



Speech to a group of DSI teachers

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Message from John Paul II to a group of professors of Social Doctrine of the Church. historical message.

Mr. Cardinal;  
Kind ladies and gentlemen:

1. I wish, above all, to express my lively complacency for this European Congress of Social Doctrine of the Church, which brings together, for the first time, the teachers of this discipline to discover the most appropriate way of teaching and disseminating it. I thank Cardinal Roger Etchegaray for the kind words with which he has presented this significant event. I extend my gratitude to Monsignor Angelo Scola, rector of the Pontifical Lateran University, and Professor Adriano Bausola, rector of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, for the concrete collaboration they have provided to the Council Pontifical Justice and Peace in the preparation of this fruitful meeting, cause of comfort and hope.

The social doctrine of the Church is one of my greatest concerns, for I am deeply aware of how generous and qualified the request of the whole Church should be to proclaim to the man of our time the gospel of life, of justice and solidarity.

Deepening the reasons for this ecclesial commitment, you have duly commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the *Populorum Progressio* of my revered predecessor, the servant of God Paul VI, and the tenth anniversary of the *Sollicitudo rei socialis*. These two encyclicals, with their demanding message, remain a current and inescapable call to not leave the workshop where the development of all man and every man is built, not only according to economic parameters, but also moral.

2. In your daily service as professors of the social doctrine of the Church,, you will find yourself many times in the face of this recurrent question: "How should the

truth entrusted to Christians be proposed in the present historical and cultural situation?" The urgency that today is perceived with greater clarity and strength is to promote a "new evangelization", a "new implantation Evangelica", also concerning the social sphere. Indeed, Pope Paul VI exhorted to overcome the rift between gospel and culture, through a work of inculturation of faith, capable of attaining and transforming, through the force of the Gospel, the criteria of judgment, the determining values and the lines of Thought of each society. The central intention, particularly current if we consider the situation in Europe, was to show, with renewed impulse, the importance of the Christian faith for history, culture and human coexistence.

From Jesus Christ, only the salvation of man, it is possible to reveal the universal value of faith and Christian anthropology and its meaning for each sphere of existence. In Christ is offered to the human being a specific personalistic and solidarity interpretation of his reality open to transcendence.

Precisely from this anthropology, the social doctrine of the Church can be proposed not as ideology, or "third way", in the likeness of other political and social proposals, but properly as a particular theological-moral knowledge whose origin is in God, which is communicated to the man (cf. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 41). In this mystery finds its inexhaustible source to interpret and orient the history of man. Therefore, the new evangelization, to which the whole Church is called, must fully integrate the social doctrine of the Church (cf. *ib.*), to be able to reach the European peoples better and to challenge them in their specific problems and situations.

3. Another perspective, which allows understanding the breadth of horizons of your formative commitment, focused on the social doctrine of the Church, is the one that refers to the Christian ethic.

In the present culture of contemporary Europe, the tendency to "privatize" ethics and to deny the public dimension to the Christian moral message is strong. The social doctrine of the Church represents, of its own, the rejection of this privatization, because it illuminates the authentic and decisive social dimensions of the faith, illustrating its ethical consequences.

As I have reaffirmed on many occasions, in the perspective delineated by the social doctrine of the Church, one should never renounce to underline the constitutive nexus of humanity with the truth and primacy of ethics over politics, economics, and technology.

Thus, through its social doctrine, the Church poses to the European continent, which lives a complex and difficult time at the level of political and economic integration and social organization, the question of the moral quality of its civilization, an essential requirement to build a true future of peace, freedom and hope for every people and nation.

4. The Church, in the face of the numerous and difficult challenges of the present epoch, in its evangelizing action, is called to carry out an intense and constant work of formation in the social commitment. I am convinced that you will give your qualified contribution, bearing in mind that this work is centered on the social doctrine of the Church. In its light, it will be possible to show that the full sense of the human and Christian vocation also includes the social dimension. It is clearly reminiscent by the Second Vatican Council, which in the *Gaudium et Spes* states: «The gifts of the Spirit are diverse: while some call them to give public witness to yearn for the celestial abode and to keep alive this yearning in the human family, others call them to dedicate to the temporal service of men, preparing with their ministry the matter of the Kingdom of Heaven "(N. 38).

In this perspective, the formation in social commitment is presented as the development of authentic Christian spirituality, called by its nature to animate all human activity. Its essential element will be the effort to live the deep unity between the love of God and love of neighbor, between prayer and action. Therefore, dear teachers of the social doctrine of the Church, your teaching must constantly insist on this. Your contribution must be part of the pastoral action of the Christian community more and more fully in an organic way.

5. Adequate training in social commitment poses a double and unitary requirement: on one side, to know in depth the social doctrine of the Church and, on the other, to know specifically the incidence of the evangelical message in the full realization of man in the various circumstances of his earthly existence. This double demand is particularly urgent if you consider the issue of development, which you have faced during the work of the Congress. Indeed, the current process of economic globalization, even with many positive aspects, also shows a disturbing tendency to exclude the neediest countries from development and even to whole regions. Especially, the world of work in the relation of dependency must face the often dramatic consequences of imposing changes in the production and distribution of economic goods and services.

It seems that the sector most benefited in the process of economic globalization is the one that for its business dynamism is often called "private" . Certainly, the social doctrine of the Church recognizes a significant role in the promotion of development, but at the same time reminds each one the responsibility of always acting with great sensitivity to the values of the common good and social justice. The lack, at the international level, of adequate structures, of regulation and orientation in the current process of economic globalization, does not diminish the social responsibility of the economic agents, committed in this field. The situation of the poorest people and nations requires everyone to take up their responsibilities, to create, without delay, conditions conducive to the real development of all.

People are entitled to development. Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine and

correct, depending on the right to work that each has in the field of the common good, the forms of organization of the economic, political and social forces, and even the criteria of distribution of the work experienced so far. The Pontifical Justice and Peace Council continues to keep this urgent need alive, by engaging in enlightening dialogue with qualified representatives of the various economic and social sectors, such as entrepreneurs, economists, trade unionists, international institutions and the academic world.

At the same time, I thank the president and all the collaborators of this dicastery for their generous dedication, a desire to heart that their commitment will contribute effectively to sow the civilization of love in the furrows of human vicissitudes. I hope, likewise, that the professors here are experts of the new generations, supported by faith in Christ, Redeemer of all men and all man, by the constant contact with the problems of the modern era, by a mature pastoral experience and the proper use of modern social media.  
May my blessing comfort you in your work.