

THE COMMON GOOD IN AN UNEQUAL WORLD
A Conference on the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church
Croke Park, Dublin | Thursday 2 March 2006

Presentation by Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino
President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

1. I am most pleased to be here in Dublin to present the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, a document drawn up by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, at the request of our beloved Servant of God, Pope John Paul II. This Conference on the *Compendium* is a significant undertaking that does honour to its Organizers, for it is by means of such initiatives that we are able to make manifest in times that are so complex and difficult our willingness to deal with issues coming to us from the field of Christian social ethics. I am grateful for the invitation to be here, and I wish to thank His Grace, Archbishop Sean Brady, President of the Irish Episcopal Conference, His Grace, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, an old friend and esteemed collaborator, and the Right Reverend Raymond Field, head of the Justice and Peace Commission of Ireland.

I have been asked to make this presentation of the *Compendium* from the perspective of the *building of the civilization of love*. This perspective serves to highlight in a very evident manner the fundamental purpose of the Church's social doctrine, which is the building of a more human society. In fact, the first task to which this doctrine calls believers is that of spreading love in social relationships, at every level and in every area. Jesus teaches us that "the fundamental law of human perfection, and consequently of the transformation of the world, is the new commandment of love"¹ (cf. *Mt* 22:40; *Jn* 15:12; *Col* 3:14; *Jas* 2:8; *Compendium*, 580, 103). *Only love can completely change man and society*² (cf. *Compendium*, 583).

2. The *Compendium* has a simple and straight-forward structure. After an *Introduction*, there follows three parts: the first, composed of four chapters, deals with the fundamental presuppositions of social doctrine — God's plan of love for humanity and for society, the Church's mission and the nature of social doctrine, the human person and human rights, the

¹ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 28; cf. *ibid.*, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 42; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 826.

² Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 49-51.

principles and values of social doctrine. The second part, composed of seven chapters, deals with the contents and classical themes of social doctrine — the family, human work, economic life, the political community, the international community, the environment and peace. The third part — which is quite brief, being composed of one sole chapter — contains a series of indications for the use of social doctrine in the pastoral praxis of the Church and in the life of Christians, above all the lay faithful. The *Conclusion*, entitled “For a Civilization of Love”, is an expression of the underlying purpose of the entire document.

3. *The Compendium places social doctrine at the heart of the Church’s mission.* The Church — existing in the world and for the world, although not of the world — cannot neglect her mission of breathing Christian life into the world³. When the Church takes an interest in human promotion, when she proclaims the rules for a new coexistence in peace and justice, when she works with all people of good will for creating relations and institutions that are more human, she “teaches the way which man must follow in this world in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Her teaching therefore extends to the whole moral order, and notably to the justice which must regulate human relations. This is part of the preaching of the Gospel”⁴.

The fact that the *Compendium* places social doctrine within the proper mission of the Church, on the one hand, means that social doctrine must not be considered as something added on, as something incidental to Christian life; on the other hand, it is an aid in understanding how this doctrine belongs to a community subject. The adequate subject of social doctrine, in fact, is nothing other than the entire ecclesial community. In paragraph 79, the *Compendium* affirms: “*The social doctrine belongs to the Church because the Church is the subject that formulates it, disseminates it and teaches it.* It is not a prerogative of a certain component of the ecclesial body but of the entire community; it is the expression of the way that the Church understands society and of her position regarding social structures and changes. The whole of the Church community — priests, religious and laity — participates in the formulation of this social doctrine, each according to the different tasks, charisms and ministries found within her”.

³ “The Church has the right to be a teacher for mankind, a teacher of the truth of faith: the truth not only of dogmas but also of the morals whose source lies in human nature itself and in the Gospel ... This right of the Church is at the same time a duty, because she cannot forsake this responsibility without denying herself and her fidelity to Christ: ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!’ (1 Cor 9:16)” (*Compendium*, 70-71).

⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Libertatis Conscientiae*, 63.

4. The *Compendium* is put forward as a *manifesto for bringing about a new humanism, in the perspective of the civilization of love*. Presenting it in this way does not seem to involve a forced interpretation. In fact, in the Introduction we find the statement that the *Compendium* has been drawn up in order to promote and sow the seeds for the civilization of an *integral humanism in solidarity that is open to Transcendence* (cf. No. 7). It is a *manifesto* in the sense that within it are found the indications — as they exist both in the mind and in history — of a new society, in order to give concrete expression to the ever pressing requirements of the Gospel and of Christianity, so that they may dwell in the hearts of men and women. Humanity cannot live without prospects for the future, without some guiding principle. It is always necessary for the essence of Christianity to be translated into concrete terms, in every context and historical period. It is necessary for the riches of the Gospel to take on new life and to extend into the *social and cultural ethos of peoples*, so that every generation may have hope, so that the commitment of every generation to the growth of civilization may be strengthened. In the current context of globalization, in fact, the *Compendium* traces out for the human family an integral humanism in solidarity and calls on all to make an investment in the best part of individuals and peoples, in the positive energies of history.

5. The *Compendium* is undoubtedly a complex and articulate text that does not allow us, in the context of this meeting, to consider all its various themes in their vastness. Allow me, therefore, to make a few brief comments that may be of some usefulness and relevance.

5. a) *Rediscovering the common good*. If you have already had the opportunity to leaf through the pages of the Analytical Index of the *Compendium*, you saw that the expression “common good” is one of the most frequently-occurring. It may sometimes seem, however, that this concept has been removed from the current agendas of economic and political life. Social doctrine continues to insist on it with force, describing its characteristics in the following words: “The common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains ‘common’, because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future. Just as the moral

actions of an individual are accomplished in doing what is good, so too the actions of a society attain their full stature when they bring about the common good. The common good, in fact, can be understood as the social and community dimension of the moral good” (No. 164).

The Compendium has a vision of the common good that is above all subsidiary, in that the common good is to be pursued by fostering participation and the taking on of responsibility in a manner that makes full use of the *principle of subsidiarity*. This is a theme of great relevance. The *Compendium* states: “The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfil their duties. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community. Experience shows that the denial of subsidiarity, or its limitation in the name of an alleged democratization or equality of all members of society, limits and sometimes even destroys the spirit of freedom and initiative” (No. 187).

5. b) *Strengthening the relationship between ethics and the economy*. In its approach to the economy, the *Compendium* forcefully emphasizes the *relationship with ethics* (cf. Nos. 330-335). The economy and economic institutions occupy that dimension of the social-relational life of men and women that seeks, in a manner quantitatively and qualitatively appreciable, to meet the primary needs that arise as a consequence of people’s existence in the world. Within this perspective is found the *intrinsically ethical dimension of the economy*, both as a practical aspect of human life and as a science. In fact, the human person is at the centre of economic quests and economic praxis, as has been repeated many times by the Church’s social magisterium, which has even declared man as “the source, the centre, and the purpose of all economic and social life” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 63). The economy has explicit need of ethics, for both the economy and ethics find their foundation and their *raison d’être* in man; both of them seek, albeit from different perspectives, to understand man in all the fullness of his dignity.

It is within this perspective that we are to place the question, of great current interest and highly debated, of the *value to be given to the market*. Or, to be more precise, we may ask: what is said in the *Compendium* about the *regulation of the market* and about *who*

should regulate the market? The *Compendium* tells us that the market must be regulated *in the first place* because it is not right that all goods should pass by way of the market. The human person cannot be an object of the market. *In the second place*, because there are needs that the market is not able to satisfy. *Third*, because there are people who — due to situations of want into which they were born, to poverty or to losses suffered in life — are not able to gain access to necessary goods. *Fourth*, because there are goods that belong to everyone and that do well to remain the common property of all (cf. Nos. 347-350).

We come now to the second question: *who must regulate the market?* I believe that by now we are all convinced that the market must be regulated by different subjects.

The market must first of all be regulated by its own rules. Transparency, knowledge, trust, lawful competition, economic democracy: these are first of all economic rules that have tremendous value and tremendous importance (cf. No. 348).

Second, *the market is regulated by the ethics of business owners and of those who work in the economic sector*, because external rules have much less binding force than the rules internalized in the consciences of those active in the economic sector (cf. No. 343).

Third, *a people's culture and tradition contribute to regulating the market. This obviously includes religion.* The market always exists within a culture, it does not exist in a pure state as a mere technical fact; social bonds of solidarity, models of behaviour are of vital importance for giving the market a soul. The ethics of work that comes from the religious order, the ethics of sacrifice of so many business owners, family bonds: these are all phenomena with great weight in terms of providing ethical direction to economic activity (cf. No. 350).

Fourth, *the market is also regulated by legitimate divergences between the different sectors of society*, by associations of people in various work categories and by labour unions that democratically demand respect for the rights of workers. Healthy clashes of social opinion have never been condemned by the Church, which, indeed, sees in them prospects for progress, provided that they never give rise to violent or ideological conflicts (cf. No. 306).

Fifth, *the market is regulated by civil society*: by consumer associations, by education, by families, by public opinion. An important regulatory factor for the market, from the Church's perspective, is also represented by the non-profit economy of the so-called *third*

sector, which is a full-fledged partner in the market, although it operates according to criteria not exclusively of efficiency, but also of solidarity (cf. No. 356-357).

Last, *economic organizations and international financial organizations are factors of regulation for the market* when they succeed in their aim of providing the market with equitable rules, fostering economic democracy (cf. Nos. 370-372). All these factors together with the political authorities contribute to the regulation of the market (cf. Nos. 351-353).

As can readily be seen, the issue of the market is an issue of *governance*, that is, of dynamic and regulated orientation on the part of various subjects that must be integrated among themselves according to *the principle of subsidiarity*. I believe I can affirm that in our globalized era these factors are being imposed as if with new force and that the urgent need to coordinate them, with a view to an economic order ethically oriented to the service of the person, can no longer be avoided.

5. c) *The political community and democracy*. The Compendium states that the first contribution that the Church offers the political community is of a religious type and corresponds to her mission: *preserving and promoting in the conscience of all the sense of the transcendent dignity of the human person*. As declared in No. 26 of *Gaudium et Spes*: “The ferment of the Gospel too has aroused and continues to arouse in man’s heart the irresistible requirements of his dignity”. In the message of Christ, the human community can find the strength that will enable people to love their neighbour as *another self*, to combat *all that is contrary to life*, to accept the *fundamental equality of all*, to *fight against every form of discrimination*, to *overcome a purely individualistic ethic* in the perspective of *civil friendship* (cf. Nos. 390-392)

In this perspective, *religious freedom* is a good for society. A secular autonomy that is truly autonomous would guarantee this religious freedom and permit the Church to undertake this task that has a public value, although it is not directly political. Making reference to *Gaudium et Spes*, the *Compendium* specifies very well what the proper function of the Church with regards to the political order: “*The Church is not to be confused with the political community and is not bound to any political system*”⁵. In fact, the political community and the

⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 76: AAS 58 (1966), 1099; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2245.

Church are *autonomous and independent* of each other in their own fields, and both are, even if under different titles, ‘devoted to the service of the personal and social vocation of the same human beings’⁶. Indeed, it can be affirmed that the distinction between religion and politics and the principle of religious freedom constitute a specific achievement of Christianity and one of its fundamental historical and cultural contributions” (No. 50). We can also affirm that the principle of secular autonomy and the principle of religious freedom represent a specific acquisition of Christianity, and an acquisition of great significance on the level of history and culture.

The *Compendium* speaks also of *democracy*, the political system that, better than any other, fosters participation and therefore mutual solidarity and cooperation within the political community. I would summarize the *Compendium*’s reflection on democracy in these terms: *democracy is an instrument and not an end*, nonetheless even if *it is only an instrument it must not be reduced to mere procedure*: “An authentic democracy is not merely the result of a formal observation of a set of rules but is the fruit of a convinced acceptance of the values that inspire democratic procedures” (No. 407). For this reason, the *Compendium* understands and proposes *democracy as a political system that allows for the protection and development of the human person*. In the perspective of the *Compendium*, democracy is understood not only as political and electoral freedom, but above all as protection and development of the person, understood as an *unconditional* reality. The Christian vision of the person is distinguished by the absolute character recognized in the person deriving from the fact of men and women being the *imago Dei*: this means that the human person cannot be reduced to something less, or be considered a means and not an end, or be understood in a partial and reductive sense. Indeed, this vision requires that the person be understood in his horizontal and vertical openness, and in his capacity to relate to others and to God in truth and goodness. A true democracy needs this humanist and personalist soul (cf. No. 407).

5. d) *Living in harmony with nature*. The *Compendium* speaks of this harmony, with balance and wisdom, in the chapter on safeguarding the environment. The key point put forth by the *Compendium* is the following: human action with regard to nature must be guided by ethics. *The ecological problem must therefore be seen as an ethical problem*, since there is a

⁶ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 76: AAS 58 (1966), 1099.

constant interaction between the human person and nature (cf. Nos. 461–465). But nature cannot be understood in an ethical sense if it is considered only from a point of view that idolatrizes it, or if it is understood as a field for the indiscriminate exercise of technology. In the perspective of the *Compendium*, the ecological emergency is also an anthropological emergency. The way that we relate to the world depends on the way that mankind relates to itself. But we must also add that the way that man looks inside himself depends on how he turns to God. When man wishes to set himself up in the place of God he loses sight of himself and of his responsibility to govern nature (cf. No. 487).

5. e) *Promoting peace.* We can understand the *Compendium*'s reflection on peace if we make a distinction between peace as the absence of war and peace as life that is fully human. The *Compendium* is concerned many times with peace in the first sense, but it is concerned even more — infinitely more and constantly so — with peace in the second sense. This, in fact, is the “fullness” of peace, which includes truth, freedom and justice, and which alone makes it possible to arrive firmly at peace as the absence of war. I do not believe I am in error in saying that the *Compendium* always speaks of peace, even when it does not use this word; it speaks of peace also when it speaks of justice or solidarity, of the unity of the human family, of God's plan for humanity, of the human rights of every person and the corresponding duties, of the dignity of the human person, peoples and cultures. In the *Compendium*, therefore, peace also takes on a powerful cultural significance that is very relevant for today. The sense of mutual respect for religious and cultural traditions, dialogue between religions, international cooperation, a culture of openness: these are all fundamental dimensions that foster peace. According to the *Compendium*, at play here is the ultimate meaning of the building up of human society and, consequently, of peace (cf. Nos. 494–496).

6. As I conclude this presentation, I wish to make a connection between the *Compendium* and the first Encyclical Letter of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. In fact, placed at the heart of *Deus Caritas Est* — especially in paragraphs 26–29 — is the Church's social doctrine, explicitly referred to also in paragraph 27 with the historical sketch from *Rerum Novarum* to *Centesimus Annus*. In the same place, moreover, reference is made to the publication of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which has made a

“comprehensive presentation” of the entire social teaching of the Church. We can therefore say that the Encyclical Letter takes in not only certain aspects of social doctrine but the whole of the Church’s modern social magisterium. Social doctrine is placed within — and not at the margins of — the Christian proclamation that *God is love*. Social doctrine, accordingly, is connected with the love that, as a theological virtue, is the divine life itself that nourishes the Church in her service to the world, and that, as a human virtue, is that civil and social friendship without which the community bonds between men grow weak and uncertain. *Deus Caritas Est* proclaims love as the very essence of God, and precisely for this reason it does not fail to consider the human and social aspects of love, which are illuminated and purified in that light. Within this dialogue between the divine and the human is found the social doctrine of the Church, which must continuously make appeals to that love that comes from divine life while at the same time it must bend down lovingly to the needs of humanity.

The connection between the Church’s social doctrine and love is therefore very deep. This doctrine is at the service of the individual person known and loved in the fullness of his or her calling, and has as its purpose the care and responsibility for man whom Christ himself has entrusted to the Church. Moreover, the original connection between the Church’s social doctrine and God’s love — or God who is love — is found in the decisive and essential fact that this doctrine is the Church proclaiming “the truth about Christ, about herself and about man” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41), and the heart of this proclamation is that God is love. It is no coincidence that the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* begins with the first chapter entitled “God’s Plan of Love for Humanity” and ends with the conclusion “For a Civilization of Love”. Thank you.

Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino
President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Dublin, 2 March 2006