

# Catholic Social Teaching and Ecclesiology

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Good morning. Dzień dobry. Ogromnie się cieszę, że mogę być tutaj z państwem. I am delighted to be here with you today. This is my second year participating in this wonderful seminar in Warsaw. However, I spend as much time as possible in Poland, as my wife is from Kraków and my daughter was born here. My research has also brought me here often, as I wrote my dissertation on *Solidarność* and most recently co-edited a critical edition of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła's monumental book *Katolicka etyka społeczna*.<sup>1</sup>

For the last 16 years, I have been a professor at Catholic universities in the United States. Early on in my career I was a religious studies teacher at a Catholic high school. I grew up a Catholic and attended a Catholic grade school, high school, college and graduate studies programs. In other words, I have spent almost my entire life studying or working in Catholic institutions. At a certain point, I became interested in the question of how Catholic social teaching should not only influence how the Church attempts to bring the world into greater conformity with the Kingdom of God, but also how Catholic social teaching should shape the life of the Church itself and its ministries. Unfortunately, some of my growing interest in this topic arose from seeing Catholic institutions either ignore or violate the principles and values of Catholic social teaching in various aspects of how they pursue their mission. For example, in the United States, many Catholic institutions violate Catholic social teaching on the rights of the worker, sometimes in a blatant way. I have spoken with Catholics from many parts of the world who tell me that the Church is not living out its social teaching in the way it treats its own employees. On the other hand, many Catholics believe the Church should focus on sacramental life and personal piety, without getting involved in the pressing problems of the world. These Catholics believe that when the Church seeks to address issues such as immigration, crime and punishment, war, economic justice, or public policy in general, the Church is getting involved in politics in a way that goes beyond what it is called to do.

This means that there is a lot of confusion about the role of Church in the world. Modern Catholic social teaching has a great deal to say about this, but unfortunately many Catholics have little to no exposure to it. In my talk, I will discuss what Catholic social teaching has to say about the role of the Church in the world. I will describe the *ad extra* and *ad intra* functions of Catholic social teaching, which refer to how Catholic social teaching sees the role of the Church in addressing problems in the world more broadly and within the Church itself. I will speak

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<sup>1</sup> Karol Wojtyła, *Katolicka etyka społeczna*, edited by Gerald J. Beyer, Agnieszka Lekka-Kowalik, Alfred Wierzbicki (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018)

about how the Catholic tradition generally sees the role of the Church in the world, but then turn to how Catholic social teaching should impact the internal life of the Church and its ministries.

Let me begin with an introduction to the topic of the Church in the world and a little bit of history. One of the great scholars of Catholic social teaching, Rev. J. Bryan Hehir, describes “three great questions” about the Church in the world.<sup>2</sup> Catholic social teaching deals with all three of these questions. First, there is “the Church/State question.” The “Church/state question” concerns, “politics, laws and institutions, and the Church’s stance or attitude towards them.” Christian thinkers have grappled with the Church/State question since antiquity. For example, Augustine maintained that we need the state because we are sinful. Aquinas, on the other hand, believed that government is necessary because we are social beings, and that the government is an important way to promote the common good.

The second question is “the Church/Society question.” According to Rev. Hehir, this question concerns “how the state should relate to socioeconomic order.” Modern Catholic social teaching has focused a great deal of attention on this. For example, Pope John Paul II argued in *Centessimus Annus* that a “task of the State is that of overseeing and directing the exercise of human rights in the economic sector.”<sup>3</sup>

Finally, we have the Church/World question. How does the Church fit into the world? How and to what degree does the Church collaborate with the “world?” Christian disciples have wrestled with the Church/World question from the earliest beginnings of Christianity. Biblical scholar Wayne Meeks points out that early Christians struggled with “loving and hating the world.”<sup>4</sup> Early Christian writings exhibit ambivalent and sometimes disparaging views of “the world,” which could be interpreted as calling for Christians to keep their distance from those outside the Christian community and “worldly affairs.” For example, in the Gospel of John 15: 18-21 we read:

If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also.

The first letter of John (I John 2: 15-17) seems to disparage the world even more starkly:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the

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<sup>2</sup> I am indebted in this paragraph to J. Bryan Hehir’s graduate course on Catholic social teaching, which he taught at Harvard Divinity School for many years. I was fortunate to take that course in 2001. The language in this paragraph follows his lecture very closely.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Centessimus Annus*, no. 48.

<sup>4</sup> See Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever.

However, Saint Paul sees the notion of withdrawal from this world as absurd.<sup>5</sup> For example, in 1 Cor. 5:9-10 (NRSV) Paul states, “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons— not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world.”

Christian Churches and Christian thinkers throughout the ages up to the present moment have thus struggled with this question of how and to what degree the Church can and should concern itself with earthly affairs. For example, in the fourth century Saint Augustine reflected on how Christians can and should live responsibly in the world as faithful disciples of Christ in Book 19 of his masterful treatise, *The City of God*. According to Augustine, Christians should see the wretchedness of the world. Yet, they should not retreat into isolation from the world outside the Christian community. Rather, they should take responsibility for promoting peace and justice, while accepting that any justice and peace in this life will be fragile and pale by comparison to the true peace of Heaven.<sup>6</sup> Augustine famously used the example of a judge’s dilemma, who knows that she or he will inevitably cause harm to those unjustly prosecuted for crimes. Although this is regrettable, if a Christian is called to be a judge by God, she or he must assume this role. Likewise, Christians can and should participate in warfare if it is necessary for the protection of innocent people and the common good. Other Christians who saw the world as evil promoted flight from the world, or isolation from broader society because getting involved in politics and the complex problems of society would cause them to become sinful and tainted. A good example of this is the *The Schleitheim Confession*, written in 1527 by the Anabaptist leader Michael Sattler in Switzerland. Among other things, Sattler recommends complete separation from society. He thus stated:

...we shall not have fellowship with them (the wicked) and not run with them in the multitude of their abominations. This is the way it is: Since all who do not walk in the obedience of faith, and have not united themselves with God so that they wish to do His will, are a great abomination before God, it is not possible for anything to grow or issue from them except abominable things. For truly all creatures are in but two classes, good and bad, believing and unbelieving, darkness and light, the world and those who (have come) out of the world, God's temple and idols, Christ and Belial; and none can have part with the other... To us then the command of the Lord is clear when He calls upon us to be separate from the evil and thus He will be our God and we shall be His sons and daughters... He

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<sup>5</sup> Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries*.

<sup>6</sup> See Augustine, "The City of God against the Pagans," ed. R. W. Dyson (London: Cambridge University Press, 1998), XIX.17.945; XIX.17.945; XIX.6.927.

further admonishes us to withdraw from Babylon and earthly Egypt that we may not be partakers of the pain and suffering which the Lord will bring upon them.<sup>7</sup>

This document calls for what the 19<sup>th</sup> century German scholar Ernst Troeltsch described as the “sect type” of being Church in the world. This vision of the world advocates an ethic of conscience and obedience to the Gospel, which requires separation from society. In other words, Christians do not have a responsibility for creating a just society. Troeltsch also described the “mystical type,” which involves an individualistic, spiritualized religion and what he called the “Church type,” which tends toward becoming a part of the establishment and promotes social, political and cultural responsibility. He categorized the Roman Catholic Church and mainline Protestantism as “Church types.”<sup>8</sup>

The modern Catholic tradition does not promote the kind of separation that the Anabaptists of the Radical Reformation promoted, nor does it believe that the Church can completely transform this earth into the kingdom of God. The Catholic tradition has developed a sense of the Church’s ability to contribute to creating a better world, one that is more like the kingdom of God, albeit imperfectly. Prior to Vatican II, the Church was perhaps too confident in its ability to solve the world’s problems. In *Rerum Novarum* Pope Leo XIII argued that only the Church could solve the world’s pressing problems because “only a return to Christian life and institutions will heal them.”<sup>9</sup> However, starting with John XXIII a growing awareness developed that Catholics must not only contribute to promoting human and ecological well-being, but that doing so required collaboration with all “people of good will” (*Pacem in terris*).<sup>10</sup>

Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, offered the clearest theological articulation of how the Roman Catholic Church sees itself in the modern world. In this connection, it is worth reading the opening paragraph of that landmark document: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts... That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.”<sup>11</sup> The introduction to the document goes on to state that it addresses “the whole of humanity,” and that the Church humbly seeks to serve humanity and be in solidarity with humanity, not superior to other traditions/cultures.<sup>12</sup> For its part, the Church

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<sup>7</sup> Excerpted from <https://www.anabaptists.org/history/the-schleitheim-confession.html>

<sup>8</sup> I am indebted here in part to Bryan Hehir’s discussion in his course at Harvard Divinity School of Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1960).

<sup>9</sup> Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 24. Krier Mich cites *Rerum Novarum* no. 41.

<sup>10</sup> See the salutation in John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*. Available at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html)

<sup>11</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1. Available at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

<sup>12</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 2-3.

has the “duty to scrutinize the signs of the times in light of the Gospel” (no. 4). Although the Church is keenly aware of human frailty and sinfulness, *Gaudium et Spes* affords a highly positive role to human activity in the divine salvific plan.<sup>13</sup> Humanity has “fallen into the bondage of sin, but now emancipated by Christ,” the human family can bring about positive change in this world. (no. 2) Thus, the Council Fathers wrote “...while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God.”<sup>14</sup> This statement refutes Karl Marx’s critique of religion, which charged that religion caused humans to ignore problems and suffering in this life by focusing solely on the afterlife.<sup>15</sup> It also serves as the foundation for understanding the place and function of modern Catholic social teaching, both in the world more broadly and within the internal life of the Church.

If this statement were not clear enough, after Vatican II the Catholic tradition developed its understanding of the relationship between evangelization and promoting peace, human rights and justice in the world. Prior to Vatican II, the Church saw doing the work of justice in the world as “pre-evangelization,” i.e. important, but not central to the Church’s mission.<sup>16</sup> It was not seen as a part of the Church’s mission in the same way as, for example, celebrating the sacraments.<sup>17</sup> Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes* began to recast the meaning of evangelization and its relationship to justice.<sup>18</sup> The 1971 World Synod of Bishops went further in *Justitia in Mundo*. They argued that “[a]ction on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel ... .”<sup>19</sup> This text, in particular the word “constitutive,” generated concerns about excessive “horizontalism,” or focus on earthly affairs. As a result, Paul VI clarified the issue in his 1975 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. He proclaimed that evangelization would be incomplete without concern for human rights, social justice and “liberation from every form of oppression.” Evangelization must include the pursuit of social justice and the defense of human rights as a necessary component, albeit a secondary one.<sup>20</sup> Announcing that God offers salvation

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<sup>13</sup> See *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 4, 5, 13, 39,

<sup>14</sup> No. 39, see also no. 34.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, Karl Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction,” 1-2; 7. Available at <http://marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>

<sup>16</sup> This paragraph has been published in Beyer, “Evangelization and Social Justice in Poland after 1989” in *Spirit*, and Beyer, *Recovering Solidarity*. I am grateful to both publishers for permission to reprint it.

<sup>17</sup> Richard McBrien, “The Future Role of the Church in American Society,” in *Religion and Politics in the American Milieu*, ed. Leslie Griffin (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1986), 92.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example Second Vatican Council., “*Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*,” 185-89, nos. 34, 39, 40.

<sup>19</sup> World Synod of Bishops, “*Justice in the World (Justitia in Mundo)*,” in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 289.

<sup>20</sup> Charles M. Murphy, “Action for Justice As Constitutive of the Preaching of the Gospel: What Did the 1971 Synod Mean?” *Theological Studies* 44 (1983): 305. I rely here on Murphy’s illuminating discussion of the drafting of *Justitia in Mundo* and its subsequent interpretation. Paul VI states: “evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay between the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social. This is why evangelization involves an explicit message, adapted to the different situations constantly being realized, about the rights and duties of every human being, about family life without which personal growth and

to all in Jesus Christ constitutes the “foundation” and “center” of evangelization.<sup>21</sup> However, Paul VI located the primary *means* of evangelization in “... the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God...and at the same time given over to one’s neighbor with limitless zeal.”<sup>22</sup>

Pope Francis retrieved this theme in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis maintains that “each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid” (no. 187). Francis devotes an entire chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* (nos. 176-207) to what he calls the “social dimension of evangelization.”<sup>23</sup> There he writes, “from the heart of the Gospel we see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every work of evangelization” (no. 178). Citing Paul VI and several passages from the Gospels (Mt 25:40, Mt 7:2, Lk 6:36-38,) Francis points to the “absolute priority of ‘going forth from ourselves towards our brothers and sisters’ as one of the two great commandments which ground every moral norm and as the clearest sign for discerning spiritual growth in response to God’s completely free gift” (no. 179).

Having reaffirmed that evangelization must entail “making the Kingdom of God present in our world” (no. 176), Francis clarifies that “a kind of ‘charity à la carte,’ or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience” does not suffice. Rather building the “kingdom of God (cf. Lk 4:43)... is about loving God who reigns in our world.” Francis maintains: “To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity” (no. 180). Put another way, evangelization requires promoting integral human development, which in turn necessitates taking a stance on concrete and complex policy questions, even if the Church’s position on them is “open to discussion” and can change in light of new insights (no. 182). Echoing Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (no. 34), Francis says the Church, while “taking into account the contributions of the different sciences,” and recognizing that it alone does not have all the answers, has a right and duty to speak about public policy issues that affect human and ecological well-being. This must be the case “lest the great social principles remain mere generalities that challenge no one” (no. 182).

Given Pope Francis’ theological reasoning in chapter two of *Evangelii Gaudium*, it should not be surprising that Pope Francis has paid so much attention in word and deed to the pressing social issues of our time. Think for example of Lampedusa, where in 2013 on his first

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development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development ... ” Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 30. See also nos. 13, 14, 29 and 31.

<sup>21</sup> Paul VI, “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*,” 313, no. 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 317, no. 41.

<sup>23</sup> Pope Benedict had echoed this theme, albeit less systematically, in Pope Benedict XVI, Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the World Mission Sunday. Available at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/missions/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20110106\\_world-mission-day-2011\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/missions/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110106_world-mission-day-2011_en.html). For a view similar to that of Pope Francis, see also Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos.13, 14, 27, 29, 31, 41

trip outside of Rome Pope Francis used a chalice and lectern made of wood from a boat that shipwrecked while carrying migrants fleeing violence and exploitation.<sup>24</sup> In *Evangelii Gaudium* he specifically addresses what he deems “great and fundamental issues,” namely overcoming the marginalization of the poor and peace and social dialogue. However, in his broader social teaching, Francis has devoted significant attention to issues such as environmental destruction, violation of the dignity and rights of migrants, refugees, and victims of human trafficking, poverty and economic inequality and the numerous forms of violence in our world.<sup>25</sup>

*Evangelii Gaudium*’s treatment of the “social dimension of evangelization” lays the theological foundation for Francis’ well-known and repeated claim that the Church must act like a “field hospital.” Francis tells us that the “thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle.”<sup>26</sup> Cardinal Blase Cupich, a friend of this seminar, explicates very well what Pope Francis means. According to Cardinal Cupich,

When the Church becomes a field hospital, it can radically change the way we view our community life. Instead of being defined as a group of people that live in the same neighborhood, have a common ethnic heritage or social status, regularly go to Mass or are the registered parishioners, we understand ourselves as those who take up the work of healing by sharing in the sufferings of others. We are a community that taps into and shares our talents to find creative ways to help those most in need.<sup>27</sup>

Catholic social teaching assists the Catholic community in this endeavor by providing guiding principles and orientations that help flesh out what it means to actualize the love commands in the social sphere. The understanding of human dignity, human rights, solidarity, subsidiarity, justice, the preferential option for the poor, the common good, the dignity and rights of workers, and integral ecology can be applied to the world’s most pressing problems in order to find just and sustainable solutions. In this regard, Pope Francis rightly maintains that the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* serves as an excellent resource that should be studied and used by Catholics trying to further the vision of Kingdom of God.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Anne Gallagher, “How to heed Pope Francis’ message on migration,” U.S. Catholic, July 13, 2018; <https://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201807/how-heed-pope-francis-message-migration-31445>. I am grateful to Villanova Theology doctoral student Mat Verghese for the insight about Francis’ use of materials from a migrants’ ship.

<sup>25</sup> For a fine primer on the social teaching of Pope Francis, see Thomas Massaro, *Mercy in Action: The Social Teachings of Pope Francis* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> Antonio Spadaro, “A Big Heart Open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis,” *America*, September 30, 2013; <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis>

<sup>27</sup> Blaise Cupich, “Cardinal Cupich: Pope Francis’ ‘Field Hospital’ Calls Us to Radically Rethink Church Life,” *America*, December 29, 2017; <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/12/29/cardinal-cupich-pope-francis-field-hospital-calls-us-radically-rethink-church-life>

<sup>28</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 184.

The modern papal social tradition powerfully demonstrates how to apply the principles, virtues and values of Catholic social teaching to myriad important social, economic and political problems in the world. As I have argued here, the Church has lucidly articulated its theological rationale for engagement in the affairs of the world. As Pope Francis says in *Gaudete et Exultate*, it is wrong to separate the life of prayer and the sacraments from them, and we should not label deep involvement in the world's social, political and economic problems suspect as "superficial, worldly, secular, materialist, communist or populist." It should be clear by now that the Catholic Church exemplifies neither the "mystical" nor "sect" types of Churches described by Troeltsch. Having established the right and duty of the Church to speak and act in concert with others to achieve, justice, peace, and integral development, I want now to turn my attention to how these principles should inform our own internal policies, practices, and way of proceeding within the Church and its ministries. To reiterate, Catholic social teaching has three purposes. The public purpose of CST is to establish a language and terms for public debate, as John Courtney Murray SJ, maintained, and serve as a resource for moral vision regarding public policy. The personal purpose of CST is to help the disciple shape his or her conscience and to see the link between personal conscience and public policy. Finally, the ecclesial purpose of CST is to shape the inner life of the Church.<sup>29</sup> For the remainder my talk, I want to speak about this third purpose.

The Church explicitly teaches that Church institutions must embody CST in their own internal policies. As the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' document *Economic Justice for All* states:

"All the moral principles that govern the just operation of any economic endeavor apply to the Church and its agencies and institutions; indeed the Church should be exemplary. The Synod of Bishops in 1971 worded this challenge most aptly: "While the Church is bound to give witness to justice, she recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes. Hence, we must undertake an examination of the modes of acting and of the possessions and lifestyle found within the Church herself (10)."<sup>30</sup>

The document from the 1971 Synod *Justitia in Mundo* is extremely important. It relates to the early discussion of evangelization. It implies that when Church-related institutions and ministries do not treat their employees justly and do not recognize their rights, they are not evangelizing. In other words, they are providing an "anti-witness" to the Gospel.<sup>31</sup> I have seen this in my own ministry as a professor of theology at Catholic universities. Numerous students have approached me and complained about the hypocrisy of Catholic institutions not fully embodying Catholic social teaching. I will give some specific examples in what follows. For

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<sup>29</sup> I am indebted here to J. Bryan Hehir's graduate course at Harvard Divinity School on Catholic social teaching.

<sup>30</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "*Economic Justice for All: A Catholic Framework for Economic Life*" no. 347.

<sup>31</sup> I am indebted here to Józef Tischner's discussion of antievangelization in *W Krainie Schorowanej Wyobrazni*, 1st ed. (Kraków: Znak, 1997).

now, the basic point to emphasize is the importance of what St. John Paul II stated in *Centesimus Annus*: “Today more than ever, the Church is aware that her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the *witness of actions* than as a result of its internal logic and consistency,”<sup>32</sup>

### **The Dignity of Human Labor and Workers’ Rights**

Catholic social teaching has long supported the right of workers to a living and just wage, the right to unionize, and to benefits necessary “to ensure the life and health of workers,” as John Paul II stated in *Laborem Exercens*. All workers therefore have a right to affordable healthcare, rest (at least one day per week and a yearly vacation), retirement pensions, unemployment insurance, workers compensation, and maternity leave according to CST regardless of the “market value” of the work they do.<sup>33</sup> Jesus Christ himself toiled as a manual laborer, thereby revealing that the dignity of work and the rights flowing from it comes from the fact that a human being does it, not the work itself. Therefore, in the context of Catholic institutions, the president, executive director, Chief Financial Officer, provost, faculty member, custodian, food service workers, security officer and faculty member – full or part time – have the same rights as workers. In the same vein, the wages of Chief Executive Officers of Catholic hospitals, universities, etc. should not be “disproportionately high,” to use Pope John XXIII’s language from *Mater et Magistra*, (no. 70), particularly when many workers are not paid a living wage. As Pope Francis states in *Evangelii Gaudium*, those who work in Catholic ministries must say “no to the new idolatry of money” and “no to spiritual wordliness.”<sup>34</sup> Yet, in the U.S. context, we have executives of Catholic hospitals and universities making millions of dollars and living lavish lifestyles while some workers in these institutions earn poverty wages.<sup>35</sup>

In fact, canon law mandates that that the Church as employer recognize the rights of all workers.<sup>36</sup> Fr. Sinclair Oubre, a canon lawyer, points to the canons which obligate Church institutions to pay their employees a living wage and recognize the freedom of association,

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<sup>32</sup> John Paul II *Centesimus Annus*, no. 58.

<sup>33</sup> John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, no. 19. See also *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 301; John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 15, John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 70-71. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 80.

<sup>34</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 55 and 93.

<sup>35</sup> On Catholic hospitals, Michael Sean Winters writes, “How bad is the problem? According to an NCR article by Eileen Markey, Tersigni made \$17.6 million in 2014, earning him the distinction of being the highest paid non-profit healthcare CEO in the country — and therefore in the world. In 2015, the last year for which federal tax forms are available, Tersigni made a measly \$13 million. Other executives also make salaries in the seven digits, much of it from bonuses.” See Michael Sean Winters, “Ascension Health commits structural sins of income inequality, capitalist excess,” *National Catholic Reporter*, November 29, 2018; <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/distinctly-catholic/ascension-health-commits-structural-sins-income-inequality>. I write about this problem at Catholic universities in *Solidarity or Status Quo? Catholic Social Teaching and Higher Education in the Age of the Corporatized University* (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming)

<sup>36</sup> See Sinclair Oubre, “Labor Law for 1.1 Billion People: How Canon Law, and Catholic Social Justice Principles Can Give a Third Way,” [http://socialscience.sla1.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/06/CanonLaw\\_CatholicLabor\\_Principles\\_6014010.pdf](http://socialscience.sla1.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/06/CanonLaw_CatholicLabor_Principles_6014010.pdf), 10-11. See also Francis G. Morrissey, “Just Wages: It’s in Church Law,” *Health Progress* 92, no. 4 (2011).

which includes the right to unionize. He cites Canon 231§2: ... “lay persons have the right to decent remuneration appropriate to their condition so that they are able to provide decently for their own needs and those of their family. They also have a right for their social provision, social security, and health benefits to be duly provided.” In addition, Canon 215: “The Christian faithful are at liberty freely to found and direct associations for purposes of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world and to hold meetings for the common pursuit of these purposes.”<sup>37</sup>

Sadly Catholic hospitals, schools, universities and other ministries have not always respected the rights of their workers to a just wage, form unions, and their due benefits. In the U.S. context, sociologist Adam Reich detailed the struggle for fair wages and the right to unionize in Catholic hospitals in his book *With God on Our Side: The Struggle for Workers' Rights in a Catholic Hospital*. Reich describes some of the administrators who, even though they were Catholic religious women, attempted to thwart the efforts of their workers to unionize because these sisters believed they knew what was best for their workers. For me, this book was a very sobering and personally challenging read, as I owe much of my home education to the women religious from orders such as the sisters of St. Joseph and sisters of Mercy. In a landmark document called *Respecting the Just Rights of Workers* the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops acknowledged the difficulties facing Catholic healthcare providers in the face of ever rising costs of healthcare delivery. Nonetheless, the bishops correctly insisted that “creating and sustaining a workplace that provides equal employment opportunities, promotes employee participation, ensures employee safety and well-being, provides just compensation and benefits, and recognizes the rights of employees to organize and bargain collectively, are no less parts of Catholic social thought than the teachings concerning the fundamental right of access to health care.”<sup>38</sup> At the same time, the bishops rightly maintained that workers unions also have a duty to act in good faith by not making false promises about the benefits that the union can deliver and not falsely accusing the employer of acting unjustly toward employees.<sup>39</sup> Although his words do not relate specifically to the employer-employee context, Francis’s admonition in *Evangelii Gaudium* (no. 98) seems relevant in this regard: “Spiritual worldliness leads some Christians to war with other Christians who stand in the way of their quest for power, prestige, pleasure and economic security.” In expensive ministries like health care and education, where providing for the needs and protecting the rights of patients and students are paramount, management and workers must, in accordance with the principle of solidarity, work together, each side being willing to make a certain level of sacrifice for the common good. However, using Catholic doctrine, such as the teaching on religious freedom, to claim that Catholic

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<sup>37</sup> See Sinclair Oubre, "Labor Law for 1.1 Billion People and Morrisey, "Just Wages: It's in Church Law." Quotations here of the relevant canons are from the Code of Canon Law at the Vatican website: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_PU.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_PU.HTM).

<sup>38</sup> United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, "Respecting the Just Rights of Workers: Guidance and Options for Catholic Health Care and Unions," (2009), 3. Available at [http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/labor-employment/upload/respecting\\_the\\_just\\_rights\\_of\\_workers.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/labor-employment/upload/respecting_the_just_rights_of_workers.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

hospitals, schools or universities should be able to reject workers' unions is illegitimate. As I have argued with my colleague Don Carroll, if anyone's rights are being violated -- including the right to religious freedom -- they are those of the employees who want to unionize. The church's teaching, summarized in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, calls people to form unions in order to promote the rights and dignity of all workers. Forming unions -- an "indispensable element of social life" in the words of John Paul II in 1981's *Laborem Exercens* -- is seen as a vital contribution to the common good.<sup>40</sup>

According to Catholic social teaching, the common good is the "sum total" of material, spiritual, political, and cultural conditions that make it possible for women and men to fully flourish as human beings.<sup>41</sup> All human beings have a right to share in the common good and an obligation to contribute to it. Individual rights are respected and "coordinated with other rights" so that each individual can fulfill her or his duties in society and promote the common good.<sup>42</sup> Thus, a careful and honest balancing of the rights to health, the right to education and the rights of workers to a dignified living must be pursued in the context of Catholic ministries.

## Solidarity & Participation

The right to participation is another key principle of CST that has relevance to Catholic employers and ministries. As St. John Paul II repeatedly wrote, the principle of solidarity seeks to empower all people to participate in the shaping of a just social order and the common good.<sup>43</sup> According to the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, authorities should respect and protect the right and duty of participation of all to contribute to and benefit from the common good because "every person, family, and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community."<sup>44</sup> The right to participation pertains to all levels of society, but it has particular relevance to the world of work. Justice demands that all workers have the right to participate in the operations of their workplace in a "fully human way" and to participate in wage and benefit negotiations, as spelled out in *Centesimus Annus* and elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> Economic

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<sup>40</sup> Adapted here from Gerald J. Beyer and Donald C. Carroll, "Battling Adjunct Unions Fails Legal and Moral Tests," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 5, 2016; <http://ncronline.org/news/people/battling-adjunct-unions-fails-legal-and-moral-tests>

<sup>41</sup> *Compendium*, nos. 164-70.

<sup>42</sup> John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, no. 60. See also United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, "Economic Justice for All: A Catholic Framework for Economic Life" no.17. This paragraph is drawn from Gerald J. Beyer, "Economic Rights: Past, Present, and Future," in *Handbook of Human Rights*, ed. Thomas Cushman (London ; New York: Routledge, 2012), 298.

<sup>43</sup> See Beyer, *Recovering Solidarity*, 90-94. John Paul II stressed that "[t]he manner and means for achieving a public life which has true human development as its goal is *solidarity*. This concerns the active and responsible *participation* of all in public life, from individual citizens to various groups, from labor unions to political parties." See John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 1988, no. 42.

<sup>44</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 187. See also Gerald J. Beyer, *Recovering Solidarity: Lessons from Poland's Unfinished Revolution* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 93.

<sup>45</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no.15. See also John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 77, 97; Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, no. 15; John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, no. 14; *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no.

processes, including wage and price determinations, must not take place over the heads of workers, especially the poor, whose livelihood depends on them to the largest degree. In short, the right to participation, a requirement of solidarity and subsidiarity, calls for decisions to be made as much as possible by persons most directly affected by them in the workplace. In the context of ministry, the principle of participation mandates that the voices of all those involved are heard and considered seriously, and that those in positions of power respect those voices. Again, Pope Francis's words regarding ministry in *Evangelii Gaudium* are instructive:

The ministerial priesthood is one means employed by Jesus for the service of his people, yet our great dignity derives from baptism, which is accessible to all. The configuration of the priest to Christ the head – namely, as the principal source of grace – does not imply an exaltation which would set him above others. In the Church, functions “do not favour the superiority of some vis-à-vis the others.” Indeed, a woman, Mary, is more important than the bishops (no. 104).

In particular, Francis argues that lay and women's voices must have greater prominence in the work of the Church (nos. 102-03). It is worth recalling here that John Paul II similarly argued for a greater role for women in the Church in his 1995 Letter to Women.<sup>46</sup> While some progress has been made since then, Francis has informed us that more work needs to be done.

### **Charity, Justice and the Option for Poor**

As I mentioned above, Pope Francis warns against Christians undertaking “charity à la carte.” Of course, many Catholic ministries must provide mercy and charity to those who are suffering from illness, disease, violence and marginalization. As Pope Benedict said in *Caritas in Veritate*, “charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36- 40).” Benedict also maintains that “for the Church, charity is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.” Moreover, charity “goes beyond justice” to give care to the souls of human beings: “the claim that just social structures would make works of charity superfluous masks a materialist conception of man.”<sup>47</sup> Although “charity goes beyond justice,” it “never lacks justice,” as Pope Benedict contends. In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict gives

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307; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, nos. 71, 72. For analysis of the right to worker participation in greater detail see *ibid.*, 90-94, 145-48.; Lee A. Tavis, "The Problem of Wealth Distribution in the Global Apparel Industry: Locating Responsibilities in the Supply Chain," in *Rediscovering Abundance: Interdisciplinary Essays on Wealth, Income, and Their Distribution in the Catholic Social Tradition*, ed. Helen J. Alford (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 336-38.; James A. Gross, *A Shameful Business: The Case for Human Rights in the American Workplace* (Ithaca: ILR Press/Cornell University Press, 2010), 64, 80.

<sup>46</sup> John Paul II, “Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women” (1995), pp. 1-7@ [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_29061995\\_women.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html)

<sup>47</sup> Pope Benedict, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 28. See also *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 6

what I believe to be the most cogent account of the relationship between charity and justice. In Catholic teaching:

On the one hand, charity demands justice: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples. It strives to build the earthly city according to law and justice. On the other hand, charity transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving [3]. The earthly city is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion. Charity always manifests God's love in human relationships as well, it gives theological and salvific value to all commitment for justice in the world.<sup>48</sup>

In short, the Church and her ministries must always be animated by and act in accordance with charity and justice. Acting in solidarity, as the concept is understood in the Catholic tradition, brings together both charity and justice.<sup>49</sup> What might this look like in practice? Ken Hackett, the former director of Catholic Relief Services (the U.S affiliate of *Caritas Internationalis*) has discussed how important it is to adopt a justice-oriented approach, while also acting out of love for our suffering brothers and sisters. He described how in the past CRS' aid to Haiti did not empower the local peoples but rather created a culture of dependency and destroyed the local economies of doctors, merchants, farmers, etc. According to Hackett, "our solutions have too often been to do it, fix it, and run it" rather than promote justice and empowerment. Fortunately, CRS recognized its mistakes and shifted towards empowering the poor and victims of oppression to become agents of positive change.<sup>50</sup>

Here in Poland, some members of the Church seem to have misunderstood the call to both charity and justice.<sup>51</sup> However, others have heeded the call. For example, Bishop Marian Gołębiewski stated, "Taking into consideration the specific conditions in which the faithful of the Koszalin-Kołobrzeg diocese live, I would say the Church must first and foremost realize the option for the poor." He went on to say, "This means imbuing the structures of state life,

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<sup>48</sup> Pope Benedict, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 6. See also no. 7: "To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity...This is the institutional path — we might also call it the political path — of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbour directly, outside the institutional mediation of the pólis. When animated by charity, commitment to the common good has greater worth than a merely secular and political stand would have."

<sup>49</sup> See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 40: "Solidarity is undoubtedly a Christian virtue. In what has been said so far it has been possible to identify many points of contact between solidarity and charity, which is the distinguishing mark of Christ's disciples (cf. Jn 13:35). In the light of faith, solidarity seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimension of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation."

<sup>50</sup> Ken Hackett, "The Crisis in Haiti: an Assessment," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 8:1, 2011, 164; see also 163-169. Available at <http://www1.villanova.edu/content/dam/villanova/mission/Toton-Hackett.pdf>. See also Kim Lamberty, "Toward a Spirituality of Accompaniment in Solidarity Partnerships," *Missiology* Vol. XL, no. 2, April 2012, p. 181-92 @ <http://mis.sagepub.com/content/40/2/181.full.pdf+html>

<sup>51</sup> See Gerald J. Beyer, "The Catholic Church and the Ethic of Solidarity in Poland After 1989: An Update," *The Polish Review* Vol. 58, No. 2 (2013): 37-54.

institutions of social life, local government and Congressional communities, and a wide range of human activity with the spirit of the Gospel and Catholic social teaching.”<sup>52</sup>

The Polish bishops’ conference acted in solidarity and in accordance with the preferential option for the poor of CST by creating a foundation in 1999 that awards 1200 scholarships annually to children of poor families from villages and small towns. These scholarships will “follow” the students throughout their educational years, thus ensuring that they will continue to receive a good education. Importantly, scholarships are awarded based on merit and a clear demonstration of financial need. Preference has been given to children from the former PGR-y regions (*Państwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne*), which is appropriate given the high concentrations of poverty in them. Scholarship winners are also invited to two-week vacations and to summer language camps. Moreover, the foundation stresses the formation of civic leadership inspired by Christian ideals. In other words, it hopes to form tomorrow’s leaders who will govern Poland in the spirit of solidarity. Catholic ministries must always seek to go to the margins first, to the poor and the oppressed to empower them. When resources may be limited, their needs and their rights must be attended to first. As Pope Francis puts it, “solidarity...presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few.” Solidarity requires acting to “restore to the poor what belongs to them” now, not some time in the distant future.<sup>53</sup>

In closing, as we consider how to best pursue our ministries in our local contexts in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel and Catholic social teaching, let us hear once again, Pope Francis’ guidance from *Evangelii Gaudium*. His words are particularly salient in the face of growing xenophobia, racism, homophobia, Islamophobia, antisemitism, and the global turn toward nationalism and authoritarianism. As Catholics, we affirm with Pope Francis that in everything we do “the Christian ideal will always be a summons to overcome suspicion, habitual mistrust, fear of losing our privacy, all the defensive attitudes which today’s world imposes on us.”<sup>54</sup> Let us go out to the margins, to embrace the immigrant, the refugee, the poor, the sick, the marginalized, and those with whom we disagree in a way that reflects the fullness of Catholic social teaching. Let us reach out to our brothers and sisters of other faiths and recognize the truth and urgency of Pope Francis’ claim that “we will either build the future together or there will not be a future. Religions, in particular, cannot renounce the urgent task of building bridges between peoples and cultures. The time has come when religions should more actively exert themselves, with courage and audacity, and without pretense, to help the human family deepen the capacity for reconciliation, the vision of hope and the concrete paths of peace.”<sup>55</sup> Let us also recall St. John Paul II’s words that “człowiek jest drogą Kościoła” – the human person is the way of the church. Protection of the inviolable dignity of every human person – regardless of her

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<sup>52</sup> Marian Gołębiewski, "Co Sobór zmienił w Polsce?," *Znak* 1, no. 524 (1999): 24-25.

<sup>53</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 188-89.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 88

<sup>55</sup> Pope Francis, “Interreligious Meeting in the Presence of the Civil Authorities and the Diplomatic Corps,” February 4, 2019. Available at <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-02/pope-francis-uae-global-conference-human-fraternity-full-text.html>

religion, race, nationality, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation or gender must be prioritized in everything we do. As St. John Paul II said, the church can “never abandon the human person,” even if it means those in authority must renounce their power and privilege to fulfill this duty.<sup>56</sup> We must reject, as Pope Francis maintains in *Evangelii Gaudium*, “the self-absorbed promethean neopelagianism of those who ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others...”<sup>57</sup> Finally, we must fulfill our roles as workers in the vineyard joyfully and with a willingness to take risks, as our Holy Father has encouraged us in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

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<sup>56</sup> John Paul II, *Centesimus, Annus*, no. 53

<sup>57</sup> Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 94.