



“ They called for manpower and human beings show up.

MAX FRISCH (1911-1991), on the problem of “foreign workers”

“ We are firmly convinced that an immense Christian-Social error was made by doing either nothing at all until now or else precisely the wrong thing about the workers.

ADOLPH KÖLPING (1813-1865), German priest who ministered to the urban working class



“ The social question concerns the *depositum fidei*.

BISHOP WILHELM EMMANUEL VON KETTLER (1811-1877), German bishop (*depositum fidei* = deposit of faith, the essential truths of the faith)

tending Holy Mass on Sunday, man’s sights are directed toward the real goal of his life. The commandment to rest on the Sabbath is thus also a bulwark against the (voluntary or compulsory) enslavement of human beings by work. The commandment to keep the Sabbath was established for both purposes: to free man for divine worship, but also to protect mankind, especially the poor, from exploitation by their masters.

258 2185-2188 47

140 What is “the worker question”?

Industrialization and the spread of the free-market economy led in the nineteenth century to swift, unprecedented technological and economic development in Europe and the United States. As a result, countless people seeking a better life streamed from the poor villages into the rapidly growing industrial cities in order to work in the modern factories. But all too often their hopes were dashed. In the early phase of industrialization, many factory workers suffered because of inhumane working conditions and inadequate wages. They and their families had too little to live on and too many fatal hazards. Unemployment, disability, and health insurance did not yet exist. In this way, a new social stratum or “class” developed: the proletariat, which was excluded from the benefits



of the growing economic prosperity and so became socially dependent on the rest of society.

267 2427-2428, 2460 438-439

141 How did the Church’s social teaching come about?

With the development of her social teaching, the Church tried to respond to the challenge of the worker question. Ever since the early phase of Western industrialization, individual figures like the Bishop of Mainz, Germany, Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler (1811-1877), have dealt with this problem. In the first social encyclical, *RERUM NOVARUM* (1891), Pope Leo XIII condemned the division of society into social classes and criticized the low wages and poor working conditions prevalent in the early phase of industrialization as an offense against human dignity and social human rights. The pope demanded that workers receive a fair share of the growing economic prosperity and urgently warned against the dangers of class warfare.

267, 268 2419-2423 438-439

142 What is the difference between the Church’s social teaching and Marxism?

Karl Marx (1818-1883) also developed his Communist doctrine as a reaction to the worker question. For him, however, the answer was an inevitable class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie had to be violently dispossessed, and a dictatorship of the proletariat was to be set

“ The great mistake made in regard to [the social question] is to take up with the notion that class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict. So irrational and so false is this view that the direct contrary is the truth.

POPE LEO XIII (1810-1903), RN 19

“ Not religion, but revolution is the opium of the people.

SIMONE WEIL (1909-1941), French philosopher and mystic, who was very involved in political and social activity

“ The social sense looks so much like the religious sense that it can be mistaken for it.

SIMONE WEIL (1909-1941)

“ The sources of the dignity of work are to be sought primarily in the subjective dimension, not in the objective one.

POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II (1920-2005), LE 6.

“ The Lord does not regard the importance of works as much as the love with which they are done.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA (1515-1582)



The Works of Mercy



168 How does a Christian react to his own poverty?

He will do all that he can to free himself and his own family from poverty through conscientious, persistent work. Often "evil" structures and unjust forces that limit opportunities for property ownership, self-support, and material progress for the poor have to be overcome by working together with others.

325 2443-2446 449-450

169 What should I do about other people's poverty?

Because God loves every individual human being "unto death on the cross", Christians look at their fellowmen in a new light. Even in the poorest of the poor they recognize Christ, their Lord. Christians are therefore deeply motivated to do everything possible to alleviate the suffering of others. In doing so they take as their guide the →WORKS OF MERCY. One can help person-to-person. But it is also possible, through donations, indirectly to help poor people to survive and to live in dignity. Much more important, however, is assistance that enables the poor person to free himself from his poverty, for example, by finding him a job or by giving him a better education. In doing so, no one should feel overburdened, but no one should feel too easily exempt. Businessmen make an important contribution toward the fight against poverty by creating jobs and humane working conditions.

329 2447 449-450

170 Can we bring about "the Kingdom of God" through material progress?

If we work passionately and perseveringly for comprehensive human development and to preserve the environment, we can accomplish much but not

The great challenge before us ... is to demonstrate that ... the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal economic activity.

BENEDIKT XVI, CV 26

We can no longer trust in the unseen forces and the invisible hand of the market. Growth in justice requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth: it requires decisions, programs, mechanisms, and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment, and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality.

POPE FRANCIS, EG 204

Today, it is the case that some economic sectors exercise more power than states themselves. But economics without politics cannot be justified, since this would make it impossible to favor other ways of handling the various aspects of the present crisis.

POPE FRANCIS, LS 194





Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

GEN 1:26-27



IMAGO DEI
(Latin for "image of God"). The doctrine which describes biblically (Gen 1:26-27) the outstanding place of man among all creatures: he is the being that can communicate with God.

By his innermost nature, man is a social being.
Vatican Council II, GS 12

The human being develops when he grows in the spirit, when his soul comes to know itself and the truths that God has implanted deep within, when he enters into dialogue with himself and his Creator. When he is far away from God, man is unsettled and ill at ease.
POPE BENEDICT XVI, CIV 11

47 What do we mean when we speak about a person?

With the word "person" we express the fact that every human being has an inviolable dignity. Man was created in God's image (→ IMAGO DEI) (Gen 1:27). So he is the one creature of God that represents the Creator himself in creation. He is "the only creature on earth that God willed for its own sake" (GS 24). As a person created by God, a human being is not something, but rather someone and hence uniquely valuable. As a person, a human being is capable of self-knowledge and reflection on himself, of making free decisions and entering into community with others. And he is called to respond to God in faith. The fact that he is made in God's image and likeness therefore means also that a human being always remains related to God and can develop his full personal potential only in God.

108, 109 356-361, 1702, 1704 56, 58, 63

48 Why is every person a social being?

A human person can survive and develop only with the help of other human beings. Being human entails not only living in a good relationship with God; one must also be very careful to live in good relation-

ships with other people. This begins in the family; it affects one's circle of friends and finally society as a whole. Fundamental for the *social dimension of the human person* is the fact that we are created as man and woman (Gen 2:23). From the very beginning, man and woman possess the same dignity. In mutual help and complementarity, they cope with their lives. God makes the loving union of man and woman fruitful when it results in a child. This is why the family is the primordial cell of every society.

110, 111 360-361 61, 64

49 What does it mean to live in society?

Social life is originally experienced in the family. The family thrives when its members regularly talk to one another, when it develops a culture of mutual consideration, and when individual interests are repeatedly subordinated to the community and welfare of all. The family is creative as God is creative not only because it brings forth children. As social beings in relation, we human beings have a share in God's creative power. Hence we are also responsible for creation and for every other personal living being. Each one of these human persons is sacred and inviolable, always and everywhere. Our social responsibility pertains also to animals, which we should treat kindly. And it pertains also to nature, which must not be exploited but used sustainably and responsibly. Central to Catholic social teaching, however, is the hu-

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.
Declaration of Independence (1776) of the thirteen colonies that formed the United States of America



In the realm of ends, everything has either a price or a dignity. What has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; what on the other hand is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity.

IMMANUEL KANT (1724-1804), German philosopher, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* II (1785)

