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## **Relationships and Challenges for Latin America and Europe**

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### **Session: Social Doctrine of the Church**

Discussing the role of Catholic Social Doctrine I would like to touch two problems. First is connected with the past. The second with the future.

#### 1. Two different approaches to Social Doctrine of the Church

Looking back at the last twenty centuries one can notice that social reflection in the Church serves two functions, presents two different approaches.

One we may call “holistic” the other “selective” or “realistic” and “idealistic” or more “academic” or more “pastoral”.

It is also a reason why talking about Catholic Social Thought sometimes we use term the “Catholic Social Doctrine”, and sometimes we speak about “Catholic Social Teaching”

The shortest and a very clear exemplification of what I mean is to compare two quotations from popes social encyclicals “*Sollicitudo rei socialis*” and “*Caritas in veritate*”

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*(41), John Paul II stresses that “the Church’s social doctrine is not a „third way” between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another: rather, it constitutes a category of its own. Nor is it an ideology ... Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent: its aim is thus to guide Christian behavior. It therefore belongs to the field, not to ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology”. And he defines the Church’s social doctrine as “the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church’s tradition”. In such a description one can find, as in many social sciences, the level of previous assumptions, axioms (foundations of faith and of the Church’s tradition), the level of conclusions drawn from these assumptions in the light of the findings of other social sciences (“careful reflection” based on achievements of economy, sociology, demography, theory of politics, anthropology, social psychology etc.), and the level of specific decisions (subject of moral theology).

Benedict XVI treats the Church’s social teaching in a much more general and pastoral manner. In *Caritas in veritate* (5) he defines it: “the Church’s social teaching, which is *caritas in veritate in re sociali*: the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love in society.” .

Thus, John Paul II clearly stresses doctrinal moment of Catholic Social Thought and places it as a part of moral theology, when Benedict XVI focuses on pastoral aspect of this thought.

The first method - “holistic” or “academic” —tries to offer a realistic depiction of the social situation in which problems have arisen. It also tries to diagnose causes and suggest ways to eliminate pathologies. It appeals mainly (but implicitly) to decision makers in economic and political life.

The second approach — the “selective”, “pastoral” school — focuses on exposing those situations that need redress. Being more emotional in character, it appeals primarily to public opinion. This approach clearly identifies injustice in the world, but it does not point the way toward realistic remedies.

Both approaches have been present in Christian reflection from the very beginning.

In ancient times, Clement of Alexandria represented the first school of thought, while John Chrysostom represented the second. In the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas took the first approach; Bernard of Clairvaux took the second. Later, Antoninus of Florence represented the first option; another famous citizen of that city, Girolamo Savonarola, represented the second. Among popes, too, the two approaches have been evident. For example, Leo XIII and Pius XI represented the holistic school, whereas Paul VI and Benedict XVI took the pastoral approach. Looking back over Catholic Social Thought since the late nineteenth century, we can observe that papal teachings on economics have exhibited shifts in emphasis over time. In the table, which once I prepared for other purposes, let us consider the first three columns, because all realistic approaches have to clearly respect private property, free exchange and limited state interventions (according to the principle of subsidiarity)

**The Evolution of Catholic Social Thought**

	Private property	Free market	Limiting state intervention	Socialism	Central planning	Democracy	"Third way"
<i>Rerum Novarum</i> (1891)	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉
<i>Quadragesimo Anno</i> (1931)	👉	👉/👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉
Pius XII (1939)	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉
<i>Mater et Magistra</i> (1958)	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	N/A
<i>Pacem in Terris</i> (1963)	N/A	👉	👉	N/A	N/A	👉	N/A
<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> (1965)	N/A	👉	N/A	👉	👉	N/A	N/A
<i>Populorum Progressio</i> (1967)	👉	N/A	N/A	👉	👉	👉	👉
<i>Octogesima Adveniens</i> (1971)	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉
<i>Laborum Exercentis</i> (1981)	N/A	👉	👉	N/A	👉	👉	👉
<i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> (1987)	👉	N/A	👉/👉	N/A	👉	👉	👉
<i>Centesimus Annus</i> (1991)	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉	👉



As this table demonstrates, the holistic approach was evident in the first several decades—with Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), and the teachings of Pius XII in the 1940s and ’50s (contained in addresses and encyclicals that do not focus specifically on social issues). The shift toward the pastoral approach began with John XXIII’s *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and accelerated with his *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and then the Second Vatican Council’s *Gaudium et Spes* (1965). Only with the papacy of John Paul II did this trend begin to reverse. In fact, John Paul’s encyclicals—from *Laborem Exercens* (1981), to *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), to *Centesimus Annus* (1991)—reveal a clear evolution from the pastoral approach to the holistic school, as his teachings synthesize the various elements of social life. Eighteen years after *Centesimus Annus*, in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), Benedict XVI signaled a turn back to the pastoral approach.

How to account for these shifts?

It appears that the holistic encyclicals were written during periods when popes were aware that their solutions might have an important and concrete influence on the shape of social life. This is true in the cases of Leo XIII (the Church’s first statement on modern industrial capitalism), Pius XI (in the midst of the Great Depression), and John Paul II (especially after collapse of communism). When the responsibility for influencing the shape of social life was lesser, popes took on the role of commentators who critically addressed the abuses evident in social life. Not being tied up in current political trends allowed popes to embrace the principle of “eschatological reservation,” to use Johann Baptist Metz term, which stresses that human actions are always (and necessarily) incomplete and temporary, invites critical engagement with the world around us, especially its social and political problems, as a way to identify our present inadequacies.

But by being more selective in their approach and tailored narrowly to the present, “pastoral” critical assessments have been more susceptible to the “spirit of the age.”

Obviously, both these traditions and approaches are complementary and penetrate and complement one another. But at the same time they have quite different functions and different aims. Both methods are among the ways in which the Church operates, but *magisterium pontificium* never stressed the distinction existing between them. They can not be completely and clearly separated, but the lack of critical reflection on their differences makes more difficult the application of Catholic Social Thought in a specific practice of the Church and its implementation in the real world.

It is a reason why increase awareness of these different functions I consider as a really important for the future.

The importance of this issue will become clearer in the light of the second part of my speech.

## 2. End of “Enlightenment paradigm” in economy?

The birth of modern economics is generally traced to 1776, the year that marked the publication of Adam Smith’s famous *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. We should actually look back almost a century earlier, to 1687. That is when Isaac Newton published his most celebrated opus, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*. Newton’s work said nothing about economics, of course. But in laying out the law of universal gravitation and the laws of motion, Newton strongly influenced Enlightenment thinkers. This influence had little to do with mathematical problems, Rather, with his

discoveries, Newton restored man's central position in the universe, which Copernicus had undermined. For it turned out that the human mind was capable of discovering the universe's laws and invisible forces, and therefore of unraveling its mysteries. Here was the source of the next century's fast-spreading conviction of the omnipotence of human reason. The religion of progress was born, and it soon conquered Western culture. Chemists, psychologists, economists, historians, biologists, sociologists — all these and more embraced the idea of the human mind's unlimited capabilities.

And just as Newton identified an invisible force that governed bodies, Enlightenment thinkers welcomed the idea of an unseen force that ruled the individual human psyche and social and economic life. Thus the *invisible hand*—a term Adam Smith used only three times, in three different meanings and in three different works (and once in his *History of Astronomy* as “invisible hand of Jupiter”!)—became a “philosopher's stone” of mainstream Western economic thought. Much like the universal gravitational force in physics, the *invisible hand* in economics emerged as the unseen but undeniable force that explains everything and governs absolutely. The idea of the *invisible hand* followed naturally from an idea, unknown to Smith, that economic life is amoral. Bernard Mandeville presented the latter concept in his *Fable of the Bees* (1714), which is best summarized by its subtitle, *Private Vices, Public Benefits*: it turns out that the “private vices” of self-interest and indulging human desires lead to the “public benefit” of increased wealth.

The extraordinary economic progress, a huge increase of wealth in the West during last centuries seemed to confirm this Enlightenment paradigm in economy (although often at the cost of injustice and abuse).

But what reveals clearer and clearer is that this enormous progress was possible at the time when the economy was set in a vibrant Christian ethics and culture.

Today the consequences of eroding the cultural foundations of Western societies—that is, the foundations of Christian anthropology and Christian ethics—cannot be ignored. As economic growth stagnates worldwide and the economists' mathematical models grow more complex but display less predictive power, the chorus of doubt about the “Enlightenment paradigm” grows louder. That dogmatic way of understanding economic life seems more and more unfit to today's reality. No longer can we openly praise the rejection of ethical standards. We are witnessing a growing appreciation for the importance of ethical foundations, particularly as the source of interpersonal trust, which enables the cooperation essential to a market economy. It is no surprise, therefore, that books saying things quite obvious from the point of view of Catholic Social Teaching — such as Michael Sandel's *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, Tomas Sedlacek's *Economics of Good and Evil* or a reflection on economic inequality like Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* has become an international sensations.

More recent crises in the Western world—the bursting of the dot-com bubble (2001), the worldwide collapse in financial and banking markets (2007–8), the crisis in the eurozone (2010)—have increased doubts about an Enlightenment paradigm that sees man as *homo economicus*.

Thus we have reason to hope that in this century the paradigm of “scientific” economics (reductive and depersonalized) will be replaced with a more “human” economy. In this matter Catholic Social Thought can be an important partner in the public debate.

So I do hope that in the coming decades we will have a real chance to create an economy more concentrated on human person as a subject and a goal of economic life and it means to create more human world in XXI century.