

The Call to Justice: The Legacy of *Gaudium et spes* Forty Years Later

The Call to Justice in the Economic Order

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"God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it'"¹. Placing Adam then in the Garden of Eden, God orders him to till it and keep it².

This means that in the economic order man is to act in harmony with God's plan. *Gaudium et Spes* confirms this interpretation: "Throughout the course of the centuries, men have laboured to better the circumstances of their lives through a monumental amount of individual and collective effort. To believers, this point is settled: considered in itself, such human activity accords with God's will"³.

Starting off then, we make a technical presentation of the typical structure of the economic order.

Work, an Objectivizing Economic Category

Nature, according to current experience, does not automatically provide in the quantity or quality required, nor in the place desired or at the desired moment, what is necessary for satisfying human needs. Because of this natural inadaptability, this gap, we define the economy as the *struggle against scarcity and poverty*. Mediation is therefore indispensable for making available what is scarce, indeed what is totally lacking, or for facilitating efforts to this end. One such type of mediation is *work*, which, applied to the *goods of creation -- the original resources*⁴ of the economy, in a *process of production* -- leads to the availability of needed items that the consumer purchases on the market. Such purchases are made with the money that production makes available to consumers in a *process of distributing* national wealth. The justification behind the human institution known as the economy consists, therefore, in *bringing victory in the battle against inadequacies in covering people's costs and against unacceptable poverty*.

The singular and unending battle against scarcity and poverty

Winning a battle by eliminating the scarcity and poverty of yesterday, in no way means that the battle against scarcity and poverty has been won; rather, by its very nature such a battle is

unending. There will always be need, scarcity will always exist.

Work, the activity of man for man

Work is an economic activity with a precise purpose and is aimed at meeting human needs. Work in this sense should be distinguished from physical work. Physical work can be done by an animal or a machine, whereas work as an economic resource is an exclusively human activity.

Man's entry into the economic order

The human being enters into the sphere of the economy when, because of the gap between unrefined nature and human needs, he must exert himself in order to remove scarcity and poverty. Those who do not give themselves to this discipline of intellect, reason and effort remain outside the sphere of the economy.

Every economic event is a human event

We observe that the starting point for every economic order is man who works, men and women at work, men and women who produce, men and women everywhere.

Money, a human institution, is omnipresent

Goods produced by work constitute the gross internal product that is the object of distribution, becoming revenue under different forms: salaries, taxes, dividends, pensions, etc. Work is the natural source of individual, domestic, national and world wealth.

Fundamental material basis of the economic order

No matter how life in society is organized, production is an absolute necessity, distributing the end result of this among the different participants of production is also clear evidence of allowing citizens to satisfy their various needs definitively.

Production, distribution, consumption are the foundations of economic life.

Man standing on his own feet

Since natural goods cannot be utilized in their unrefined state, man must apply to them his own quality, his uniqueness, as a being endowed with intellect and will. Poverty must be fought. Victory in this regard is a characteristic of man standing on his own feet.

Work is the economic resource par excellence

Work is existential, it is an eminent human prerogative. Work can take on many different forms, which gives rise to the heterogeneity of this economic resource.

From the manufacturing of things to the transformation of nature

One of the first meanings of work is to manufacture. People are not content to be subject to

the nature from which they emerge nor to deal constantly with the resistance it poses, so they revisit nature in order to transform it and to impose gradually upon it the sovereignty of a personal universe.

Productivity, a measure of progress and an arm for competitiveness between national economic orders

Productivity is an expression of the relation of volume, weight or value of production to the needed quantity of work-as-resource that has made production possible.

The division of labour, a technique at the service of productivity

Adam Smith⁵, in his celebrated work of 1776 entitled *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, highlighted the concept of the division of labour. This consists in dividing the tasks to be accomplished with a view to limiting each worker's part of the manufacturing process to one operation that is simple but complementary to another operation. Workers are thus specialized in one certain task with a view to increasing the productivity of the whole enterprise.

Increased productivity is synonymous with increased profit, which can lead to dysfunctions in the economic order

The division of labour aimed at increasing the productivity of work-as-resource represents one of the many problems that are raised with regard to work, sometimes concerning the relations connected with the work process.

RESOURCES	AGENTS	PROCESSES	REGULATION
Natural	Household	Production	Economic Fluctuation
Human	Business	Distribution	Market Price Plan
Capital	State	Consumption	Monetary Policy

In the schematic table above, we can already see where there may be found dysfunctions concerning what is good and right, and within the truth of man in the economic order, both national and international.

Let me cite here an excerpt from *Africa on the Margins* ("*L'Afrique dans les marges*"), from a recent editorial in the magazine "Études"⁶, in which the editor-in-chief, Pierre de Charentenay⁷, quite correctly writes: "Far removed from the world's great economic trends, on the outskirts of places where knowledge is developed, away from the poles of wealth, Sub-Saharan Africa tries to move beyond a post-colonial situation. Relegated to the margins of development, it is a spectacle of violence and corruption. The margins where it lies is full of activity, agitation, signs sent to the world. It is on the margins that one writes the truth of a text, of a thought, the rejection or acceptance of a speech, the sending back of a position. Thus it is for Africa, which tells us what we would rather not hear: the disorders of the developed world, the peripheral issues of international politics, the situations that are too far off to be controlled, the greed of numerous industrial and commercial enterprises, the facile indifference of peoples with regard to those who are helpless. This shows us our powerlessness and our refusal, our blindness and our thirst for power and wealth".

Pope Benedict XV⁸ had said that "it is in the economic sphere that the lives of souls are placed in danger".

In our development of the Call to Justice, we shall not limit ourselves only to the guidelines of *Gaudium et Spes*. Because of the important requirements of economic justice, we shall also rely on other magisterial documents of the Church's social doctrine that deal with the economy. We shall thus proceed in deciphering the real functioning of the economic order with regard to dignity for men and women in their activity of production and with regard to human dignity in the distribution of the gross internal product, the twofold nature of this dignity being seen in the light of work as a finalizing economic category.

Work, a Finalizing Economic Category

It is not enough that production be adequately and economically efficient. The question of human dignity comes into play on two levels: that of production and that of distribution. At the very least, it is important to look critically at the real functioning of the economy in order to flush out what is hidden behind the information given on the material and immaterial things of the economic order, in the way they are objectively manifested. This critical reflection is a human right. We even think that each person has the duty to take a hard look at the economic order in these times of globalization, of obsession with monetary gain, given especially the various forms of violence that accompanies these phenomena. What is the purpose of the economy, what is the meaning of money? We do well to add that discernment of these things is needed in a world of constant media bombardment, indeed of systematic disinformation, to say nothing of so many counter-truths, of every sort of manipulation.

Everybody and anybody is concerned with what the economic order should include so that it will truly be at the service of the truth of man and at the service of providing adequate means for managing this truth. The true nature of man, created in the image and likeness of God, the foundation of human dignity, requires that people project the light of reason and conscience onto things of the temporal order in general, and, as far as concerns us at the moment, onto economic matters. We are speaking here specifically of the order of the exercise of human freedom, human responsibility and human resistance to all that is contrary to this freedom and responsibility, in a perspective that sees man as a being meant to stand on his own feet. The economy must promote this noble ideal and safeguard it.

In order, then, to enlighten their consciences and strengthen their conviction in light of what, in everyday life, builds up their lives and that of others, men and women must have guidelines and must place their inner freedom at the service of the appropriate judgment for responsible action enlightened by the awareness of values. With resolute determination people must place themselves within a perspective of those values that both individual and collective conscience understands as right and good for the true nature of men and women.

When a person acts in an evil manner, this person can even be accused of being inhuman. Being human means, in some way, behaving according to the imperatives of what is good, right and true for human beings; it means serving humanity, preserving the humanity of human beings, helping this humanity to grow stronger in every person. Human beings have the fundamental vocation of existing within a human economic order.

In the area of the economy, we are necessarily and authentically within the sphere of politics, which implies a certain vision of man. We have said earlier that economic events are human events, and that man is a being with needs. Man is also a relational being: horizontal relations, vertical relations, relations with other men, relations of dialogue, relations with nature, dialectic relations, and all of these relations in an institutional environment.

It is therefore the responsibility of the caretaker of faith in Jesus Christ, the Church, to provide beacons to those who profess the Catholic faith so that they will not be agents or accomplices in the suffering of their brothers and sisters. These beacons consist of the whole of the Gospel, which is a light for guiding human action.

Down the centuries, since the beginning of the Church, this Gospel has been explained and illustrated by the Fathers and the educators in the faith.

This is so because from the beginning of Gospel times "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ"⁹. The Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* was one of the significant moments of these times, since the institutional situation no longer corresponded to the requirements of the truth that calls for human dignity and justice. This call, already a solemn appeal, of Pope Leo XIII in response to the "new things" that had then divided society into two antagonistic classes in a century which, among other things, experienced a strong acceleration of material progress, has continually been taken up anew, deepened and made ever more relevant by those who have successively occupied the Chair of Peter. Faced with the global situation following the Second World War (1939-1945), this call required a review of the doctrinal and pastoral orientations for the time leading up to the twenty-first century and beyond. Pope John XXIII took up this providential initiative in announcing his decision on 25 January 1959 to convoke the first Council of the twentieth century for the updating of the Church, an event which he desired as a "new Pentecost" after twenty centuries of the Church's existence, when the events of the inhabited earth seemed to be taking a course that up till then was unknown.

It is indeed good for human dignity that people should have those goods necessary for their existence, and that this situation should continue from generation to generation. Another level of this dignity nonetheless places limits on the economic order. In fact, it is not sufficient to ensure food, lodging, clothing, health care, education, even in adequate quantities and of adequate quality; it remains necessary as well that human dignity should not be held up to ridicule in its dimension of working men and women and in its undying aspirations for justice.

Since economic life is a life of work, there can be no economy without the resource that constitutes work, consequently, without men and women who work. Moreover, since for man work means working in society, there can be no economy without social relations. It follows that the process of production is the process of working men and women, and hence it must be the case that this process take place within a community that has men and women at its centre and, since they are at its centre, they must be the crown of all creation¹⁰. People are becoming ever more conscious of their dignity¹¹ and of their capacity to act according to their conscience¹² and to act freely¹³. But people may think that their rights are fully recognized only when they are exempt from every norm of the divine law. The Church issues the warning: human dignity thus vanishes¹⁴. *Gaudium et Spes* speaks with great clarity about human dignity, a clarity enlightened by the revelation of God who is love and who invites us to love.

Evaluating the economic order, work activity connected with man

Harmony is needed between the universally recognized demands of performance and the demands of human dignity in the manufacturing process.

The level of individual and collective needs is not static. These needs grow and change, connected as they are to the culture created by and for man, and connected therefore to history. It is an imperative, then, that the production process -- if it is to be efficient -- include the productivity of human work. Of course, there are demands to maximize performance and to produce the greatest number of goods possible. It is therefore necessary to take into concrete consideration the consequences of an economic rationale in the relations between man and nature, between man and other men, between man and institutions.

To the degree that the production process bases the efficiency of human work activities on those things that make these activities amenable to life, the economic order will be in harmony with its fundamental end and will therefore be good and just, unquestionably serving the truth of man.

From the perspective of the quest to increase efficiency with an anxious concern for profit, the production process becomes, to a greater or lesser extent, synonymous with the quest to maximize the number of deals made and the gross internal product. What should only be a means thus becomes an end, and the true purpose, that is, man, runs the grave risk of becoming a means, a being reduced to modern-day slavery, to productivity at all costs.

Work is the major resource of the economic order, from which fact it follows that the growth of productivity is undergirded by a better structure and organization of work. All productive work is indissolubly linked to man.

The structure and organization of work, that is to say, the rationale guiding it, go back to the structure and organization of something by man and for man, at the service of the growth of productivity and of production. We must then ask ourselves whether those who are subject to this structure and organization do not themselves become means of production, being reduced once more to the level of simple manpower, with the risk that work will lose its human component, all the more since specialization can lead to completely removing every human dimension from work. Accordingly, development cannot be reduced to a purely economic problem. The process of production-distribution-consumption always presents a moral problem. In this regard, it is remarkable that the third chapter of Part Two of *Gaudium et Spes*, on economic and social life, begins with the words: "In the economic and social realms, too, the dignity and complete vocation of the human person and the welfare of society as a whole are to be respected and promoted"¹⁵.

The ever increasing division of labour means that "the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is, of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally

loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become."¹⁶.

When the father of political economy makes this judgment, we can affirm that there is a connection between the structure of work, the mental state of workers and their personality. We also know that human dignity is connected to the fact that people know that they are a person by virtue of their status, privileged among creatures, of being made in the image and likeness of God.

The organization of work, which can empty work of meaning for man just as economism can create meaning, namely when the principle of economic efficiency prevails over every other consideration, can cause an existential crisis in workers. In fact, man is entitled to desire a form of work that is suitable to him, a human work that leaves him the possibility and the freedom to fulfil himself and that neither stunts his growth nor makes him into a robot. In other words, work is not to be merely understood as a necessary and often painful means that permits a person to subsist. It remains a means for man to affirm his human nature.

It is when the production process neglects this dimension of work that man may come to perceive work as an arduous necessity. In this case, work is in contradiction to man's humanity and can upset his fundamental relational capacities.

Man is not merely to live for the economy, but is to live in a manner that promotes the fulfilment of what is human within him. In the production process, he must be able to count on a status that allows him to make use of his creativity, his rights and his sense of responsibility, and not on a status that reduces him to the level of manpower that is used and paid without further considerations. Man has a deep aspiration to make use of his creativity, his rights and his sense of responsibility in his status as producer: this is an innate need.

Since it must be human, the economy must respond to the demands of economic efficiency.

It goes without saying that human considerations must not be abusively made into the dominating criteria, and even less into the sole criteria, of the economic order. In fact, it is quite evident that an economy structured according to inefficient human principles does not conform to the fundamental demand requiring that the economy should be at the service of life. Because in this way it would be no less immune from the tendency to sink into an existential crisis than a system of great productivity that ignores the human element.

Human dignity in the economic order is based also on the aspiration of workers for justice.

Gaudium et Spes, following in particular Saint Thomas Aquinas and *Rerum Novarum*, teaches that "God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples... attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, 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"¹⁷.

Justice is directly and necessarily connected to the process of the distribution of the internal gross product. An economic order that satisfies fundamental human needs and the human purpose of workers, of which we have just spoken, is not however exempt from criticism.

In fact, the very nature of the functioning of the economy creates social inequalities, such as monetary devaluation that makes the poor even poorer. It is therefore necessary that "care should also be taken lest the economically weak countries unjustly suffer any loss from a change in the value of money"¹⁸. Engaging in the struggle to see that service is rendered to life is a permanent effort aimed at avoiding superabundance and superfluosity on the one hand, and great scarcity of essential goods on the other.

But justice goes beyond the distribution of the internal gross product, an eminently moral problem. Equitable distribution must not be considered in a restrictive sense, as though it were simply a question of distributing national revenue under the form of salaries, taxation or patrimony. When we speak about equitable distribution, we are in the end talking about situations.

The equitable distribution of national wealth, a true economic challenge that must have man as its centre

The situation of a human being is not reduced to his salary or his patrimony. In any specific economic order, does a man have the possibility of benefiting from a formation and a job that is suited to his abilities? Is he able to give to his life a meaning that goes beyond the practice of a certain paid activity? These questions are not without importance.

A material, not social, vision of things

The recent tradition of economism has always sought to defuse the question of equitable distribution with pragmatic arguments, because in the eyes of economism, distribution was always limited to a purely materialistic aspect. Adam Smith, contrary to the dominant ideology of his day, already found it deplorable that large numbers of rural people lived in conditions of poverty and he explicitly declared that "equity by itself requires moreover that those who provide nourishment, clothing and lodging for all the bodies of a nation should have, in what is produced by their own work, a sufficient part so that they themselves are adequately nourished, clothed and lodged". The objective sought by Adam Smith is the growth of national wealth.

Identical words today

This passage from the liberal thought of the economy of yesterday is interesting. It is the same type of argumentation that is put forth today in the words of those who praise globalization. It is this that will bring prosperity for all, strength, health, the easiest and best life for the people; economic policies contrary to this one way of thinking create misery.

Are things as simple as that?

Adam Smith lived in the eighteenth century. More than two centuries after him, there are still found in the richest country in the world -- whose currency¹⁹ is greatly valued by all those involved in the area of international economy -- citizens who do not have access to health care, who are homeless, uneducated, very shabbily clad, and who beg for food²⁰ daily, and all this because they have no job and are therefore without money. This phenomenon is moreover observable in every national economy, whether developed or underdeveloped.

From every person according to ability, to every person according to need

In his day, Karl Marx praised "the modern bourgeois society that gave birth to powerful means of production and communication". He saw in such societies the economic condition that would allow the needs of all to be fully met; in this he was in agreement with Adam Smith. But he expressed the reservation that the conditions of production, that is to say, the systems and structures by which bourgeois society engaged in economic activities, no longer corresponded to the forces of production that bourgeois society had created. He concluded that if the system could undergo a change so that the means of private production would pass to the public sector, allowing centralized guidance and planning of the economic processes, a state of abundance would not fail to be established along with socialism. This socialism would in turn give rise to a political economy that, at the beginning of the process of socialization, would lead to each person receiving according to his capacities and, at the final stages, to each person receiving according to his needs; in such a socialism neither the State nor social classes would exist any longer. Equitable distribution of the fruits of production would then be resolved on its own.

Innate aspirations, in each person

It was also argued that if the economic situation is one of abundance, then it matters little whether one person receives more than someone else in the distribution of goods. Of course it is true that in a society of great growth in productivity, the social problem of distribution loses its disruptive force. Where there is an elevated productivity, a strong production, a consequent national revenue, there is more to be distributed and there is greater social satisfaction. We can then understand that growth of productivity, of production and of national revenue have been built into economic dogmas. The problem of commutative justice is therefore not resolved automatically, and even less that of distributive justice, which rests on the equality of individuals²¹. Economic growth can coincide with injustice.

There is therefore a real challenge: economic growth must necessarily be accompanied by social justice -- commutative justice -- which is the minimum without which no other justice -- distributive justice, which is a requisite of love -- would have any value.

The role of unions as social regulators

Whatever the case may be, it falls to organized groups of workers to defend the material and moral interests of their members in particular and of workers in general. Unions today play an integral role in regulating the economic order, in the sense of fighting for social justice, otherwise they are merely economic regulators that occupy all available space, and in that case economism triumphs, without any social regulation.

The Catholic Church and the essential question of wages

For more than a century, from the time of Pope Leo XIII²² in 1891 to the current tenant of Vatican City, Pope John Paul II, who summarizes and clarifies its shape today, the Catholic Church has had a teaching on the concept of wages²³.

The bronze law of wages²⁴ is condemned by reason of the fact that the natural law is higher than positive law.

Guaranteeing the general equilibrium of a business enterprise

In determining wages, we must take into account the needs of the business enterprise and of those who finance it. It would be unjust to demand that a company pay wages that it cannot afford without going into ruin, dragging its workers into disaster with itself. If out of apathy, negligence or because it is not sufficiently concerned with economic progress and technology, the profits of a company decrease, the business cannot cite these circumstances as a legitimate reason for reducing the wages of its employees. But if on the other hand it does not have the resources to offer equitable remuneration to its employees, whether because overcome itself by the burden of unjustified costs, or because it must put its products on the market at unfairly low prices, then those who have placed it in this extreme position are guilty of a glaring iniquity. For it is their fault that the employees are deprived of the remuneration that is due them, since, forced by necessity, the workers accept wages that are inferior to what they have the right to demand²⁵. It is proper, then, to observe a just measure in salary levels, with a reasonable concern for equilibrium.

A just concern of the common good

The need to offer those seeking work the possibility of employing their abilities depends in large part on the level of salaries, which increase the opportunities for work the more they remain within reasonable limits and which, vice versa, decrease job possibilities when they move outside those limits. By unduly reducing or increasing salaries, with a view to personal interests that have no concern for what is demanded by the general good, social justice is assuredly cast aside²⁶.

Workers ought to receive an adequate salary allowing them to lead a life worthy of men and to meet the needs of their families. But, in setting a just salary, considerations must also be made regarding the effective contribution that each person makes to production, the financial situation of the company in which one works, and the requirements imposed for the good of the country, in particular those concerning full employment²⁷. These are matters of rights and duties.

Having taken into account the functions and the productivity of each person, the situation of the company and the common good, wages for work must ensure that people have the resources that will permit them, together with their families, to lead a decent life on the material, social, cultural and spiritual levels²⁸.

Qualifying criteria for every system with regard to justice

The definitive assessment of the justice of a socio-economic system and, in any event, of its just functioning must be made according to the manner in which human labour is equitably remunerated within the system. Although salary is not everything with regard to a worker's participation in production, remuneration for work remains the way by which virtually all people gain concrete access to the goods that are destined to common usage, whether we are speaking of natural goods or the goods that are the fruits of production. Both types of goods are made accessible to workers thanks to the salary that is received as remuneration for the work done. A just wage becomes in all cases the concrete measure of the justice of every economic order, and in any event the measure of its just functioning. A just wage is not the only measure, but it is essential; for it is a principal indicator and must be connected with the index of prices. A just wage for working adults with families is one that is sufficient for raising a family, ensuring it both a decent life and a future²⁹.

Conclusion

In processes of the economic order, work -- both as personal activity and as action aimed at nature -- can be separated from its underlying principle and from its purpose, men and women who work. When such a separation occurs, economic dysfunction is brought about, and we can place this dysfunction into three categories:

- the worker in the production process is considered as a mechanical cog in the economic order that makes use of many different machines, and the worker is treated as a machine;
- the worker is treated on a par with the raw materials and the other things that are the input and output of the economic order, that is to say, workers are treated as merchandise;
- the product of work is separated from the person who works, the worker is deprived of what is due to him.

From this there follow three possible forms of human alienation, arising from the very nature of work. Each and every one of these is in contradiction to human justice, human dignity and human truth. They are most often interconnected. Work-as-activity is simultaneously treated as a mechanical activity and is bought and sold as merchandise, at the same time the natural product of work is snatched away from the worker.

The alienation of work is generally seen first of all as exploitation. It is therefore a non-equivalent exchange. Here we find the meaning given to it by the socialist theories of the nineteenth century. Part of the material fruits of work is diverted by social institutions to profit, especially to the profit of the owners of the capital. The condemnation of the State and the criticism of formal sectors of freedom arose then from an awareness of the harmful role of the authorities that, although charged with the common good, in fact perpetrated this exploitation by sanctioning the power of those who owned the means of production.

The exploitation of work in the processes of production and distribution is the misunderstanding or refusal of the satisfaction of those needs that can be considered normal by common perception, a phenomenon that occurs even though such satisfaction is possible given the state of resources of the economic order and of the riches produced.

But there is also exploitation and alienation of work in a deeper sense, when work is seen simply as a tool, when it is made subject to a process of depersonalization, treated as merchandise that is the object of trade, when the human relationships born from work are reduced to nothing more than relations between objects.

Finally, exploitation and alienation of work occurs when work is placed at the service of obsession: productivity considered as an end in itself in order to make ever more money; domination of other social groups or the subjection of other nations in contempt of morality; and, let us dare to say, there is exploitation and alienation of work when the economy is placed at the service of violence, destruction, war; when in the end there is a dysfunction with regard to human truth.

In short and more generally, there is exploitation and alienation of work when work is

diverted from its natural purpose, when the person of workers is degraded and the human community shattered.

The economic order is at the service of human truth:

- the truth of man's original status, which endows him with the right to find what is needed to preserve his life and the obligation to preserve it;
- the truth of man's twofold dignity regarding his status as a working man and his innate aspirations for justice;
- the truth of the human obligation to safeguard for future generations the patrimony received and/or acquired³⁰.

If the economy fails in this service, which is the service of life, it betrays the truth of man which is its sole justification. It betrays human life. It then becomes an instrument that disrupts the structure of people's fundamental relational capacities. It becomes dehumanizing and is opposed to the values of the Kingdom of God.

In fact, "the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and that it allow men as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfill it"³¹.

Dr. Pognon has served as:

- Director-General of the Bank of Development of Dahomey;
- Deputy Governor for Dahomey to the World Bank;
- National Director for Benin of the Central Bank of West African States;
- Deputy Governor for Benin to the International Monetary Fund;
- Central Director of Inspection at the Headquarters of the Central Bank of West African States in Dakar (Senegal).

He presently serves as:

- President of the Board of Directors of the Regional Bank of Solidarity, Benin;
- Teacher of economy and administration at the Grand Séminaire in Benin and at the John Paul II Institute for French-Speaking Africa in Benin;
- Member of Justice and Peace, Benin.

¹ Gen 1:27-26. The original French of Dr. Pognon's text notes that the biblical citation is taken from *La Bible des Peuples*, éditions Fayard, 1999, and underlines the fact that this recent French translation received the *imprimatur* of the Zaire Episcopal Conference on 27 February 1995.

² Gen 2:15.

³ *Gaudium et Spes*, 34.

⁴ Gen 1:1-2:1.

⁵ A Scottish economist, 1723-1790, generally considered the father of political economy.

⁶ No. 4022, February 2005.

⁷ S.J.

⁸ During his lifetime, the Turks erected a statue to him in Istanbul, seeing in him "the great Pope of the

worldwide tragedy... the benefactor of all men regardless of nationality or religion".

⁹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 1.

¹⁰ *Gaudium et Spes*, 12: "According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their centre and crown".

¹¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 12: "But what is man? About himself he has expressed, and continues to express, many divergent and even contradictory opinions. In these he often exalts himself as the absolute measure of all things or debases himself to the point of despair. The result is doubt and anxiety. The Church certainly understands these problems. Endowed with light from God, she can offer solutions to them, so that man's true situation can be portrayed and his defects explained, while at the same time his dignity and destiny are justly acknowledged".

¹² *Gaudium et Spes*, 16: "In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; **to obey it is the very dignity of man**; according to it he will be judged. **Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths**".

¹³ *Gaudium et Spes*, 17: "**Man's dignity demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice that is personally motivated and prompted from within, not under blind internal impulse nor by mere external pressure**".

¹⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, 41 "For we are tempted to think that our personal rights are fully ensured only when we are exempt from every requirement of divine law. But this way leads not to the maintenance of the dignity of the human person, but to its annihilation".

¹⁵ And later, in his second social Encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, ten years into his pontificate and twenty years after Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, John Paul II -- strengthened by the invigorating experience of contact with the realities experienced in the course of his travels throughout the world, in affluent countries as well as in poor countries, in a context of economic crisis for the former and of an unending crisis for the latter, not only underdeveloped but, what is more, also crushed by the weight of their enormous debts -- the Pontiff enters deeply into the question of the need for human dignity in the direction of a clear vision of solidarity (No. 46), invites Catholics to "give precedence to the phenomenon of growing poverty" (No. 42), points out the equality of individuals and peoples (Nos. 9, 33, 39), develops a theology of solidarity (Nos. 38-40), and extends it in *Centesimus Annus*, commemorating the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*, to those who are weakest (*Centesimus Annus*, 15), to conflicts (*ibid.*, 22), to communities of work (*ibid.*, 32) and in general to relations of communion (*ibid.*, 41, 43).

¹⁶ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1904) B V., Ch. 1 in paragraph V.1.178.

¹⁷ *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

¹⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, 70.

¹⁹ On the banknotes of this currency we find written: "In God we trust".

²⁰ "The economy of a humanized mankind will begin on the day that the human race no longer allows its poor to die" (François Perroux in *Cahiers universitaires catholiques*, special issue, June-July 1963, p. 486).

²¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 69: "If one is in extreme necessity, he has the right to procure for himself what he needs out of the riches of others... 'Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him'".

²² *Rerum Novarum*, that is, the Encyclical on "new things" that Pope Leo XIII published on 15 May 1891, is the Church's response to the problems raised by the division of society into proletariat, those who have only their work power, and factory owners, whom socialist theories accused of exploiting the working masses. This was the first time that the Church took an official and solemn position in the matter.

²³ In *Rerum Novarum* we read: "It is surely undeniable that, when a man engages in remunerative labour, the impelling reason and motive of his work is to obtain property, and thereafter to hold it as his very own. If one man hires out to another his strength or skill, he does so for the purpose of receiving in return what is necessary for the satisfaction of his needs" (No. 5). Salary must necessarily take on the imperative function of responding to human needs. There can be no exception to this, not even by way of mutual agreement. In fact, the human person is above all things. *Rerum Novarum* goes on to say, "man's labour is necessary; for without the result of labour a man cannot live, and self-preservation is a law of nature, which it is wrong to disobey... The preservation of life is the bounden duty of one and all, and to be wanting therein is a crime. It necessarily follows that each one has a natural right to procure what is required in order to live, and the poor can procure that in no other way than by what they can earn through their work" (No. 44).

²⁴ *Rerum Novarum*, 45: "Let the working man and the employer make free agreements, and in particular let them agree freely as to the wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice".

²⁵ *Quadragesimo Anno*, 79.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁷ *Mater et Magistra*, 71.

²⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, 67.

²⁹ *Laborem Exercens*, 19.

³⁰ *Gaudium et Spes* tells us that there is a "serious obligation" of "looking out for the future and of establishing a right balance between the needs of present-day consumption, both individual and collective, and the demands of investing for the generation to come" (No. 70).

³¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 35.