

CONCLUSION

My intention in this book has been two-fold: to describe, through the sources of papal social teachings, the moral and religious principles and virtues of the good steward and to discuss concrete proposals of what these virtues and principles would look like in the workplace. The papal social tradition has contributed to the organizational world a vision of work that is both moral and religious. It presents work and the organizing of work as inherently moral and religious activities. This vision of work is a unifying thematic thread throughout papal social teachings. It is a vision of work that gives us a concrete idea of who the good steward is, and how we can become good stewards in our work.

I have examined four essential dimensions of work from the papal social teachings—formation of workers, remuneration, production process, and product. I have articulated several moral and theological principles and virtues in relationship to the four organizational dimensions. Principles such as human dignity, common use, common good, participation, and equity, virtues such as social and commutative justice, magnificence, solidarity, and industriousness, and theological principles such as image of God, dominion, co-creation, and stewardship, have a particular relevance to understanding the nature of the organization.

The papal social tradition has steadfastly maintained that people need community. They need to be treated with dignity and respect. They need to be productive, creative, responsible, and participate in God's creative order. Because these needs are basic to human well-being, participative and distributive programs are fundamentally justified. While all such programs will have to pass the financial tests of productivity, efficiency, and profitability, according to the papal social tradition, they must first satisfy the requirement of human dignity. The Church has consistently condemned those who restrict work to economic and market considerations. Not to go beyond the material purposes of work fails to comprehend the full meaning of work as a human activity.

Failure to take seriously the moral and religious dimension of work creates a danger concerning the purpose of work. For example, many organizational theorists and managers advocate or use participative and distributive programs not because they are humane and good for the worker, but solely because they are efficient and practical. What usually lurks behind a statement such as this is that the only fiduciary relationship management has is an economic one to owners. What is lost, however, is the personal and social fiduciary relationship management has to

employees as well as to themselves by the nature that work has a formative dimension. Financial concerns are necessities in the organizational world, but they are not the only factors in running an organization if one maintains, as the papal social tradition does, that work is not only an economic activity. As John Paul II explains in *Centesimus annus* “Profit is a regulator of the life of a business but it is not the only one; other human factors must also be considered which, in long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business” (CA, 35). For what happens when participative and distributive programs are no longer effective? What happens when treating workers as extensions of machines is most effective? Practicality and efficiency are necessities in the organizational world, but they are not the only nor even the primary factors in running an organization if one maintains that work is primarily a moral and religious activity.

Although it recognizes the human and religious meaning of work, the papal social tradition never prescribes one solution to the problems of organizing work. Rather, it provides a general direction for the good steward. The direction it offers for the good steward is a workplace that entails partnerships, participation, cooperation, equity, worker ownership, development of personal skills, long-term thinking, accountability, virtue, competence, moral direction, and so forth. All of these characteristics are designed to enhance the dignity of workers. Yet, the papal documents point out that what can be done in each particular workplace depends largely on the particular situation and programs of each. No clear formula exists to apply to every conceivable workplace. Nonetheless, it is impossible to read the papal social tradition and conclude that work can be understood in purely economic (job) or psychological (career) terms. The popes point in a moral and religious direction. While quality circles, employee ownership plans or work-teams may not be pertinent in a specific organization for whatever reason, something like them that attempts to meet the distributive and participative needs of the worker ought to be implemented. Since work is an inherently moral and religious activity, time, energy, and money must be devoted to human resource management that will structure a workplace conducive to the fulfillment of human nature, both personal and social, thereby contributing to the realization of workers’ vocations and the common good.

Overall, an important part of the future of Catholic social teaching rests with its interdisciplinary nature. The solutions to problems concerning work are both moral and technical. Organizational competence can fail to articulate an adequate vision of who the worker is, and what a moral workplace should be. Similarly, moral and theological analysis can fail to consider and understand the economic, psychological, and sociological factors that are an integral part of operating an organization. Hence, it is necessary that both an understanding of organizational behavior, human resource management, and other disciplines as well as a theological and moral understanding of work and the worker are imperative to address the needs of today’s workers and organizations.

Concerning this interdisciplinary area, John Paul II explains in *Centesimus annus* that

In order better to incarnate the one truth about man in different and constantly changing social, economic and political contexts, this teaching enters into dialogue with the various disciplines concerned with man. It assimilates what these disciplines have to contribute, and helps them to open

themselves to a broader horizon, aimed at serving the individual person who is acknowledged and loved in the fullness of his or her vocation (CA, 59).

He maintains that the problems of work as well as society will only be solved through the cooperation of various disciplines. The future challenge for the practitioners of Catholic social thought are not only the moral insights of theologians and philosophers, nor the technical insights of social scientists, engineers, and others, but rather the integration of both founded on the basis of a Christian anthropology informed by revelation.

One future development that would further the interdisciplinary nature of Catholic social thought is to form associations to discuss, debate, and further a moral and religious understanding of work in a changing and complex organization. Techniques such as employee ownership and quality circles will help but they will not sustain a humane and Christian workplace alone. What else is needed are associations of workers (executives and labor), academics, government officials, and prelates that discuss, debate, work, and pray for such a workplace. One association that has done this in the past is The National Christian Conference of Employers and Managers (NCCEM)¹. NCCEM attempted to integrate the social teachings of the Church with the prevailing managerial sciences of the day. It understood management as an activity with an inherently moral and religious character which could never be exhausted by financial or scientific analysis. The group perceived management as an art, science, and profession, which carries a tremendous amount of responsibility. Through conferences seminars case studies continuing education programs, and publications, NCCEM attempted to address the technical and moral problems faced by managers, using the tools of managerial sciences, philosophy, and religious traditions, particularly the Catholic social tradition.

Unfortunately NCCEM has been disbanded for the past fifteen years. Although associations like the NCCEM exist in the U.S., they are far too few in number. It is hoped that in the near future associations such as NCCEM or something similar will organize to apply the social teachings of the Church in the modern workplace. The Catholic social vision provides a rich tradition of virtues, moral principles, theological insights, and general social analysis that can contribute significantly to understanding the meaning of one's work. Through the association of executives, unions, prelates, academics, and actors in the work world, the social vision of the Church can have a profound impact. Without such associations of various disciplines, thoughts for the application and development of the Catholic social tradition will most likely languish in the papers and articles of academics.

ⁱ John Murray, "Scientific management and Christian Social Thought," NCCEM Newsletter (October 1966): 4, 5, and 8. After World War II, largely immigrant American Catholics emerged as the first generation of Catholic managers and executives in the U.S. Many Catholics, however, were troubled by what they perceived as a tendency in the U.S. management to subordinate all managerial decisions, whether technical or ethical, to economic and technological considerations without regard to philosophical or theological considerations. In order to explore and implement a Catholic understanding of management NCCEM was formed.