

A Compilation of Catholic Social Teaching

By Esther Terry

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A COMPILATION OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

By Esther Terry*

INTRODUCTORY NOTE: THE COMMON GOOD AS A LENS FOR EXAMINING CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

We include this Compilation of Catholic Social Teaching as a reference tool for various entities within the Catholic Church that may be involved in discussions about constitutional reform in South Sudan. This compilation includes statements of Popes, the Synod of Bishops, and a number of Episcopal Conferences in Africa, which address issues of political, social, and economic concern that correspond to the comparative constitutional law essays in this dossier. Although Catholic social teaching does not provide a “blueprint” for society and leaves room for legitimate disagreements among people of good will, it does offer principles that serve as a lens for examining political action.¹

One such principle is that of the common good. Whereas many constitutional lawyers may approach the framing of a new constitution in South Sudan by prioritizing individual rights, the Catholic understanding of the common good, which emphasizes the interplay of rights and responsibilities and includes the promotion of integral human development, may serve as a more comprehensive starting point for debates on constitutional reform.

In their recent pastoral letter, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa,”² the bishops of Africa (SECAM) not only affirm the importance of democratic governance and the rule of law but also highlight the Church’s responsibility to promote values needed for just and peaceful societies in Africa. SECAM’s letter draws on a long tradition of Catholic thought about the common good, which views the State not simply as an instrument for the protection of individual rights, but rather as an authority entrusted with the positive end of promoting the good of each human being and all human beings.³ The common good also serves

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¹“Often enough the Christian view of things will itself suggest some specific solution in certain circumstances. Yet it happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that with equal sincerity some of the faithful will disagree with others on a given matter. ... The Church, by reason of her role and competence, is not identified in any way with the political community nor bound to any political system. She is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person.” (II Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* [1965], 43, 76:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

²Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” (February 2013); complete text: <http://secam-sceam.org/?pg=documents>

³See Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), 14:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html and Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), 38:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html.

as a standard against which to measure and limit the action of the State. As Pope John XXIII elaborates: “The whole reason for the existence of civil authorities is the realization of the common good,” which is “the sum total of those conditions of social living whereby [persons] are enabled to achieve their own integral perfection more fully and more easily.”⁴

Catholic social teaching views the individual as an inherently relational being, a person embedded in interdependent relationships through which he or she achieves the goods of life. Human flourishing always has a communal dimension, even as it also requires fostering the dignity and agency of the individual.⁵ In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, the common good “is the good of ‘all of us’, made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. It is a good that is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it.”⁶

From the perspective of Catholic social teaching, authentic human development takes into account the whole person—including his or her transcendent and moral dimensions—and recognizes each life as a vocation to free and responsible action.⁷ Such integral human development, then, includes growing in awareness not only of one’s own rights, but also of one’s duties towards others.⁸ This personal responsibility and recognition of rights and duties, in turn, upholds the common good, and according to Catholic social thought, this dynamic should be acknowledged by governments. Thus, a primary concern of public authorities is the coordination of social relations to protect and promote the rights and duties of each person, so that all—especially the most vulnerable members of society—may enjoy a decent life and together participate in the common good.⁹

The principles briefly discussed in this introductory memo recur in the quotations included below. While this compilation includes general statements on the common good, integral human development, and the preferential option for the poor, it is primarily organized according to topics addressed in the collection of comparative constitutional law essays.

As mentioned above, Catholic social thought does not necessarily provide direct answers to particular questions about constitutional reform, but it does offer a framework of principles through which to approach such questions. The quotes that follow sketch that framework of principles in the words of popes and bishops.

⁴Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1963), 54, 58:
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html.

⁵Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), 53:
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html

⁶Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), 8.

⁷See Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1963), 34.

⁸See Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), 14-21 and Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), 16-19.

⁹Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1963), 62-66.

THE COMMON GOOD

The Church, Government, and the Common Good

“If we desire peace, we should all work for justice, we should foster the rule of law. In many cases, people have turned to the Church that she might accompany them as they set out on the journey of the democratic process. Consequently, democracy should become one of the principal routes along which the Church travels together with the people. Hence education towards the common good as well as to a respect for pluralism will be one of the pastoral tasks which are a priority for our times. The lay Christian, engaged in the democratic struggle according to the spirit of the Gospel, is the sign of a Church which participates in the promotion of the rule of law everywhere in Africa.” (Message of the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops [1994], 34)¹⁰

“The body politic, whose essential duty is the implementation and administration of a just order, can be a major instrument at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace. This order, in its turn, is at the service of the ‘vocation to the communion of persons.’ In order to put this ideal into practice, the Church in Africa must help to build up society in cooperation with government authorities and public and private institutions that are engaged in building up the common good.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus* [2011], 81)¹¹

“Let us be exemplary so that we set the pattern for moving forward in faith. ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied’ (Mt. 5:6). When we work together for the Common Good we succeed in building a Kingdom of justice, respect for the dignity of persons and their rights, a Kingdom of truth, unity, forgiveness, political tolerance, service, free and fair elections, good national ethics, good media, solidarity, peace and good stewardship of God’s creation. His Holiness Pope Benedict XIV says: ‘It is incumbent for the Church to strive that every people may be the principal agent of its own economic and social progress... and may help to bring about the universal common good as an active and responsible member of the human family...’.” (SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” [2013], 56-57; quoting *Africae Munus*, 79)¹²

Conversion and the Common Good

“A change in behaviour and mode of administration and management of resources can enable Africa to rise up and be able to stand on her own as called for by the Fathers of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Good governance is a technical as well as an ethical requirement for policy change. It requires a change in behaviour, attitude and mentality. It demands a veritable conversion towards the concern of the Common Good.”

¹⁰ Complete text of 1994 Message of Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops: http://www.ewtn.com/new_evangelization/africa/synod/message.htm

¹¹ Complete text of *Africae Munus*: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus_en.html#I_Care_for_the_human_person

¹² Download complete text of SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” here: <http://secam-sceam.org/?pg=documents>

(SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” [2013], 22; Quoting Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, Final Message, 43)

“The effectiveness of the Common Good requires behavioural change, adherence to the values of charity and justice, for it is not a Good that is sought for itself as in a commercial operation, but for people who are part of the community. This presupposes an institutional and organic reform to stimulate an economic behavioural change where the human person is not reduced to an economic value. It is about implementing conditions that give each and everyone the possibility to meet their basic needs in mutual respect to the priority of their public interest.” (SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” [2013], 26)

The Preferential Option for the Poor and the Common Good

“The ‘winds of change’ are blowing strongly in many parts of Africa, and people are demanding ever more insistently the recognition and promotion of human rights and freedoms. In this regard I note with satisfaction that the Church in Africa, faithful to its vocation, stands resolutely on the side of the oppressed and of voiceless and marginalized peoples. I strongly encourage it to continue to bear this witness. *The preferential option for the poor* is ‘a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole Tradition of the Church bears witness ... The motivating concern for the poor — who are in the very meaning of the term “the Lord’s poor” — must be translated at all levels into concrete actions, until it decisively attains a series of necessary reforms’.” (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* [1995], 44)¹³

“For the Church, the principle of the Common Good requires that all social, political, economic and cultural structures, systems and processes be accessible to all. Furthermore, it requires that even those who are marginalised in society are not neglected, hence the Church’s preferential option for the poor as a conscious effort to correct the moral mistakes, failings and shortcomings of our social institutions, cultures and systems. The option for the poor is inspired by Gospel values and the identification of Jesus’ vocation as that which brings ‘good news to the poor ... and proclaiming the year of God’s Jubilee’ (Luke 4:16-19). SECAM reiterates what Pope Benedict XVI has said that, ‘on the social plane, human consciences are challenged by the grave injustices existing in our world as a whole and within Africa in particular. The plundering of the goods of the earth by a minority to the detriment of entire peoples is unacceptable; because it is immoral. Justice obliges us to ‘render to each his due’.” (SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” [2013], 24-25; quoting Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Ecclesia in Africa*, 40 and Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Africae Munus*, 24)

Integral Human Development, Rights and Responsibilities, and the Common Good

“The common good is chiefly guaranteed when personal rights and duties are maintained. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are acknowledged, respected, coordinated with other rights, defended and promoted, so that in this way each one may more easily carry out his duties. For ‘to safeguard the inviolable rights of the human person,

¹³ Complete text: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa_en.html

and to facilitate the fulfillment of his duties, should be the chief duty of every public authority.” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* [1963], 60)¹⁴

“‘The reality of human solidarity, which is a benefit for us, also imposes a duty’. Many people today would claim that they owe nothing to anyone, except to themselves. They are concerned only with their rights, and they often have great difficulty in taking responsibility for their own and other people's integral development. Hence it is important to call for a renewed reflection on how *rights presuppose duties, if they are not to become mere licence*.... An overemphasis on rights leads to a disregard for duties. Duties set a limit on rights because they point to the anthropological and ethical framework of which rights are a part, in this way ensuring that they do not become licence. Duties thereby reinforce rights and call for their defence and promotion as a task to be undertaken in the service of the common good.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [2009], 43)

“*There cannot be holistic development and universal common good unless people’s spiritual and moral welfare is taken into account, considered in their totality as body and soul.*” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [2009], 76)

“Only if we are aware of our calling, as individuals and as a community, to be part of God's family as his sons and daughters, will we be able to generate a new vision and muster new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism. The greatest service to development, then, is a Christian humanism that enkindles charity and takes its lead from truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God. Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity.... Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life — structures, institutions, culture and *ethos* — without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment. Awareness of God's undying love sustains us in our laborious and stimulating work for justice and the development of peoples, amid successes and failures, in the ceaseless pursuit of a just ordering of human affairs. *God's love calls us to move beyond the limited and the ephemeral, it gives us the courage to continue seeking and working for the benefit of all, even if this cannot be achieved immediately and if what we are able to achieve, alongside political authorities and those working in the field of economics, is always less than we might wish. God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for love of the common good, because he is our All, our greatest hope.*” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [2009], 78)

The Common Good and Care for Creation

“The principle of the Common Good invites all of us to adhere to the notion of ‘common goods’ or of global services that no country can produce alone, such as the environment, health, knowledge, information, peace and security. It reminds us, to some extent, of the principle of the universal destination of the goods of the earth, according to the Social Teaching of the Church: ‘God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of all men and all people, such that goods of creation should flow fairly in the hands of all, according to the rule of justice that is inseparable from charity.’ The principle of the Common Good shows that the earth is a gift from

¹⁴Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (1963), 60, quoting Radio Message of Pope Pius XII, Pentecost, June 1, 1941.

God to all humankind and it should be used fairly and judiciously. Africa owes herself the duty to apply this principle through a rational, responsible and provisional management of its natural resources, through defining of the legal and structural frameworks, to guarantee for current and future generations, their right to these same goods.” (SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” [2013], 27; quoting Vatican II *Gaudium et Spes*, 69).

HUMAN LIFE, DIGNITY, AND EQUALITY

“The dignity of the person constitutes *the foundation of the equality of all people among themselves*. As a result all forms of discrimination are totally unacceptable, especially those forms which unfortunately continue to divide and degrade the human family, from those based on race or economics to those social and cultural, from political to geographic, etc. Each discrimination constitutes an absolutely intolerable injustice, not so much for the tensions and the conflicts that can be generated in the social sphere, as much as for the dishonour inflicted on the dignity of the person: not only to the dignity of the individual who is the victim of the injustice, but still more to the one who commits the injustice. ... The dignity of the person is the indestructible property of *every human being*. The force of this affirmation is based on the *uniqueness and irrepeatability of every person*.” (Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* [1988], 37)¹⁵

“In effect the acknowledgment of the personal dignity of every human being demands *the respect, the defence and the promotion of the rights of the human person*. It is a question of inherent, universal and inviolable rights. No one, no individual, no group, no authority, no State, can change-let alone eliminate-them because such rights find their source in God himself. The inviolability of the person which is a reflection of the absolute inviolability of God, finds its primary and fundamental expression in the *inviolability of human life*. Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights—for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture- is false and illusory if *the right to life*, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination. The Church has never yielded in the face of all the violations that the right to life of every human being has received, and continues to receive, both from individuals and from those in authority. The human being is entitled to such rights, *in every phase of development*, from conception until natural death; and in *every condition*, whether healthy or sick, whole or handicapped, rich or poor.” (Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* [1988], 38)

“As far as the right to life is concerned, every innocent human being is absolutely equal to all others. This equality is the basis of all authentic social relationships which, to be truly such, can only be founded on truth and justice, recognizing and protecting every man and woman as a person and not as an object to be used. Before the moral norm which prohibits the direct taking of the life of an innocent human being ‘there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone. It makes no difference whether one is the master of the world or the “poorest of the poor” on the face of

¹⁵Complete text: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html

the earth. Before the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [1995], 57)¹⁶

“Human life is sacred and inviolable at every moment of existence, including the initial phase which precedes birth. All human beings, from their mothers' womb, belong to God who searches them and knows them, who forms them and knits them together with his own hands, who gazes on them when they are tiny shapeless embryos and already sees in them the adults of tomorrow whose days are numbered and whose vocation is even now written in the ‘book of life’ (cf. Ps 139: 1, 13-16). There too, when they are still in their mothers' womb-as many passages of the Bible bear witness-they are the personal objects of God's loving and fatherly providence.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [1995], 61)

“Society as a whole must respect, defend and promote the dignity of every human person, at every moment and in every condition of that person's life.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [1995], 81)

“Neglect of the elderly or their outright rejection are intolerable. Their presence in the family, or at least their closeness to the family in cases where limited living space or other reasons make this impossible, is of fundamental importance in creating a climate of mutual interaction and enriching communication between the different age-groups. It is therefore important to preserve, or to re-establish where it has been lost, a sort of ‘covenant’ between generations. In this way parents, in their later years, can receive from their children the acceptance and solidarity which they themselves gave to their children when they brought them into the world. This is required by obedience to the divine commandment to honour one's father and mother (cf. Ex 20:12; Lev 19:3). But there is more. The elderly are not only to be considered the object of our concern, closeness and service. They themselves have a valuable contribution to make to the Gospel of life. Thanks to the rich treasury of experiences they have acquired through the years, the elderly can and must be sources of wisdom and witnesses of hope and love.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [1995], 94)

“The Gospel of life is not for believers alone: it is for everyone. The issue of life and its defence and promotion is not a concern of Christians alone. Although faith provides special light and strength, this question arises in every human conscience which seeks the truth and which cares about the future of humanity. Life certainly has a sacred and religious value, but in no way is that value a concern only of believers. The value at stake is one which every human being can grasp by the light of reason; thus it necessarily concerns everyone. Consequently, all that we do as the ‘people of life and for life’ should be interpreted correctly and welcomed with favour. When the Church declares that unconditional respect for the right to life of every innocent person-from conception to natural death-is one of the pillars on which every civil society stands, she ‘wants simply to promote a human State. A State which recognizes the defence of the fundamental rights of the human person, especially of the weakest, as its primary duty.’ The Gospel of life is for the whole of human society. To be actively pro-life is to contribute to the renewal of society through the promotion of the common good. It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of

¹⁶Complete text: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html

individuals are founded and from which they develop. A society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized. Only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential goods of society, such as democracy and peace.” (Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* [1995], 101)

“But first We must speak of man's rights. Man has the right to live. He has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, he has the right to be looked after in the event of ill health; disability stemming from his work; widowhood; old age; enforced unemployment; or whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood.... He has the natural right to share in the benefits of culture, and hence to receive a good general education, and a technical or professional training consistent with the degree of educational development in his own country.” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* [1963], 11, 13)

THE FAMILY

“Human beings have also the right to choose for themselves the kind of life which appeals to them: whether it is to found a family—in the founding of which both the man and the woman enjoy equal rights and duties—or to embrace the priesthood or the religious life. The family, founded upon marriage freely contracted, one and indissoluble, must be regarded as the natural, primary cell of human society. The interests of the family, therefore, must be taken very specially into consideration in social and economic affairs, as well as in the spheres of faith and morals. For all of these have to do with strengthening the family and assisting it in the fulfilment of its mission. Of course, the support and education of children is a right which belongs primarily to the parents.” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* [1963], 15-17)

“In the family, which is a community of persons, special attention must be devoted to the children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity, and a great respect and generous concern for their rights. This is true for every child, but it becomes all the more urgent the smaller the child is and the more it is in need of everything, when it is sick, suffering or handicapped.” (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* [1981], 26)¹⁷

“The task of giving education is rooted in the primary vocation of married couples to participate in God's creative activity: by begetting in love and for love a new person who has within himself or herself the vocation to growth and development, parents by that very fact take on the task of helping that person effectively to live a fully human life. As the Second Vatican Council recalled, ‘since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it. For it devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well-rounded personal and social

¹⁷Complete text: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html

development will be fostered among the children. Hence, the family is the first school of those social virtues which every society needs.’

The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others. In addition to these characteristics, it cannot be forgotten that the most basic element, so basic that it qualifies the educational role of parents, is parental love, which finds fulfillment in the task of education as it completes and perfects its service of life: as well as being a source, the parents' love is also the animating principle and therefore the norm inspiring and guiding all concrete educational activity, enriching it with the values of kindness, constancy, goodness, service, disinterestedness and self-sacrifice that are the most precious fruit of love.” (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* [1981], 36)

“The ideal of mutual support and development between the family and society is often very seriously in conflict with the reality of their separation and even opposition. In fact, as was repeatedly denounced by the Synod, the situation experienced by many families in various countries is highly problematical, if not entirely negative: institutions and laws unjustly ignore the inviolable rights of the family and of the human person; and society, far from putting itself at the service of the family, attacks it violently in its values and fundamental requirements. Thus the family, which in God's plan is the basic cell of society and a subject of rights and duties before the State or any other community, finds itself the victim of society, of the delays and slowness with which it acts, and even of its blatant injustice.

For this reason, the Church openly and strongly defends the rights of the family against the intolerable usurpations of society and the State. In particular, the Synod Fathers mentioned the following rights of the family:

- the right to exist and progress as a family, that is to say, the right of every human being, even if he or she is poor, to found a family and to have adequate means to support it;
- the right to exercise its responsibility regarding the transmission of life and to educate children; family life;
- the right to the intimacy of conjugal and family life;
- the right to the stability of the bond and of the institution of marriage;
- the right to believe in and profess one's faith and to propagate it;
- the right to bring up children in accordance with the family's own traditions and religious and cultural values, with the necessary instruments, means and institutions;
- the right, especially of the poor and the sick, to obtain physical, social, political and economic security;
- the right to housing suitable for living family life in a proper way;
- the right to expression and to representation, either directly or through associations, before the economic, social and cultural public authorities and lower authorities;
- the right to form associations with other families and institutions, in order to fulfill the family's role suitably and expeditiously;
- the right to protect minors by adequate institutions and legislation from harmful drugs,

- pornography, alcoholism, etc.;
- the right to wholesome recreation of a kind that also fosters family values;
 - the right of the elderly to a worthy life and a worthy death;
 - the right to emigrate as a family in search of a better life.”
- (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* [1981], 46)

“The family, since it is a society in its own original right, has the right freely to live its own domestic religious life under the guidance of parents. Parents, moreover, have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive. Government, in consequence, must acknowledge the right of parents to make a genuinely free choice of schools and of other means of education, and the use of this freedom of choice is not to be made a reason for imposing unjust burdens on parents, whether directly or indirectly. Besides, the right of parents are violated, if their children are forced to attend lessons or instructions which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs, or if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all.” (II Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae* [1965], 5)¹⁸

WOMEN’S DIGNITY AND EQUALITY

“We render homage to you our mothers, our sisters! This Synod of hope reflected on the alienations that weigh upon you. They come from a traditional vision of man and of the world and in this manner they manifest clearly one of the major forms of the structure of sin engulfing our African societies. They also come from the unjust structures of the present world. The Synod requests that woman be given quality formation to prepare her for her responsibilities as wife and mother, but also to open for her all the social careers from which traditional and modern society tend to exclude her without reason. The Synod asks that woman be given once again that place which corresponds to the real importance conferred upon her by the responsibilities she already exercises. Convinced that ‘to educate a woman is to educate a people’, your Bishops and all those who participated in this holy Synod are determined to take every measure to see your dignity fully respected. ... As participants in the bringing about of full human development, you will be a source of hope for our continent in this hour of crisis, if you know how to imitate Mary, the new Eve, the Mother of Christ, the Redeemer of mankind.” (Message of the First Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops [1994], 65-69)

“‘In creating the human race ‘male and female’, God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity, endowing them with inalienable rights and responsibilities proper to the human person’. The Synod deplored those African customs and practices ‘which deprive women of their rights and the respect due to them’ and asked the Church on the Continent to make every effort to foster the safeguarding of these rights.” (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* [1995], 82).

“One of the characteristic signs of our times is the growing awareness of women’s dignity and of their specific role in the Church and in society at large. ‘So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them’ (*Gen* 1:27). I have repeatedly affirmed the fundamental equality and enriching complementarity that exist between

¹⁸Complete text: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html

man and woman. The Synod applied these principles to the condition of women in Africa. Their rights and duties in building up the family and in taking full part in the development of the Church and society were strongly affirmed... The Church deplures and condemns, to the extent that they are still found in some African societies, all 'the customs and practices which deprive women of their rights and the respect due to them'. It is recommended that Episcopal Conferences establish special commissions to study further women's problems in cooperation with interested government agencies, wherever this is possible." (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* [1995], 121)

"While it is undeniable that in certain African countries progress has been made towards the advancement of women and their education, it remains the case that, overall, women's dignity and rights as well as their essential contribution to the family and to society have not been fully acknowledged or appreciated. ... When I visited Africa, I insisted that: 'we must recognize, affirm and defend the equal dignity of man and woman: they are both persons, utterly unique among all the living beings found in the world.' Unfortunately, the evolution of ways of thinking in this area is much too slow. The Church has the duty to contribute to the recognition and liberation of women, following the example of Christ's own esteem for them (cf. *Mt* 15:21-28; *Lk* 7:36-50; 8:1-3; 10:38-42; *Jn* 4:7-42). Giving women opportunities to make their voice heard and to express their talents through initiatives which reinforce their worth, their self-esteem and their uniqueness would enable them to occupy a place in society equal to that of men – without confusing or conflating the specific character of each – since both men and women are the 'image' of the Creator (cf. *Gen* 1:27). Bishops should encourage and promote the formation of women so that they may assume 'their proper share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and ... of the Church.' Women will thus contribute to the humanization of society." (Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus* [2011], 56-57)

"The part that women are now playing in political life is everywhere evident. This is a development that is perhaps of swifter growth among Christian nations, but it is also happening extensively, if more slowly, among nations that are heirs to different traditions and imbued with a different culture. Women are gaining an increasing awareness of their natural dignity. Far from being content with a purely passive role or allowing themselves to be regarded as a kind of instrument, they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons." (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* [1963], 41)

"Then too, when we look at one of the most sensitive aspects of the situation of women in the world, how can we not mention the long and degrading history, albeit often an 'underground' history, of violence against women in the area of sexuality? The time has come to condemn vigorously the types of *sexual violence* which frequently have women for their object and to pass laws which effectively defend them from such violence." (Pope John Paul II, "Letter to Women" [1995], 5)¹⁹

"But I am convinced that the secret of making speedy progress in achieving full respect for women and their identity involves more than simply the condemnation of discrimination and injustices, necessary though this may be. Such respect must first and foremost be won through an

¹⁹Complete Text: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women_en.html

effective and intelligent *campaign for the promotion of women*, concentrating on all areas of women's life and beginning with a *universal recognition of the dignity of women*.” (Pope John Paul II, “Letter to Women” [1995], 6)

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE, FREEDOM OF WORSHIP

“This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits. The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself. This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right.” (II Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae* [1965], 2)

“On his part, man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience in order that he may come to God, the end and purpose of life. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious. The reason is that the exercise of religion, of its very nature, consists before all else in those internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind. The social nature of man, however, itself requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion: that he should share with others in matters religious; that he should profess his religion in community. Injury therefore is done to the human person and to the very order established by God for human life, if the free exercise of religion is denied in society, provided just public order is observed.” (II Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae* [1965], 3)

“The freedom or immunity from coercion in matters religious which is the endowment of persons as individuals is also to be recognized as their right when they act in community. Religious communities are a requirement of the social nature both of man and of religion itself. Provided the just demands of public order are observed, religious communities rightfully claim freedom in order that they may govern themselves according to their own norms, honor the Supreme Being in public worship, assist their members in the practice of the religious life, strengthen them by instruction, and promote institutions in which they may join together for the purpose of ordering their own lives in accordance with their religious principles.

Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered, either by legal measures or by administrative action on the part of government, in the selection, training, appointment, and transferral of their own ministers, in communicating with religious authorities and communities abroad, in erecting buildings for religious purposes, and in the acquisition and use of suitable funds or properties. Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word. However, in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices everyone ought at all times to

refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people. Such a manner of action would have to be considered an abuse of one's right and a violation of the right of others. In addition, it comes within the meaning of religious freedom that religious communities should not be prohibited from freely undertaking to show the special value of their doctrine in what concerns the organization of society and the inspiration of the whole of human activity. Finally, the social nature of man and the very nature of religion afford the foundation of the right of men freely to hold meetings and to establish educational, cultural, charitable and social organizations, under the impulse of their own religious sense.” (II Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae* [1965], 4)

“If, in view of peculiar circumstances obtaining among peoples, special civil recognition is given to one religious community in the constitutional order of society, it is at the same time imperative that the right of all citizens and religious communities to religious freedom should be recognized and made effective in practice. Finally, government is to see to it that equality of citizens before the law, which is itself an element of the common good, is never violated, whether openly or covertly, for religious reasons. Nor is there to be discrimination among citizens.

It follows that a wrong is done when government imposes upon its people, by force or fear or other means, the profession or repudiation of any religion, or when it hinders men from joining or leaving a religious community. All the more is it a violation of the will of God and of the sacred rights of the person and the family of nations when force is brought to bear in any way in order to destroy or repress religion, either in the whole of mankind or in a particular country or in a definite community.” (II Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae* [1965], 6)

“The fact is that men of the present day want to be able freely to profess their religion in private and in public. Indeed, religious freedom has already been declared to be a civil right in most constitutions, and it is solemnly recognized in international documents. The further fact is that forms of government still exist under which, even though freedom of religious worship receives constitutional recognition, the powers of government are engaged in the effort to deter citizens from the profession of religion and to make life very difficult and dangerous for religious communities.

This council greets with joy the first of these two facts as among the signs of the times. With sorrow, however, it denounces the other fact, as only to be deplored. The council exhorts Catholics, and it directs a plea to all men, most carefully to consider how greatly necessary religious freedom is, especially in the present condition of the human family. All nations are coming into even closer unity. Men of different cultures and religions are being brought together in closer relationships. There is a growing consciousness of the personal responsibility that every man has. All this is evident. Consequently, in order that relationships of peace and harmony be established and maintained within the whole of mankind, it is necessary that religious freedom be everywhere provided with an effective constitutional guarantee and that respect be shown for the high duty and right of man freely to lead his religious life in society.” (II Vatican Council, *Dignitatis Humanae* [1965], 15)

THE REINTEGRATION OF WAR VETERANS

“Our people have displayed great strength, courage and fortitude in the face of war and hardship, but they have been traumatised and cycles of resentment and revenge have been created. Trauma healing is an immediate priority. The Church, by its nature and mission, is a sign of reconciliation, and South Sudanese have demonstrated a remarkable ability to reconcile, both through traditional mechanisms and in the Church-led ‘People to People Peace Process’. Reconciliation within South Sudan will be essential in building a new nation, addressing the grievances and pain of many individuals and ethnic groups who feel they have been mistreated even by the state or those who misuse the powers entrusted to them. However a number of necessary conditions must be in place for this to happen successfully. These include education, security, and a degree of stability and political maturity. Eventually, when the time is ripe, a truth and reconciliation process should be developed. It is to be hoped that, with time, reconciliation (as opposed to mere absence of conflict) will also be possible between the two Republics. The Church will continue to do whatever it can to bring people together in Truth, Justice, Peace, Mercy, Love and Forgiveness.” (Sudan Catholic Bishops Conference, “The Church God Wants Us To Be,” Message from the October 2011 Plenary Assembly)²⁰

STATELESSNESS: MIGRANTS, REFUGEES, AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

“SECAM invites all African people to adopt a new look at the stranger who remains a brother or a sister beyond the State, political, tribal or religious borders.” (SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” [2013], 47).

“Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own State. When there are just reasons in favor of it, he must be permitted to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there. The fact that he is a citizen of a particular State does not deprive him of membership in the human family, nor of citizenship in that universal society, the common, world-wide fellowship of men. Finally, man’s personal dignity involves his right to take an active part in public life, and to make his own contribution to the common welfare of his fellow citizens. As Pope Pius XII said, ‘man as such, far from being an object or, as it were, an inert element in society, is rather its subject, its basis and its purpose; and so must he be esteemed. As a human person he is entitled to the legal protection of his rights, and such protection must be effective, unbiased, and strictly just. To quote again Pope Pius XII: ‘In consequence of that juridical order willed by God, man has his own inalienable right to juridical security. To him is assigned a certain, well-defined sphere of law, immune from arbitrary attack.’” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* [1963], 25-27)

“For this reason, it is not irrelevant to draw the attention of the world to the fact that these refugees are persons and all their rights as persons must be recognized. Refugees cannot lose these rights simply because they are deprived of citizenship of their own States. And among man's personal rights we must include his right to enter a country in which he hopes to be able to provide more fittingly for himself and his dependents. It is therefore the duty of State officials to accept such immigrants and—so far as the good of their own community, rightly understood,

²⁰Complete text: <http://archdioceseofkhartoum.catholicweb.com/index.cfm/NewsItem?ID=325202&From=Home>

permits—to further the aims of those who may wish to become members of a new society.” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* [1963], 105-106)

“One of the most bitter fruits of wars and economic hardships is the sad phenomenon of refugees and displaced persons, a phenomenon which, as the Synod mentioned, has reached tragic dimensions. The ideal solution is the re-establishment of a just peace, reconciliation and economic development. It is therefore urgent that national, regional and international organizations should find equitable and long-lasting solutions to the problems of refugees and displaced persons. In the meantime, since the Continent continues to suffer from the massive displacement of refugees, I make a pressing appeal that these people be given material help and offered pastoral support wherever they may be, whether in Africa or on other Continents.” (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* [1995], 119)

“Millions of migrants, displaced persons and refugees are searching for a homeland and a peaceful country in Africa or elsewhere. The scale of this movement, which affects every country, reveals the hidden magnitude of the different types of poverty produced by deficiencies in public administration. Thousands of people have tried and continue trying to cross deserts and seas, searching for an oasis of peace and prosperity, better education and greater freedom. Unfortunately, many refugees and displaced persons encounter all kinds of violence and exploitation, even prison, and all too often, death. Some states have responded to this dramatic situation with repressive legislation. The precarious situation of these poor people should awaken everyone’s compassion and generous solidarity; yet it often gives rise to fear and anxiety. Many regard migrants as a burden and view them with suspicion, seeing them only as a source of danger, insecurity and threat. This perception provokes reactions of intolerance, xenophobia and racism. As a result, these migrants are forced, through the precariousness of their situation, to do low-paid work that is often illegal, humiliating or degrading. The human conscience can only respond with indignation to these situations. Migration inside and outside the continent thus becomes a complex drama which seriously affects Africa’s human capital, leading to the destabilization or destruction of families. The Church remembers that Africa offered a place of refuge for the Holy Family when they were fleeing the murderous political power of Herod, in search of a land that could offer them security and peace. The Church will continue to make her voice heard and to campaign for the defense of all people.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus* [2011], 84-85)

“Now and again, God invites his people to pay special attention to the most vulnerable members of society like the widows, orphans, aliens, refugees and the very poor. Indeed God says: “I desire mercy not (ceremonial) sacrifice and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). This exhortation is very relevant today where the majority of our people are very poor while a few are very rich.” (SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” [2013], 6)

“Another aspect of integral human development that is worthy of attention is the phenomenon of *migration*. This is a striking phenomenon because of the sheer numbers of people involved, the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises, and the dramatic challenges it poses to nations and the international community. We can say that we are facing a social phenomenon of epoch-making proportions that requires bold, forward-looking policies of

international cooperation if it is to be handled effectively. Such policies should set out from close collaboration between the migrants' countries of origin and their countries of destination; it should be accompanied by adequate international norms able to coordinate different legislative systems with a view to safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries. No country can be expected to address today's problems of migration by itself. We are all witnesses of the burden of suffering, the dislocation and the aspirations that accompany the flow of migrants. The phenomenon, as everyone knows, is difficult to manage; but there is no doubt that foreign workers, despite any difficulties concerning integration, make a significant contribution to the economic development of the host country through their labour, besides that which they make to their country of origin through the money they send home. Obviously, these labourers cannot be considered as a commodity or a mere workforce. They must not, therefore, be treated like any other factor of production.

Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [2009], 62)

“Participation in community life is not only one of the greatest aspirations of the citizen, called to exercise freely and responsibly his civic role with and for others, but is also one of the pillars of all democratic orders and one of the major guarantees of the permanence of the democratic system. Democratic government, in fact, is defined first of all by the assignment of powers and functions on the part of the people, exercised in their name, in their regard and on their behalf. It is therefore clearly evident that every democracy must be participative. This means that the different subjects of civil community at every level must be informed, listened to and involved in the exercise of the carried-out functions.... *The political community pursues the common good when it seeks to create a human environment that offers citizens the possibility of truly exercising their human rights and of fulfilling completely their corresponding duties...*” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,” 190; 389)

“A natural consequence of men's dignity is unquestionably their right to take an active part in government.” (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* [1963], 73)

“Participation constitutes a right which is to be applied both in the economic and in the social and political field.” (Synod of Bishops, *Justitia in Mundo* [1971], 18)²¹

CUSTOMARY LAW, INCULTURATION OF THE GOSPEL, AND AFRICAN TRADITIONS

“The Synod Fathers rightly affirmed that ‘a serious concern for a true and balanced inculturation is necessary in order to avoid cultural confusion and alienation in our fast evolving society’. During my visit to Malawi I made the same point: *‘I put before you today a challenge — a challenge to reject a way of living which does not correspond to the best of your traditions, and your Christian faith. Many people in Africa look beyond Africa for the so-called “freedom of the modern way of life”. Today I urge you to look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own*

²¹Complete text: <http://www.shc.edu/theolibrary/resources/synodjw.htm>

traditions, look to the faith which we are celebrating in this assembly. Here you will find genuine freedom — here you will find Christ who will lead you to the truth’.” (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* [1995], 48)

“In order to bring about this communion, it would be helpful to recall that the First Synodal Assembly for Africa spoke of the need for an in-depth study of African traditions and cultures. The Synod members noted a dichotomy between certain traditional practices of African cultures and the specific demands of Christ’s message. In her concern for relevance and credibility, the Church needs to carry out a thorough discernment in order to identify those aspects of the culture which represent an obstacle to the incarnation of Gospel values, as well as those aspects which promote them. The Church’s initiatives for a positive appreciation and safeguarding of African cultures are well known. It is very important that this continue, at a time when the intermingling of peoples, while a source of enrichment, often weakens cultures and societies. The identity of African communities is at stake in these intercultural encounters. It is imperative therefore to make a commitment to transmit the values that the Creator has instilled in the hearts of Africans since the dawn of time. These have served as a matrix for fashioning societies marked by a degree of harmony, since they embody traditional formulae for peaceful coexistence. These positive elements therefore need to be emphasized, lit up from within (cf. *Jn* 8:12), so that Christians may truly receive the message of Christ, and in this way God’s light may shine before the eyes of all. Then, seeing the good deeds of Christians, men and women will be able to give glory to ‘the Father who is in heaven’ (*Mt* 5:16).” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus* [2011], 36, 38)

“Traditional chiefs have a very positive contribution to make to good governance. The Church, for her part, is committed to promoting within her own ranks and within society a culture that respects the rule of law.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus* [2011], 81).

“Perhaps time has now come for Africa to strive to invent models of government that really respond to our needs and fit our contexts, inspired by the wisdom of African traditional governance systems and structures. African societies must start to engage themselves in this reflection, to develop a holistic vision that can well serve the transitions and consolidate the democratic experience. The starting point is a return to the original meaning of democracy, that is, a form of government with the people as the sovereign. It is for their own good that people entrust their power to rulers, to guarantee the respect of the general will and to manage the country’s resources for the benefit of all. Taking into account this fundamental vision of democracy in the management of power and political space, will help lay the foundation for a real stability that is not dependent on the power of the gun but on a mutually agreed social pact.” (SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” [2013], 41)

LAND REFORM

The Universal Destination of Created Goods (Property and Land Reform)

“*Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute and untouchable*: ‘On the contrary, it has always understood this right within the broader context of the right common to all to use the goods of the whole of creation: the right to private property is

subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone'. The principle of the universal destination of goods is an affirmation both of God's full and perennial lordship over every reality and of the requirement that the goods of creation remain ever destined to the development of the whole person and of all humanity. This principle is not opposed to the right to private property but indicates the need to regulate it. *Private property, in fact, regardless of the concrete forms of the regulations and juridical norms relative to it, is in its essence only an instrument for respecting the principle of the universal destination of goods; in the final analysis, therefore, it is not an end but a means. The Church's social teaching moreover calls for recognition of the social function of any form of private ownership* that clearly refers to its necessary relation to the common good. Man 'should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others'. *The universal destination of goods entails obligations on how goods are to be used by their legitimate owners.* Individual persons may not use their resources without considering the effects that this use will have, rather they must act in a way that benefits not only themselves and their family but also the common good. From this there arises the duty on the part of owners not to let the goods in their possession go idle and to channel them to productive activity, even entrusting them to others who are desirous and capable of putting them to use in production." (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," 177-178)²²

Land and the Preferential Option for the Poor

"Care for the land, therefore, implies seeing it not simply in material terms as geographical space, but in moral and theological terms as an opportunity for sharing and caring for the poor, the dispossessed, the stranger, the sojourner, the widow and orphan; in other words, those who have no status in the community, since being without land means to be without power and dignity. This same spirit of sharing was at the heart of the early Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles (2:44-45; 4:32-37) where all things were shared in common. Members sold property and goods, dividing everything on the basis of each one's need." (Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, "Vision for Land Reform in South Africa," p. 3)²³

The Environment, Intergenerational Solidarity, Multinational Corporations

"Today the subject of development is also closely related to the duties arising from *our relationship to the natural environment*. The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. When nature, including the human being, is viewed as the result of mere chance or evolutionary determinism, our sense of responsibility wanes. In nature, the believer recognizes the wonderful result of God's creative activity, which we may use responsibly to satisfy our legitimate needs, material or otherwise, while respecting the intrinsic balance of creation. If this vision is lost, we end up either considering nature an untouchable taboo or, on

²²Complete text:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_comp_endio-dott-soc_en.html#The%20universal%20destination%20of%20goods%20and%20private%20property

²³Complete text: <http://www.sacbc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Catholic-Church-Vision-for-Land-Reform-in-South-Africa-Text-for-printing.pdf>

the contrary, abusing it. Neither attitude is consonant with the Christian vision of nature as the fruit of God's creation.... Consequently, projects for integral human development cannot ignore coming generations, but need to be *marked by solidarity and inter-generational justice*, while taking into account a variety of contexts: ecological, juridical, economic, political and cultural.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [2009], 48)

“Human beings legitimately exercise a *responsible stewardship over nature*, in order to protect it, to enjoy its fruits and to cultivate it in new ways, with the assistance of advanced technologies, so that it can worthily accommodate and feed the world's population. On this earth there is room for everyone: here the entire human family must find the resources to live with dignity, through the help of nature itself — God's gift to his children — and through hard work and creativity. At the same time we must recognize our grave duty to hand the earth on to future generations in such a condition that they too can worthily inhabit it and continue to cultivate it. This means being committed to making joint decisions ‘after pondering responsibly the road to be taken, decisions aimed at strengthening that *covenant between human beings and the environment*, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying’. Let us hope that the international community and individual governments will succeed in countering harmful ways of treating the environment. It is likewise incumbent upon the competent authorities to make every effort to ensure that the economic and social costs of using up shared environmental resources are recognized with transparency and fully borne by those who incur them, not by other peoples or future generations: the protection of the environment, of resources and of the climate obliges all international leaders to act jointly and to show a readiness to work in good faith, respecting the law and promoting solidarity with the weakest regions of the planet. One of the greatest challenges facing the economy is to achieve the most efficient use — not abuse — of natural resources, based on a realization that the notion of ‘efficiency’ is not value-free.” (Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [2009], 50)

“Multinational organizations continue systematically to invade the continent in search of natural resources. In complicity with African leaders, they oppress local companies, buy thousands of hectares of land and expropriate populations from their lands. Their adverse effect on the environment and creation affects the peace and well-being of the African people and, thus, the prospects of their living in harmony.” (II Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris* [2009], 28)²⁴

“Yet, Africa still remains a poor continent. The abundant wealth in natural resources is in sharp contrast with the pervading poverty of the vast majority of the African population. Many African countries are producers of oil and other minerals, yet they have failed to invest the resources in productive sectors to improve the quality of life of their people. Africa remains a prey of foreign multinational companies. They continue to plunder the continent of its resources; in some cases they even evade the tax system both in African countries and in their own countries of origin by putting away the revenues of their activities in fiscal havens, thus depriving local communities of resources they are entitled to.” (SECAM, “Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa” [2013], 14)

²⁴Complete text: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20090319_instrlabor-africa_en.html

Land and Women

“Land plays a role in integrating different sectors (rich & poor, male, female & youth) and communities (black and white, urban, rural) into a cohesive and prosperous society, through progressive spatial planning.... Women do now assert their land and housing rights and these are more often recognized than before (gender discrimination has been reduced).” (Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, “Vision for Land Reform in South Africa,” p. 7, 8)

“Policies intended to facilitate access to modern technology and public services must pay special attention to the crucial position of women in farm production and the food economies of developing countries. While there are considerable variations from place to place, women in these countries supply over half the labour used in agriculture. Moreover, full responsibility for producing the food needed to support the family usually falls on their shoulders. Despite this, they are widely marginalised by severe forms of economic and social injustice. Even agrarian reform programmes consider women in terms of their domestic work and not as agents of productive action. Laws favour men in conferring the right to land ownership, and the educational system tends to emphasize boys’ training rather than that of girls. In view of this situation, if agrarian reform programmes are to be successful, it is vital to ensure women of an effective right to land, with concrete attention to their needs on the part of technical assistance services, fuller and better schooling and easier access to credit. This will improve the quality of their work, reduce their vulnerability to changes in technology, in the economy and in society, and increase alternative opportunities for employment.” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, “Towards a Better Distribution of Land,” 52)²⁵

Land and Indigenous Communities

“Agrarian reform not only helps to solve the problem of latifundia, but is also very valuable in supporting policies which ensure that the rights of indigenous populations are recognized and respected. The very close relationship between land and the models of culture, development and spirituality of these populations means that agrarian reform is a decisive component of the systematic and co-ordinated plan of action that governments must draw up in order to protect the rights of indigenous populations and guarantee respect for their specific identity.

An agrarian reform must allow for the identification of equitable and rational ways of dealing with the problem of restoring land traditionally occupied by indigenous populations to them, especially that taken away through various forms of violence or discrimination, sometimes very recently. In this case, the reform has to lay down criteria for recognizing the lands they occupied and exactly how their use is to be restored to them, guaranteeing effective protection for their rights of ownership and possession. The reform must ensure their access to production and social services, thus giving them the means for pursuing the development of their land and benefitting from treatment equal to that received by other sectors of the population. In a word, the agrarian reform must help indigenous communities in various ways: to protect and reconstruct the natural resources and ecosystems on which their survival and well-being depend; to preserve and

²⁵Complete text:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_12011998_distribuzione-terra_en.html

develop their identity, culture and interests; to uphold their aspirations for social justice; and to ensure an environment that allows for active participation in the social, economic and political life of the country.

Two conditions must be respected if agrarian reform programmes are to fulfill all these aims.

a) Adequate attention must be paid to the necessary but delicate balance between the need for the preservation of common ownership and that of land privatization. Traditional systems of land possession based on common ownership — a form of ownership unsuited to the use of modern inputs and technological innovation — tend gradually to shift to individual ownership as agriculture develops. There are valid reasons to expect a policy of individual assignment of land ownership to develop also in the case of indigenous peoples.

b) The communities concerned must participate and co-operate in drawing up and implementing reform programmes. Agrarian reform must, on the one hand, guarantee indigenous communities access to productive and social services that they judge suited to their social organization and their view of environmental issues, and, on the other hand, provide a fresh orientation for economic and social factors that can otherwise be drawbacks.” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, “Towards a Better Distribution of Land,” 55-56)

“If forms of property unknown in the past take on significant importance in the process of economic and social development, nonetheless, traditional forms of property must not be forgotten. Individual property is not the only legitimate form of ownership. The ancient form of community property also has a particular importance; though it can be found in economically advanced countries, it is particularly characteristic of the social structure of many indigenous peoples. This is a form of property that has such a profound impact on the economic, cultural and political life of those peoples that it constitutes a fundamental element of their survival and well-being. The defence and appreciation of community property must not exclude, however, an awareness of the fact that this type of property also is destined to evolve. If actions were taken only to preserve its present form, there would be the risk of tying it to the past and in this way compromising it. An equitable distribution of land remains ever critical, especially in developing countries and in countries that have recently changed from systems based on collectivities or colonization. In rural areas, the possibility of acquiring land through opportunities offered by labour and credit markets is a necessary condition for access to other goods and services. Besides constituting an effective means for safeguarding the environment, this possibility represents a system of social security that can be put in place also in those countries with a weak administrative structure.” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,” 180)

“Care for the environment represents a challenge for all of humanity. It is a matter of a common and universal duty, that of respecting a common good, destined for all, by preventing anyone from using ‘with impunity the different categories of beings, whether living or inanimate — animals, plants, the natural elements — simply as one wishes, according to one’s own economic needs’. It is a responsibility that must mature on the basis of the global dimension of the present ecological crisis and the consequent necessity to meet it on a worldwide level, since all beings are interdependent in the universal order established by the Creator. ‘One must take into account

the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system, which is precisely the “cosmos”.... The relationship of indigenous peoples to their lands and resources deserves particular attention, since it is a fundamental expression of their identity. Due to powerful agro-industrial interests or the powerful processes of assimilation and urbanization, many of these peoples have already lost or risk losing the lands on which they live, lands tied to the very meaning of their existence. The rights of indigenous peoples must be appropriately protected. These peoples offer an example of a life lived in harmony with the environment that they have come to know well and to preserve. Their extraordinary experience, which is an irreplaceable resource for all humanity, runs the risk of being lost together with the environment from which they originate.” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,” 466, 471)²⁶

²⁶Complete text:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_comp_endio-dott-soc_en.html#The%20environment.%20a%20collective%20good

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