



Premise

I am especially glad to be here with you, to live this magnificent and compromising ecclesial experience that the Lord Jesus has prepared us to strengthen our faith in him, to increase our hope and to help transform our charity into effective good purposes. We have gathered here to present the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, giving its universal message a timely continental context.

We want to make it with our gaze on the face of Jesus, which is the way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14.6) of the Church and the whole world. In the Compendium number 1 we read these meaningful words: "The Church continues to challenge all peoples and all nations, because only in the name of Christ is salvation given to man. The salvation that the Lord Jesus has earned us, and for which it has paid a high price (cf. 1 Co 6.20; 1p 1,18-19), it is carried out in the new life which waits for the righteous after the death, but it also concerns this world, in the fields of the economy and of the work , of the technique and of the communication, of the society and of the politics, of the international community and of the relations between the cultures and the peoples: «Jesus came to bring the integral salvation, which encompasses the whole man and all the men, opening them to the admirable horizons of divine filiation »".

Of the Ecclesia in America to the Compendium of social doctrine

At this moment, our thoughts filled with gratitude are adressed to the fearless Servant of God John Paul II, who wanted the publication of the Compendium, relying on the wording of the text to the Pontifical Council "Justice and Peace". He himself, enumerated the motives that encouraged him to request the publication of this document, and exposed them in his apostolic exhortation post-synodal Ecclesia in America.

The great Pope longed for the promotion of a culture of solidarity to establish an economic order "in which it does not dominate only the criterion of profit, but also

that of the search for the common national and international good, the equitable distribution of the goods and the integral promotion of societies (N. 52); he also spreading this doctrine is therefore a real pastoral priority. For this it is important "that in America the agents of evangelization (bishops, priests, professors, pastoral animators, etc.) assimilate this treasure which is the social doctrine of the Church, and, enlightened by it, be able to read the current reality and search for ways of action". In this respect, we must encourage the formation of laic faithful who are able to work, in the name of faith in Christ, for the transformation of earthly realities. In addition, it will be appropriate to promote and support the study of this doctrine in all areas of the particular churches of America and, above all, in the university field, to be known more deeply and applied in American society.

The complex social reality of this continent is a fruitful field for the analysis and application of the universal principles of this doctrine. To achieve this objective - here is the project that John Paul II entrusted to the Pontifical Council "Justice and Peace" - would be very useful a compendium or authoritative synthesis of Catholic social doctrine, including a "catechism" that shows the relationship between her and the new evangelization.

The part that the Catechism of the Catholic Church dedicates to this subject, on the seventh commandment of the Decalogue, could be the starting point of this "Catechism of Catholic social doctrine." Naturally, as has happened with the Catechism of the Catholic Church, it would be limited to formulating the general principles, leaving later applications to deal with problems related to the various local situations» (n. 54).

It is not useless, for a profitable community meditation, to remember that John Paul II delineated this project in a global reflection entitled "Road for Solidarity", articulated in the points that I will now enumerate, precisely because they describe very well also urgencies in the broad American Continent: solidarity, the fruit of communion; the social doctrine of the Church, expression of the demands of conversion; the globalization of solidarity; the social sins that cry out to Heaven.

The Compendium: structure and purposes

Following faithfully the authoritative indications of the Holy Father John Paul II in the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, the Compendium offers a unitary panorama of the fundamental lines of the doctrinal corpus of Catholic social teaching, and presents, « In a complete and systematic, albeit synthetic way, the social teaching, which is the fruit of the wise magisterial reflection and expression of the constant commitment of the Church, faithful to the grace of the salvation of Christ and to the loving request for the fate of humanity» (n. 8) .

The Compendium presents a simple and clear structure. After an introduction,

three parts follow. The first, consisting of four chapters, deals with the fundamental tenets of social doctrine: the design of God's love for man and for society; The mission of the Church and the nature of social doctrine; The human person and his rights; The principles and values of social doctrine.

The second part, consisting of seven chapters, deals with the contents and classical themes of social doctrine: the family; human labor; economic life; the political community; the international community; the environment and peace. The third part, rather brief because it consists of a single chapter, contains a series of indications for the use of social doctrine in the pastoral praxis of the Church and in the life of Christians, especially the laic faithful. The conclusion, titled a civilization of love, expresses the fundamental object of the whole document.

The Compendium has a precise purpose: «It is proposed as an instrument for the moral and pastoral discernment of the complex events that characterize our time; as a guide to inspire, in the individual and collective sphere, the behaviors and options that allow looking to the future with confidence and hope». An instrument elaborated, in addition, with the precise objective of promoting.

The Compendium highlights how social doctrine is at the heart of the church's mission. And it illustrates, above all in chapter II, the ecclesiological character of social doctrine, that is, its relationship with the mission of the Church, with evangelization and with the announcement of Christian salvation in the temporal realities. The mission of service to the Church's own world, which is to be the sign of unity of the whole human race and sacrament of salvation, counts, in effect, among its instruments, also the social doctrine.

The fact that the Compendium highlights the place of social doctrine inside the Church's own mission, on the one hand, leads not to consider social doctrine as something added or collateral to the Christian life; on the other hand, it helps to understand how she belongs to a community subject. The subject appropriate to the nature of the social doctrine is, precisely, the whole ecclesial community. The statement is found in Compendium No. 79.

The social doctrine: wisdom and realism

By reading the Compendium you can easily grasp how the social doctrine of the Church is essentially a global look at the reality of humanity, considered within God's plan of love over it. In this sense, the social doctrine is a look at the whole, by virtue of the projection of the light of the Gospel in the historical reality. For this reason, social doctrine does not cover everything.

The Church, with its social teaching, illuminates the economy and politics, but does not present economic and political programs. That is the case with the

Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church: it is not a manual of social recipes; it is, on the other hand, the synthetic proposal of that look at all, expressions of God's love for humanity. The social doctrine illuminates with the light of the Gospel the world of man in its complexity. The world of man is the reality of history, the place where humanity lives its earthly life and walks amid many difficulties and successes, driven by a desire for justice and peace. The social doctrine considers all this, without dividing it into sectors and with an analytical spirit, without proposing specific answers for each question.

Leave that job to the responsibility of individuals, individually or associated. Most of all, contemplates man with all his needs, material and spiritual, and proposes to show the deep sense of our common life, of our struggle for justice, of our suffering for the tardiness of peace. Social doctrine is "a look" at the destiny of man within society, in the light of God's plan for the human family and what reason and experience tell us about who we are and how we must confront each other to be fully men.

This does not mean that social doctrine is abstract or indifferent. If the Compendium does not examine in detail the individual problems that are present in our time, it does not mean that they are not interested in them and prefer to stay in the theory without getting their hands dirty in history. His gaze, on the other hand, is a "passionate" look at all man and all men, without excluding anyone.

It is a loving look, which feeds on wisdom but also, and above all, with charity. It is an "approach" to men, trying to give them the ability to accompany each other in daily challenges, paying special attention to the weakest. This is why social doctrine is thought, of course, but for action: it needs hands, a commitment, people who sow the message of justice and peace that she proposes, in economic, social and political life.

Social doctrine has a need for each of us. Precisely because it is a "global look", it cannot deal with "everything" and cannot give specific recipes. All of us, especially the laic faithful and the people of goodwill, have to take responsibility for justice and peace. The social doctrine indicates a wide field of daily commitment, it illuminates it with the light that comes from God and orients our action with the great principles of its social wisdom. But we are the ones who have to enter that field, prepared, cultivated and harvested in it.

Specific needs and human values

I have affirmed that the social doctrine takes care of man in all its complexity. Essentially, this means that it considers it with its many specific needs and, at the same time, with the richness of its values.

The realistic wisdom of the social teaching of the Church never separates the needs of values, and vice versa, because it-to the Church-is interested in the real and concrete man, who needs these two things at the same time: of the bread and of the justice , work and peace.

The one, who works in society, by different concepts, knows from experience that any initiative that has has an impact on the most concrete needs of men. It also knows that the same initiative corresponds or does not correspond to certain values.

In the first case, we talk about the effectiveness of that action. In the second, of its ethical character. However, it is not only impossible to evade this double valuation of our social act, although we must not give in to the temptation to separate the two dimensions. There is no neutral social act. After each economic or political option, there are concrete men, whether they are the protagonists of the action in question, or the recipients. Needs have a fundamental role and, if they are legitimate, they deserve all our attention. But, after each election, there are also values that are asserted or denied.

It is not possible to evade this responsibility. That is why every economic option is also an ethical option, in good and evil. Investing in one place or another, valuing or oppressing workers, respecting fiscal or circumvented laws, eliminating customs or augmented tariffs: by choosing these or other similar options, every responsible person must at the same time take into account that their action must meet the needs of man and respect true human values. To act "as men", we must all have before our eyes, both concrete situations, and the need to respect human dignity.

If specific needs are not taken into account, the call to respect values is useless and rhetorical. Without the passion for moral values, practical efficiency loses orientation, lost and at last fails to even solve concrete problems. What I have just pointed out may be worth to anyone committed to society: syndicalist, an entrepreneur, a worker, a professional.

Social doctrine teaches us that solidarity, namely the human values that drive us to act for the good of all, considering them as brothers, must be accompanied by the efficiency of our action; and that the efficiency of our action should not be translated into a high degree of efficiency, forgetting the human values that are at stake. If profits become the only criterion of economic action, it falls into that high degree of efficiency that forgets values. If the value of solidarity suppresses the criterion of profit, it ends up forgetting the specific nature of the needs and becomes ineffective and therefore unsympathetic. As the Compendium states, true solidarity does not reject economic laws, but economic laws, to be truly such, and not larceny laws, cannot dispense with solidarity.

The social doctrine constantly contemplates these two demands, without separate. And he entrusts men engaged in society and politics with a task and a challenge:

to elaborate with the value of thought and with the generosity of new action in which solidarity drives efficiency and efficiency makes solidarity concrete.

The duties and rights of the human person

Another aspect of the social doctrine, which expresses very well its concrete and realistic wisdom, refers to the rights and duties of man. In our current world, unfortunately, human rights, although they have been proclaimed in so many important documents, are not always respected. The rights of the "old generation" also present in past societies, have added new ones, the result of development. In many countries the demand for justice for basic rights has not been resolved, while others claim the satisfaction of sophisticated rights and the "new generation". In some places the right to drinking water has not yet been satisfied, while other places on the planet claim the right to "privacy" of personal data.

As far as human rights are concerned, social doctrine also assumes a "according to the whole" view: it sees them as interdependent and sympathetic to each other, although it recognizes a primacy of the right to life as the basic basis of all other rights, and the right to religious freedom, for being the transcendent basis of the same human rights and, consequently, the source of all lawful freedom.

I believe, however, that the Compendium invites us today to take a step forward in the field of human rights. A courageous step, being contrary to many current, widespread ways of thinking. This step is to insist that the rights must be preceded by the duties. It seems to me that this could have two important consequences:

a) The first consequence is that the attention, the vindication of the rights, the commitment is shifted. Assuming a duty means committing, responding to a call and taking over a task. Our very life, rather than being a claim for rights, is the acceptance of a task to us and to others.

This, because we are an unfinished project, for whose full realization we must all work. Of course, of this task also derive rights, of which one must enjoy to be able to realize it. But rights are not, by themselves, an end; they are justified for the realization of a social task to be carried out. Solidarity precedes the individual rights and the foundations: the latter should not be considered as subjective goods of which it is enjoyed in private, but as an appreciation of the talents of which it is necessary to carry out a common project, assumed as a duty.

Social doctrine reminds us, for example, that private property has a social mortgage. It also tells us, and this is another example, that the spaces of creativity of people and civil society, claimed under the principle of subsidiarity, should be used for solidarity and not for selfish use. The same freedom, which is now asserted insistently, is not, by itself, an end: it serves to commit itself to good.

b) The second consequence is that, by putting the duties on the rights, the participation is promoted, of which our societies have so much need. Rights, on their own, return to passive persons; homework is mobilizing them. These words of mine may seem inopportune, in the face of so many situations in the world, where the most basic rights are not even respected.

How do you expect your duties to be accepted by those who do not see their own rights respected? I would respond in the following way: if human rights are not respected in so many parts of the world, that is because the right duties are not assumed in other part of the world. If in so many laicers of our population citizens do not enjoy real rights, this is because the sense of duty is not rooted in society and in men who have responsibilities in society.

If so many women and men do not enjoy their rights, it is detrimental to all, since it is not given the possibility of assuming their duties and giving, thus, their contribution to the whole society. It seems to me that those who have positions of responsibility in society, by different concepts and in the various fields, should reflect so that their action takes account of this priority of duties on rights. We should be, all men capable of homework, who open spaces to accept their own duties and empower others to give everything they can give.

According to social doctrine, this is how we work for the common good because, all together, we work for the satisfaction of the rights.

Practical indications for the use of the Compendium

The Compendium and its use must correspond to what I have said so far. With the Compendium it is not possible to establish an improvised relationship, but followed; nor a peripheral, but central relationship; not an individual but a community relationship. These needs do not derive from extrinsic demands, or from excessive consideration of the Compendium itself. It is not for the love of the Compendium that I say this, but for the fidelity that we all owe to the social doctrine of the Church. It is in the center-though not the center-and not on the periphery of Christian life; she is a fact, not only personal, but communal; she asks us for a relationship, not improvised, but followed.

Of the deepening of these three elements-which I will now try to develop briefly, but which I leave to a further reflection of you, linked also to your experience and competence-can emerge rich and concrete indications on how to use the Compendium.

A). Unimprovised use, but followed. The Compendium, by its very nature, requires us to bear in mind all the development of social doctrine. As we approach him, taking him in our hands and leafing through, it is understood that it is the fruit

of a story. It would be a mistake to consider it as an indifferent and compilation work. It is born from a logical tea reading of the life of the Church in the world and for the world. It cannot, then, but refer to a history, and it cannot be presented but as a continuation of that history, as a stimulus to continue it and to bring it up to date. It is at the service of a vital presence of our Christian communities in the history of men. It stimulates us, therefore, to think of a programmed use of it, meditated pastorally, in the long term.

B). Non-peripheral, but central use. The pastoral programming of the use of the Compendium cannot provide for isolated moments, with watertight compartments, parallel routes or only for the specialists; it must be conceived within the life of the Christian community, that is to say, in relation to the reading of the word of god, with the liturgy and with the prayer, and with the development of an authentic Christian social pastoral. It is also to be conceived in the pastoral programming of the maturation of a true Christian-inspired culture. The use of the Compendium will find correct placement only within this global and synthetic context of Christian life.

C. Non-individual, but communal use. Distributing the Compendium, making the faithful acquire it, getting everyone interested in the good of the community to possess and read it is, of course, a very good thing. But it should not be forgotten that its main destination is community, and its use must provide for community moments of reading, confrontation and discernment. It is necessary to have experiences followed by community confrontation on him and, if I can afford another annotation, experiences followed by confrontation with this document, which is the voice of the Church, also in the social, economic and political commitment. In the community and in history: these are the main places for reading the Compendium and confrontation with it. Its light becomes so much clearer; the more questions are raised with it in community form and with a project of social action, having before us something to be done for the common good, in the presence of concrete faces of people and with concrete things to do. In this way, the laity will also participate and, above all, make them "as laicmen".

The Compendium is now in our hands. It invites us, by the very fact that it exists, to re-examine the organic reference to all social doctrine. Of course, it may be useful to face one or another emerging problem pastorally, even to provide the communities with guidance and discernment tools. But the really decisive thing is to advance the formation with all the social doctrine of the Church, in such a way that it builds, in time, a capacity of cultural production, of social presence and of political commitment. Without a doubt, the Compendium invites the foregoing and, in a way, becomes an instrument of such a project.

Final indications

My intention was to present, through the social message of the Compendium, the way to walk the path that indicates the social doctrine with its realistic wisdom. She takes this wisdom-let me, at least at the end of these words, a brief theological observation-of the mysteries of the incarnation, of the cross and of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this the Church contemplates the concrete man as his own path, in the entirety, equally concrete, of his needs. My hope is that the Compendium of Church social teaching can help all of you to rediscover this dimension. Salvation is not of this world, but it passes through this world. Thanks a lot.