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EDITORIAL

JUSTICE: The bedrock of social harmony



In today's world, justice is more urgent than ever. The widening gap between the rich and the poor both within and between countries, the exploitation of vulnerable populations, and the numerous on-going conflicts which continue to devastate communities and undermine peace are just a few examples of the many challenges that require a concrete commitment to social justice. Social justice is a crucial issue in a socio-political context marked by economic inequalities, security crises, corruption and election-related tensions. Against this backdrop where inequalities persist, freedom is violated and the most fundamental rights are flouted, it is imperative to reaffirm the importance of justice in social life to ensure that individuals are treated with respect, dignity and fairness, regardless of their origin, status and circumstances.

In fact, it has always been the duty of the Church to remind us that the world is called to become more just, more equal and more respectful of human dignity. This is in line with Jesus' teachings which inextricably link justice to the Kingdom of God. Jesus calls them blessed and assures the Kingdom of God to all those who hunger, thirst and are persecuted for justice (Cfr Matt. 5: 6,10). He presents justice as a cornerstone of the earthly manifestation of the Kingdom of God, "the foundational principle of the existence and the coexistence of man, as well as of human communities, societies and people". (T. PAZHAYAMPALLIL, *Pastoral Guide: Fundamental Moral Theology and Virtues*, Vol.1, Kristu Jyoti Publications, Bengaluru 2004, 981).

Justice, which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines as "the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give God and neighbour their due" (n. 1807), is a multifaceted concept with both a social dimension and a

transcendental dimension. In social life, Justice encompasses fairness, equality and compassion. It implies the respect of the rights and duties of the members of the society in view of the common good, equality between persons with regard to the exchange of goods and services, and the just distribution of honours and burdens in society. Justice is at the service of peace and social stability (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, *Message pour la Journée Mondiale de la Paix*, 2000). It "guides citizens to contribute to the common good, respecting and promoting the fundamental rights and duties of all the members of society" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church*, n. 201). Justice, therefore, permeates every aspect of human life from the workplace to the public square. It is a requirement of love and charity which brings peace, tranquillity and happiness. With all this, we can see that without justice in social life, there is no love, no peace, no social harmony, no knowledge of God. Our active engagement, critical reflection and unwavering dedication are therefore demanded for the promotion of social justice. It requires us to confront systemic inequalities, challenge discriminatory practices and advocate for the rights of the marginalized.

In this edition of the *Searchlight Magazine* titled, "Justice: a fundamental value of social life" we aim to emphasize the necessity of justice in social life by exploring its theological foundations, its historical development in the life of the Church, the agents of its effective implementation and the adequate and best means for its promotion. This edition of the *Searchlight Magazine* is less a theological treatise on the concept of Justice and more a call for concrete action. This can be appreciated in articles such as: Social Justice in the light of the Bible; Social Justice in the Early Church: lessons for today; The Catholic Church and social justice: a historical perspective; The role of Christians in promoting social justice; The challenges of social justice in the 21st Century; Solidarity and compassion: conditions for social justice; Social media and social justice: opportunities and challenges; The role of education in promoting social justice; The role of prayer in social justice work; Social justice and political commitment: ethics of an action; Social justice movements within the Church; The consequences of armed conflict on social justice; The clergy's contribution to social justice. The Christmas article, titled "The Spirit of Christmas: a time for joy, giving and togetherness", also invites us to a concrete commitment to social justice during this time of Christmas. We also have in this edition some "Practical tips to understand the universal language of music" in the music article; and Saint Gioglio Frassati, the Saint of this issue, is proposed to us as a model in our fight for a more just world.

Dear readers, as we celebrate Christmas, a time of joy, let us renew our efforts to promote justice, to stand in solidarity with the vulnerable, and to work towards a more just and equitable society. Enjoy reading the magazine, and may it inspire you in the pursuit for justice. Merry Christmas and Happy New year!

Rev. Jules Jordan MVOGONFOUNGA
(Editor-in-Chief)

Seminary Affairs

REOPENING

Echoes of “welcome” and joyful greetings could be heard in the seminary on Saturday 20th September 2025 as the Seminary opened her doors to receive seminarians for the 2025/2026 Formation Year. Despite the difficulties surrounding this year's reopening on account of the socio-political imbroglio, the seminarians succeeded to find ways to return to the Seminary on Saturday September 20, 2025 with enthusiasm, hope and the readiness to embrace the new formation year.

ANNUAL RETREAT

This spiritual exercise, which invited the seminarians to profound reflection and to commit the formation year to God's care, ran from Sunday 21st September to Friday 26th September 2025. It was facilitated by Fr Anthony Mailiy of the Diocese of Kumbo who had recently been assigned to serve as a Spiritual Director in Saint John Paul II Major Seminary Bachuo Ntai-Mamfe. Drawn from the Gospel according to Saint John 15:5, the theme for the retreat was “I am the Vine and you are the Branches.” The retreat master had as his aim to guide the seminarians to cling to Jesus Christ, the True Vine, as he invited them to love their vocation, to love Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary. This love, he said, will prompt them to observe the Evangelical Counsels and to be able to cling to Jesus in the midst of pressure, stress and trauma.

INAUGURAL MASS AND INSTALLATIONS

This year's Inaugural Mass was celebrated on Saturday 27th September 2025 by Mgr George Nkuo, bishop of Kumbo. During this Celebration, fifty five seminarians were instituted into the ministry of Lector and forty seven others were installed Acolytes. The presiding prelate invited the newly installed Lectors to make their lives a living lectionary so as to edify their brethren. To the new Acolytes, he said they should contemplate the mysteries and apply themselves to the service of the Blessed Sacrament. Addressing the entire community, he called on all to be men of gratitude.

SPORTS

The traditional football match between the seminarians of Theology I and those of Theology II, at the start of each formation year to welcome the Theology I seminarians and to inaugurate the sporting season was played on Saturday 18th October 2025. The seminarians of

Theology II distinguished themselves as a class that won all the matches they have played at this level. The final score was 4 to 2 in favour of Theology II.

The official launching of the Dormitory Competitions took place on Saturday 8th November 2025. This grand launching was coloured by activities such as the 200 m race, the sack race and other displays. The ever-ecstatic Fan Club graced the day with entertainment. The opening match was played between Donato Squicciarini's dormitory (the reigning champions) and Our Lady's dormitory. The encounter ended three goals to two in favour of Donato Squicciarini's dormitory. This year's edition adopted the league format for the draws as opposed to the group format which has been in vogue for the past years. According to the league format, each of the eleven dormitories shall play two matches and the first three teams automatically qualify for the semi-final. The fourth to the seventh teams shall go into a playoffs to contest for the last spot for the semi-final; while the eighth to the eleventh teams automatically make their way out of the completion.

AQUINAS' SHOPPING CENTRE

In her continuous strive for self-reliance, the seminary has erected a shopping centre in the Bambui Central Business District, *Four Corners*, Bambui, just 300m on the Fundong road. This structure was inaugurated on Friday 16th August 2025 by His Grace Andrew Fuanya Nkea, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Bamenda. It houses shop spaces for business people who sell various items and services on the ground and first floors, and the second floor serves as residences.

NEW SECRETARY AND BURSAR

This Formation Year, the Seminary welcomed Sr. Mary Gladys Mahla and Sr. Mary Assumpta Dzemndze, the Secretary and Assistant Bursar respectively. This follows the transfers of Sr. Joan Sikem and Sr. Josephat Leinyuy. The Seminary community extends her sincere appreciation to the outgoing Sisters. It is our wish that God continues to strengthen and guide them as they assume their new assignments. The Seminary welcomes Srs. Mary Gladys and Sr. Mary Assumpta. May Almighty God see them through as they exercise their functions.

Notice! Notice!! Notice!!!

Information for the attention of Ex-seminarians and Priests alumni of **Saint Thomas Aquinas' Major Seminary (STAMSTheologicum), Bambui.**

If you wish to collect documents from the secretariat, kindly make your request via the email address provided below:
bambuiseminary@yahoo.co.uk

Indicate clearly what kind of documents you wish to be prepared for your collection and leave a contact phone number by which you can be conveniently reached when the documents are ready for collection. Your appointment to collect documents should be on working days, that is, from Monday to Friday, during working hours, that is, from 9:00AM until Midday.

Thank you for your understanding and collaboration.
Sister Secretary

A PLEA FOR MASS INTENTIONS

We use this opportunity to thank you who have been sending Mass Intentions to our Seminary. We appeal for more intentions. Our Seminary has eleven resident Priests, and ten intentions could be exonerated everyday. Mass Intentions to STAMS could be sent through any Bishop's House or through any member of the STAMS family-Priest or Seminarian. Once the Mass is celebrated, the Mass Offering is used for the upkeep of the Seminary as a whole. Thus, when you send these intentions, besides reaping the assured Spiritual Benefits, you contribute to the upkeep of the Seminary materially. May God continue to bless and reward you for all your kindness towards our House of Formation for future Priests.

Rev. Fr. Charles BERINYUY SENGKA
(Rector)

A PLEA FROM STAMS LIBRARY

We plead with Priests and Christians to send copies of Sunday Newsletters, Wedding cards, Funeral booklets, Wedding booklets, Invitation cards, Thank You cards, Souvenirs of Religious Professions, Papers, Magazines and any other souvenir cards for preservation in the archive section of the Seminary library. We also use this opportunity to acknowledge, with profound gratitude, having received a good number of these items. However, we remain open to receive even more. You could hand any of these to any member of the STAMS family (priest or seminarian) or, if possible, bring them yourself to the Seminary.

Fr. Kenneth Ngwobela
(Father Librarian)

Dear Readers, we would like to inform you that Subscription Forms for the Searchlight Magazine are now available. To get the form, kindly get to any seminarian from STAMS Bambui and Subscribe for a year or more. Thanks.

NOTICE! NOTICE!!

Dear brothers and sisters, we would like to remind all those who visit the Seminary, that whenever they come, they should dress decently.

THE CHRISTIAN PROMOTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE



Rev. ANTOINE NSANYUY
Theology IV



NARCISSE TCHATIE N.
Theology III

INTRODUCTION

Social Justice is a term often linked to poverty, inequality, human rights and access to resources (Cfr JOHN XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, n.15). It challenges not only political structures but also moral and spiritual values, calling for deeper ethical reflection on human dignity and fair resource distribution amid today's crises. Right from Old Testament times, the Prophet Amos called on the people to let justice roll down like waters (Amos 5:24). This was reminding the people that God wants fairness, kindness and honesty more than empty worship. (R. E. BROWN, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Double Day, New York 1997, 134). In our world today, it is an urgent issue demanding action from all levels of society, involving complex challenges such as systemic oppression, economic inequality, and political exclusion (Cfr PIUS XI, *Quadragesimo*

Anno, n. 46). From this therefore, a key question arises: how is the concept of social justice reflected in the Bible? The aim of this article is to explore this theme in light of Scriptures, by examining both Old and New Testament teachings on social justice.

1. SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Let us begin by tracing how the Old Testament presents social justice as a core expression of God's will, calling individuals and communities to care for the poor, protect the oppressed, ensure economic fairness, and embrace social responsibility.

1.1. CARE FOR THE POOR

God's concern for the poor and vulnerable is central in the Old Testament. In the book of Leviticus, the Israelites are instructed to leave behind part of their harvest for the poor and foreigners (Cfr Lev 19:9–10), showing a practical way of upholding dignity and supporting for the needy. God is also portrayed as a just defender of the oppressed, as Psalm 146:9 declares, "The Lord watches over the strangers, and sustains the fatherless and the widow" (Cfr St. AUGUSTINE, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, CSEL 93, vol. 34, 10:9). We are therefore called to imitate this divine justice by caring for the marginalized, making our compassion a true expression of faithfulness to God's will.

1.2. JUSTICE FOR THE OPPRESSED:

The Old Testament reveals God as a just defender of the oppressed, who hears their cries and brings deliverance. As the psalmist proclaims, "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit" (Ps 34:18). This affirms the call to stand with the afflicted and work for justice. The concept of *tsedaqah*, which connotes

God's justice and righteousness, is central to biblical social ethics (Cfr G. V. RAD, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. I, 217). We are therefore called to act with justice, reflecting divine righteousness in our communities.

1.3. ECONOMIC JUSTICE:

The Old Testament underscores economic justice as vital to God's plan, urging obedience to His laws for safety and well-being (Cfr Lev 25:18-19). The principle of *jubilee*, involving debt cancellation and slave liberation every 50 years, highlights generosity and fairness as foundations of social justice (Cfr G. V. RAD, *Old Testament Theology*, 223). We are therefore called to embody generosity, equity, and solidarity, fostering a society grounded in justice and compassion through the jubilee spirit.

1.4. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:

The Old Testament underlines social responsibility by showing that both individuals and communities are answerable for how they treat others. The book of Proverbs teaches that, "Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God" (Prov 14:31), underscoring the call to uphold dignity and fairness. The value of community living in solidarity and working toward the common good is central to biblical justice. The Old Testament establishes social justice by emphasizing God's care for the poor and calling for compassion and righteousness, which the New Testament continues.

2. SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Social Justice in the New Testament is manifest in the ministry of Jesus Christ and in the Early Christian community.

2.1 THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Jesus' ministry reveals deep compassion for the poor and the outcasts, as seen in his teaching: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me" (Mt 25:40). This underscores the Christian duty to act with justice and mercy. The New Testament principle of *agape*, God's unconditional love, grounds social justice in selfless concern for others. Through his ministry, Jesus shows us that we are called to live out love by caring for the vulnerable and committing ourselves to justice. The ministry of Jesus sets the foundation for Christian social ethics. His mission of preaching the good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, and liberation for the oppressed (Cfr Luke 4:18-19; Isaiah 61), His teachings, like the Sermon on the Mount (Cfr Matthew 5), turned-down social hierarchies. This ministry also gave pride of place to the meek, the merciful, and the peacemakers whom he called "blessed". By friending the outcasts, the rejected of the society, tax collectors, lepers, women, and Gentiles, his emphasis on the marginalized laid the groundwork for the early Church's understanding of justice as integral to faith (Cfr BENEDICT XVI, *Deus*

Caritas Est, n.22). In Jesus' address to Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me? ...feed my sheep" is found the very core of social justice's foundation which is built on love (SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Justitia in Mundo*, n.6).

2.2 THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The Acts of the Apostles presents the early Christian community as one marked by shared resources and care for the vulnerable. Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:28: "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free... for you are all one in Christ Jesus" underscores the call to unity and equality. The New Testament concept of *koinonia* highlights communal living and solidarity in justice. We are called to foster this spirit of sharing and mutual care (Cfr St. J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Acts*, PG 60, 33).

2.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARITY

The New Testament presents charity and generosity as essential acts of justice, urging believers to give freely and manage resources wisely, as Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 9:6: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously". Grounded in stewardship, we are called to use our possessions for the good of others, as St. Basil the Great reminds us, while the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) warns against selfishness and deceit in community life.

2.4. THE CALL TO JUSTICE

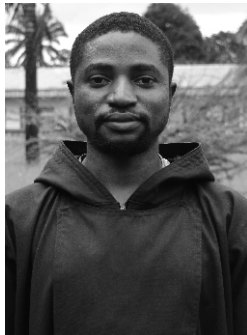
The New Testament urges us to uphold justice and righteousness, as seen in Paul's exhortation: "Let love be genuine, abhor what is evil, and cling to what is good" (Rom. 12:9). This call reflects a commitment to stand with the oppressed and embody God's justice, expressed through the concept of *dikaioyne*, divine righteousness (Cfr L. MORRIS, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1965, 253-256). We are called to live with integrity and compassion, serving those in need and fostering justice in daily life (Cfr J. CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Romans*, 615-618).

CONCLUSION

This article so far has highlighted how the Bible offers a strong basis for grasping social justice, stressing God's attention to the poor, the weak, and the excluded. The message of both Testaments urges us to live with integrity and compassion, supporting the needy and fostering justice in society. As the Church affirms, "The Church's social doctrine is a teaching that is based on the Bible and the tradition of the Church" (Cfr *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican Publishing House, 2004, 45), reminding us through Pope Francis that "the measure of the dignity of a person is not how much they have but who they are" (FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 67).



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SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE EARLY CHURCH:

LESSONS FOR TODAY

INTRODUCTION

The early Church challenged social norms by promoting equality among Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slaves and free people (Cfr Galatians 3:28). Leaders urged their communities to care for widows, orphans, and the poor, reflecting a commitment to compassion and justice. Social justice was thus a foundational principle in the early Christian Church, rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, who emphasized care for the poor, marginalized, and oppressed. The early believers practiced radical generosity and communal living, whereby they shared their possessions such that no one among them would be in

need. Through acts of charity, advocacy for the vulnerable, and a vision of human dignity based on the image of God in all people, the early Church laid a strong foundation for Christian social justice that continues to inspire movements today.

1. PRACTICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The early Christian community practiced an economic system rooted in equity and solidarity: "All the believers were together (Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free born, rich and poor) and had everything in common, for they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need" (Acts 2:44-45). This was the spirit of voluntary communion, a Spirit led generosity. The community understood stewardship not as private ownership but as service for the common good. This practice directly reflected Jesus' warning against wealth and his call to store up treasures in heaven (Cfr Matthew 6:19-21). The story of Ananias and Sapphira (Cfr Acts 5:1-11), who because of their self-centeredness received heavenly retribution, highlights how seriously the community regarded justice and honesty in economic matters (GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, New York 1973, pp. 103-105). There was no discrimination among the brethren: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3: 28). The early Church's commitment to the poor was not



THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



SWITHBERT AJUO NCHITU
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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course of human history, the recognition of human dignity and the pursuit of justice have stood as universal ideals that transcend cultures and epochs. Central to this ongoing quest is the role of the Church, which has consistently sought to serve as a moral compass and advocate for social justice. Rooted in her profound understanding of humanity's inherent worth, the Church has tirelessly fought to combat injustice, inequality, and oppression. The Catholic Church has a long tradition of advocating for social justice, a commitment that has been exemplified by saints throughout history. The Church's teaching on social justice is based on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, which are the foundation of the saints' commitment to serving the poor and vulnerable. This enduring legacy illustrates that social justice, for the Church, is more than an ideal, it is a moral imperative in her mission to serve humanity and embody the love of Christ in the world. This article considers the historical development of the role played by the church in the

fight for social justice from the Early Fathers up to the contemporary era.

1. EARLY CHURCH FATHERS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

During the period of the Fathers of the Church, the role of the Church in promoting social justice was both challenging and crucial. Amid societal chaos and fragmentation, figures like Saint Benedict and the growth of monastic communities worked tirelessly to uphold the Christian ideals of charity, compassion, and justice. Monasteries became vital centers of aid, providing care for the poor, the sick, and travelers. These communities sought to restore dignity and promote equity in a time when social structures had broken down. Gustavo Gutiérrez emphasized that "Christianity must be a source of liberation for the oppressed," highlighting the Church's role in advocating for justice (G. GUTIÉRREZ, *A Theology of Liberation*, Orbis Books, New York 1971, 97).

2. MIDDLE AGES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

During the Middle Ages, the European society was organized around the feudal system, which established a rigid social hierarchy. Lords owned land and held power, while vassals, peasants, and serfs worked the land under various obligations. It led to



social inequality, exploitation of peasants, and limited social mobility. Throughout the medieval period, the Church played a vital role in addressing social injustices arising from the feudal system and economic exploitation by promoting charity, justice, and moral economic practices. Aquinas explicitly condemned usury, emphasizing that money should serve human needs and not be a means of greed. These efforts laid foundational principles for social justice that continue to influence Christian teaching today.

3. ENLIGHTENMENT PERIOD

The Enlightenment period (1685-1815) laid the groundwork for modern social justice movements. Thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, and Thomas Paine emphasized the importance of human rights, equality, and the social contract. These ideas influenced the development of modern democracy and laid the foundation for the Church's later advocacy for social justice. Some Catholic thinkers, such as Joseph de Maistre, criticized the Enlightenment's focus on individualism, while others, like Charles de Montesquieu, saw the potential for the Church to engage with and influence the emerging liberal order. John Rawls, although writing later, drew from Enlightenment principles to argue that justice must be fair and equitable, challenging religious justifications for inequality (Cfr J. RAWLS, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, London 1971, 4).

4. INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

During the modern period, the Industrial Revolution dramatically transformed societies, leading to rapid economic growth but also significant social upheaval. The rise of factories and mass production created immense wealth for some, while many workers faced poor working conditions, low wages, and economic insecurity. This period exposed profound inequalities in the distribution of wealth, prompting the Church to respond with a moral framework rooted in Christian social teaching. A landmark moment was Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* which directly addressed the social injustices caused by industrialization. Leo XIII emphasized the dignity of workers and condemned the exploitation of labour, calling for fair wages, reasonable working hours, and the right to form associations and unions. (Cfr LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* (15 May 1891), n. 4.). Building on this foundation, Pope Pius XI critically examined economic systems, warning against both unrestrained capitalism and socialism. Pius XI promoted the principle of subsidiarity and called for a social order where wealth is fairly distributed and economic activity benefits the whole community, (Cfr PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* (15 May 1931), n. 55)

5. CONTEMPORARY CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

In the 20th and 21st centuries, the Church's stance on social justice has become more explicit and active. This shift is exemplified by Vatican II, which emphasized the importance of social justice as essential to the Christian message (Cfr VATICAN II, Dogmatic Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 92). The document calls for dialogue, peace, and the elimination of economic inequalities, setting a new standard for the Church's engagement with social justice issues. Paul VI maintained that authentic development must be rooted in social justice, advocating for global efforts to eradicate poverty and promote solidarity among nations (Cfr PAUL VI, Encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*, n. 25). Later Popes like John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis have continued to speak out against poverty, war, and injustice. They have advocated for the marginalized; including refugees, the poor, and oppressed; urging believers to take action to address these issues (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, *Centesimus Annus*, n. 53). Benedict XVI emphasized the importance of charity and truth in the context of social justice, calling for a more just and equitable world order (Cfr BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 22.). Pope Francis highlighted the need for environmental justice and the protection of the poor (Cfr FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, n. 21). Regarding the Church's role in promoting social justice, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* states: "The Church has a prophetic role to play in the promotion of social justice, not as a substitute for the State, but rather as a partner in building a more just and peaceful society... The Church's social doctrine is a reflection on the nature of the human person and his social relationships, which are rooted in the Gospel and informed by the principles of reason and natural law." (PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church*, n. 19.)

CONCLUSION

The voice of the church has cried out throughout the various historical epochs, calling on the need for social justice. The church has constantly developed her teaching to address issues of social justice, prominent saints have played crucial roles in the fight, various Popes have addressed this topic and the church continues to maintain her position and to play her role in the promotion of social justice. The Catholic Church's stance on social justice emphasizes the importance of prioritizing the needs of the poor and marginalized. The Church advocates for human rights, recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of every individual. It also emphasizes the need for compassion, empathy, and solidarity with those who are suffering. The Church teaches that social justice is a fundamental aspect of living a Christian life, and that individuals and societies have a responsibility to promote the common good and protect the most vulnerable members of society.



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THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANS IN PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION

Social justice refers to the fair and equitable treatment of all individuals and social groups within a given society. Social justice goes beyond social, political and economic institutions that promote fairness, equity, inclusion and self-determination especially for the marginalized persons. Social justice is often equated to justice itself, emphasizing the fair distribution of resources, opportunities and responsibilities. Hence a society ensures social justice when it provides the conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain their due according to their nature and their vocation (Cfr *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1928). Christianity plays a significant role in promoting social justice by teaching that believers have a duty to work towards a fair and just society where everyone has equal rights and opportunities.

1. ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

In order for social justice to become a reality in every part of society we must take into consideration some key aspects that foster social justice.

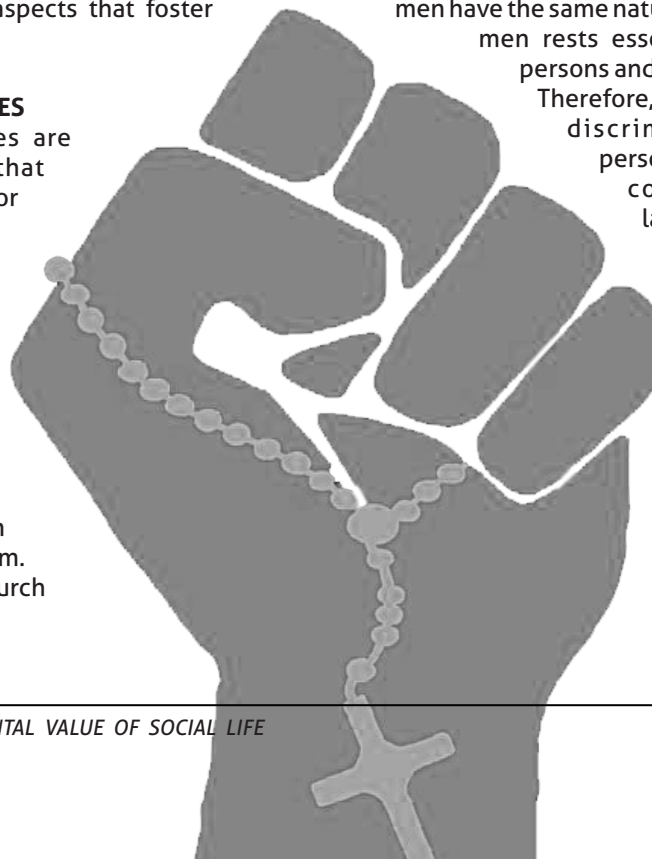
1.1. RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Rights and duties are fundamental concepts that govern individual behavior and social interaction where rights are entitlements and duties are obligations. The mutual complementarity between rights and duties which are indissolubly linked are above all in the human person who possesses them. The Magisterium of the Church

underlines the contradiction inherent in affirming rights without acknowledging corresponding duties or responsibilities. Those therefore who claim their own rights, yet forget or neglect to carry out their duties are people who build with one hand and destroy with the other (Cfr PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 156). These rights and duties derive their origin, their sustenance, and their indestructibility from the natural law, which in conferring one, imposes the other. Thus, for example, the right to live involves duty to preserve one's life and the lives of others; the right to be free, the duty to seek out the truth and the duty to devote oneself to an ever deeper and wider search for it (Cfr JOHN XXIII, Encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, n. 9).

1.2. EQUALITY

Social justice can be obtained by respecting the transcendent dignity of man. Created in the image of the one God and endowed with a rational soul, all men have the same nature and origin. The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights which flow from it. Therefore, any form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights base on sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion must be eradicated as incompatible with God's design (Cfr VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 29). The principle of the common good to which every aspect of social life must be related, obtains its fullest meaning from the dignity, unity and equality



of all people. Equality forms an intimate bond with solidarity among men all peoples in the world.

1.3. HUMAN DIGNITY

There is a widespread agreement today on the importance of human dignity and on the unique and transcendent value of every human being which includes: ontological, moral, social and existential dignity. Of these, ontological dignity stands out because it belongs to a person simply for the fact that he/she exists, is willed, created and loved by God. It is the intrinsic value and worth of every individual, recognized universally as a fundamental principle in human rights and ethical framework (Cfr DICASTERY FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Dignitas Infinita*, n. 7). Human dignity refers to the inherent worth of every person which is not contingent upon their status, abilities or any other characteristics. It is a foundational concept in human rights which states that all individuals deserve respect and ethical treatment just by virtue of their being humans. Thus, the Catholic Church teaches that the love and respect we give to each person makes all mankind truly brothers and sisters in Christ (Cfr PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 3).

2. CHRISTIAN DUTIES TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE

2.1. THE VOCATION TO SOCIAL LOVE

The call to social love is that which takes into consideration solidarity, common good, subsidiarity, and social engagement. Joseph Hoffner points out the importance of social justice which involves prioritizing social love, care for the poor, the vulnerable, the marginalized, while emphasizing the need to promote

the well-being and flourishing of all members of the society. In this connection, he maintains that "all sections of society must have the intimate conviction that they are members of one great family, and children of the same Heavenly Father, and feel themselves to be one body in Christ" (J. HOFFNER, *Fundamentals of Christian Sociology*, The Mercier Press, Dublin 1962, 52). By means of the church's social doctrine, the church shows her concern for human life in the society, aware that the quality of life depends in a decisive manner on the protection and promotion of the human person, for whom every community comes into existence. It should be borne in mind, that the object of the Church's social doctrine is essentially the same doctrine that constitutes the reason for its existence: the human person called to salvation, as such, entrusted by Christ to the church's care and responsibility (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Centissimus Annus*, 859).

2.2. EVANGELIZATION

Evangelization is the fundamental duty of the Church, and its deepest identity is to proclaim the Gospel. The call to evangelize like the call to holiness is addressed to all Christians. The Church's social doctrine is an integral part of her evangelizing ministry. Christians are encouraged to share their faith with others and to proclaim the gospel message. As such, they are invited to explore all the available avenues at their disposal, the family, schools, seminars, social groups and the internet to spread the good news of social justice. The Church makes a moral judgment about economic and social matters when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it. The Church is concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good because they are ordered to

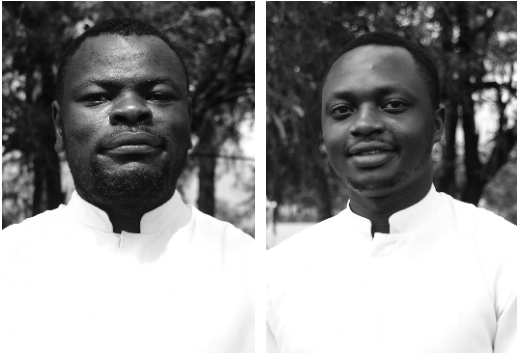
the Sovereign Good, our ultimate end. She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships (Cfr *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2420).

2.3. TEACHING BY WITNESSING

There is a general call to witnessing to the gospel by our way of life which constitutes evangelizing not using mere words but living what we preach. Whatever is against the gospel values viz. conforming to the worldly principles and vices, adhering to the new global ethics and violating the fundamental human rights and dignity, we are to shun. We are called upon to transmit virtues like forgiveness, mercy, and compassion to those whom we encounter. By doing this, we do not only impart knowledge but shape hearts and minds which serves as inspiration for the promotion of the common good.

CONCLUSION

Responding to the call of true discipleship entails going beyond one's self to satisfy the other; seeing the other as one with equal rights and dignity; and a display of positive altruism. It is the responsibility of Christians to foster and promote social justice since they are members of the society. Christians must be authentic and credible in what they teach, since what they teach can inspire others to adopt similar virtues, creating a ripple effect of goodness. When we value and respect one another, we uphold our dignity, promoting the common good by fostering a sense of community and social responsibility. All these are possible if we ourselves have these virtues active in us; we cannot give to another what we ourselves do not have.



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THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY



INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of social justice remains one of the most urgent and complex issues of the 21st century. In a world marked by deepening economic inequality, systemic racism just to name a few, the question of how to build a just society is more pressing than ever. While advancements in science, communication, and globalization have connected humanity in unprecedented ways, they have also revealed and, at times, worsened structural injustices that marginalize the poor and vulnerable. Pope Benedict XVI, emphasizes that true development must be rooted in ethical values, human dignity, and the common good. He writes, "Charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine" (BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 2). We are going to examine the challenges of social injustice from the point of view of religious and political

orders, economic, social and the natural order.

1. RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ORDERS

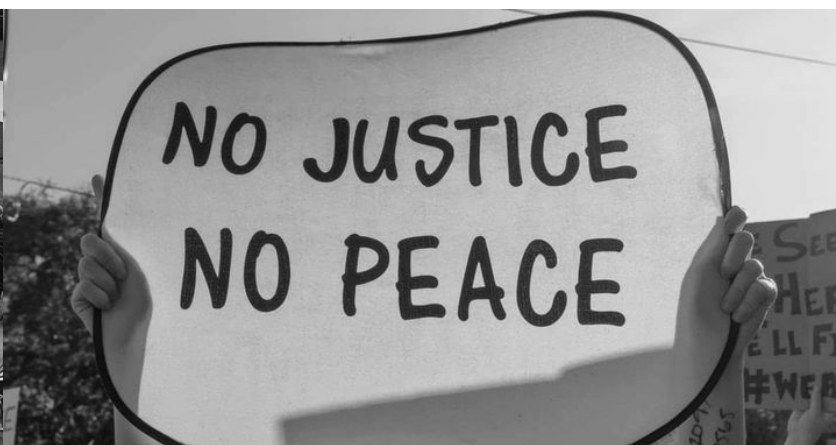
1.1. THE CHURCH AND THE STATE

Social justice faces several challenges, particularly in applying Gospel values to modern social realities. *Gaudium et Spes* stresses human dignity, workers' rights, and the common good, which many Catholic institutions and faithful still struggle to apply these principles consistently in political, economic, and cultural contexts. (Cfr VATICAN II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 29). The state on the other hand, has a duty to promote justice by protecting human rights and ensuring equitable access to resources. (Cfr PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 168). This has not been the case because many

political systems today focus on prioritizing economic or ideological interests over human dignity, leading to marginalization and systemic injustice rather than the respect of the dignity of persons, solidarity, and the preferential option for the poor. In a time when the state sometimes fails to uphold these values, the Church calls for renewed collaboration between civil society and faith communities to build structures that respect life and promote peace.

1.2. THE FIGHT AGAINST INJUSTICE

The fight against injustice within political systems faces complex challenges. Widespread poverty, corruption, discrimination, and environmental degradation continue to hinder efforts toward a just society. The Catholic Church teaches that confronting injustice is a moral obligation. Pope Francis affirms that "working for a just



distribution of the fruits of the earth and human labour is not mere philanthropy. It is a moral obligation" (FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 193). He warns against an "economy of exclusion" where the poor are discarded as "leftovers." True social justice requires transforming political orders that tolerate inequality into systems that actively promote justice, inclusion, and peace for all.

2. ECONOMIC ORDER

2.1. ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

Social justice faces enormous challenges within the global economic order. The gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen, with wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, while millions struggle with poverty, unemployment, unfair trade, harmful labour practices and a lack of access to basic services (Cfr K. PESCHKE, *Christian Ethics: Moral theology in the light of Vatican II*, Vol. II, Theological Publication in India, Bangalore 2020, 240). Pope Francis also addresses these injustices by saying that: "Today we also have to say 'thou shalt not' to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 53). This reflects the Church's concern that economic systems, if not rooted in human dignity and the common good, become destructive. Social justice, therefore, demands policies that promote fair wages, access to education, ethical business practices, and protection for the vulnerable. Without addressing these systemic inequalities, true peace and justice remain unattainable.

2.2. THE COMMON GOOD

Pope Pius XI states "wealth which is constantly being augmented by social and economic progress, must be distributed proportionately among various individuals and classes of society" (PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, n. 58) The Second Vatican Council also

upholds that: "The goods of the earth are destined for the whole human race" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 69). This principle calls for an economy which serves everyone, not just a privileged few. However, this law is violated by an irresponsible wealthy class who in their riches receive everything and labourers almost nothing. This constitutes a grave evil in modern society (Cfr *Quadragesimo Anno* n. 58). Ensuring a just distribution of the common good requires ethical leadership, fair economic structures, and a renewed commitment to human dignity. Without such efforts, social justice remains an ideal rather than a reality.

3. SOCIAL ORDER

Social justice faces a good number of challenges in the social order. This shall be examined in two strands. Firstly, we shall tackle the problem of work and the just wage, and secondly we shall be looking at the impact of the various ideologies in social order.

3.1. WORK AND THE JUST WAGE

In the 21st century, the pursuit of social justice in the domain of work and just wages faces significant challenges. Many workers around the world are subjected to unstable employment, unfair wages, and exploitative conditions. This violates the principle of the "just wage." *Rerum Novarum* asserts "remuneration must be enough to support the wage earner in reasonable and frugal comfort." (Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* 15 May 1891, n. 34). However, today many workers, even in full-time employment, live below the poverty line.

3.2. OTHER CHALLENGES TO THE SOCIAL ORDER

Social justice is challenged by deeply rooted ideologies such as capitalism, tribalism, nationalism, and individualism, which often distort the social order and undermine the dignity of the human person. Unchecked

capitalism can prioritize profit over people, leading to economic inequality and exploitation. Tribalism and nationalism, in extreme, breed division, exclusion, and violence, while radical individualism erodes the sense of community and responsibility for others. These ideologies can weaken social solidarity and deepen injustice. *Centesimus Annus* acknowledges the merits of the free market but warns against its dehumanizing excesses, stating that "the economy must be oriented to the needs of people, not profit alone" (JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1st May 1991, n. 35).

4. NATURAL CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Natural challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, and environmental degradation have become major threats to social justice. These issues disproportionately affect the poor, who have the least resources to adapt or recover. Environmental harm is not just an ecological crisis but a moral one, as it violates the rights of future generations and the dignity of the most vulnerable. According to Pope Francis "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" are interconnected and urging care for creation is a requirement of justice (Cfr FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, 24 May 2015, n. 49).

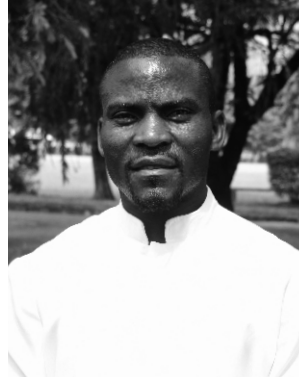
CONCLUSION

The challenges of Social justice in the 21st century have always been a perennial issue in the history of humanity. Social justice demands the equitable distribution of wealth among social groups and among nations according to their share in the economic process and their contribution to the general welfare and to their right of a worthy human life. Thus, no solid social order and no peace are possible without respect for the demands of justice in a society.

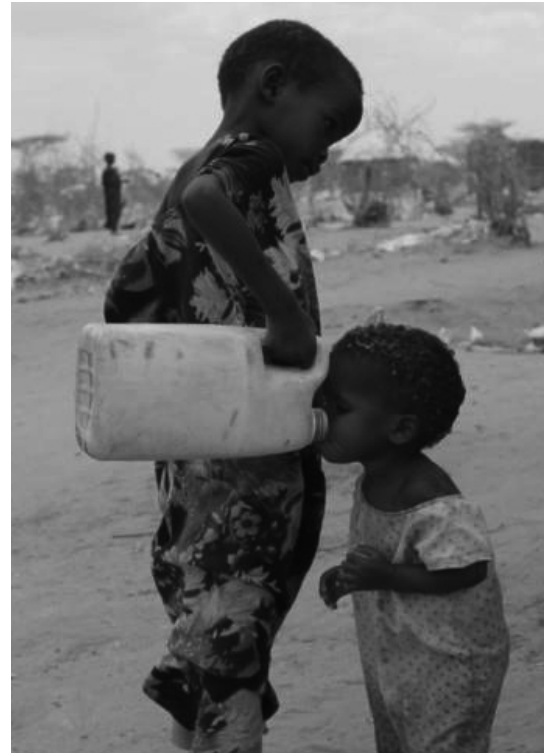
SOLIDARITY AND COMPASSION: CONDITIONS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



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INTRODUCTION

In a world marked by deep inequality, conflict, and systemic injustice, the pursuit of social justice is more urgent than ever. Yet, achieving a just society is not solely a matter of reforming laws or redistributing resources; it requires a transformation of how we relate to one another as human beings. At the heart of this transformation lies two essential values: solidarity and compassion. These are not optional virtues; they are conditions for social justice to take root and thrive. Solidarity originates from the Latin *solidus*, meaning "whole" or "firm,". It connotes mutual obligation and collective responsibility in legal and social contexts. It signifies mutual obligation or interdependence, particularly in Roman law where *in solidum* referred to shared legal responsibility. The word "Compassion" has its roots in the Latin *compati* meaning "to suffer with". In other words, it means to be moved with deep emotion or mercy, reflecting the intuitive nature of Christ's response to human suffering (Cfr HENRI NOUWEN, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, Doubleday, New York 1982, 4). This article explores how solidarity and compassion are conditions necessary for a true social justice.

1. SOLIDARITY AS A CONDITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Solidarity brings man to consciousness of the full basic equality and dignity of all human beings. In this light, the Council Fathers made clear that: "Since men are members of the same human family, they are indissolubly linked with one another in the one destiny of the whole world, in the responsibility for which they all share" (SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Justice in the World* (1971), in AUSTIN FLANNERY (ed.), *Vatican Council II*, Vol. 2, 720). For social justice to prevail, people must work together with the common good in mind. This was the case in the Acts of the Apostles where being faced with a situation of injustice in the daily distribution of

food the community came together and arrived at a solution as a community through dialogue (Cfr Acts 6:1-7). Today perhaps more than in the past, people are realizing that they are linked together by a common destiny, which is to be constructed together by solidarity. From the depth of anguish, fear and escapist phenomena like drugs, typical of the contemporary world, the idea is slowly emerging that "the good to which we are all called and the happiness to which we aspire cannot be obtained without an effort and commitment on the part of all, nobody excluded, and the consequent renouncing of personal selfishness" (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 26).

The freedom with which Christ has set us free (Cfr Gal. 5:1) encourages us to become the servants of all. Thus, the process of development and liberation takes concrete shape in the exercise of solidarity, that is to say in the love and service of neighbour, especially of the poorest. To this Pope John Paul II avows, "for where truth and love are missing, the process of liberation results in the death of a freedom which will have lost all support" (JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 46).

Systemic oppression refers to the deeply embedded forms of injustice—such as racism, sexism, classism, and other forms

of discrimination—that are maintained through institutions, policies, and cultural norms. These systems do not operate in isolation; they are reinforced by silence, apathy, and division. To dismantle such entrenched structures, individual effort is not enough. Real change requires solidarity that is, a collective strength, people coming together and united by a shared commitment to social justice (Cfr O. OKEKE, *Solidarity and the Catholic Social Teaching*, Delta State University Press, Delta State 2023, 5).

2. THE POWER OF COMPASSION AS A CONDITION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Compassion is the emotional and moral grounding of solidarity. It involves more than sympathy or pity; it is the ability to feel with others, to understand their pain, to recognize their dignity, and to respond with care. Compassion reminds us that behind every injustice is a person whose rights and well-being are being denied. Compassion fuels the urgency for change. It prevents us from becoming numb to suffering or indifferent to inequality. Compassion sustains our commitment in the face of setbacks and reminds us of the humanity we are fighting for. It ensures that our advocacy remains rooted in love, respect, and a belief in the inherent worth of every person. We shall consider some areas in which compassion can be a condition to social justice (Cfr H. M. NOUWEN, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, Doubleday, New York 1982, 16).

2.1. COMPASSION NECESSITATES ENTERING INTO THE LIVES OF THE MARGINALIZED

Compassion is understood as “to suffer with” those who are weak, vulnerable, or powerless. It means going into another's pain, not remaining distant. This implies an awareness of suffering in society and a willingness to engage it. Without this, justice is blind; with it, one becomes aware of injustice and inequity. (Cfr H. M. NOUWEN, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, 4).

2.2. COMPASSION AS ACTION NOT FEELING

Compassion is more than pity or sentiment; it must move people to respond, to act, to seek justice. Nouwen sees the compassionate life as involving action—discipline, prayer, attention, and concrete steps toward those who suffer. Social justice requires these responses, not passive sympathy (Cfr H. M. NOUWEN, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, Doubleday, pp. 116-117). It's a commitment to alleviate suffering and promote well-being.

2.3. COMPASSION AS TRANSFORMATIVE TO THE SELF AND SOCIETY

Nouwen holds that compassion transforms not just individual hearts but also social relations and institutions. When people allow compassion to

reshape their motivations (away from competition, fear, exclusion) they begin to build communities oriented toward justice, equality, care, healing. Justice then is not just legal or political but relational, incarnated in how people treat one another. (Cfr H. M. NOUWEN, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, 142)

3. INTERSECTION BETWEEN SOLIDARITY AND COMPASSION AS CORE VALUES IN PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE

Solidarity and compassion put together are core values that promote social justice. The togetherness of the community is not the result of shared anger or anxiety; it grows from a deep sense of being called together to make God's compassion visible in the concreteness of everyday living. Compassion without solidarity can become passive; it may feel deeply, but fail to act. Solidarity without compassion can become rigid or performative, lacking the emotional connection that sustains real change. Together, they form the ethical and emotional foundation for social justice. Solidarity gives us direction and purpose. Compassion gives us depth and resilience. In the Acts of the Apostles we get a glimpse of this new togetherness: “The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common” (Acts 2:44). Nouwen adds that, the Christian community is not driven together but drawn together by a common language, love (Cfr H. M. NOUWEN, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian life*, 76). When people are able to come together for the common good, have compassion for one another, then they are sure to make decisions that promote social justice guided by the Spirit like the Apostles in the issue of the distribution of food (Cfr Acts 6:1-7). In what has been said so far it has been possible to identify many points of contact between solidarity and charity, which are the distinguishing marks of Christ's disciples (Cfr Jn 13:35).

CONCLUSION

Solidarity and compassion form the moral and theological groundwork for authentic social justice. A just society is built not only through policies and institutions but through relationships grounded in solidarity and compassion. These values teach us to care beyond ourselves, to act with purpose, and to build communities where everyone belongs, thrives, and is treated with dignity. In the struggle for social justice, solidarity and compassion are not just ideals to aspire to, they are the *conditions* upon which a better world depends.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES



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INTRODUCTION

Social justice refers to the moral obligation to build a society that respects the dignity of every person and promotes the common good (Cfr PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 201). Rooted in the Gospel and the example of Christ, social justice calls for solidarity, the preferential option for the poor, and the pursuit of structures that uphold human rights and dignity (Cfr CCC, nn. 1928–1948). In the digital age, social media has become a powerful tool that can either promote or hinder these goals. Pope Benedict XVI emphasized that social media should foster “authentic dialogue” and “respectful exchange” rooted in truth and charity (Cfr Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for the 45th World Communications Day*, n. 3). Traditional evangelization began with Christ's Great Commission around 33 A.D., spreading through missionary journeys such as those of St. Paul. This outreach evolved over time, culminating in the era of mass-media evangelization in the 20th century. With the advent of the internet in the 1990s, a digital mission emerged. By 2020, more than 4.5 billion people were online, prompting the Church to engage the “digital continent.” Pope Benedict XVI described digital platforms as new *areopagi* public spaces for dialogue and evangelization (Cfr Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for World Communications*, n. 6).

1. OPPORTUNITIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE

1.1. SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR EVANGELIZATION, AWARENESS AND SOLIDARITY

Social media serves as a powerful tool for evangelization, awareness, and solidarity, enabling the Church and individuals to reach global audiences instantly. Antonio Spadaro describes digital platforms as a “digital continent” where faith can be expressed and encountered. Similarly, Heidi Campbell notes that platforms like Facebook and Twitter promote awareness of religious identity and foster global solidarity among believers (Cfr ANTONIO SPADARO, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, Routledge, New York, 2013, pp. 15–17). Pope Francis also affirms that social networks can nurture religious identity, awareness, and community-building among believers across boundaries (Cfr POPE FRANCIS, *Christus Vivit*, n. 87).



1.3. VOICES OF THE MARGINALIZED AND DIGITAL MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

The voices of the marginalized must be amplified in today's digital world, where technology can serve as a tool for inclusion and evangelization. Pope Francis, in *Christus Vivit*, calls young people to become digital missionary disciples who bring the Gospel to the peripheries. When used ethically, digital media can uplift the forgotten, strengthen solidarity, and proclaim Christ's message in contemporary culture.

2. CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

2.1. THE RISKS OF ISOLATION AND DIGITAL DEPENDENCY

Pope Francis warns that "the digital environment is also one of loneliness, manipulation, exploitation and violence, even to the extreme case of the "dark web" (It is the part of the internet that is only accessible by means of special software, allowing users and website operators to remain anonymous or untraceable) (Cfr *Christus Vivit*, n. 88). Such realities can lead to addiction, isolation, and a loss of contact with concrete reality, undermining both personal and social justice. When virtual interaction replaces authentic human connection, individuals risk becoming detached from community life and moral responsibility.

2.2. CYBERBULLYING AND THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY

One of the major challenges of social media is cyberbullying, a new form of violence that violates human dignity. Social media becomes unjust when it infringes upon the worth of the human person. Moreover, social media can facilitate the manipulation of consciences and the distortion of democratic processes. Many platforms are designed to connect users with like-minded individuals, shielding them from genuine debate.

2.3. MANIPULATION, ECHO CHAMBERS, AND FAKENEWS

The proliferation of fake news reflects a culture that has lost its sense of truth and social responsibility, damaging reputations and eroding justice (Cfr *Christus Vivit*, n. 89). Pope Benedict XVI also observed that the culture of social networks poses serious challenges to those who wish to speak about truth and values, since "the significance and effectiveness of various forms of expression appear to be determined more by their popularity than by their intrinsic importance and value" (Cfr POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the 47th World Communications Day: "Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith; new spaces for evangelization,"* 12 May 2013, §2).

3. PASTORAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES

3.1. Social Media as a Gift and a Tool for Communion

While condemning the misuse of social media, the Church nonetheless recognizes these technologies as a "gift of God", which, according to His providential design, unite people in brotherhood and cooperation toward salvation (Cfr *Communio et Progressio*, n. 2). When engaged wisely and with balance, social media can foster respectful dialogue and debate, promoting unity and harmony within the human family (Cfr POPE FRANCIS, *Message for the 48th World Communications Day: Communication at the Service of an Authentic Culture of Encounter*, 1st June 2014 §4).

3.2. THE CALL TO DISCERNMENT, MODERATION, AND EDUCATION

The Church calls on young people to practice moderation, discipline, and moral discernment in their use of digital media. Social media must be approached with a sense of ethical responsibility, ensuring that it promotes truth, justice, and authentic human relationships. Also Parents and

educators, for their part, have the duty to safeguard children from harmful content and to form them in responsible media use. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, they must ensure that entertainment and publications that endanger faith and morals "do not enter their houses" (Cfr VATICAN II, *Inter Mirifica*, 1963, 10).

CONCLUSION

This article has considered a key contemporary issue: social media and social justice and their impact on human life and society. Focusing on the opportunities and challenges of digital communication, it highlights the need for ethical discernment and moral responsibility in online engagement. Social media can serve as a tool for promoting justice, peace, and evangelization when used rightly; yet it can also become an instrument of injustice and harm when misused. Therefore, Christians are called to sanctify the digital space promoting truth, dialogue, and solidarity so that technology may continue to serve the dignity of the human person and the glory of God.



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VOX POP

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT CAN A CHRISTIAN DO IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL INJUSTICE?



Christianity is built on a basic principle; love of God and love of neighbour. In my opinion therefore, in the face of social injustice, a Christian should act in accordance with this basic tenet; speak the truth in love and maintain a good relationship with God through prayers.

MBOTE MELVIS, Student ENSET Kumba.



Social injustice is the unequal treatment given to individuals or groups of people within a society. A Christian in the face of social injustice can practice empathy and advocate for those in the situation. They can effectively do this through prayers, asking God for wisdom and justice

FORMIN Gertrude, STS Peter And Paul Anglophone Parish Simbock, Yaounde.



There is this saying which I love; "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" Unfortunately, many of us Christians always take the oath of silence when we come across acts of injustice. We are all called upon to be solution-providers or channels to remedy an unjust circumstance by participating to repair, heal, and restore the dignity and health of those who have been harmed

PLACID CEDRIC TEDJI, Teacher, St. John's Parish, Ntaghem



In the face of social injustice, a Christian should be more practical in his faith by speaking up against unjust social systems and taking appropriate measures to ensure a more just and peaceful society. The role of prayer in this pursuit should never be undermined

KWA PAOLA Yuoh, Student, Buea.



In my own opinion, a Christian faced with social injustice should pray fervently for wisdom, and guidance and reflect on his/her actions and behaviours in the pursuit of justice.

EKITI DIVINE; Teacher, Ave Maria Parish Bangem Kumba.



In my opinion, a Christian can counteract social injustice by directing his or her services to helping the Vulnerable, Caring for the poor, the sick, the marginalized, the refugee, the elderly, and the imprisoned (James 1:27), volunteering time or resources to organizations that fight injustice like human trafficking, poverty, or discrimination. Thus becoming the voice of the voiceless.

Sr CHE OPHILIA Ndum, Student, Higher Teacher Training College, Yaounde.

VOX POP

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT CAN A CHRISTIAN DO IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL INJUSTICE?



My Christian convictions compel me to pursue justice through knowledge, integrity, and service. It is not about self-righteousness but about humility, recognizing that peace and justice begin with how we live, lead, and relate to others. Prayer, for me, grounds that work. It reminds me that justice is not simply a social project but a spiritual calling to restore what has been broken and to hold hope where hope seems lost. In that sense, being a Christian in the face of injustice means standing with others, grounded in truth, guided by grace, and acting with the quiet courage that faith demands.

Dr LUKONG S. SHULIKA, Cameroon.



To me, the most appropriate response to give is to follow Christ's command to love our neighbours. This command fosters a spirit of sensitivity to the situation of the marginalized, downtrodden, oppressed and those suffering any form of injustice. On the other hand, if one is a victim of injustice, he/she could make the situation known without using unchristian means (violence).

KIGHA AMOLEN; Ebonyi State University, Nigeria.



Cognizant of the fact that social injustice is characterized by unfair treatment meted out on the human person, a Christian should actively work to defend the oppressed and correct injustice by being just and merciful.

KUO KELSY, Student, University of Buea.



A Christian faced with social injustice should practice virtue and strive to live a life worthy of emulation. Practically, this is shown through gentleness and restraining from anger and violence

KUKWAH AUDREY - Student COLTECH Bamenda.



A Christian is supposed to be a Light to the world and Salt to the earth. As a Christian faced with social injustice, the first step is to pray for strength and guidance, advocate for human rights, provide support to affected communities, promote peace and reconciliation, speak out against social injustice.

MR. MUA Kedze FIDELIS, Senior Finance Officer, Ministry of Public Health, Yaoundé.



I think a Christian should first seek the guidance of God through prayer, then try to educate himself by understanding the nature and dynamics of the situation at hand. Having knowledge about a situation will help the individual act thoughtfully and effectively. He/She could also participate in peaceful protests, write letters to leaders and use the internet to create awareness.

KWA PEREZIA Mbi, United Kingdom.

New! New!! New!!!

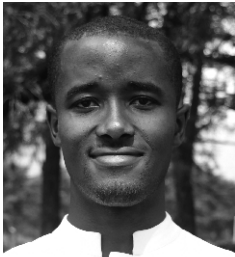
THE SEMINARY PRESENTS TO YOU DEAR READERS, THE

Aquinas Complex



It is a safe and conducive business centre open for rents. In the same structure, there are apartments that can serve as residences for individuals or families. It is affordable and accessible.”





**RODRIGUE STÈVE
NOUBISSE**
Theologie III



LEONNEL SIKAM LAKAK
Theologie III

LE RÔLE DE L'ÉDUCATION DANS LA PROMOTION DE LA JUSTICE SOCIALE



INTRODUCTION

La justice sociale constitue une vertu essentielle et indispensable à la vie de toute société. Elle n'est pas un acquis définitif, mais un idéal toujours à bâtir, à approfondir, à rechercher sans relâche. Comment, dès lors, l'éducation peut-elle contribuer à cette noble entreprise ? Cette question nous invite à analyser le rôle fondamental de l'éducation dans la promotion et la défense de la justice sociale. Notre démarche se déploiera en trois temps : d'abord, la clarification des concepts d'éducation et de justice sociale ; ensuite, l'examen des objectifs et des enjeux de l'éducation ; enfin, la présentation de quelques structures de promotion de la justice sociale par le biais de l'éducation et du dialogue éducatif.

1. DÉFINITION DE L'ÉDUCATION ET DE LA JUSTICE SOCIALE

1.1. L'ÉDUCATION, CREUSET DE LA FORMATION INTÉGRALE DE L'HOMME

Selon Émile Durkheim, « l'éducation est l'action exercée par les générations adultes sur celles qui ne sont pas encore mûres pour la vie sociale ; elle a pour objet de susciter et de développer chez l'enfant un certain nombre d'états physiques, intellectuels et moraux que réclame de lui la société politique » (D. ÉMILE, *L'Éducation morale*, PUF, Paris 1925, p. 45). Ainsi, l'éducation dépasse largement la simple transmission de savoirs : elle vise la formation intégrale de la personne humaine en vue du bien commun et de la participation responsable à la vie sociale. Dans une perspective critique et émancipatrice, elle ne doit pas se réduire à l'accumulation de connaissances, mais permettre à l'apprenant de devenir acteur de sa

propre libération et artisan de transformation sociale.

1.2. LA JUSTICE SOCIALE, FONDEMENT DU BIEN COMMUN

Le philosophe politique John Rawls fonde la justice sociale sur deux principes essentiels : le principe de liberté, garantissant à chacun des droits et libertés égaux et le principe de différence, selon lequel les inégalités ne sont justes que si elles profitent aux plus défavorisés. Il écrit : « Les principes de la justice sociale déterminent la répartition des droits et des devoirs fondamentaux ainsi que les avantages des coopérations sociales » (R. JOHN, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, Harvard 1971, p. 3). Pour sa part, l'Église enseigne que « La justice sociale ne peut être obtenue que dans le respect de la dignité transcendante de l'homme. La personne représente la fin ultime de la société » (*Catéchisme de l'Église catholique*, n. 1929). Ainsi comprise, la justice

sociale se réalise dans la mise en œuvre du bien commun et la reconnaissance effective des droits fondamentaux de chaque personne.

2. OBJECTIFS ET ENJEUX DE L'ÉDUCATION

2.1. L'ÉDUCATION COMME VECTEUR DE TRANSFORMATION SOCIALE

L'éducation a toujours été perçue comme un outil de changement social. Elle ne se limite pas à un savoir académique, mais vise la formation d'individus capables de s'engager pour le bien commun. Paulo Freire considère l'éducation comme un acte politique de libération (Cfr F. PAULO, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Continuum, New York 1970, p. 72). Il critique le modèle « bancaire » de l'enseignement, où l'élève reçoit passivement le savoir, et propose une pédagogie dialogique fondée sur la conscientisation. Cette approche permet à l'apprenant de comprendre les structures d'oppression et d'y résister. Ainsi, éduquer, c'est éveiller la conscience critique et permettre à chacun de devenir sujet de sa propre histoire.

2.2. LES VALEURS ÉDUCATIVES AU SERVICE DE LA JUSTICE SOCIALE

2.2.1. Égalité et équité

Selon le rapport de l'UNESCO sur l'éducation pour tous, plus de 244 millions d'enfants et de jeunes dans le monde ne sont pas scolarisés, la majorité provenant de milieux défavorisés (Cfr UNESCO, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, UNESCO Publishing, Paris 2021, p. 24). Ces inégalités compromettent directement la construction d'une société juste. Promouvoir la justice sociale par l'éducation suppose donc de dépasser la simple égalité, donner à tous la même chose, pour atteindre l'équité, c'est-à-dire donner à chacun selon ses besoins réels.

2.2.2. L'éducation à la citoyenneté et à la responsabilité sociale

Une éducation orientée vers la justice sociale ne peut ignorer la dimension civique et éthique de la formation humaine. L'UNESCO promeut une éducation à la citoyenneté mondiale qui vise à former des citoyens conscients de leurs droits et devoirs, engagés dans la défense de la dignité humaine et du développement durable (Cfr UNESCO, *Education Globale du Citoyen : Savoirs et les Objectifs de l'Apprentissage*, Paris 2015, p. 8). Cette approche repose sur trois axes : la connaissance, les valeurs et l'action.

Sur le plan éthique, l'éducation doit viser la formation intégrale de la personne humaine dans sa dimension spirituelle et sociale. La justice sociale trouve son fondement dans le respect de la dignité de toute personne, valeur centrale de la doctrine sociale de l'Église. La justice sociale consiste à garantir à chacun la possibilité de participer au bien commun selon ses capacités. Ainsi, l'éducation à la justice sociale implique l'apprentissage de la solidarité et de la coresponsabilité. Elle prépare les jeunes à devenir des acteurs de paix, capables de transformer leurs

communautés par l'action citoyenne.

3. LES STRUCTURES DE PROMOTION DE LA JUSTICE SOCIALE

3.1. L'ÉCOLE POUR LA CONSCIENCE CRITIQUE ET L'ÉQUITÉ SOCIALE

L'école est le lieu par excellence où peut s'opérer la transformation du paradigme de l'injustice en une culture de justice équitable. Cependant, le modèle traditionnel d'enseignement, fondé sur la transmission unidirectionnelle du savoir, montre ses limites. Freire le décrit ainsi : « La connaissance est un don que transmettent ceux qui se considèrent comme détenteurs du savoir à ceux qu'ils jugent vides de connaissances » (F. PAULO, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, p. 72).

En réaction, il propose une pédagogie dialogique fondée sur la cocréation du savoir entre enseignant et apprenant. « Le point de départ de tout programme éducatif doit être la situation concrète et existentielle du peuple, reflétant ses aspirations » (*Ibid.*, p. 95). Ainsi, éducateurs et apprenants développent ensemble une conscience critique en débattant des problèmes sociaux réels et en élaborant des actions concrètes (*praxis*) pour combattre l'injustice sous toutes ses formes.

3.2. LES INSTITUTIONS SOCIO-CULTURELLES, ESPACES DE DIALOGUE ET D'OUVERTURE INTERCULTURELLE

Sur le plan social, un dialogue éducatif de plus en plus intense sur la question de la vertu civile, morale et du bien commun se veut effectif et pressant dans les associations, les centres de formation et autres milieux de formation. Freire Paulo s'indigne contre la domination culturelle où les dominants imposent leurs valeurs et systèmes de connaissances aux opprimés. L'éducation dans la culture implique inéluctablement le dialogue pour l'accueil des multicultures sans complexe de supériorité de culture. En ce sens, « la perspective interculturelle implique un véritable changement de paradigme au plan pédagogique. On passe de l'intégration à la recherche de l'accueil des différences, ce qui n'est ni simple ni facile » (PAUL LONTSIE-KEUNE, *L'éducateur*, Macacos, Douala 2007, p. 193). Ni simple, ni facile, mais pas impossible dans une visée de dialogue interculturel qui s'ouvre et accueille les autres cultures.

CONCLUSION

En définitive, l'éducation a pour mission fondamentale de rendre l'être humain capable de servir la cause de la justice sociale. Elle accomplit cette noble tâche en offrant des opportunités équitables, en éveillant la conscience critique et en inculquant les valeurs du respect, de la responsabilité, de la tolérance, de l'égalité et de l'équité. Des établissements scolaires aux structures culturelles, l'éducation façonne des individus aptes à participer activement à la construction d'une société plus juste, plus fraternelle et véritablement inclusive pour tous.



THE ROLE OF PRAYER IN SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK



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INTRODUCTION

It is very common and almost natural for human beings to venture into solving any societal or political issues with no thought of God. This is true of issues of social justice. Taking into consideration that Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour; and that Justice towards men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and the common good (Cfr CCC, n. 1807), we are called to stop and ask ourselves the fundamental question: What justifies the concern for social justice? This leads us to realize that we have to start from prayers to God. Prayer and social justice are not separate or diametrically opposed; they are intimately connected. Prayer is not a retreat from the world's suffering or a passive act of devotion. Rather, it is an active participation in the compassionate heart of God, who "hears the cry of the poor" (Ps 34:6). Hence, through prayer, we open our hearts to God's mercy, allowing His love to shape our desires, decisions, and actions toward others. In this light, prayer prevents faith from degenerating into mere ideology or activism detached from God's will (POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 262). Therefore, prayer safeguards social engagement from becoming a mechanical pursuit of social goals or political agendas. It ensures that our actions flow from a heart aligned with God's love.

1. THE MEANING AND NATURE OF PRAYER

Prayer, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, is "the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from Him" (CCC, n. 2559). It is not just a ritual or recitation but a dynamic encounter of a human heart with the living God. It is in this light that prayer becomes relational, as it expresses love, trust, and dependence on God, and transforms, and shapes the believer's mind, will, and actions in conformity with divine goodness. Also, St. Augustine emphasizes that prayer not only lifts the soul towards God but also purifies the heart, so that love of God flows naturally into love for neighbor (Cfr Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 10). Similarly, Pope Benedict XVI observes that true Christian prayer inspires moral courage and social responsibility, connecting contemplation with concrete service to humanity (BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 31). Hence, authentic prayer, is never self-contained but engenders mercy, compassion, and the pursuit of justice in the world.

2. PRAYER AND JUSTICE IN THE BIBLE

Scripture makes allusion to the connection

between Prayer and Justice. In [Psalm 7:9-11](#) we read: "Bring an end to the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure." In [Isaiah 61:8](#), the Lord proclaims, "For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In My faithfulness, I will give them their recompense and make an everlasting covenant with them." This reflects the divine commitment to justice and the assurance that God will act on behalf of the oppressed.

In the New Testament, Jesus teaches His followers to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Cfr Mt 6:10–11), which includes the establishment of justice. The parable of the persistent widow in [Luke 18:1-8](#) illustrates the importance of persistent prayer for justice and above all not giving up in the face of injustice. Social justice was a distinctive mark of the early Christian Communities as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. In Acts 2:42–45 we see the three pillars on which the first Christian community was built: on prayer, fellowship, and charity (sharing everything in common) and nobody was in need. This illustrates, that prayer fosters communal solidarity and social responsibility (Cfr JOSEPH FITZMYER, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Doubleday, New York 1998, 830). In these passages, prayer is not merely private devotion but an active engagement with God on behalf of others, calling for justice and protection for the oppressed (Cfr RAYMOND BROWN, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, Doubleday, Garden City 1993, 594).

3. PRAYER AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN CHURCH HISTORY

From the earliest Christian communities, prayer has been closely linked with acts of justice and care for the poor. The *Didache* instructs believers to pray three times daily and to give alms, directly connecting devotion with practical charity. Saints such as St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena demonstrated that prayer fuels commitment to the marginalized, while modern figures like Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa of Calcutta show that sustained prayer equips the heart for selfless service and social advocacy.

Finally, the Church in her role as mother and teacher through various pontiffs has written extensively on various aspects of social justice. In 1891 Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* highlights the moral responsibility for labour rights advocating for improved working conditions, fair wages and formation of trade unions. In 2009, Benedict XVI in *Caritatis in Veritate* links charity and justice, emphasizing how our love of God should lead to the practice of justice. Lastly, in *Fratelli Tutti* Pope Francis emphasizes that prayer grounds efforts for fraternity and social solidarity (POPE FRANCIS, *Fratelli Tutti*, nn. 280-282). In all these documents we see that prayer is not separate from action but serves as the inner source

from which justice flows. As a practical illustration to this, we observe that in most Churches in the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Bamenda the Justice and Peace commission a fruit of the Provincial Pastoral Plan and has been instrumental in the pursuit of justice within the local Church of Bamenda and beyond.

4. WHY PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our desire for social justice must be rooted in prayer. Justice is a virtue hailed by ancient philosophers long before the birth of Christ. Through the mediated presence of Christ in the Church she teaches that grace (divine unmerited favor) builds on nature and as such our disposition should be that which would enable us as Christians to be ideal instruments of justice in the world. Therefore, praying for justice is a surer and more perfect path to our goal for justice because God is our standard to evaluate what true justice is and should be. He is just like none of us are just. Christian action is most authentic when it flows from prayer, as reflected in the Benedictine motto *ora et labora*, "pray and work", which unites contemplation and labour (Cfr BENEDICT OF NURSIA, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, Ch. 48). Prayer is not a passive retreat but the source of insight, courage, and compassion that enables effective service.

In this light, prayer purifies motives, transforming anger into compassion and ensuring that actions flow from love rather than pride or vengeance (Cfr BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 28). Also, prayer sustains hope and perseverance in the slow works of justice, as seen in Scripture: "Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy" (Ps 126:5). Furthermore, it fosters forgiveness and reconciliation, as Jesus teaches: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44). By deepening communion with others, prayer cultivates empathy and motivates concrete acts of mercy, while integrating contemplation and action to ensure that social engagement flows from a heart transformed by love.

CONCLUSION

From our discussion above we would realize that Prayer and social justice must go together. Put differently, we can say that setting out on the work of Social Justice while leaving out prayer (God) is toiling in vain for as the Psalmist pray "if the Lord does not build the house in vain do the builders labour" (Ps 127:1-2). However, it should be noted that Prayer without justice becomes abstract or self-centered and justice without prayer risks exhaustion or ideological distortion. Hence, prayer and social justice together constitute the heartbeat of authentic discipleship, transforming the believer and society alike. Therefore, Christian disciples are called to let prayer move them toward justice, and justice, in turn, return them to prayer, embodying God's Kingdom in the world.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT: AN ETHICS OF ACTION



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INTRODUCTION

Justice is more than an abstract ideal we admire from a distance; it is a call to action that lies at the very heart of a meaningful social life. For people of faith, this call to do action is not an optional political hobby but a profound moral vocation, an integral part of living out one's beliefs in the world. For over a century, a rich tradition of thought known as Catholic Social Teaching has provided a powerful "ethics of action" for this work. It insists that a genuine commitment to social justice must necessarily lead to engagement in the political sphere, the primary arena where the structures of our common life are shaped. This body of teaching offers a clear roadmap for transforming our good intentions into concrete, positive, and lasting change for all.

1. THE FOUNDATION: WHY POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A MORAL IMPERATIVE

1.1. THE PURSUIT OF THE COMMON GOOD

The fundamental reason for political engagement is the pursuit of the common good. This is not simply about what benefits the majority, but about creating the conditions for every single person to flourish. Vatican II Council defines the common good as "the sum of those

conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment" (VATICAN II COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 26). Politics, when practiced nobly, is the art of organizing society to create these conditions, from fair labour laws and accessible healthcare to clean environments and educational opportunities. It is the structured, society-wide effort to ensure all people have what they need not just to survive, but to truly thrive as human beings.

1.2. POLITICS AS A HIGH FORM OF CHARITY

Because its aim is the well-being of the entire community, politics is a preeminent form of charity. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* describes the lay faithful's duty to animate the political order with Christian values as a "lofty vocation" (Cfr PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, nn. 563-566). While individual acts of mercy, feeding a hungry person, for example, are absolutely essential, political charity seeks to address the root causes of hunger itself. It works to build a society where fewer people need direct assistance because the economic and social systems are themselves just and supportive of human dignity. It is charity on a structural level, aiming to create a social safety network from justice and compassion.

1.3. DIAGNOSING THE NEED FOR ACTION: CONFRONTING "STRUCTURES OF SIN"

The moral duty to engage becomes tragically clear when we diagnose the reality of our world. Injustice is more than the sum of individual bad choices. Pope John Paul II introduced the crucial concept of "structures of sin" to describe how personal failings can become embedded in our social, economic, and political systems (Cfr JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 36). These are policies, laws, and ingrained cultural habits that actively perpetuate harm

and create systemic obstacles to human flourishing. They are the hidden mechanics behind generational poverty, racial discrimination, and environmental degradation. Pope Francis powerfully describes the fruit of these structures pointing to an “economy of exclusion” that creates a “globalization of indifference” where the poor are considered “leftovers” (Cfr Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 53). Confronting such entrenched injustices requires more than the individual goodwill; it demands a courageous political commitment aimed at transforming the very structures that cause the suffering.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

If we must act, how must we act? Catholic Social Teaching offers a clear ethical framework to guide our political commitment. First, all action must be rooted in *Caritatis in Veritate*, charity guided by truth. As Pope Benedict XVI explained, “charity is at the heart of the Church’s social doctrine,” but to be effective, it must be joined with reason and truth (Cfr BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritatis In Veritate*, n. 2). Justice without love can become cold and vindictive, while love without a clear-eyed analysis of the facts can devolve into ineffective sentimentality. This principle calls for solutions that are both compassionate and practical. This love naturally extends into the virtue of solidarity. Solidarity is not a “feeling of vague compassion,” but a “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself

to the common good; that is to say... to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* n. 38). Finally, this solidarity finds its moral compass in the preferential option for the poor. This principle does not mean loving the poor exclusively, but it demands that we judge our policies and priorities from their perspective. The first question of any political proposal must be: “How will this affect the most vulnerable among us?”

2.1. THE METHOD OF ACTION: THE ROLE OF PRUDENCE

Having the right principles is essential, but it is not enough. The ethics of action demands the virtue of prudence. In the Christian tradition, prudence is not timidity or political calculation for personal gain. It is “right reason in action,” the practical wisdom to know how to apply moral principles to complex, concrete situations. Politics is often called “the art of the possible,” and prudence is the virtue that governs this art. It allows us to discern the best course of action here and now, to weigh the likely consequences of a policy, to build coalitions with those of different viewpoints for a common goal, and to choose the most effective means to achieve a just end. Without prudence, our passion for justice can lead to ineffective or even counterproductive actions. With it, our commitment becomes a tangible force for good, capable of navigating the messy realities of the political world to achieve real, incremental progress for the common good.

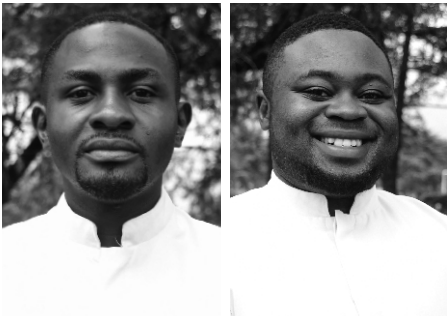
2.2. THE GOAL AND THE VOCATION

The ultimate goal of this political commitment is what past popes have called a “civilization of love.” This is not a political utopia, but the constant, patient work of building a society that more closely reflects God’s justice and mercy. It is about fostering an “integral human development”, a development that is not merely economic but also cultural, social, and spiritual, promoting the good of “every man and the whole man” (PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, nn. 14, 21). This transformative work in the world belongs especially to the laity. Beginning with Pope Leo XIII’s foundational encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which courageously called for the Church and its members to address unjust social conditions directly (Cfr LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*, n. 16), the faithful have been urged not to retreat from the world but to sanctify it from within. Christians are called to be salt and light in the public square, infusing politics, business, and their communities with Gospel values.

CONCLUSION

Catholic Social Teaching presents a clear and compelling mandate. Political engagement is not an optional extra for a person of faith; it is a moral imperative. It is a demanding ethics of action, guided by truth, animated by love, enacted with prudence, and always oriented toward the good of all, especially the least among us. The challenge is to move from passive belief to active, courageous commitment.





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SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS WITHIN THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

An age-old cry still heard in many societies today is the call for social justice. Social justice is defined as “a virtue by which men, as members of human society and the mystical body of Jesus Christ, by virtue of natural law and evangelical solidarity, give to their fellow men especially the needy those things necessary for the maintenance of their life and dignity” (T. PAZHAYAMPALLIL, *Pastoral Guide*, Vol. 1, Kristus Jyoti Publications, Bangalore 2021, 984). It requires us to be attentive to the sufferings and needs of others and to share in Christ's work of liberation as instruments for spreading His love (LEO XIV, *Apostolic Exhortation Delixit Te*, 4 October 2025, n.2). Regrettably, many societies today suffer from social injustice, manifesting vast inequalities between rich and poor, oppression, racism, discrimination against women, human rights violations, and the plight of refugees (D. DORR, *The Social Justice Agenda: Justice, Ecology, Power and the Church*, Gill and Macmillan, New York 1991, 105).

The Church has never ceased to advocate for social justice and the preferential option for the poor. It accomplishes this through various social justice movements within the Church. This article aims to highlight some of these movements and to explain how they function.

1. CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT

The Catholic Worker Movement, founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in the United States in 1933, seeks to live according to the justice and charity of Jesus Christ. One of its guiding principles is hospitality towards those marginalized by society. There are over 240 local Catholic Worker communities providing social services, each with a mission tailored to its regional needs. The movement campaigns for non-violence and opposes both war and the unequal global distribution of wealth. Members believe in the personal obligation to care for others, daily practice of the Works of Mercy, establishing houses of hospitality to provide immediate relief, and creating farming communes where work and

resources are shared according to ability and need (D. J. O'BRIEN, “The Significance of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker in American Catholicism,” in W. J. Thorn, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee 2001, 51-53). The Catholic Worker Movement remains a vital voice for social justice within the Church.

2. SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is an international Catholic voluntary organization founded in 1833 by Frédéric Ozanam and Emmanuel-Joseph Bailly de Surcy, named after Saint Vincent de Paul. It aims at the sanctification of its members through personal service to the poor, originally assisting impoverished residents of Paris slums. Today, it operates in numerous parishes worldwide. The Society alleviates suffering, promotes human dignity, and supports the disadvantaged regardless of creed, ethnicity, social





background, gender, health, or political opinions. It empowers the poor to advocate for themselves (SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, *Rule of the International Confederation*, 2006, 5-6,16). Acting as a bridge between generous donors and those in need, the Society is a significant instrument of the Church's social mission.

3. AFRICA-EUROPE FAITH AND JUSTICE NETWORK (AEFJN)

AEFJN is an international organization founded by religious institutes to promote justice in Africa. The Cameroon branch, established in 2010 by missionary congregations, addresses socio-economic challenges through prophecy and pastoral care. Through prophecy, AEFJN analyzes socio-historical realities, proclaims God's plan, and denounces injustices such as land dispossession, illicit drug trafficking, and environmental destruction. Pastoral care involves nurturing Christian life by providing capacity-building training for religious individuals and community leaders, linking evangelization with peoples' lived experiences.

AEFJN observes and reports injustices, supports affected groups with advice and training, seeks sustainable solutions for social cohesion between host populations and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and advocates for the inclusion of young people with disabilities in schools and parishes (S. NGAH, "Presentation of the Cameroon Faith and Justice Antenna," *Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network*, 1-3). This network is pivotal in advancing social justice in Africa, especially Cameroon.

4. JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION

The Justice and Peace Commission is one of nineteen commissions within the Small Christian Communities of the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda. It is a pastoral structure dedicated to building a just and peaceful society by promoting human dignity, combating injustice, and resolving conflicts (BAMENDA ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE, *Pastoral Plan*, ARISE, Bamenda 2009, 75). Established in December 2002, the Justice and Peace Commission of

the Archdiocese of Bamenda (JPC) is part of the global network of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The Commission works towards societal transformation grounded in respect for human dignity, equality, peace, and sustainable development. Its mission aligns with the Gospel and the Church's Social Teaching to promote justice, peace, and socially sustainable development (Justice and Peace Commission Archdiocese of Bamenda, *Strategic Plan 2015-2022*, Bamenda 2015).

5. CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS

This organization was started in Germany in 1897 by Lorenz Werthmann. It was named after a Latin word "Caritas" meaning "Love and Compassion". In the 20th century, Giovanni Battista Montini, who later became Pope Paul VI laid the foundations for an international network for this organization. In 1954, *Caritas Internationalis* was officially recognized. It works to promote charity, justice and integral human development. Its mission aligns with Catholic Social Teaching which works for social justice.

This organization is very instrumental in the Church of Cameroon and the Ecclesiastical province of Bamenda. It was founded in Cameroon in 1971 under the name

"Bureau d'Action Socio-Caritatives" (BASC). It supports social and charitable actions in the church. Through CARITAS, basic needs like food, water, medical facilities among other things are made available to those in need.

CONCLUSION

The cry of the poor, marginalized, and innocent for social justice continues to resonate worldwide. The Church remains steadfast in responding to this call through movements such as those highlighted above, as well as others like Caritas Internationalis, Focolare, Mendicants, Madonna House Apostolate, and Labour Church. These movements work tirelessly to eradicate social injustice and create spaces of hope for the vulnerable. Supporting the Church's mission by encouraging and participating in these movements is both a Christian virtue and a genuine act of charity.



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Theology II

INTRODUCTION

Armed conflict is one of humanity's greatest threats to peace and dignity. It is a violent struggle between groups or nations driven by political, ethnic, or religious motives, and it devastates societies. The wars in Gaza and the war between Russia and **Ukraine reveal how conflict strips people of fundamental rights such as food, shelter, and security.** By contrast, *social justice* seeks "a fair and equal society where every person has access to rights, resources and opportunities to live with dignity" (PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*,

n.160). War annihilates these values, leaving the weakest to suffer most. The Church teaches that all people, made "in the image of God" (Gen 1:27), have an inherent right to peace and respect. Therefore, war is "a moral failure and a sign of broken relationships" (VATICAN II COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.77). This article explores how armed conflict undermines social justice and how the Church calls humanity to rebuild peace through faith and justice.

1. THEOLOGICAL AND MORAL FOUNDATIONS

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) provides the moral lens

through which to view war. It rests on the dignity of the human person, the common good, solidarity, and the preferential option for the poor (Cfr PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, nn.192–208). Armed conflict violates all these principles.

Saint John Paul II reminds that "when people kill or mistreat others, they destroy the image of God in humanity (JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, 1995, n. 2). The Scriptures reveal that peace is the fruit of justice: "The effect of righteousness is peace" (Isaiah 32:17). Christ blesses "the peacemakers, for they



shall be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Peace is not merely the absence of war but "the presence of right relationships built on truth, justice, and love."

2. THE HARM CAUSED BY ARMED CONFLICTS

2.1. HUMAN DIGNITY UNDERMINED

The first casualty of war is human dignity. Armed conflicts lead to death, displacement, and immense suffering. Families are separated, children traumatized, and civilians dehumanized through torture, forced labour, or child soldiering. The Rwandan survivor Immaculée Ilibagiza, who hid for 91 days during the genocide, embodies the horror of violated dignity. Every assault on a person wounds the whole human family (Cfr *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1700).

2.2. ECONOMIC INJUSTICE

War drains economies and deepens poverty. Resources meant for education and health is diverted to buy arms. Infrastructure (roads, farms, and industries) is destroyed, and millions lose their livelihoods. Post-war nations become dependent on aid, reinforcing inequality. The Church insists that peace requires economic justice since poverty and injustice often breed further violence.

2.3. POLITICAL AND LEGAL BREAKDOWN

Conflict destabilizes political systems. The rule of law collapses, corruption rises, and leaders use violence to maintain control. Justice systems fail, and people lose protection and fair trials (Cfr PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 411). Without justice, trust between citizens and governments diapers, making democracy hard to build.

2.4. SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION

War tears apart the social fabric. Neighbours become enemies, and hatred replaces cooperation. Families are displaced; women face abuse, and children become orphans. The family is the foundation of society; its destruction retards national growth. Pope Francis insists that we belong to one family, called to live in solidarity, something war makes impossible (Cfr POPE FRANCIS, *Fratelli Tutti*, nn. 225–230).

2.5. ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

War not only kills people but poisons creation. Bombs, fires and chemicals pollute water, soil and air. Forests are burned, and farms destroyed, endangering future generations. Pope Francis reminds that peace includes "harmony with creation" (Cfr FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, n.91).

2.6. ARMED CONFLICT AS SOCIAL INJUSTICE

Ironically, many wars are declared to fight for justice. Secessionist or revolutionary movements often seek "social change," but war becomes "a poisoned cup." Violence cannot establish justice; it destroys it.

There is nothing that war has ever achieved that we could not better achieve without it. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds that the commandment "Thou shall not kill" comes from the One who is justice itself. To kill in the name of justice contradicts the Gospel. War thus propagates social injustice rather than curing it (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n.2259).

3. THE CHURCH'S ROLE AND RESPONSE

The Church assumes a threefold role (prophetic, pastoral, and practical) in the face of war (Cfr PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, nn.524-527).

Prophetically, it denounces violence and reminds nations that peace must rest on truth and respect for human life. Pastorally, it provides comfort and healing. Through *Caritas* and other Catholic organizations, the Church supports refugees and victims, offering food, shelter, counseling and reconciliation. Priests and religious accompany the wounded and displaced, embodying God's mercy. Practically, it promotes education and peace building. Parishes, schools, ad seminaries teach human rights, forgiveness and non-violence. Peace begins in the heart and grows through moral education and dialogue.

4. THE WAY FORWARD: RESTORING SOCIAL JUSTICE

Rebuilding social justice after war requires truth, forgiveness, and integral human development. Pope Francis emphasizes that reconciliation demands truth, societies must confront past crimes honestly (Cfr FRANCIS *Fratelli Tutti*, n. 226). Truth and reconciliation commissions help heal wounds and restore trust. Forgiveness, though painful, breaks cycles of revenge. Peace building efforts must involve governments, civil society, and religious leaders to ensure economic recovery, education, and good governance. The Church's concept of integral human development combines economic growth with moral and spiritual renewal, ensuring peace that endures. Peace is both a divine gift and human responsibility. Christians must not only pray for peace but embody it through justice, compassion, and service.

CONCLUSION

Armed conflict destroys more than lives and property; it tears apart the moral and social fabric of nations. It undermines dignity, deepens poverty, weakens justice, divides families, and devastates creation. War is itself a profound injustice. Social justice cannot coexist with violence. Christ calls His followers to be "peacemakers and builders of justice." The Church remains a prophetic voice of hope, urging reconciliation and the common good. True peace emerges where justice, love, and respect for human dignity are restored.



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THE CLERGY'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL JUSTICE



INTRODUCTION

The Christian understanding of ordained ministry is deeply linked to the pursuit of justice. Bishops, priests, and deacons are called not only to celebrate the sacraments and proclaim the Word, but also to embody God's compassion and righteousness in society. The Church's social mission, therefore, lies at the heart of her identity. Rooted in the Gospel and in Catholic social teaching, this mission reflects what Pope Francis calls a transformative vision: "the Church's social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change, and it constantly seeks the common good" (FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 183). The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed this in *Gaudium et Spes*, declaring that "the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties" of humanity are also those of Christ's followers (Cfr VATICAN II COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1). Inspired by this vision, many Bishops, Priests and Deacons have dedicated themselves to promoting justice, peace, and human dignity. Some Theologians highlight this moral and spiritual responsibility: Curran stresses the transformation of unjust structures, while Dorr situates it within a spirituality of liberation and solidarity. In Cameroon and elsewhere, the clergy live this vocation through preaching, catechesis, media outreach, and social engagement. This article explores the theological, moral, and pastoral contribution in their commitment to social justice.

1. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS: THE CHURCH AND THE PROPHETIC MISSION

The clergy's involvement in social justice arises from the Church's self-understanding as the "sacrament of salvation" and the "sign of unity in the world" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 42). As participants in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices of Christ, ordained ministers share in His mission to bring the "good news to the poor" and "liberty to captives" (Cfr Lk 4:18).

Gaudium et Spes invites Christians to read "the signs of the times" and to respond with faith and courage (Cfr *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4). For the clergy, this entails identifying and confronting social structures that undermine human dignity. The Council affirms that "Christians who neglect their temporal duties neglect their duties toward their neighbour and even toward God Himself" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 43). Thus, the clergy's social engagement is not optional; it is an essential dimension of their priestly vocation.

As prophets, priests are called to speak the truth boldly, yet prudently, to the powers that be, even at the risk of their lives. This prophetic dimension demands courage in denouncing sin, whether personal or systemic. It echoes the voices of the biblical prophets who proclaimed that worship without justice is empty (Cfr Amos 5:21–24).

1.1. ADVOCATING FOR THE POOR AND THE VULNERABLE

While Curran emphasizes the moral imperative of justice, Donal Dorr highlights its spiritual and theological depth. In his seminal work *Option for the Poor and for the Earth: Catholic Social Teaching*, Dorr asserts that “there can be no authentic evangelization unless it includes a commitment to the transformation of unjust structures” (D. DORR, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth: Catholic Social Teaching*, 3rd ed. Maryknoll, Orbis Books, New York 2016, 43). For Dorr, the mission of the clergy must integrate faith, prayer, and social action. His theology of justice is rooted in the Trinitarian mission: the God revealed in Jesus Christ is a God who liberates the oppressed and calls humanity into communion. Hence, the priest's ministry is incomplete without solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable. The clergy's fight for social justice thus becomes a participation in God's own redemptive action in history (Cfr D. DORR, *Mission in Today's World*, pp. 120–140).

The preferential option for the poor is a cornerstone of Catholic social teaching. Clergy are called to be “the voice of the voiceless,” as the 2025 *Lenten Message of the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC)* reminds us. In their 2025 *Lenten Message*, the Bishops wrote: “True Christian faith and hope consist not only in beseeching God's blessing but also in working for justice and peace. This includes defending the rights of internally displaced persons, orphans, and those affected by conflict in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.”

1.2. PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY

Human dignity is non-negotiable. Pope John Paul II affirmed in *Centesimus Annus* that “the Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making

political choices”. (JOHN PAUL II, *Centesimus Annus*, n. 46). In Cameroon, Archbishop Samuel Kleda of Douala has spoken courageously against electoral fraud and violence, declaring that “injustice can never bring peace; electoral fraud can never bring peace; lawlessness can never bring peace.” Such statements highlight the clergy's unwavering commitment to defending truth and justice, both within the Church and in society at large.

2. MORAL THEOLOGY AND STRUCTURAL JUSTICE

Charles E. Curran's moral theology provides a solid framework for understanding the clergy's role in promoting justice. He argues that moral theology must address not only personal actions but also the social structures of sin that sustain inequality and oppression. In *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891–Present*, Curran affirms that “the social mission of the Church is an essential and constitutive dimension of the Gospel itself” (C. E. CURRAN, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891–Present: A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis*, Georgetown University Press, Washington 2002, p. 18).

For Curran, Christian ethics must be both historical and contextual, engaging concretely with issues such as economic injustice, environmental degradation, and political corruption. The Clergy, as moral guides, are thus responsible for forming consciences attentive to social sin and committed to transformation (Cfr C. E. CURRAN, *The Social Mission of the U.S. Catholic Church*, Georgetown University Press, Georgetown 2011, pp. 84–104).

He further emphasizes that this mission must remain rooted in the Church's pastoral and sacramental life: prophetic witness loses meaning when detached from prayer and community. Social justice, therefore, is not an ideology but an expression of

Christian discipleship. Through preaching, catechesis, and pastoral engagement, clergy help move the faithful from charity to justice and from personal compassion to structural transformation.

3. PASTORAL PRAXIS AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

The clergy's fight for social justice is a demanding vocation that requires discernment, courage, and humility. Many priests who have taken prophetic stands have been exposed to misunderstanding, marginalization, or even martyrdom. The witness of figures such as Archbishop Óscar Romero, and priests in Cameroon who have been killed defending human dignity amid the ongoing Anglophone crisis, illustrates the cost of prophetic fidelity.

Yet, as *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us, “peace is not merely the absence of war, but the work of justice” (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 78). Clergy are therefore called to integrate the social teachings of the Church into every aspect of pastoral life. Parishes must become communities of conscience, where faith formation includes reflection on social realities and moral responsibilities. Homilies should link Scripture with social ethics; catechesis should address issues such as economic inequality, human rights, and ecological care.

CONCLUSION

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* calls on priests to work with lay professionals and civil groups to promote justice and peace, keeping the Church's mission prophetic and practical. This vocation requires integrity, simplicity, and moral courage, for witness fades when the clergy clings to privilege or power. As heralds of God's Kingdom of truth, justice, love, and peace, they must proclaim the Gospel by challenging structures that violate human dignity and by accompanying the poor in their struggle for hope and liberation.



THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS:

A TIME FOR JOY, GIVING AND TOGETHERNESS



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INTRODUCTION

The Nativity of the Lord commemorates the Redemptive Mystery of the entrance of Christ into this world. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwells among us, and we saw his glory" (Jn 1: 14). As the year draws to a close, the world pauses to embrace the warmth and wonder of Christmas, a season that transcends mere festivity and touches the deepest chords of human experience. It is a time when joy blossoms, generosity flows freely, and togetherness becomes a cherished gift. The most common spiritual sense attributed to this feast is related to the three births: the eternal birth of the world in the bosom of the splendor of the paternal glory, the temporal birth in the humility of the flesh and the final return on the day of Judgment (Cfr JOVIAN LANG, *Dictionary of the Liturgy*, Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 1989, p. 103). Jesus was born in a stable, into a poor family (Cfr Lk 2:6-7). Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest (Cfr Lk 2:8-20). The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night: "The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal and the earth offers a cave to the inaccessible. The angels and shepherds praise him and the magi advance with the star, for you are born for us, little child, God eternal" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 525).

1. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTMAS

It is not clear when the celebration of December 25 as the day of the birth of Christ began because the modern testament does not provide any information about it. The early Christian church began to celebrate the monumental of Prophet Jesus on 14 Nisan because Jewish festival Passover was also celebrated on this date (Cfr J. F. KELLY, *The Origins of Christmas*, Liturgical Press, 2004, p. 60). According to church traditions, the cross was allegedly given to Christ on the same day, which is also mentioned in the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (Cfr 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Saint Tartalian (220 AD) also tried to calculate the birth date of Jesus by making Easter as a basis. According to his calculations, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ happened on March 25, so he celebrated Jesus on March 25 in accordance with the day of crucifixion. It was declared as the birthday of Christ. (Cfr S. K. ROLL, *Toward the Origins of Christmas*, Peeters Publishers, 1995, p. 87). In the background of this approach of Saint Tartalian was Jewish thought because according to the traditional Jewish belief, the day of birth and day of death of great people are on the same day. December 25 was celebrated in ancient Rome as the day of the birth of the undefeated sun god. It was a very famous festival of the Roman Empire, which was celebrated every year with great enthusiasm at the regular official level (Cfr HALE BRADT, *Astronomical Methods*, 1st ed., Cambridge

2004, p. 69). When The Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, the same festival was celebrated as Christmas in the name of the birthday of Christ (a), and the priests began to offer different religious explanations by combining the birth of the sun and the birth anniversary of the Son of God. Pope Julius I was the first to choose the birthday of Jesus on December 25, and thus the first Christmas was partially celebrated in the Roman Empire on December 25, 336 AD. Until the 3rd century AD, the date of birth of Jesus was unknown, but later it was thought to be 25th December, although for the last two centuries this date was unknown and the Christians were not aware of it. In 432 AD, the influence of the Christmas ritual reached Egypt, and at the end of the 6th century AD, this ceremony began in England

Christmas, is the Christian festival celebrating the birth of Jesus: "The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God" (POPE FRANCIS, *Admirabile Signum*, n.1). The English term Christmas (Mass on Christ day) is of fairly recent origin.

The birth of Christ brought joy into the world. This is not a season of sadness, it is the birthday of life; the life which annihilates the fear of death, and engenders joy. This happiness encompasses all the human race. Pope St. Leo the Great corroborates this when he writes, "Let the Saint rejoice, for he hastens to his crown; let the sinner be filled with joy, for pardon is offered him; let the gentile be emboldened, for he is called to life (FRANCIS, *Sermon I Nativity*, nn.1-3). This joy reaches its peak when the Angels sang "Glory to God in the highest Heaven". In the same light, the joyous spirit of Christmas is enhanced by the sound of cheerful music: classic carols like "Jingle Bell," "Deck the Hall," and "Silent Night."

2. THE GENEROSITY OF THE SEASON

When Jesus entered the world, the Magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. More than 2000 years later, the gifts we exchange have evolved in size, meaning, value and most of all, price. During Christmas, family and friends come together to exchange gifts: "it is when families and friends come together and give gifts to one another to celebrate their love for each other. There are not many better feelings in the world than when a loved one opens the gift you gave them and smiles" (J. SALAKI, *Christmas is the Greatest Holiday*, The Omega, Rockeller Center 2023, p. 17). Pope Francis, in *Admirabile Signum*, emphasizes the Nativity scene as a "living Gospel," a visual catechism that stirs the heart toward compassion and giving. The Magi's gifts, the shepherds' awe, and Mary's quiet strength all model a generosity that is not transactional, but transformational. In addition, Thomas G. Weinandy's theological reflections

highlight that true giving mirrors divine love: selfless, abundant, and life-giving. Whether through gifts, time, or kindness, Christmas calls us to imitate this love in our own lives (Cfr THOMAS G. WEINANDY, *In the Likeness of God: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Christian Life*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh 2002, p.156).

3. TOGETHERNESS IN A FRAGMENTED WORLD

In a world often marked by division, Christmas offers a counter-narrative: unity. Families gather, communities sing, and strangers exchange smiles. The spirit of togetherness is not just sentimental, it is sacred. The Incarnation itself is God's act of drawing near, of becoming Emmanuel, "God with us." This togetherness is not limited to those who share our beliefs. As many contemporary reflections note, the values of love, peace, and goodwill resonate across cultures and faiths, making Christmas a bridge of shared humanity: "The Nativity story reminds us of the incredible love God has for us. People of all faiths come together to celebrate and give thanks for their blessings. They sing festive songs, share food and attend masses together" (J. SALAKI, *Christmas is the Greatest Holiday*, p.17). The season of Christmas, brings us together with family and friends to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. During this period, there are celebrations of weddings, anniversaries and other achievements acquired in the course of the year. Some people equally go for outings, share stories, laughter and love. All these go a long way to foster the spirit of togetherness during Christmas.

CONCLUSION

Christmas still remains one of the greatest seasons in which we encounter Christ in a unique, a season that brings people together, a time for gift giving, festive activities, and sharing of meals. It provides a magical atmosphere that fills homes with warmth and joy. It's a time to celebrate, appreciate God's blessings in our lives, and to spread love and kindness to those around us. The spirit of Christmas is a time of joy, giving and togetherness, rooted in shared humanity, compassion, and love that extends beyond religious or cultural boundaries; Christ very own kind of Love. This spirit is expressed through joyful celebrations, the strengthening of family and community bonds, and acts of generosity towards those in need reminding people of the importance of compassion and connection. The STAMS family wishes you a happy Christmas; a season filled with warm joy, gift and happiness. May this season rekindle the joy of the Nativity, inspire generous hearts, and draw us closer to one another. For in giving, we receive; in joy, we are renewed; and in togetherness, we find the true spirit of Christmas.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO UNDERSTAND THE UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE OF MUSIC

INTRODUCTION

The Christian faithful who gather to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Cfr Acts 2:46). The last edition focused on the suitability of songs used in the liturgy. In this edition, our focus is on practical ways to understand the universal language of music, which will, in turn, enhance our participation during liturgical celebrations. Generally, the language of music is based on staff notation. However, solfa notation has also been adapted in particular cases as an alternative to the staff. Thus, the practical ways of understanding music discussed here apply to both staff and solfa notations.

1. STAFF AND SOLFA NOTATIONS

The staff is a musical equivalent of a mathematical graph, consisting of five lines and four spaces. Each line and space represents a different musical pitch, corresponding to a key on the selected instrument. The major components of a staff include the staff itself, brace, bracket, clef, accidentals, time signature, ledger lines, and dynamic markings.

Tonic solfa is a system of naming musical notes using syllables—do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti—instead of letter names (C, D, E, F, G, A, B). It helps singers and musicians understand pitch relationships, improve sight-reading, and develop aural skills. To begin reading tonic solfa, one should memorize the syllables and their corresponding notes.

2. PRACTICAL WAYS TO UNDERSTAND MUSIC (STAFF AND SOLFA)

"Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when it is celebrated in song, with the ministers of each degree fulfilling their ministry and the people participating in it" (*Musicam Sacram*, n. 5). To guarantee active participation, one must understand the language that music speaks for better use it in liturgical celebrations. Here are some practical steps to understand the language of music:

2.1. CONNECTING SOUNDS AND SYMBOLS

When reading either staff or solfa notation, it is important to recognize that every piano note has a matching letter and pitch.

2.2. UNDERSTANDING THE STAFF

Music is written on a series of five equally spaced horizontal lines called the staff (Cfr BRUCE BENWARD & MARILYN SAKER, *Music in Theory and Practice*, McGraw Hill, New York, 2008, 15). Each line and space corresponds to a specific piano note. Notes increase in pitch as they move upward from the bottom line of the staff. Understanding these note patterns forms the foundation of reading staff notation.

2.3. COUNTING BEATS / TIME SIGNATURES

Each beat in a measure has a distinct degree of accent or emphasis; some are strong while others are weak. This rhythmic structure helps keep singing and playing even and expressive. Time signatures indicate the composition's rhythmic structure that is, the duration of each beat and the number of beats per measure. The most common time signature is 4/4, indicating four quarter notes per measure. Other common time signatures include 2/4, 3/4, and 6/8.

2.4. DYNAMIC MARKINGS

Dynamic markings dictate the loudness or softness between notes or phrases. The execution of dynamics often includes changes in tempo. In Western music, the most basic and common dynamic markings are "p" (piano), meaning quiet, and "f" (forte), meaning strong or loud (Cfr BRUCE BENWARD & MARILYN SAKER, *Music in Theory and Practice*, 15).

CONCLUSION

Adequate knowledge of staff and solfa notations is a prerequisite for a proper understanding of music. Such knowledge is a strong aid in guaranteeing active participation in the liturgy, as St. Augustine says: "He who sings prays twice."



A SYNOPSIS OF THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *DILEXI TE* OF POPE LEO XIV

INTRODUCTION

The Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* ("I have loved you") was signed by Pope Leo XIV on 4th October, 2025 and published shortly thereafter. As an exhortation to all Christians, its purpose is to call the Church and the faithful to a renewed dedication to love for the poor (its subtitle is "on love for the poor"). Pope Leo explains that this exhortation was already in preparation by Pope Francis, bearing the same title, and that he took it up, "adding some reflections... at the beginning of my own pontificate." (Cf. LEO XIV, Apostolic Exhortation, *Dilexi te* (4 October 2025), n. 3.). The document is organized into 121 numbered paragraphs and in five chapters that intertwine together Scripture, Church Tradition, examples of saints, and social critique.

1. A FEW ESSENTIAL WORDS

The opening chapter establishes the inseparable bond between love for Christ and love for the poor. Inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi, whose conversion began with an encounter with the poor, believers are called to hear "the cry of the poor," which echoes God's own concern for humanity. The text denounces both traditional and modern forms of poverty caused by structural inequality, greed, and indifference. The chapter concludes by reaffirming that service to the poor lies at the very heart of the Gospel, shaping the Church's perennial mission to embody mercy, justice, and solidarity in every age. (Cfr *Ibid.*, nn. 2-15)

2. GOD CHOOSES THE POOR

The second chapter presents the preferential option for the poor as a fundamental

dimension of divine revelation. God's mercy is revealed in His choice to share in human poverty through the Incarnation. Jesus' life, marked by humility, rejection, and solidarity with the marginalized, identifies him as the Messiah of the poor. His actions and parables overturn stigma, restoring the dignity of the excluded. Scripture unites love of God and neighbor, demanding that worship overflow into mercy and justice. The early Church embodied this ideal through communal charity and sharing of goods, while Paul's collections for the poor revealed faith's social dimension. The chapter concludes that Christian faith cannot exist without charity: God's salvific plan, revealed in Christ, calls the Church to live out solidarity, generosity, and justice toward the poor. (Cfr *Ibid.*, 16-34)

3. A CHURCH FOR THE POOR

The third chapter articulates the vision of "a Church which is poor and for the poor", rooted in Christ's own poverty. Early Christianity viewed the poor as "the treasures of the Church." The Fathers, including Ignatius of Antioch, Justin the Martyr, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine, taught that charity is intrinsic to faith and worship. Monasticism and the mendicant movements such as the Franciscans and Dominicans embraced hospitality, social care and poverty as a form of prophetic witness. The chapter concludes that holiness and service to the poor are inseparable marks of authentic Christianity. (Cfr *Ibid.*, 35-81)

4. A HISTORY THAT CONTINUES

The fourth chapter traces modern Catholic social teaching as

the Church's response to new injustices. Rooted in workers' and social movements, it highlights *Rerum Novarum* (Leo XIII) and *Mater et Magistra* (John XXIII) as key foundations. Vatican II's declaration of "the Church of the poor" and *Gaudium et Spes*' teaching on the social function of property redefined the Church's social role. Previous Popes: Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis addressed global inequality, denouncing "structures of sin" and economic systems that exploit the poor. The Church's social mission, therefore, is one of continual dialogue, conversion, and commitment to justice through closeness to the poor. (Cfr *Ibid.*, 82-102)

5. A CONSTANT CHALLENGE

The final chapter reaffirms that care for the poor defines the Church's faithfulness to Christ. The parable of the Good Samaritan challenges modern indifference and calls Christians to compassion in action. Citing Gregory the Great, it warns against arrogance and spiritual blindness caused by wealth. The poor are "the flesh of Christ," and solidarity with them is central to faith and evangelization. The Church must avoid spiritual worldliness and engage actively in promoting justice. Almsgiving, though often dismissed, remains a sacred form of encounter with Christ in the suffering. The chapter ends by proclaiming that Christian love transcends barriers, reconciles divisions, and transforms societies, manifesting the living Gospel through mercy and solidarity. (Cfr *Ibid.*, 103-121)



POEM: JUSTICE, LIGHT OF EVERY LAND

Justice stands with open hands,
Guiding hearts and shaping lands.
In truth and love it finds its way,
To heal the wounds of night and day.

Where justice reigns, peace can grow,
And mercy like a stream will flow.
The weak are seen, the poor are heard,
All lives are shaped by the sacred Word.

Christ is our model, pure and just,
In Him we place our deepest trust.
He walked with those the world ignored,
And raised the low with love outpoured.

True justice seeks not pride or gain,
But lifts the lost and breaks the chain.
It builds a world where all belong,
Where hearts unite in hope and song.

Each person bears God's holy face,
Deserving dignity and grace.
No race or class can break this truth,
It shines in age, in child and youth.

Let laws be fair, and leaders wise,
Let honesty and right arise.
Let selfish power take no place,
In lands that seek God's truth and grace.

So let us walk this path each day,
Where justice lights the narrow way.
With faith, with hope, with charity
We build a world of free men filled with generosity.

By **Narcisse TCHATIE NJANNOU**
THEOLOGY III



SAINT OF THE ISSUE:

SAINT PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI

Born in Turin to Alfredo Frassati, a prominent senator and diplomat, and Adélaïde Ametis, an artist of royal recognition on April 6, 1901; Pier Giorgio grew up in a cultured but not deeply religious household (*The Dialogue*, Catholic News Service, 2017). From childhood, he showed a remarkable heart for the poor. When a barefoot boy came begging at his home, young Pier Giorgio immediately removed his shoes and gave them away (*Vincentian Encyclopedia*, 2014). He received his First Communion in 1911 and Confirmation in 1915, already distinguished for his piety and

compassion. Though an average student, his intelligence and moral strength made him a leader among his peers. He was an Italian Catholic layman, social activist, and member of the Third Order of Saint Dominic; who was deeply committed to justice and charity. He joined *Catholic Action* and the *Society of Saint Vincent de Paul* to serve Turin's poor and marginalized. His life became a radiant expression of the Beatitudes, earning him the title "Man of the Eight Beatitudes" (JOHN PAUL II, *Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati*, Saints SQPN, 2017). His passion for justice led him to resist the rise of fascism. Arrested once during a protest in Rome, he stood firm in faith and truth, declaring that "charity is not enough; we need social reform" (L. Frassati, *A Man of the Beatitudes*, Ignatius Press, 2000). As a member of *Catholic Action* and *Apostleship of Prayer*, he sought to unite people in fellowship and faith.

On May 28 1922, he entered the Third Order of Saint Dominic, taking the name "Girolamo" in honor of Girolamo Savonarola. Inspired by *Rerum Novarum*, he helped found the newspaper *Momento*, advocating for workers' rights and the dignity of labor. He studied engineering with the dream of serving Christ among miners. Upon graduating, when his father offered him a car or money, Pier Giorgio chose the funds to distribute to the poor. His generosity knew no limits: he found housing for the homeless, provided for widows, and cared for the sick. Yet he also had a joyful, adventurous side—an accomplished mountaineer and athlete, full of laughter and friendship. To his companions, he often exclaimed, "Verso l'alto!" ("To the heights!"), a motto expressing both his love for the mountains and his striving toward God. In late June 1925, while boating with friends, Frassati began to feel severe back pain and fever. Unknown to him, he had contracted poliomyelitis. As his condition worsened, he concealed his suffering so that his family might mourn his grandmother's death without worry. His final words before dying on July 4th 1925 were serene: "May I breathe forth my soul in peace with you." Thousands of Turin's poor, whom he had served in silence, filled the streets at his funeral. His body, found incorrupt in 1981, now rests in Turin Cathedral.

After years of devotion among the needy, he was beatified in 1990 by Pope John Paul II. His cause for canonization, first opened in 1932, was interrupted but later resumed and concluded in joy. On 27 April 2024, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro confirmed his forthcoming canonization during the Jubilee of Youth (C. MARES, *Catholic News Agency*, 2024). Finally, on September 7 2025—alongside Carlo Acutis, Pope Leo XIV proclaimed Pier Giorgio Frassati a saint—honoring a life where faith met action, and joy became a form of holiness.

Pier Giorgio Frassati remains a timeless witness to youthful holiness: a man who climbed both mountains and the heights of grace, showing that true greatness lies in serving Christ among the poor and neglected.