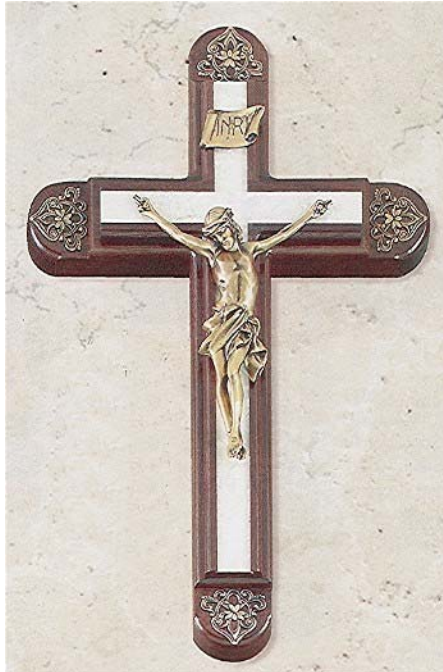


A Compendium That Touches Everyday Life



A presentation on the Compendium

of

the Social Doctrine of the Church

By Cardinal Renato Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

(July 2005)



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My dear brother/sister,

As part of our efforts to educate Catholics about the social teachings of our Church, The Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ) wishes to share with you the following text of an address given by Cardinal Renato Martino during a presentation in July 2005 of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.

CCSJ also wishes to remind you that each week this Commission continues to highlight various aspects of the Compendium in the Catholic News. Past articles are available on our website: www.rcsocialjusticett.org.

The Compendium is an extremely useful tool to assist us in the process of putting our faith into action. It helps us to link what our faith teaches us with how we should live. Please read the following and share it with others.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Leela Ramdeen, Chair of CCSJ

A Compendium That Touches Everyday Life

"Not Mere Theoretical Knowledge, Rather It Is Meant 'for Action'"

The Church's Mission for an Integral Humanism in Solidarity
By Cardinal Renato Martino
President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Introduction

The Compendium of the Church's Social Doctrine, written by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace at the behest of Pope John Paul II, was presented to the press on 25 October 2004. This document -- long-awaited, since its publication was initially foreseen for shortly after the Jubilee Year, and the result of a long process of work, because of the complex problems involved in its conceptual precision and in drawing up its material content -- has been welcomed with great interest.

On the basis of the very process that generated it, however, this is a document destined to sow its seeds very extensively, to fertilize the soil of the building of society over long periods of time, to motivate and guide the presence of Catholics in history, and not merely in some extemporaneous manner. The destiny of the Compendium will be measured by the conviction with which it is received and by the use that is made of it for the relaunching of general pastoral activity in society and, above all, in bringing about a reflective, aware, coherent and community presence of lay Catholics involved in society and in politics. If today we witness a warm reception given to the Compendium, it is

tomorrow that will determine whether the spirit and purpose that guided its birth have been respected.

Structure and Purpose of the Compendium

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church offers a complete summary of the fundamental framework of the doctrinal corpus of Catholic social teaching. Faithful to the authoritative recommendation made by the Holy Father John Paul II in No. 54 of the postsynodal apostolic exhortation "Ecclesia in America," the document presents "in a complete and systematic manner, even if by means of an overview, the Church's social teaching, which is the fruit of careful magisterial reflection and an expression of the Church's constant commitment in fidelity to the grace of salvation wrought in Christ and in loving concern for humanity's destiny" (Compendium, 8).

The Compendium has a simple and straightforward structure. After an Introduction, there follow three parts: the first, composed of four chapters, deals with the fundamental presuppositions of social doctrine -- God's plan of love for humanity and for society, the Church's mission and the nature of social doctrine, the human person and human rights, the principles and values of social doctrine; the second part, composed of seven chapters, deals with the contents and classical themes of social doctrine -- the family, human work, economic life, the political community, the international community, the environment and peace; the third part, which is quite brief, being composed of one sole chapter, contains a series of indications for the use of social doctrine in the pastoral praxis of the Church and in the life of Christians, above all the lay faithful. The Conclusion, entitled "For a Civilization of Love," is an expression of the underlying purpose of the entire document.

The Compendium has a specific purpose and is characterized by certain objectives that are well spelled out in the Introduction. In fact, the document "is presented as an

instrument for the moral and pastoral discernment of the complex events that mark our time; as a guide to inspire, at the individual and community levels, attitudes and choices that will permit all people to look to the future with greater trust and hope; as an aid for the faithful concerning the Church's teaching in the area of social morality."

It is moreover an instrument put together for the precise purpose of promoting "new strategies suited to the demands of our time and in keeping with human needs and resources. But above all there can arise the motivation to rediscover the vocation proper to the different charisms within the Church that are destined to the evangelization of the social order, because 'all the members of the Church are sharers in this secular dimension'" (Compendium, 10).

A fact that we do well to emphasize, because it is found in various parts of the document, is the following: The text is presented as an instrument for fostering ecumenical and interreligious dialogue on the part of Catholics with all who sincerely seek the good of mankind. In fact, the statement is made in No. 12 that the document "is proposed also to the brethren of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, to the followers of other religions, as well as to all people of good will who are committed to serving the common good."

Social doctrine, indeed, is intended for a universal audience, in addition to those to whom it is primarily and specifically addressed, the sons and daughters of the Church. The light of the Gospel, which social doctrine brings to shine on society, illuminates every person: Every conscience and every intellect is able to grasp the human depths of meaning and values expressed in this doctrine, as well as the outpouring of humanity and humanization contained in its norms for action.

Obviously, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church concerns Catholics first of all, for "the first recipient of the Church's social doctrine is the Church community in

its entire membership, because everyone has social responsibilities that must be fulfilled and in the tasks of evangelization, that is to say, of teaching, catechesis and formation that the Church's social doctrine inspires, it is addressed to every Christian, each according to the competence, charisms, office and mission of proclamation that is proper to each one" (Compendium, 83).

Social doctrine also implies responsibility regarding the construction, organization and functioning of society: political, economic and administrative duties, that is to say, duties of a secular nature, that belong to the lay faithful in a particular way because of the secular nature of their state of life and because of the secular character of their vocation. By means of this responsibility, the laity put social doctrine into practice and fulfill the Church's secular mission.

The Compendium and the Church's Mission

The Compendium places the Church's social doctrine at the heart of the Church's mission. It shows, above all in Chapter Two, the ecclesiological aspect of this social doctrine, that is, how this doctrine is intimately connected with the mission of the Church, with evangelization and the proclamation of Christian salvation in temporal realities. In fact, among the instruments of the Church's particular mission of service to the world, which consists in being a sign of the unity of all the human race and a sacrament of salvation, there is found also her social doctrine.

The Christian mysteries of the Resurrection and the Incarnation of the Word attest that the message of salvation, reaching its climax at Easter, concerns all people and every dimension of what is human, since Christ's redemptive work, "while essentially concerned with the salvation of mankind, includes also the renewal of the whole temporal order."

The Church, existing in the world and for the world, although not of the world, cannot neglect her proper mission of instilling within the world a Christian spirit: The Church "has an authentic secular dimension, inherent to her inner nature and mission, which is deeply rooted in the mystery of the Word Incarnate." When the Church becomes involved in human promotion, when she proclaims the rules of a new coexistence in peace and justice, when she works, together with all people of good will, for establishing relations and institutions that are more human, it is then that the Church "teaches the way which man must follow in this world in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Her teaching therefore extends to the whole moral order, and notably to the justice which must regulate human relations. This is part of the preaching of the Gospel."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains that when the Church "fulfills her mission of proclaiming the Gospel, she bears witness to man, in the name of Christ, to his dignity and his vocation to the communion of persons. She teaches him the demands of justice and peace in conformity with divine wisdom." It is good to emphasize the words "proclaiming the Gospel" and "mission" in this passage, as they indicate the life and action of the Church, her very purpose according to the will of her Founder. This means when she puts forth her social doctrine the Church is doing nothing other than fulfilling her innermost mission: "to teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message."

It has thus been possible to understand the Church's social doctrine in the context of the mystery of creation, of the redemption of Christ and of the salvation -- which is integral in character -- that he brings: "Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person and all mankind, and opens up the wondrous prospect of divine filiation." It has been possible to place it better within the

relation that exists between evangelization and human promotion, which are intimately connected but must not be confused: "Between evangelization and human advancement -- development and liberation -- there are ... profound links." It has been possible to consider it as closely connected to the entire Christian life insofar as it is itself "an integral part of the Christian conception of life," according to the memorable expression found in "Mater et Magister."

The fact that the Compendium places social doctrine within the mission proper to the Church prompts us on the one hand not to consider it as something added or peripheral to the Christian life and, on the other hand, helps us to understand it as belonging to a community subject. In fact, the only subject properly suited to the nature of social doctrine is the entire ecclesial community.

The Compendium, in No. 79, states: "Social doctrine belongs to the Church because the Church is the subject that formulates it, disseminates it and teaches it. It is not a prerogative of a certain component of the ecclesial body but of the entire community: it is the expression of the way that the Church understands society and of her position regarding social structures and changes. The whole of the Church community -- priests, religious and laity -- participates in the formulation of this social doctrine, each according to the different tasks, charisms and ministries found within her."

The Church is one body with many members who, "though many, are one body" (1 Corinthians 12:12). The action of the Church is likewise one, it is the action of a sole subject, but it is carried out according to a variety of gifts through which the whole richness of the entire body passes. "The entire Christian community" is called to an adequate discernment aimed at "scrutinizing the 'signs of the times' and interpreting reality in the light of the Gospel message," but "each individual person" is also called to this same task. "Everyone for their part" and "each individual person": service to the

world, so that it may know the ways of the Lord, is brought about through the specific -- and at the same time all-encompassing -- commitment of every component of the ecclesial community. In this perspective, I wish to offer a reflection concerning the contribution of these different ecclesial components.

Bishops and the Compendium

The Compendium is put into the hands of bishops. The conciliar decree "Christus Dominus," in paragraph 12, offers some points of interest regarding the bishop's function, precisely as teacher of the faith, in formulating, teaching and applying the Church's social doctrine. An integral part of this function of teaching, the decree states, is showing that "earthly goods and human institutions according to the plan of God the Creator are also disposed for man's salvation and therefore can contribute much to the building up of the body of Christ" (No. 12).

The bishop is also called to "teach, according to the doctrine of the Church, the great value of these things: the human person with his freedom and bodily life, the family and its unity and stability, the procreation and education of children, civil society with its laws and professions, labor and leisure, the arts and technical inventions, poverty and affluence" (ibid.). Finally, he also has the duty of setting forth "the ways by which are to be answered the most serious questions concerning the ownership, increase, and just distribution of material goods, peace and war, and brotherly relations among all countries" (ibid.).

This intimate relation between social doctrine and the bishop as teacher of the faith ultimately arises from the indissoluble bond existing between social doctrine and evangelization, a bond spoken of many times in the Compendium. The bishop is the pre-eminent teacher of the faith in a particular community that has the specific task of discerning historical

events in the light of social doctrine. It is the task of the particular Christian community -- as stated in the famous fourth paragraph of "Octogesima Adveniens" -- "to analyze with objectivity the situation," "to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words" and "to discern the options and commitments which are called for." This is a task that belongs to the community and is to be undertaken "with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the Bishops who hold responsibility and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all people of good will" (ibid.) so that the proclamation of the social Gospel may be incarnated in the minds and hearts of concrete men and women who share the same concerns and the same hopes.

The bishop, as the first servant of his community, will find in the Compendium the help needed for fulfilling this duty of discernment. The Compendium will be a kind of reference point for working out the Church's social doctrine in his diocese, taking into account the papal social magisterium as well as Scripture and Tradition, and keeping careful watch also over how this doctrine is taught and embodied. The Compendium will help the bishop, insofar as he is responsible for spreading social doctrine in his diocese, constantly to remind all ecclesial subjects of their social responsibility. Nor will the bishop consider the application of this same social doctrine in his diocese as foreign to his office of teacher of the faith. Of course, putting its principles into concrete action in situations of politics, the economy and work will belong to other subjects, and in a particular way to Christian associations of the laity and to individual laymen and women. Nonetheless, the bishop is called to maintain an important role of overseeing this application so as to reawaken, even in a prophetic manner, consciences which have fallen asleep, to condemn distortions and errors in its application, to indicate -- without getting involved in empirical questions -- basic criteria and dynamic guidelines for resolving the human and social problems that call into play the word and actions of believers.

Priests and the Compendium

The Compendium is put into the hands of priests. The priest, "by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the Sacrament of Orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is configured in a special way as Head and Shepherd of his people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world." Priestly service to the world takes place according to the specific character proper to the priest. He is a missionary, but not independently of his liturgical service, of his making Christ present in his preaching and in his very life, of his being a shepherd to his flock, of his value as an instrument of dialogue among Christians and between Christians and all men and women.

The priest serves the Church's social doctrine not when he becomes involved directly in social or economic activities, but by preaching the social Gospel from the altar, by proclaiming in his preaching the freedom of Christ and condemning the denial of human rights and the disregard for the dignity of the person, by showing the uncontainable force of the love and justice that issue forth from the Word, teaching the social value of the Christian faith, by promoting a catechesis -- especially among young people and adults -- that draws its inspiration also from social doctrine, by prompting the Christian community and the laity, both as individuals and in associations, to open their minds and hearts to the human needs found in their own territory as well as to the needs of the larger world community.

Moreover, to the priest belongs the mission of promoting the "different roles, charisms and ministries present within the ecclesial community," in relation also to the assimilation and

proclamation of the Church's social doctrine. He has the first responsibility, within his community, of fostering and strengthening the awareness that all subjects of the community must have concerning their role in the evangelization of society: parents and families, the laity, the world of school and education, associations, movements, and so on.

Consecrated Life and the Compendium

The Compendium is put into the hands of men and women religious. Those who have responded to Christ's call to a form of life that already in this world can anticipate the perfection of the Kingdom of God have a special place in the Christian community and, by virtue of their charism, have a unique role in the evangelization of society. Theirs is not a detachment from the world, it is a different way of being within the world. It is a particularly profound and non-evasive way, in that those in consecrated life see social relationships and economic questions not only as they are, but also and above all as they will be and therefore as they should be.

Men and women religious leave everything behind (cf. Luke 14:33; 18:29) in order to open their hearts to a greater fullness and to live more completely an undivided love for the Lord (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:34), and thus to show prophetically to men and women new forms of relations with the things of creation and with one's brothers and sisters: relations oriented towards sharing, built on the freedom of God's children, relations that accept rather than possess, relations of human promotion rather than oppression.

Consecrated life focuses its gaze prophetically on the Resurrection, when men and women will be "like angles in heaven" (Matthew 22:30), and, already in the present time that we live here and now, it is an anticipation of that mysterious state of perfection that the merits of Christ make

possible: All of us, already, are in fact "one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). By their witness to the Gospel beatitudes in their personal and community lives and by their total openness -- with their vows of obedience, poverty and chastity -- to living with the Lord for the salvation of the world, consecrated persons imbue social, political and economic relations with the radicality of the Gospel.

Consecrated life offers a Gospel-based model of coexistence based on gift and keeps alive the ability of the entire Christian community and of all people to discern in the "already" the "not yet," to seek communion and charity, in order to provide human relations with a heart even in today's society.

The Laity and the Compendium

The Compendium is put above all into the hands of the laity. By virtue of their baptism, the laity are placed within the mystery of God's love for the world that Christ has revealed and of which the Church is the memory and continuation in history. Therefore, the laity share in the mystery, communion and mission that characterize the Church, but they do so according to a particular nature, their secular nature. The lives of the laity are directly involved in the organization of secular life, in the areas of the economy, of politics, of work, of social communication, of law, of the organization of institutions in which are made the decisions and choices that become social structures affecting civil life.

The laity are not in the world more so than other ecclesial subjects, they are in the world in a different way: They deal directly with secular matters, constructing the architecture of relations between members of social and political communities, leaving the mark of their work on the course of world events, determining the organizational and structural aspects of these events.

The Christian lay faithful, with their professional competence and their life experience, serve the evangelization of society as they follow their vocation to "seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God." They bring to the Christian community their passion for human needs and their openness to learn from others, since God is at work also beyond the official confines of the Church. They bring to the world their Christian knowledge that orders things according to God's plan and their keen desire to serve the ecclesial community that by means of their hands and their work reaches into the recesses of society where people concretely live.

The Christian laity -- with their competence and professional capabilities, and by taking on the responsibility to work in a particular context -- in a certain way complete the Church's social doctrine on the practical level and mediate its necessary impact on concrete realities. Evangelization is the proclamation of a new life; the evangelization of society is not an abstract ideological proposal but the incarnation of new criteria of behavior in the work of men and women.

Thus, social doctrine is not mere theoretical knowledge, rather it is meant "for action"; it is oriented towards life, it is to be applied with creativity and is to be incarnated. The laity have a very particular, although not exclusive, role in this area. Since social doctrine is the encounter between the truth of the Gospel and human problems, the laity must guide this social doctrine's directives for action towards concrete and effective operative results, even if these results are only partial.

The laity are men and women who are willing to take risks and who also concretely experience this doctrine. Drawing up historical, concrete solutions to humanity's problems, they are not, so to speak, an appendix to the Church's social doctrine, but the very heart of this doctrine, since it has a profound "experiential" character.

The laity must not be abandoned in this work of opening new frontiers and of working out new responses. The entire Christian community shall sustain them and encourage them so that they know that, although on the one hand their choices can only be attributed to themselves without involving the entire community, on the other hand their efforts are felt by the community to be the efforts of the community itself; their hard work and expectations are appreciated and valued. Nor shall the Christian community refrain from engaging in a collective effort in temporal realities, lest the community be compromised and suffer internal divisions.

Responsibility for working at the forefront and for making this doctrine a lived experience cannot be relegated solely to the laity as individuals. If the ultimate decisions regarding the economic and political spheres are to be made by the laity in autonomous responsibility, the fundamental orientational decisions and even the creation of places for the concrete experience of this doctrine and for dialogue must be the undertaking of the entire community.

The Christian laity are intermediaries between, on the one hand, the principles of reflection, the criteria of judgment and the directives for action found in the Church's social doctrine and, on the other hand, the concrete and unique situations in which the lay faithful must act and make decisions. But mediation does not mean a lack of courage, a tendency to weaken or to compromise. If lay Christians are to be salt, light and leaven, they must strive to make ever more clearly seen all that is authentically human in social relations, fearlessly and with openness and hope towards the future. In this, they are assisted by the presence of the ecclesial community, by the encouragement of priests and men and women in consecrated life, by their participation in

sacramental and liturgical life, and by the indications that come to them from places of community discernment of the signs of the times.

Witness and Planning

In concluding these reflections on the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, I would like to emphasize the twofold dimension of the presence of Christians in society, a twofold inspiration that comes to us from the Church's social doctrine itself and that in the future will need to be lived more and more as two realities that together form a single whole. I am referring to the need for personal witness, on the one hand, and, on the other, the need for new planning for an integral humanism in solidarity that involves social structures.

These two dimensions, the personal and the structural, must never be separated. It is my fervent hope that the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church will contribute to the development of mature men and women who are authentic believers and will inspire them to be credible witnesses, capable of changing the mechanisms of modern society by their thought and action. This explains the need for witnesses, martyrs and saints in the area of society as well. These are people who have lived their presence in society as a "witness to Christ the Savior"; Popes have repeatedly made reference to such individuals.

We are speaking here of those whom "Rerum Novarum" considered "worthy of all praise" for their commitment to improve the conditions of workers. Those who, in the words of "Centesimus Annus," have "succeeded time after time in finding effective ways of bearing witness to the truth." Those who, "spurred on by the social magisterium, have sought to make that teaching the inspiration for their involvement in the world. Acting either as individuals or joined together in various groups, associations and organizations, these people

represent a great movement for the defense of the human person and the safeguarding of human dignity."

There are many such Christians, many of whom are members of the laity, who "attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life." Personal witness, the fruit of an adult Christian life, that is, one that is profound and mature, cannot fail to be firmly rooted also in the building of a new civilization, the civilization of love.