of the above terms the meaning of injustice as derived from sin can be analyzed as below.

As defined by Plato in his book *Republic* justice means 'giving other what is due to him'. Greeks and Romans developed a system to distribute justice on the basis of legal contracts. They developed legal system based on the definition of justice. They also developed natural law and natural justice. The rules and regulations developed by man for building a harmonious society is known as Ethics.

For example, assume that two individuals enter into the contract that those who work for five hours will receive 1000 rupees. If the laborer works only for four hours and claims 1000 rupees, it is injustice. If the laborer works for five hours and receives 800 rupees it is injustice. If the laborer works for five hours and receives 1000 rupees it is justice. If the laborer works five hours and the beneficiary is willing to pay more than the thousand rupees that was originally agreed upon, then it is love. If the laborer works willingly even for more than 5 hours and is still satisfied with 1000 rupees, it is love. If the laborer works unto death willingly without demanding anything from other, it is maximum love. Church teaches that without first doing justice, no one can love his neighbor. So every attempt to establish systems for maintaining justice in a society is minimum love. The system for establishing justice in the city is the minimum and basic requirement for establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.

However, it is difficult for a man without love, even to do minimum love or justice. If anyone in the society commits injustice, it leads to the diminution in common good and somebody in the society is victimized due to that unjust act. Moreover, the errors in the manmade systems themselves lead to injustice and, this also is diminutive and depleting to the common good victimizing many individuals. When, in this manner, the manmade systems do not include and comprise certain sections of people in their considerations, those persons fall and are dropped outside the boundaries of the justice system or city. They are defined as marginalized.

Church finds the root of injustice in man's failure to obey the truth, the darkening of his conscience, loss of his moral and ethical life, internal division within him between the spirit and the flesh. This situation arises in man because of the rupture in the relationship between man and God. Without eradicating the causes which leads to the social problems any attempt to eradicate injustice is futile. In the light of this, God himself takes initiative to reconcile man with God through Jesus Christ by pouring the Holy Spirit into man's heart and thus regaining his dignity he had in the beginning. This is the curing of man's internal division. Jesus was incarnated as man to redeem man and reconcile him with the Father. Through Christ's reconciliation man receives Holy Spirit and becomes holy once again. This enables man to live a life of maximum love and maximum love is the cure for injustice in society.

Jesus selected a few disciples to continue the mission of reconciliation and selected a few to give leadership to them as apostles, and these latter few forms the hierarchy of the church. God needs a few to continue the reconciliation mission of God realized by pouring of Holy Spirit in man's heart through the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, unto the boundaries of the world and that mission is to be defined as redemptive vocation. Priesthood and consecrated life is the response to take up the responsibility of continuing the leadership of the redemptive work of Jesus.

3) Social Action Plan of the Church and Charity or Caritas /Love

As we found earlier, man is called by God to be perfect or holy as heavenly Father is perfect and this is fundamental vocation to all human beings. Man can attain this holiness by loving God and loving neighbor. Man loves his neighbor (a) by labor (b) by building family and city and (c) by taking up the work of redemption.

Moreover, we find that man and his action are the root cause of all social problems in this world. Victims of injustice exist (a) due to man's unjust actions arising out of his internal division, because of rupture in his relation with God (b) due to imperfections in the 'city' (c) due to wrong structure of the city or structural sin.

“ We can now determine more precisely, in the life of the Church, the relationship between commitment to the just ordering of the State and society on the one hand, and organized charitable activity on the other. We have seen that the formation of just structures is not directly the duty of the Church (As a subject), but belongs to the world of politics, the sphere of the autonomous use of reason. The Church has an indirect duty

here, in that she is called to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of those moral forces without

The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation “in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good.” The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility. Even if the specific expressions of ecclesial charity can never be confused with the activity of the State, it still remains true that charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as “social charity”.

The Church’s charitable organizations, on the other hand, constitute an *opus proprium*, a task agreeable to her, in which she does not cooperate collaterally, but acts as a subject with direct responsibility, doing what corresponds to her nature. The Church can never be exempted from practising charity as an organized activity of believers, and on the other hand, there will never be a situation where the charity of each individual Christian is unnecessary, because in addition to justice man needs, and will always need, love (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas est*,29).

So the church has been doing (a) Sanctification of human beings by leading man to the reconciliation with God (b) participating in labor and building family and city and (c) by directly helping the victims of injustice, victims of unjust social structure, and those who are beyond the margins of the structure of the city or, in other words, the marginalized.

(a) Reconciliation and Sanctification: direct duty of Apostles and their descendants and indirect duty of lay men

The most fundamental social action program of the church is the curing of internal division in man. All immorality and unethical act of man leads to injustice and diminution of common good, originally arising out breaking of the relation between man and God, loss of human dignity and tarnishing of divine image of man within him. So the church gives first priority to the reconciliation and sanctification of man. Church believes that absence of the Holy Spirit in man’s heart is the root cause of man’s internal division. Jesus through his passion, death, resurrection and ascension purified man, enabling him to receive Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit helps man to live up to maximum love (Romans 5: 6). This function is performed through two steps(a) Evangelization (b)Administering sacraments

a) Evangelization and its effect on society

“In the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, I stated that “the Church does not have technical solutions to offer for the problem of underdevelopment as such,” but

“offers her first contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when she proclaims the truth about Christ, about herself and about man, applying this truth to a concrete situation.” The Conference of Latin American Bishops at Puebla stated that “the best service we can offer to our brother is evangelization, which helps him to live and act as a son of God, sets him free from injustices and assists his overall development. It is not the Church’s mission to work directly on the economic, technical or political levels, or to contribute materially to development. Rather, her mission consists essentially in offering people an opportunity not to “have more” but to “be more.” by awakening their consciences through the Gospel. “Authentic human development must be rooted in an ever deeper evangelization.”

The Church and her missionaries also promote development through schools, hospitals, printing presses, universities and experimental farms. But a people’s development does not derive primarily from money, material assistance or technological means, but from the formation of consciences and the gradual maturing of ways of thinking and patterns of behavior. Man is the principal agent of development, not money or technology. The Church forms consciences by revealing to peoples the God whom they seek and do not yet know, the grandeur of man created in God’s image and loved by him, the equality of all men and women as God’s sons and daughters, the mastery of man over nature created by God and placed at man’s service, and the obligation to work for the development of the whole person and of all mankind (Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*,58).

b) Effect of sacraments on social life

“Jesus gave this act of oblation an enduring presence through his institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He anticipated his death and resurrection by giving his disciples, in the bread and wine, his very self, his body and blood as the new manna (cf. Jn 6:31-33). The ancient world had dimly perceived that man’s real food—what truly nourishes him as man—is ultimately the Logos, eternal wisdom: this same Logos now truly becomes food for us—as love. The Eucharist draws us into Jesus’ act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving. The imagery of marriage between God and Israel is now realized in a way previously inconceivable: it had meant standing in God’s presence, but now it becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus’ self-gift, sharing in his body and blood. The sacramental “mysticism”, grounded in God’s condescension towards us, operates at a radically different level and lifts us to far greater heights than anything that any human mystical elevation could ever accomplish”(Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas est*,14)

“Here we need to consider yet another aspect: this sacramental “mysticism” is social in character, for in sacramental communion I become one with the Lord, like all the other communicants. As Saint Paul says, “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17). Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just

for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become “one body”, completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbour are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself. We can thus understand how agape also became a term for the Eucharist: there God’s own agape comes to us bodily, in order to continue his work in us and through us. Only by keeping in mind this Christological and sacramental basis can we correctly understand Jesus’ teaching on love. The transition which he makes from the Law and the Prophets to the twofold commandment of love of God and of neighbour, and his grounding the whole life of faith on this central precept, is not simply a matter of morality—something that could exist apart from and alongside faith in Christ and its sacramental re-actualization. Faith, worship and ethos are interwoven as a single reality which takes shape in our encounter with God’s agape. Here the usual contraposition between worship and ethics simply falls apart. “Worship” itself, Eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented. Conversely, as we shall have to consider in greater detail below, the “commandment” of love is only possible because it is more than a requirement. Love can be “commanded” because it has first been given”(Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas est*,14).

(b) Building of ‘City ’: Direct duty of lay men and indirect duty of priests

The second step in social action is the participation in labor, building of family relationships and reframing of the existing but sinful social structure, and reformulation of social structure to include favorably the marginalized. All human beings derive benefits from systems developed for distributing justice. So it is an essential duty of an individual to contribute towards this end it. Christians as custodians of truth are more indebted to contribute to ‘city’. Cultural workers, educationists, politicians, philosophers, literary workers, agriculturists, bankers, policemen, defense personnel, health workers, social reformers, scientists etc are with their habitual grace are contributing to common good by building the ‘city’. A Christian is called to participate in the above mentioned areas with maximum love (Pope Francis, *Lumen Fides*, 4th chapter; Pope John Paul II, *Go in Peace*, St. Paul’s, Bombay, p. 24,2009; Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*,6 and 7).

(c) Direct Help to Victims of Injustice and the Marginalized: Duty of the church as subject

The third step is to provide subsistence directly to those who are victims of injustice and to the marginalized. From the inception of the church to till this date church is model and champion in providing direct assistance to those who are in need. Deaconate in early Church was formed to distribute material help to the needy. In the third century AD itself Roman kings established systems to promote welfare activities (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, 24). In the last 2000 years of its history, Church has contributed to this world, men of charity who have provided direct help to the poor and needy.

Some of the most illustrious among them are St. Lawrence, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare, Father Damien, St. Vincent D Paul and St. Teresa of Calcutta.

4) Misunderstanding of the Faithful Regarding Vocation and Charity

Many Christians have wrong notions about divine vocation. They think that divine vocation simply means God's call for priesthood and consecrated life. Pope Francis tries to redefine the meaning of divine vocation as a call given to men to love through labor, building family and society, and priesthood. He presented all these three on equal footing. The error, that only priesthood is divine vocation, make the Christians to think that lay people have no duty invested in them by God in this world. Many think that building family and the State is a call inferior to priesthood or the life of the consecrated in the kingdom of God. Many laymen think that their only duty is simply to wait for the second coming of Jesus Christ. They don't reflect on the fact that Jesus never prayed to the Father that He should take away His believers from this world, but only to deliver them from the evil.

Moreover, many Christians think that giving alms is the only expression of love or charity. They think that labor, building of family and society are not works of charity. "It must be admitted that the Church's leadership was slow to realize that the issue of the just structuring of society needed to be approached in a new way"(Pope Benedict XVI ,Deus Caritas est,27). Actually Christian love is expressed through three avenues of social action plan mentioned above and ignoring any one of its components breaks the integrity of Christian charity and distorts the divine vocation of man. "All of us, inspired and guided by different, unique and individual forms of spirituality (that constitute the rich spiritual heritage of the church and humanity) each one of us should aspire to live truly the Christian life – to live as Christians "in the world" without being "of the world". "For the lay faithful, this apostolic life calls for effective openness to our various environments in order to cause the evangelical leaven to penetrate them. It involves assuming multiple activities and responsibilities in all areas of human life: the family, professions, society, culture, and politics. It is by assuming these responsibilities competently and in deep union with God that you will fulfill your vocation as laity and Christians: you will sanctify yourselves and sanctify the world" (Pope John Paul II, Go in Peace, St. Paul's, Bombay, p.24). Simply by participating in sacramental life a man will not be sanctified. Sacraments provide with man Gods grace (unmerited mercy or divine charity) which is the power to love god and love man. By loving God and by loving man, man is sanctified. The notion of Christians that, one can attain eternal life simply by participating in sacramental life, without loving God and neighbor is a fallacy. "A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented. Conversely, as we shall have to consider in greater detail below, the "commandment" of love is only possible because it is more than a requirement. Love can be "commanded" because it has first been given" (Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas est, 14).

Appendix

- 1) Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum, 1891.
- 2) Pious XI, Quadregesimo Anno, 1931
- 3) John XXIII, Mater et Magistra, 1961
- 4) John XXIII, Pacem in Teris, 1963
- 5) Paul VI, Populorum Progreessio, 1967
- 6) Paul VI, Octogesima Adveniens, 1971
- 7) John Paul II, Laborem Excerns, 1981
- 8) John Paul II, Sollicitudo rei Socialis, 1987
- 9) John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 1991
- 10) Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas est, 2005
- 11) Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 2009
- 12) Francis, Lumen Fides, 4th chapter, 2013
- 13) Francis, Laudato Si, 2015
- 14) Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern world, 1965
- 15) Congregation for Doctrine and faith, Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation, 1986
- 16) Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Compendium of Social Doctrines of the church
- 17) Francis, Fratelli tutti 2019