

## **MEN AND WOMEN FOR OTHERS**

### **PROMOTION OF JUSTICE AND EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE**

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### **EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE**

The theme of “education for justice” has in recent years become one of the Church’s major concerns. It received special attention at the recent Synod of Bishops, whose main theme was “Justice in the World.” The Church has acquired a new awareness of how Christians’ action on behalf of justice and liberation from all oppressive situations—and consequently their participation in the transformation of this world—now form a constitutive part of the mission which the Lord Jesus has entrusted to her.<sup>1</sup> This new consciousness impels the Church to educate (or better to re-educate) herself, her children, and all men and women by methods that teach us to “live our lives in the global context and according to the evangelical principles of personal and social morality as they are expressed in living Christian witness.”<sup>2</sup>

### **MEN AND WOMEN FOR OTHERS**

Our educational goal and objective is to form men and women who live not for themselves but for God and for his Christ, who died and rose for us. “Men and women for others” are persons who cannot conceive of

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<sup>1</sup> *Justice in the World*, Document of the 1971 Synod of Bishops, ## 6, 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Justice in the World*, # 49.

love of God without love of neighbor. Theirs is an efficacious love that has justice as its first requirement; for them justice is the sure guarantee that our love of God is not a farce or perhaps a pharisaical guise to conceal our selfishness. All the scriptures make us aware of this intimate relation between love of God and efficacious love of others. Listen simply to these verses of Saint John: “Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers and sisters are liars, for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen.” “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and in action.”<sup>3</sup>

## OBSTACLES

This educational task of forming men and women who truly live for others is confronted with tremendous obstacles. The Synod itself warns us of this and makes us aware that in most of the world the orientation of the present educational system (including schools and mass media) is moving in precisely the opposite direction. Instead of producing men and women with social consciousness, “they encourage a narrow *individualism*.” Instead of viewing education as preparation for service, they produce “*a mentality that exalts possession of things*” and that reduces schools and universities to being the training grounds for learning how to obtain promotions, earn money, and rise above others, sometimes through exploitation. Finally, and perhaps most seriously, the established social order (or disorder) has such great influence on educational institutions and the mass media that these, instead of creating “new men and women,”

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<sup>3</sup> 1 John 4:20; 3:17-18.

merely reproduce “people as they are,” the “people that the established order desires, that is, people in its own image and likeness,” incapable of bringing about any true transformation of reality.<sup>4</sup>

## **OUR INITIAL ATTITUDE**

After this preamble, you will understand that it is not at all easy for a General of the Society of Jesus to speak to alumni of Jesuit schools, that is, to the men and women who have been educated by us. As I will say in a moment, I take up this theme with a firm attitude of confidence and with an optimistic spirit. I believe that the family atmosphere that envelops us here will awaken a profound wisdom among us and allow us to speak with complete sincerity.

## **HUMILITY: WE ARE NOT EDUCATED**

Feeling buoyed by this confidence, I want to respond in all sincerity to a question that for some time has been floating in the air and has no doubt been asked by more than one of you. Have we educated you for justice? Are you educated for justice? Let me try to answer. If we use the term “justice” and the phrase “education for justice” in the profound sense in which the Church uses those terms today, then I think that we Jesuits in all humility have to give a negative response: we have not educated you for justice in the way that God requires of us in these days. And I believe I can also ask you to be humble enough to respond likewise: no, you are not educated for justice, and you must still supplement the education you have already received. There is a very profound sense in which we must all be

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<sup>4</sup> *Justice in the World*, # 51.

in a process of permanent education.

What is more, even though real advances have been made in some places, I would not dare to say that even today we are educating for justice the students presently in our schools or the other persons whom we influence in our various apostolic activities. I think I can assure you, nevertheless, that for some time now the Society has been quite concerned in this regard and that our concern has already shown some fruits. Indeed, we have experienced much incomprehension and even some persecution as a result of our efforts.

### **CONFIDENCE: THE PROBING SPIRIT PROPER TO THE SOCIETY**

As I just told you, recognizing our past and present limitations does not prevent us from treating the theme before us with confidence and optimism. And our confidence and optimism are based on the following: despite our historical limitations and deficiencies, I believe that the Society has transmitted to you something of the very essence of the Ignatian spirit, and I believe you have preserved this spirit well, just as the Society has. We have preserved something that allows us to renew ourselves continually, namely, the spirit of continual searching for the will of God and a keen spiritual sensibility for discerning the ways in which God wants Christianity to be lived at the different stages of history. It has been said with some truth that the Society of Jesus—and even more the spirituality of the Exercises—offers very few concrete details for defining a Jesuit or, correspondingly, a person who has been educated by Jesuits. There is no fixed and permanent image available. In saying that, I don't mean to say that the person who emerges from the Exercises is amorphous, colorless, and featureless. Quite the contrary.

The Exercises are a method for making concrete decisions according to the will of God; they are a method for choosing among various alternatives. Nevertheless, the Exercises of themselves do not limit us or confine us to any particular alternative; rather, they open us completely to the horizon of manifold alternatives so that the One who marks our path is God himself in his tremendous originality.

An example taken from the Society itself will help us to understand what I mean. The Society was born before Trent and before the Catholic reaction to the Protestant Reformation had taken definitive shape. The Society was born free and ready for whatever was needed. The Society came into being at that particular moment of history without being concretely defined, except for an attitude of seeking God's will and being ready for anything. The Society sought God's will in the three places where it becomes manifest: in the Gospel, in the concrete life of the Church under the Roman Pontiff, and in what we would today call "the signs of the times." By heeding and discerning the voice of the Spirit as it was revealed through those three channels, the Society gradually found its specific path and took on particular features and characteristics. The Society of Jesus has not been a shapeless order. It has made options that have defined it quite concretely. In fact, most historians consider it to be the kind of order that is typical of Trent and the post-Tridentine period. Its basic pluralism—or what might be called its "pluralist potential"—leaves it in principle open to almost everything, but that pluralism has not left the Society lacking in functional effectiveness; rather, pluralism has been the foundation on which very clear options have been made in accord with the requirements of history.

And that is precisely what the Society is doing today. As the Church moves beyond the post-Tridentine period and as new "signs of the times" emerge on the historical horizon, the Society feels itself obliged to ask

about the path it is currently taking and to seek out once again, on the basis of its fundamental pluralist potential, the historical form it should take. What is essential to the Society is not the spirit of Trent but fidelity to the historical call of God, which at a certain moment in time asked it to adopt that spirit of Trent, but which today is asking it to embody the spirit of Vatican II in its life and its concrete options. If the Society wants to be faithful to itself, if it does not want to betray what is most characteristic of its spirit, then paradoxically, it must profoundly change most of the concrete forms it assumes in any particular epoch.

Let us return now to you alumni and the theme of justice. If we have not failed totally in the formation we gave you, then we trust that we've transmitted to you this spirit of availability and openness to change—or in biblical language, a capacity for repentance and conversion. I believe we have taught you to listen to the living God, to read the Gospel in such a way that by its light we are able to discover ever new aspects of God's revelation. We have taught you to be attentive to the Church, in whose realm the Word of God, ever ancient and ever new, sounds with the precise tone that each age needs. That is what is important, and on that alone our confidence rests.

Therefore, despite any limitations in the education we have given you, if we have succeeded in giving you this Ignatian spirit, then we have ultimately given you everything. For the important thing is not that you are former students of the Society of Jesus. In fact, I'm happy to say that I have no inclination to tell you in triumphal fashion: "We Jesuits have taught you everything. Just remember what you learned from us!" No, nothing like that. Our glory, if we have any—or better, our joy—is not in reminding you that you are our former students but in realizing that you, perhaps with the help of the training we gave you, are now, along with us, students and disciples of the Lord Jesus. As such, you are men and

women who want to discern God's will for the present times. Therefore, I do not speak to you as a father but as a simple companion. We are all schoolmates seated together on the same benches, trying to hear the Lord's words

## **PROPOSITION**

The purpose of my words today is only to help you to listen to God. We want to begin a dialogue in which you also take part so that among all of us we discover what the Spirit is asking of the Church today in this matter of justice and education for justice.

I am going to limit myself to two series of considerations. In the first series I want to draw on the teaching of the last Synod in order to examine in depth the very idea of justice, a concept which, thanks to the combined light of the Gospel and the signs of the times, is taking on an ever clearer profile for us. The second series of considerations will deal with the kind of person we want to form, the type of person we must become if we want to serve the evangelical ideal of justice. We are talking about spiritually renewed persons, men and women for others, moved by the Spirit that transforms the face of the earth.

## **JUSTICE**

### **STARTING POINT: THE TEACHING AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1971 SYNOD**

The starting point for our reflection on justice will be, as we just stated, some statements of the last Synod of bishops, held at the end of 1971.

## THE CHURCH'S ATTITUDE OF LISTENING IN THE SYNOD

These statements are not merely a repetition of what has been taught before in the Church, nor are they simply a sort of abstract development of doctrine. Rather, they are a poignant expression of the earnest plea that God is making to the Church and to all human beings to adopt generous attitudes and to undertake effective action on behalf of those who are oppressed and suffering.

The introduction to the Synod document describes for us the attitude of listening and conversion that the bishops adopted at the Synod so that God could appeal to them and show them his concrete will. Their listening was not something superficial and improvised. It involved asking questions of God and discerning the action of his Spirit in the signs of the times, so that, thus enlightened, they could reinterpret the message of salvation and detect in it nuances that previously had gone unnoticed. This is a vital process that has been spreading and developing in the Church for years now. It clearly originated in Vatican II, and its application to the problem of justice was strongly advanced by the encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*. This spark was ignited at the center of Christianity but then quickly spread to the outlying parts, especially the poorest regions. The Synod is only the latest blaze generated by those flames.

Let us keep in mind these dates. In 1967 Paul VI issued *Populorum Progressio*, a document to which he had already alluded during his trip to India in 1966. During the three years following the publication of the encyclical, the pope presided at various meetings of Third World bishops who came together to reflect on what God was asking of their churches in the post-conciliar period, most especially in regard to justice. Some day history will pass judgment on the tremendous importance of these meetings, which are already giving the Church a new complexion. In 1968

there was a meeting of the Latin American Church in Medellín. In 1969 there was a meeting of the African Church in Kampala. In 1970 there was a meeting of the Asian Church in Manila. As a result of these meetings, shortly before the Synod, in 1971, the pope wrote *Octogesima Adveniens*, which was far from being a final statement. In fact, it wasn't even issued in the solemn form of an encyclical but simply as a letter addressed to a cardinal. This was the pope's way of telling us that the purpose of the document was to generate dialogue and encourage people to an active part in it. This is the setting in which we should understand the Synod. The working documents given to the Synod Fathers were precisely the main texts dedicated to justice from the meetings in Medellín, Kampala, and Manila.

## **THE DOCUMENT'S INTRODUCTION: AN ATTITUDE OF LISTENING AND THE RESULT**

Now that we are conscious of the full force they have, we can read some paragraphs from the introduction of the Synod document: "Gathered from the whole world, in communion with all who believe in Christ and with the entire human family, and opening our hearts to the Spirit who is the whole of creation new, we have questioned ourselves about the mission of the People of God to further justice in the world.

"Scrutinizing the 'signs of the times' and seeking to detect the meaning of emerging history, ... we have listened to the Word of God so that we might be converted to the fulfilling of the divine plan for the salvation of the world. "We have been able to perceive the serious injustices which are creating in the world a network of domination, oppression, and abuses.

"At the same time we have noted an inmost stirring that is moving the

world in its depths. ... In associations of people and among peoples themselves, a new awareness is arising which is shaking them out of any fatalistic resignation and which is spurring them on to liberate themselves and to be responsible for their own destiny. People are organizing movements which express hope in a better world and a will to change whatever has become intolerable.”<sup>5</sup>

After these initial words with the questions they pose, the bishops astutely anticipate in the same introduction *the answer they believe they have heard from God*. They state that the preaching of the Gospel cannot be separated from action in favor of justice, or from participating in the transformation of the world, or from liberating people from all oppressive situations. For all of these are a constitutive part of the Gospel and of the Church’s mission. But let us hear their own words: “Listening to the cry of those who suffered violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures, ... we are keenly conscious that the Church's vocation is to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming Good News to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted. The hopes and forces which are moving at the very foundations of the world are not foreign to the dynamism of the Gospel, which through the power of the Holy Spirit frees people from personal sin and from its consequences in social life.”

The introduction goes on to say that our present-day history, with all its vicissitudes and tragedies, “directs us to sacred history, where God has revealed himself to us and made known to us, as it is brought progressively to realization, his plan of liberation and salvation which is once and for all fulfilled in the Paschal Mystery of Christ.”

The final and perhaps most important words are the following: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the

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<sup>5</sup> *Justice in the World*, # 1-4.

Gospel, that is, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”<sup>6</sup>

## **THE DOCUMENT'S CENTRAL PART: AN ATTITUDE OF LISTENING AND THE RESULT**

Allow me to read still another paragraph, one taken from the very heart of the document. It expresses with even greater clarity both the Church's new awareness of her mission to promote justice and the originality of this awareness, which results from the theological method of heeding the signs of the times and re-interpreting the Gospel accordingly.

Listen first to these words concerning this method, which harmonizes closely with our Ignatian method: “The present situation of the world, seen in the light of faith, calls us back to the very essence of the Christian message, creating in us a deep awareness of its true meaning and its urgent demands.”

The document then shows the result of applying this method to the problem of justice: “The mission of preaching the Gospel requires at the present time that we dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world.”<sup>7</sup>

## **AN ATTITUDE OF RECONCILIATION AND COMPLEMENTARY THESES**

With the foregoing as a basis, let us now consider some factors that will help us to advance toward a Christian conception of justice and to lay a firm foundation for effective action. We can begin by speaking about the

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<sup>6</sup> *Justice in the World*, # 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> *Justice in the World*, # 35.

need for us to reach agreement on several theses that are sometimes presented nowadays as contrary or contradictory. Harmonizing these opposed theses will be impossible if we fail to adopt a sincere attitude of reconciliation among ourselves.

## **TENSIONS IN THE CHURCH**

You are quite aware that serious tensions exist today within the bosom of the Church, and even more so within associations of Catholic inspiration. These tensions are in large part based on the different degrees to which we have assimilated and accepted the new appeals the Lord is making to us. I am not referring to persons who are holding fast to what they call traditional ways as a means of defending their personal or their group interests; such attitudes end up collaborating with oppressive political and economic structures.<sup>8</sup> Instead, for many people the temptation is more subtle, and in some cases their reluctance to change has some foundation. They fear that the new currents will diminish Christianity and reduce it to the level of simple humanism which takes no account of God, Christian love (as opposed to simple justice), grace, sin, personal conversion, or the afterlife. They fear that these will be replaced by the cold demands of justice, a strictly this-worldly humanism, the reform of structures, and the belief that God's Kingdom should come in this life.

## **OVERCOMING THE ALTERNATIVES THAT EXCLUDE ONE**

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Juan Alfaro, S.J., "Cristianismo y justicia," Comisión Pontificia Justicia y Paz (La justicia en el mundo, 3), PPC (Madrid, 1973), p.42. Fr. Alfaro, professor of the Gregorian University, took part in the 1971 Synod as one of the "special assistants to the Secretary."

## ANOTHER

As long as the opposing sides view the problem in terms of alternatives that exclude one another, there can be no solution to the problem. We will soon begin the Holy Year of Reconciliation, and even if we cannot solve this problem definitively, perhaps we can contribute to true reconciliation within the Church by trying to move beyond this dilemma of conflicting alternatives.

Those who have gladly heard the new interpretations of the Spirit of the Lord and are conscious of their great novelty should not forget that they are coming from the same Spirit who has always been active in the Gospel and in the Church. Their novelty does not annul the traditional teachings of the Christian message; indeed, it reaffirms them and brings them to greater fullness. We should also be mindful that forgetfulness of this or simply insufficient explanation—especially if joined to a harsh and contemptuous attitude toward those who think differently—will understandably provoke a conservative reaction. As a result, many people who find novelty more difficult to accept will be deprived of the new lights and graces with which the Lord now wishes to enrich us.

At the same time, Christians who are concerned about preserving the perennial values should also learn from today's Church that those values should be viewed not as dead realities but as living realities that are capable of producing new flowers and fruits of surprising, unexpected richness. They should also reflect that their refusal to accept sincerely and unreservedly the newness of life to which the Spirit now impels us will provoke a reaction that is also understandable: some people will abandon or treat as secondary other less known but no less important aspects of the Gospel message and of the Christian way of life.

## **SIX PAIRS OF COMPLEMENTARY THESES**

My purpose here is not to bring about an opportunistic harmonization of irreconcilable opposites. I am convinced that the principal Christian affirmations and attitudes relating to justice are true and correct only if they bring into profound harmony extremes which at times are presented as contradictory and conflicting. I here offer a list of the main pairings of apparent oppositions.

1. Effective justice for people and a religious attitude toward God
2. Love of God and love of others
3. Christian love (charity) and justice
4. Personal conversion and reform of structures
5. Salvation and liberation in this life and in the other
6. The Christian ethos and its technological and ideological mediations

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPLEMENTARY THESES**

A completely satisfactory development of these affirmations would require a long treatise. I am going to limit myself to a few sketches about how to harmonize each of these oppositions.

### **EFFECTIVE JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE AND A RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD**

First of all, we need to overcome the apparent opposition, and even separation, between the human, historical imperative of promoting justice for people and maintaining a religious attitude toward God, an attitude that becomes concrete in the Church's mission of preaching the Gospel and

bringing integral salvation to all people. Certainly the church's mission does not consist only in the promotion of justice here on earth; nevertheless, promotion of justice is a constitutive element of that mission. The God of the Bible, the God of Exodus, is the God who liberates the poor and the oppressed here in this world.<sup>9</sup> The Ancient Covenant, the pact between God and his chosen people, included as a basic element the practice of justice, such that a violation of the justice due to human beings implied a rupture of the Covenant with God.<sup>10</sup> We can even claim that in the beginnings of the history of revelation the relations of human beings with God were viewed more in terms of temporal, earthly welfare. The prophets developed that conception by adding more spiritual elements, but these in no way negated the earlier ones. The Messiah who was promised and awaited was seen as a liberator who would bring justice to the poor and the oppressed.<sup>11</sup>

The truth is that Christ, when he came, superseded that conception and broadened the horizons of salvation, but without undoing the ancient contents. In many gospel passages Saint Matthew and Saint Luke see in Jesus the eschatological Prophet announced in Isaiah 42:1-4 and 61:1-2. Jesus received from God the mission of announcing the Good News to the poor, of liberating those who were oppressed, and of bringing about the triumph of justice. This is the context in which we should understand the meaning of the Beatitudes, which, according to the best modern exegetes, should be interpreted in their simplest, most direct sense: the poor are blessed because the Kingdom has arrived and they will no longer be poor, for their Liberator is already at hand.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp. 11-13.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-26.

## LOVE OF GOD AND LOVE OF OTHER PERSONS

In the foregoing discussion of how Christ assumed and radicalized the horizontal dimension that was so evident in the Old Testament and so fused with the vertical dimension in himself, we already touched on the second complementary thesis: the identification of love of God with love of other human beings. It was Jesus himself who, without being asked, proclaimed that the second great commandment was similar to the first. He went so far as to unite them into a single commandment that summed up the Law and the Prophets. Consequently, the sole criterion to be used in the Final Judgment, according to the teaching of Jesus, will be love for other persons, because “Whatever you did to one of the least of these who are my sisters and brothers, you did it to me.”<sup>13</sup> And in order for this to be the case, the person being judged does not even have to be aware of the fact that Jesus is identified with those other men and women.<sup>14</sup>

We can express this same perspective using the words of a contemporary theologian from whom we have taken many of the ideas presented in this conference: “Our belonging to or our being excluded from the Kingdom announced by Jesus is decided by our attitude in dealing with the poor and the oppressed, those whom Isaiah 58:1-2 describes as victims of human injustice and for whom God wants to make manifest his justice. But what is truly new is that Jesus makes these despised, marginalized people his ‘sisters and brothers.’ He enters into personal solidarity with all those who are poor and vulnerable, who all those who suffer hunger and misery. All those who find themselves in such a situation are sisters and brothers of Christ. That is why what is

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-26.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 25, 37-39.

done on their behalf is done for Christ himself. Those who provide genuine assistance to these ‘sisters and brothers’ of Jesus belong to the Kingdom; those who abandon the poor to their condition of misery exclude themselves from the Kingdom.”<sup>15</sup> All the other writing of the New Testament—James, Paul, John—repeat with countless nuances this same doctrine about the unity that exists between love of God and love of other persons, above all the oppressed.<sup>16</sup>

### **CHRISTIAN LOVE (CHARITY) AND JUSTICE**

With this reflection we are already touching on the third of our pairs of complementary concepts. Just as love of God and love of neighbor are so fused together in our Christian conception that they impossible to separate, so also love (charity) and justice become fused together and practically identical.

A process of abstraction has led Western thought to make a drastic distinction between charitable love and justice, and this process has had a reductive and impoverishing effect on both concepts. At the present time that distinction is not so marked, but we have still not been able to overcome it completely. In recent centuries the word “charity” (especially as applied to our neighbors) has been used principally to indicate the so-called “works of charity.” Since these are considered to be supererogatory, a very problematic element is introduced into the Christian ethos.

Justice, on the other hand, is taken to indicate something that is strictly obligatory. The symbol of justice is a blind figure with an impassive face;

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-32.

she has a balance in one hand and a sword in the other. If her image is carved in marble, that's all the better because she is perceived to have a cold heart or perhaps no heart at all. Her equanimity is not to be disturbed by any human sentiment or sympathetic feeling. We should not think, however, that that is the only ideal of justice. In the East things are very different, almost the contrary. In classical China, for example, the ideal of justice does not tend toward impersonalization; instead, it assumes the maximum personalization of relationships. A just judge is not the one who judges by applying rules that are formal, abstract, and inflexible; rather, the just judge takes the concrete situation into account and judges persons according to their concrete qualities, that is, with equity and with full knowledge of the how everyone will be affected.<sup>17</sup> Let us note in passing that even in the West the Roman concept of justice, while maintaining its substantive character, was greatly enriched in the medieval period by the Christian notion of equity.

In any case, we do not deny a certain value to the theoretical distinction between charity and justice, but we want to affirm that on the concrete, existential plane the person who does justice cannot be distinguished from the person who loves. Moreover, for Christianity *the two notions are inseparable*, each one implying the other. Let us examine this statement in more detail.

First and most important is what the Synod document itself tells us: "Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, that is, recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor."<sup>18</sup> How is it possible to love and to be unjust

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Max Weber, *The Religion of China. Confucianism and Taoism*. Free Press/Collier-MacMillan Ltd., New York/London 1964, p. 149.

<sup>18</sup> *Justice in the World*, # 34.

toward the person loved? Removing justice from love is to destroy its very essence. There is no such thing as love which fails to consider and recognize the beloved as a person and to respect that person's dignity, with all that that implies.

The second point assumes the first: "Justice attains its intrinsic completeness only in love." Even when using the Roman notion of justice ("giving all persons what is owed to them"), Christians must affirm that what they owe all human beings, enemies included, is precisely love. The Synod gives us the reason for this: "Since every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, Christians find God himself in every person and therefore recognize God's absolute demand for justice and love."<sup>19</sup> Saint Paul confirms this teaching: "Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due. Owe no one anything except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ... All the other commandments are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ... Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."<sup>20</sup>

We have still one more step to take in this process of identification. It is impossible to conceive of Christian love that does not begin with justice and include justice as a constitutive element, but we cannot talk sensibly about Christian justice either if it is not crowned with love. Indeed, there is still more to be said because we are not talking just about human love but about love infused in us by God: no one can be just without loving with the very love that is God's gift to us. "The message of Jesus," Father Alfaro tells us, "carries the Old Testament demands regarding justice to the most profound human level, to the most radical interior dimensions of

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<sup>19</sup> *Justice in the World*, # 34.

<sup>20</sup> Rom 13:7-10.

love; only sincere love of neighbor can give us the strength we need to make justice effective in the world.”<sup>21</sup>

Just as we never know whether we love God unless we love our neighbor, so also we never know whether we love our neighbor unless we do so with a love that has justice as its first fruit. I would even dare to say that the most difficult step for us to take is that step from love to justice; it is the step that is least prone to self-delusion, and it most clearly reveals whether our religious attitude is a charade or not.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, we are talking about justice as revealed to us in the Word of God. We understand it in the light provided by the scriptures and actively catalyzed by the signs of the times. This justice is not limited to an individualist kind of “accomplishment.” Rather, it consists, first of all, in an attitude of enduring respect for all men and women, such that they are never used as instruments for the profit of others. Second, this justice demands a determined effort never to take advantage of or be cajoled into situations and mechanisms of privilege (which are correspondingly mechanisms of oppression); even by passively tolerating such situations, we make ourselves accomplices of this world’s injustice, and we silently enjoy the fruits of that injustice. Third, this justice requires us to mount a counter-offensive, that is, we must resolve to dismantle the unjust

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<sup>21</sup> Alfaro. Cf. *supra*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>22</sup> Editor’s note: We feel obliged to transcribe here what Pope John Paul said nearly nine years later regarding the relation between justice and love: “Christian love energizes justice, inspires it, reveals it, perfects it, makes it feasible, respects it, elevates it, surpasses it, but does not exclude it. To the contrary, Christian love presupposes justice and demands it because true love and true charity cannot exist without justice. Is not justice the minimum measure of charity?” (“To the Workers of the Solvay Co. Factory,” 29 March 1982. Cf. “Ecclesia,” no. 2072, 3 April 1982, p. 13. The pope worked at Solvay, in Cracow, during World War II.)



structures by taking the side of the weak, the oppressed, and the marginalized.

Those who practice this dynamic and this liberating type of justice will seek above all to eliminate injustice from their own lives. Such justice has nothing in common with the vindictive hatefulness of those who feel oppressed or those who are simply reacting against their oppression. The persons who practice this liberating justice will gain nothing by it in this life because they will have to forego many of the fruits of the unjust structures. Moreover, their active solidarity with the weak will bring on them the persecution of the powerful, as was the case with Christ and the prophets. It is clear that no one can make this commitment unless impelled and sustained by love for other human beings and by love (sometimes anonymous) for God. Love is at the root of true justice, and love is also its crown and the seal of its authenticity. We can express all this in still another way: justice is the modality necessarily adopted by authentic love in a world lacerated by personal and structural injustices. In this kind of world, love takes the form of an option for the marginalized and the oppressed because that is the only way to love all human beings, and that is the only way to liberate the oppressed from oppression and the oppressors from the misery of being oppressors. This perspective helps us to understand better the power for renewal that comes from Christ's personal self-identification with the little ones and those who are suffering.

## **PERSONAL CONVERSION AND REFORM OF STRUCTURES**

Let us proceed now to the harmonization of the fourth pair of concepts: personal conversion and reform of structures. To do this, let me make a small detour, which we'll soon see is closely connected with what has

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gone before.

The asceticism of Christian tradition is founded on the following basic truth: sin is not only a personal act that affects the inmost center of ourselves and makes us guilty of offending, but it extends also to what might be called the surface of our being, where it disorders our habits, our customs, our spontaneous reactions, our criteria for judgment, our ways of thinking, our will, and our imagination. At the same time, we are not the only ones who influence what we have called the surface of our personality; it is also affected by all those who have educated us and been part of our lives. We know, moreover, that we have been born with original sin and a nature that is inclined to evil—what is called “concupiscence” in theological language. Concretely, concupiscence in each of us is the combined effect of the sin of Adam and all the personal sins of history, including our own. All of them have a negative effect on our manner of being and acting.

When we are converted, that is, when God works in us the marvel of justification, then our personal center turns both to God and to neighbor so that sin in the strict sense disappears from our inward being. Nevertheless, the effects of sin continue to exercise their tremendous power on the surface of our being, even though we are sometimes not even conscious of it. Those effects are also called “sin” by Saint Paul; they are objectifications or materializations of sin which remain in those who have already been justified. The Council of Trent tells us that concupiscence can be called sin, not because it is sin in the strict sense but because “it proceeds from sin and inclines toward sin.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Enrique Denzinger. *El magisterio de la Iglesia*, Herder. Barcelona, 1955. no. 792 (5), p.227.

As we noted above, this truth is the foundation of Christian asceticism and spirituality. Christ has come to liberate us from sin and to flood the center of our being with his grace, but that grace must display its full potency by conquering for God not only our inner being but also what we have called the surface. Such conquest is necessary in order for justification to produce every more abundant fruits through works of love for God and for other human beings. The work of Christ is not destined to remain hidden away in the secret depths of each human heart, working there a mysterious transformation which will become outwardly known only in the other life. Christ came not only to eliminate sin but also the present effects of sin in this life. To deny this would be to minimize Christian asceticism and spirituality. What is more, concupiscence is not only something that proceeds from sin; it is a materialization of sin itself, so that if it is not combated and eliminated to the fullest extent possible, then it will tend to reproduce itself in the form of personal sin. Consequently, acquiescing to concupiscence means acquiescing to sin itself (and sinning in the strict sense).

Let us now try to relate all this to our effort to relate personal conversion and reform of structures. In a certain sense, these two concepts fit well with what we just said. We have already seen that it is not enough to understand personal conversion strictly in terms of the justification that is brought about in the interior depths of our personality. Such justification is only the root source (though, in the long run, also the effect) of a process of renewal and reform of the outward structures of our being, which at first remain outside our personal center but can little by little be reformed *from* that center.

Naturally we struggle against concupiscence and the effects of sin, which tend to keep sin itself alive, but in doing so, need we limit our struggle only to the effects that influence us individually and affect only our own

personal structure? Why not attack also the effects that influence all of us through the social structures in which we live? There is no profound theological reason not to do so. In this regard, there has been a lacuna in our traditional ascetical and spiritual teaching, and to understand why this is so we should realize that in the past people were more or less conscious that they can change themselves but not much more. Given this consciousness, which was reinforced by Christianity, people felt a moral imperative to change and to eliminate the traces of sin in themselves. It is only in very recent times that people have become aware that the world in which they live—with its structures, its organizations, its ideas, its systems, etc.—is also in large part a product of human freedom and is therefore modifiable and changeable if people truly have a mind to change it.

If we grant this, then the consequences come quickly. In large part, the structures of this world are also objectivizations of sin—by structures we mean customs; laws; social, economic, and political systems; exchange relations; and in general the concrete forms of human interactions. The structures are objectified sin, that is, the fruit of historical sin, and at the same time they are the continual source of new sins. We even have the benefit of a biblical concept to designate this reality: it is the “sin of the world” in the negative sense given it by Saint John. If this concept has not been developed in theology in the same way that the concept of concupiscence has, it is because earlier times did not allow us to go beyond a purely individualist conception of sin. Now that we have developed a new consciousness, we need simply apply to the “sin of the world” the same theological concepts devised for concupiscence in order to give it a tremendous new dynamism. The “sin of the world” becomes in the social sphere what concupiscence <sup>24</sup>is in the individual sphere. We could even call it “social concupiscence,” which, like individual concupiscence,

“proceeds from sin and inclines toward sin.” Accordingly, social concupiscence should be the object of our efforts to achieve ascetical purification, in the same way that individual concupiscence is; in this way a basis would be provided for a new spirituality, or even better, a drastic expansion of the traditional field of asceticism and spirituality.

We have always been told that interior conversion is not enough; we must continually strive to improve ourselves and reclaim for God the whole of our being. Now we become aware that what we have to reclaim and reform is also the whole of our world. In other words, personal conversion cannot be separated from reform of structures.

Even if the former is fundamental in the sense that all objectivization of sin proceeds from personal sins and is overcome only through personal conversion, it is also true that, once the objectivizations of sin (especially those of a more general nature) become established, they maintain such a grip on the lives of many people that personal conversion becomes almost impossible without eliminating the objectivizations themselves. It is also true that none of us can say that we have been personally converted if we still take advantage of those structures for our own benefit or if, being aware of our involvement in them, we simply acquiesce to the structures and reject the idea of eliminating them. As is the case in our individual lives, abstentionism is of no use here but is rather a form of collaborating with sin.

That is why we can affirm, in accord with the Synod, that the “dynamism of the Gospel” frees people not only from personal sin but also “from its consequences in social life,” because “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of this world” are “constitutive dimensions of the preaching of the Gospel and the Church’s mission.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Justice in the World*, # 5, 6.

## **SALVATION AND LIBERATION IN THIS LIFE AND IN THE OTHER**

We have perforce already arrived at the fifth of our harmonized theses: salvation and liberation in this life and in the other. The Synod text we just read is quite explicit, but there is another which is even more so: “The mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of people even in their present existence in this world.”<sup>25</sup>

Let us observe here that we are not being told that our this-worldly efforts will fully attain for us in this life the salvation we seek. Neither are we being told that Christian salvation consists simply in the this-worldly objectives for which we strive. Ultimately our hope always resides in something beyond. Moreover, as we’ve warned already, those who truly work on behalf of justice can hardly expect anything else in this life except persecution.

Nevertheless, that does not mean, first of all, that the tension involved in achieving that this-worldly purification and liberation is not an intrinsic part of the Christian attitude, such that those who reject such tension and refuse to struggle for justice are implicitly renouncing love for their fellow human beings and consequently love for God. Second, the conviction that the struggle for justice never ends and that our efforts are never going to be crowned with complete success in this life does not mean that they are useless or that they achieve nothing at all. Even partial successes are desired by God for they are the first fruits of the salvation brought by Jesus; they are signs of the coming of God’s Kingdom; and their abiding aspects are anticipatory realizations, even if not complete ones, of the Kingdom that has already come and that is always mysteriously growing

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<sup>25</sup> *Justice in the World*, # 37.

among us. Third, the failure experienced by those who are defeated and destroyed in their struggle against the world is only apparent, for the world inevitably pursues and tries to annihilate all those who are not of the world and those who are opposed to it. The persons who, like Christ, “go about doing good and healing everyone”<sup>26</sup> are precisely the ones who die on a cross. The eschatological future of their personal existences is in the hands of God for they were faithful to his Covenant established for the liberation of the poor, and they were faithful to the point of death.

### **THE CHRISTIAN ETHOS AND ITS TECHNOLOGICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL MEDIATIONS**

I will treat this final harmonizing thesis very briefly, but it is an important one; without this thesis this whole talk could be characterized either as ineffective “angelism” or as revolutionary “immediatism,” that is, something ultimately and absolutely futile.

Everything we have presented thus far moves at the level of what we might call the “Christian ethos for justice,” and it provides us the basic attitudes we need. However, passing to action, which is one of the components of that ethos, requires the mediation of technologies and even of ideologies. These are needed first of all for analysis. It is not enough simply to state in general fashion that there are injustices in the world. We must also study the concrete context of this world in order to discover the neuralgic points where sin and injustice are entrenched. Second, there is also a need for technologies, ideologies, and dynamic reform programs to demonstrate the existence of various types of injustice and to uproot them effectively from their bastions. To do that we need plans, tactics, and strategies; we need ordered hierarchies of objectives and determined time-

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<sup>26</sup> Acts 10:38.

lines; and these are almost always incompatible with the naïve demand for immediate results.

It is no simple matter to harmonize the simple Christian ethos in favor of justice and the technological and ideological mediations that are required by the ethos itself. A certain tension is inevitable and beneficial. Without the mediations the ethos is useless, but we must also remember that the ethos, if it lets itself become submerged in the complexity of the mediations, runs the risk of being suffocated or deformed or hopelessly lost in the labyrinth. We must not forget that the technologies and the ideologies, as necessary as they may be, are also the joint products of what is good and what is sinful. Injustice can also infect them, no matter what sign they carry.

The Christian ethos must make use of the mediations, but it must also judge them and relativize them and never allow them to become idols. The encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens* recognizes how much value there is in protest and in utopian ideals for gaining a critical perspective on ideologies and especially on the systems by which the ideologies seek to become concrete reality. “Such criticism of the established society often stimulates the future-oriented imagination not only to perceive the disregarded possibilities hidden within the present but also to direct itself towards a fresh future; it thus sustains social dynamism by the confidence it imparts to the inventive powers of the human mind and heart; and finally, if it remains open to the fullness of reality, it can respond anew to the Christian calling.” We could affirm in this regard that what we have thus far called the Christian ethos in favor of justice is a utopian ideal characterized by—to continue citing *Octagesima Adveniens*—“the Spirit of the Lord, who animates a humanity renewed in Christ and continually breaks down the horizons within which human understanding likes to find security and the limits to which human activity would gladly restrict

itself. There dwells within men and women a power which urges them to go beyond every system and every ideology. ... The dynamism of Christian faith here triumphs over the narrow calculations of egoism. Animated by the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Savior of humankind, and upheld by hope, Christians involve themselves in the building up of the human city, one that is called to be peaceful, just, fraternal, and acceptable as an offering to God.”<sup>27</sup>

None of this, however, denies the need for technological and even ideological mediations. We may have a healthy reaction against the deification of particular systems and ideologies<sup>28</sup>—or against technology and science themselves when they become ideologies<sup>29</sup>— but that reaction should not make us think that we can build a better world without their help. *Octogesima Adveniens* also warns us about this danger: “The appeal to a utopia is often a convenient excuse for those who wish to escape from concrete tasks in order to take refuge in an imaginary world. To live in a hypothetical future is a facile pretext for rejecting immediate responsibilities.”<sup>30</sup>

This is all the more true insofar as Christians can look to the Church and her hierarchy for spiritual light and nourishment. However, lay people should not imagine that their pastors are always great experts; they cannot be expected to give a concrete solution to every problem which arises, no matter how complicated, nor should their mission be conceived as such.”<sup>31</sup> As a religious and hierarchical community, the Church can provide society with what we have called the Christian ethos for justice, which involves criticism, relativization, and demythologization of particular

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<sup>27</sup> Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, # 37.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., ## 25-26.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., ## 25-26.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., # 43.

<sup>31</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican II. Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), # 43.

systems and ideologies.

Such an ethos works for the “defense and promotion of the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person,” and a constitutive part of her mission is “to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of people and their very salvation demand it.”<sup>32</sup> *Octogesima Adveniens*, however, warns us that none of this is sufficient by itself. “It is not enough to recall principles, declare intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action on the part of each individual.”<sup>33</sup>

To take the step into action, we need mediations, and every Christian must decide concretely how the mediations are to be handled. “The members of the Church ... must accept their responsibilities in this entire area. ... In this way they testify to the power of the Holy Spirit through their service to others in those things which are decisive for the existence and the future of humanity. While in such activities they generally act on their own initiative without involving the responsibility of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in a sense they do involve the responsibility of the Church whose members they are.”<sup>34</sup>

## **MEN AND WOMEN FOR OTHERS:**

### **PERMANENT FORMATION AND EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE**

After this long dissertation on the Christian notion of justice, I would be happy if we were able to gain from it just one fruit: the conviction that the we are far from completely assimilating this notion either in our

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<sup>32</sup> *Justice in the World*, ## 36-37.

<sup>33</sup> *Octogesima Adveniens*, # 48

<sup>34</sup> *Justice in the world*, # 38

spontaneous ways of thinking or in our practical activities. If we have come to this conviction, then we have taken a decisive step toward achieving the principal objective of this talk and even of this assembly.

The reason why we are meeting here is to rethink the meaning and the goals of our Alumni Associations, and we believe in principle that such associations are called today to be privileged channels of ongoing formation.

Today there is much talk of ongoing formation, but it is often understood in a very limited way. It is seen simply as a matter of updating our technical and professional skills so that we can keep up with the ever more challenging competition we face. Sometimes ongoing formation also includes the goal of reeducating people to live in a “totally different society” or to face the challenge of a continually changing world. This task is absolutely necessary for living in today’s world, but it cannot give us all we need. From the perspective of Christian values, such re-education is a neutral task and can even be a negative one; it all depends on the basic orientation we have given to our existence. To the extent that we orient them toward others and toward justice, there is positive value in technical and professional training and in the ability to find new meaning in the midst of change; but if we use them only for our own personal interests or for our group interests, then they are negative. In any case, the concept of ongoing formation, as used in common parlance, lacks what is most specific to all Christian formation, namely, the call to conversion. Speaking about ongoing formation in Christianity means speaking about continual conversion, and today that means speaking specifically about formation for justice.

We were not joking when we began this talk by confessing that we have not really been educated for justice. Only when we become aware of this lack and make this humble confession, accompanied by a determination

to change, will it make sense for us to discuss seriously the problem of our own formation. Naturally, I leave to your own deliberations the analysis of the concrete forms which this formation for justice can and should take, and I also leave to your study and judgment the choice of the organizational means for putting it into practice.

Under the general motto, “men and women for others,” I am going to limit myself in this second part of my talk to sketching out three series of considerations. The first will try to justify our use of this expression and explain the meaning we have given it. The second series will consider one indispensable quality that those “men and women for others” should have today if they truly want to serve others effectively: they must be agents and promoters of change. The third series will deal with another important and quite radical condition: that of being a person docile before God. “Men and women for others” should be persons who are impelled by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit whose anointing will endow them with flexibility and sensitivity in their most inward being. Thus inspired, they will be able to discern, hear, and follow the Spirit’s voice, which will be made manifest to them in the works which the same Spirit accomplishes in the world, in the entire life of the Church, and in their own personal depths. All this will take place in the light of a continual re-reading of the Gospel message, which will release little by little, in an unending process, the fullness of its meaning and its demands.

## **MEN AND WOMEN FOR OTHERS: JUSTIFICATION AND MEANING OF THE PHRASE**

### **PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS**

My first approximation will be of a philosophical nature but without any pretensions. It seems that the human person may be characterized as a “being for self,” that is, a being centered on himself or herself. Simple reflection on the data of our experience provides us with evidence that a being’s degree of plenitude and perfection increases in proportion to its internal capacity for self-centralization, which paradoxically coincides with the degree of its complexity. The most perfect beings are at once the most centralized and the most complex: we move from protons to atoms to simple molecules to crystals to macromolecules to viruses to protozoan cells to complex plants, which harmonize and unify millions of cells, and finally to animals, which have even greater complexity and yet also a greater centrality, giving them sensation and movement.

Finally there are human beings, possessed of the radical centrality that endows them with consciousness. Thanks to their intelligence and the power they derive from it, human beings tend to dominate the world by taking control of it and orienting its activities to themselves.

Nevertheless, we also know from experience that human beings can “lose their center” when they become too self-centered. Each human person is a spiritual center endowed with consciousness, intelligence, and power. But we are centers who are called to go out of ourselves, to give of ourselves, and to reach out to others in love. Love is the definitive and encompassing dimension of human beings; it is the dimension that gives all the other dimensions their meaning, their value, or their lack of value. Only the person who loves becomes fully realized as human. We are most truly persons not when we close in upon ourselves but when we open up to others. Our “knowing” and our “having,” that is, our centering on ourselves and appropriating things through intelligence or power, are certainly dimensions that enrich us, but they are such only to the extent that they do not close us off to other persons but rather enhance our

loving self-donation to others. When people not only increase their worldly “knowledge” or “wealth” but also place them at the service of humanity, they are carrying out the task of humanizing themselves and humanizing the world.

## **THE DEHUMANIZATION OF EGOTISM**

Frequently, however, things happen otherwise, and the centralizing movement stops within the person. When there is an accumulation of “knowledge” and “power” and “wealth” and they are used exclusively to serve oneself and are withdrawn from others, then the process becomes perverted and dehumanizing.

First of all, the accumulating process dehumanizes the direct victims of the conduct. The least that can be said of persons who do not live for others is that they contribute nothing to their sisters and brothers. The first step in the ladder is thus a sin of omission of which we are almost never conscious. This sin can take the form of simply a listless existence, or it can go further and take the form of an existence based on speculative transactions. In this group can also be placed those who participate positively in the productive process (by contributing to the growth of wealth or knowledge), but who take such advantage of their situation of privilege and power in setting the terms of contracts that those who are weaker end up with a negative balance.

Let us suppose, however, that we are in a situation where there is still no type of unjust appropriation. Those persons who live for themselves alone fail to contribute anything to society, but what is more, they tend to accumulate ever greater parcels of knowledge, power, and wealth, and in so doing they displace from the centers of power great multitudes of persons, leaving them marginalized.

Not only that, but selfish persons do not humanize things, for the only way that things can be humanized is by putting them at the service of others. Instead, they convert human persons into things, making them objects of exploitation and domination and appropriating to themselves part of the fruit of their labor.

Second, at a more radical level, those who do not live for others dehumanize themselves. Such cases are unfortunately very common because, for such dehumanization to take place, it is not necessary to take advantage of others in reality; it is sufficient simply to desire to do so. Many persons who are victims of the indifference or the oppression of others also become tyrants over themselves (and sometimes over other persons as well) simply because they have assimilated the behavioral patterns of their oppressors. Almost all of us—especially those of us imprisoned by the subtle webs of consumer society—take an active part in this suicidal work of dehumanization.

If we're honest, we'll admit that we all tend to evaluate ourselves by the same criteria that society uses to evaluate us. And modern society does not value people for what they *are* or even for what they *know*, but simply for what they *have* or what they *can obtain*. Power and wealth are the measures of value. Our spontaneous tendency, therefore, is to identify with our wealth. In the eyes of others and in our own eyes, our being and our value are measured by the wealth we possess. When this happens, wealth very quickly ceases to be a means and becomes rather an end. Human beings need very few things to live humanly, but their desires know no limits when their value is measured by wealth or by the power they possess. Even when we complain about being treated as “things,” we actually make ourselves into things when we identify with our wealth. We have the conviction that we have triumphed in life, not when we have given disinterestedly to others but when we have gained a position, won a

business deal, exercised influence, bought a farm, or fattened our stock portfolio.

Nevertheless, something deep within us gets revealed each time we define ourselves in terms of things. We feel frustrated. In our depths we know that what we possess does not determine who we are or what we are worth. We want simply to be ourselves, but we don't dare to break the vicious circle. We strive to "have even more" or, what is worse, to "have more than others," thus making life into a senseless competition. The spiral of ambition, competitiveness, and self-destruction twists endlessly over itself, in ever wider circles that bind us with ever greater force to a dehumanized, frustrating existence. As a result, it becomes ever more necessary to increase our power and improve the efficacy of the mechanisms that produce oppression and yield profit. In this way, our dehumanization of ourselves leads directly to the dehumanization of others, which we spoke of in an earlier section.

This brings us to the third dehumanizing aspect of our selfish attitudes: not only do they dehumanize ourselves and others, but they dehumanize social structures as well. This is one of the clearest examples of what I called "objectified sin" in the first part of my talk. As a result of our sins of selfishness and our dehumanizing acts, which not only exploit others but also destroy our own human integrity, sin becomes hardened and objectified into ideas, structures, and anonymous organisms that escape our direct control. Sin installs itself in the world as a titanic force that has us firmly in its grip.

## **THE HUMANIZATION OF LOVE**

How to escape from this vicious circle? It truly is a circle, because the three dehumanizing effects of unrestrained selfishness weave themselves

tightly together to form a knot that is nearly impossible to untie. We are well aware that personal egotism, the sum total of all our personal attitudes of selfishness, is at the root of this whole process. But at the same time we feel that it would be useless and even suicidal to try to live lives of love and justice in a world where most other people are selfish and unjust and where injustice and selfishness have become structurally entrenched.

Such lives, however, are precisely what the Christian message impels us to live; in fact, they are the essence of Christian ethics. Saint Paul wrote something that illustrates precisely what I'm trying to tell you; he stated, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."<sup>35</sup> As we'll see, this teaching reflects the teaching of Christ about love of enemies; it is the touchstone of Christianity. We would all like to be good to others, and all of us, or at least most of us, *would* be relatively good in a good world. What is difficult is being good in a bad world, in a world where structural selfishness and the selfishness of others assault us from all sides and threaten to annihilate us. When that happens, we believe that the only possible reaction is fighting evil with evil, selfishness with selfishness, hate with hate; if possible, we would even destroy the aggressors with their own arms. But that is precisely the moment when evil conquers us most thoroughly and most deeply. Not only does it destroy us externally, but it also dehumanizes us and perverts us from within. It inoculates us with its own poison; it makes us evil. That is what Saint Paul calls being overcome with evil.

Evil can be overcome only by good, hate only by love, selfishness only by generosity; all those are necessary in this concrete world in order to implant justice. In order to be just, we have to do more than simply refrain

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<sup>35</sup> Rom 12:21.

from contributing to the already gigantic reserve of injustice in the world; we must also voluntarily experience the effects of injustice, we must refuse to continue playing its game, and above all we must replace its dynamic of hatred with the dynamic of love. For that purpose, we need more than the love of the self-interested, who love only their friends and hate their enemies. That is no solution; at best, it maintains the status quo. Christian love, in contrast, is like God's love, which makes the sun rise on both the good and the evil.<sup>36</sup> This creative love does not love only what is lovable; it loves everything, and by the power of love makes it everything that is loved lovable.

In the same passage Saint Paul tells us: "Bless those who curse you; bless and do not curse them. ... Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peacefully with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves. ... No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads"<sup>37</sup>—those are burning coals of affection that will eventually soften their hearts and restore their humanity. We must sow love in this way, planting the seeds of love where there is no love so that one day we may harvest love. It is true that, between the sowing and the harvest, the grain of wheat may just possibly die. Only the grain that dies bears fruit. But herein lies the true victory, the victory in which there are no losers. We were saying before that when other people's hatred of us gives birth to hatred in ourselves, we are the losers; we are the ones who are overcome, even when we succeed in crushing our enemy. But when we respond to hatred with love and even give our lives

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<sup>36</sup> Matt 5:43-48.

<sup>37</sup> Rom 12:14-20.

if necessary, as Christ did, loving and forgiving our enemies, then most probably we are the ones who will end up infusing our love into others. That is when we most truly overcome, by achieving a complete victory in which there are no losers but only winners because our enemies have become our friends, our sisters and brothers.

The great difficulty is that all this seems to us quite lovely but hopelessly ineffective. We do not have faith in love. Nevertheless, nothing is more effective than love. In fact, if we were to use this strategy of God, then the pain and suffering that human beings experience in constantly defending themselves and in futilely trying to implant a bit of justice in the world would be much less than it is. Many people, even those with high ideals and noble aims, are willing to kill for the sake of establishing justice in the world. Indeed, many are willing to die fighting for that goal. But there are very few who are willing to die simply loving. Yet it's almost never necessary to go that far. Normally it's enough just to love and put up with some of the consequences of loving. In order to drive back the realm of injustice significantly, I think it would be enough simply to reproduce a series of well-coordinated groups of valuable people whose lives are guided by the spirit I'm speaking of here, which I will try to describe more concretely in the following section.

## **AGENTS AND PROMOTERS OF CHANGE**

Let us not forget that, although the root of the kingdom of injustice is within ourselves (which is why we dedicate our best efforts to reeducating and reforming ourselves), injustice is structurally embedded in the world and functions independently of any individual. What is more, we cannot completely change ourselves if we do not change our world. Education for justice is therefore educating for change; it means forming men and women who will be effective agents for change and transformation.

As we saw in the first part, what we need is a formation that enables us to analyze the situations that must be transformed in each concrete case and to elaborate efficient strategies and tactics for attaining the goals of transformation and liberation. That task obviously exceed the objectives of this talk, although it possibly does not exceed the objectives of the Alumni Associations. I believe that you alumni, among yourselves, should undertake initiatives of this type at different levels, with diverse degrees of coordination, and with a wide latitude of pluralism.

Here I will limit myself simply to indicating some very general attitudes which I believe we should form part of the tactics we develop in everything we undertake. I wish also to call attention to the need for us to stimulate a forward-looking imagination, that is, an imagination that makes us take very seriously the task of building a better future for humanity.

## **GENERAL ATTITUDES FOR PROMOTING CHANGE**

I'm going to enumerate just three general attitudes that will contribute effectively to change, especially when diverse groups adopt these attitudes and apply them in coordinated action.

<sup>46</sup> John p. 75.

The first attitude is a firm resolve to give a much simpler tone to our individual, family, social, and collective lives by refusing to take part in

the spiral of luxurious living and social competitiveness. Making drastic reductions in our festivities, our gifts, our clothing, and our accoutrements would free us from the need for certain (perhaps rather dubious) sources of income or would allow us to direct such income generously toward others. Such reductions would also serve as a symbolic gesture of tremendous social efficacy.

Let me give you one very simple example. Celebrating a certain class of wedding easily costs a half-million to a million pesetas. Such extravagance is not necessary in order to attain the legitimate and deeply human satisfaction of bringing good friends together for such a moment. If we're really sincere, we'll admit that we're aiming for more than conviviality; the wedding becomes a question of social prestige, and often it's even a calculated scheme of exchanging gifts. Such costly weddings also have the disturbing social consequence of inciting social competitiveness; the people among whom we move cannot be disappointed; the next wedding has to be better still, and the money to pay for it has to be gotten in any way possible. This is just another turn in the screw of luxury and oppression, which gets twisted ever deeper into the structure of the world and becomes firmly fixed there. The decadent example spreads, and those with fewer means join the game as well, often spending money they don't have. Thus to the foolish idol of prestige are sacrificed values that are much more fulfilling and profound, such as a reasonable honeymoon, a comfortable apartment for the new couple, etc.

What would happen if a group of Christians, publicly announcing their decision, were to break with the usual ways of acting? At the explicit desire of the couple, guests would be invited to a simple, truly religious

<sup>46</sup> ceremony in which the love between the spouses would be honored; they John 16:7-15. would both promise to support one another mutually and to form a community open to helping others and to working for great humanization

of the world. Such a ceremony would be accompanied by a frugal repast with the guests and the donation of a hefty sum—the largest expense of all—to some work of human development.

The example has value but only as a symbol. Such a symbol would serve no purpose at all unless it truly expressed a totally new conception of a way of life which needs to be made concrete in many other details. We must form men and women who are not enslaved to a consumer society and whose lives are not ruled by the desire to be and to appear a little better than others. Rather, their ideal should be to trail always slightly behind others in order to unscrew bit by bit the screw of luxury and competitiveness.

They should be men and women who, instead of feeling compelled to buy everything that the next-door family has managed to buy, are able to do without many things that others in like circumstance do without and that most of humankind must willy-nilly do without. The ancient counsel of moralists, when they were trying to determine what level of luxury was in keeping with the Gospel, was that Christians should adopt without excess whatever was customary at each social level. But this counsel is no longer useful since it presupposed a static society that was concerned only about individual justice. Such a society could not even conceive that the very social structure which determines those different social levels was itself an incarnation of injustice. Since that is in fact the case, the only attitude that can be considered truly moral in our day is one which strives to dismantle and level out the established social pyramids. Viewing it from another perspective, we need to form truly liberated men and women who are not slaves of consumer society—men and women who, when viewing

<sup>46</sup> the TV advertisements and the display windows of the stores, rejoice with satisfaction in their own freedom and <sup>33</sup> are able to exclaim, “What a lot of things I can do without! How free I am!”

<sup>46</sup> John 16:7-15.

I'll be much briefer in describing the second and third fundamental attitudes. The second attitude is a firm resolve not only to refrain from sharing in any gain from clearly unjust dealings, but also to gradually reduce one's own sharing in the benefits accruing from social and economic structures that are decisively organized to favor the most powerful sectors of society. It's not a question of reducing one's expenses and even less of reducing income based on unjust structures. Rather, it is a conviction that obliges us to move against the current. Instead of trying always to shore up our position of privilege, we should rather let it decline in favor of those who are less privileged. The Alumni Associations should carry out honest and thorough analyses to determine the extent to which our most advantaged citizens (well situated professionals, big business owners, industrial and financial magnates, etc.) appropriate to themselves a share of the social product that is in excess of what it would be if social structures were more just. And I would ask you not to exclude yourselves too quickly from this analysis, because I am convinced that all persons of a certain social level enjoy these advantages, at least in certain ways, even if they are, at the same time, unfairly disadvantaged compared to even more affluent groups. But let us not forget that our decisive point of reference are the masses of truly poor people in our own countries and in the Third World.

The third attitude is connected with the second. It may be possible for us to reduce our expenses and live a much simpler life without clashing with society's norms. It is true that our attitude may arouse displeasure, but for that very reason it does society some good. If we propose, however, to reduce our income to the extent that it derives from our participation in unjust structures, then that is not possible without transforming the structures themselves. It would then be inevitable that those who feel

<sup>46</sup> John 16:7-15.

themselves displaced from their privileged positions, along with us, would adopt a defensive position of counterattack. Renouncing every position of influence would be too facile a solution.

In certain cases, such renunciations may be appropriate, but for the most part they would only serve to hand over the entire world to those who are most avaricious. This is the basic reason why the struggle for justice is so difficult, and it also shows the need for mediations, as we've mentioned already. But here we can enlighten one another through the Alumni Associations themselves, by calling on our alumni who belong to the working class. Even though the thematic of this second part of my conference has shifted to other perspectives, we should not forget that the principal agents of transformation and change are going to be the people who are oppressed. The corollary of this is that those who are more privileged, when they take up the cause of the oppressed, will be simple collaborators who are managing the control points of the structures that need to be changed.

## **BUILDING THE FUTURE**

Let me offer a few more words about how you can collaborate responsibly in building the future. Ralph Lapp compares our world to “a train that is gaining speed and moving swiftly along tracks with switches that lead to unknown destinations. There is not a single scientist in the locomotive, and there may be demons at the switches. Most of society is in the caboose, looking backward.”<sup>38</sup>

The love that Christians have for their fellow human beings will inspire

<sup>46</sup> them to try to take control of the locomotive and guide the train toward  
John 16:7-15.

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<sup>38</sup> Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*.

the right destination. But that requires many things: knowledge of how the controls work, familiarity with the territory through which the train is traveling, information about the system controlling the switches, and even familiarity with the demons meddling with the switches.

At the controls of the locomotive it is not enough to have persons of good will; it's not even enough to have the scientific experts mentioned in the quote. The persons we need at the controls are profound thinkers in the sense that I will explain in a minute. We might even say that we need spiritual persons there in cabin of the locomotive, true sages who know how to exorcise the demons ruling the world.

Sometimes a long detour through rough terrain may be the only way to avoid catastrophe. That's why it will be necessary to deal with the anger of the passengers at the back of the train who want to travel only through rolling countryside. Christians should never forget that they are at the service of the people who are traveling in the train. They are men and women for others, and for that very reason they must prudently but resolutely have recourse to the necessary technological and ideological mediations. And they must do so without forgetting their fundamental ethos and without converting the mediations into ends, for that would be equivalent to abandoning the locomotive and a forward-looking vision; it would be like retreating to a laboratory car in the train and being quite as isolated from the truth of reality as those traveling in the caboose.

But neither can Christians be dilettantes who try to find the right track by random guesses or who let themselves be carried away by the trendiest currents or countercurrents. Following the latest trend is especially dangerous when people react, often with good reason, against some excess  
<sup>46</sup> by moving vehemently in the opposite direction. Every form of totalitarianism has taken root in societies dominated by that type of reaction. Alvin Toffler, while rejecting the idolization of technology, is

<sup>46</sup> John 16:7-15.

reacting against a contemporary tendency which simply rejects technology out of hand. He writes: “We should ask those who, in the name of some vague human values, preach anti- technological absurdities: what do you understand by ‘human’? To turn the clock back deliberately would mean condemning billions of human beings to a state of permanent, inescapable misery, precisely at the moment in history when their liberation becomes possible. It is clear that we need more, not less, technology. At the same time, it is undoubtedly true that we often apply new technologies in stupid and selfish ways.” It is for that reason that legitimate reactions against technocracy arise, but these reactions become stupid themselves if they are absolutized. Toffler states: “These protests against the ravages caused by irresponsible use of technology could crystallize pathologically into an anti-futuristic fascism in which scientists would replace the Jews in the concentration camps. Sick societies need scapegoats. As the pressure of change increases on individuals and future shock gains force, this nightmare ending appears more likely. There was a very significant slogan scrawled on a wall by the students in the Paris strike: ‘Kill the technocrats!’ The incipient worldwide movement for control of technology should not be allowed to fall into the hands of irresponsible technophobes, nihilists, and Rousseauian romantics.”<sup>39</sup>

This is just one example that speaks to us of the difficulty of the task before us. It makes us mindful of the sincerity, the prudence, and the profundity with which Christians should act in this sphere.

The “spiritual” person We reach the point in this talk where I want to show that only “spiritual” persons—in the sense of men or women of God who are led by the Spirit—will in the long run be able to be persons for others, persons for justice, persons capable of contributing to a true transformation of the world that will eliminate from it the structures of

sin.

In saying this, I do not deny that there are men and women of impeccable good will who share with genuine Christians all the qualities noted in our exposition. To the extent that this is the case, they are in our eyes the ones who are today called “anonymous Christians.” They are our sisters and brothers who, in loving their fellow human beings radically and sincerely, love God and his Christ without knowing it. The only thing they need is to hear the Good News of the Gospel, which gives their faith, their hope, and their love precise expression and completion.

### **THE INFUSION OF LOVE**

According to Saint John, love has its origin in God. God takes the initiative. Love does not consist in our loving God but in God’s loving us.<sup>40</sup> By loving us, God has transformed us in turn into fountains of love that have the same characteristics as God’s own love, which is a self-surrendering love that bears with enmity and so overcomes it. It is love that allows itself to be killed by the injustice of this world but in dying destroys injustice, thus converting the triumph of evil into defeat. It is love which embraces the enemy with transformative love, making the one loved lovable and thus converting him into a friend. In the end, it is a love that is effective and victorious. That is the love that God has infused into us by his Spirit. If we have such love and truly love our sisters and brothers, then we have been born of God. If we reject it and do not truly love our sisters and brothers, then we reject God’s love and with it the gift of his Spirit which makes us children of God and sisters and brothers of

<sup>46</sup> Jesus Christ.<sup>41</sup>  
<sup>46</sup> John 16:7-15.

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<sup>40</sup> 1 John 4:10.

<sup>41</sup> 1 John passim.

In its essence, Christian faith is faith in love.<sup>42</sup> What is more, it is faith in victorious love and so the foundation of our hope. That is why Saint John can declare: “This is the victory that conquers the world: our faith.”<sup>43</sup>

## DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

This love which is the first aspect of our life in the Spirit is without a doubt the principal one and the one that gives energy to all the rest, but it is not enough. Not only must we love, but we must love with discernment. And here is where we need to understand the second way in which a person can be “spiritual.”

This concrete world, from which we must dislodge the injustice imbedded in ourselves and in the structures of society, is in fact a product of the joint influence of the Holy Spirit and of sin. That is why, when striving for justice, we need the gifts of counsel and discernment; we need to be able to distinguish between diverse spirits in order to separate, in each feature of the world, what comes from God and what comes from sin. Neither simple observation nor sociological analysis of our social reality is sufficient.

Some people try to identify the results of sociological analysis with the “signs of the times,” but they run the risk of understanding as a work of God what is perhaps an effect of sin. Sociology provides us only the raw material on which spiritual discernment must be exercised. With the help of spiritual discernment, our task is to discover where precisely the sin of the world is located and, above all, where it is most densely concentrated.

<sup>46</sup> As we insert ourselves into the drama, we need also to discover the signs  
John 16:7-15.

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<sup>42</sup> 1 John 4:16.

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of the times that can instruct us about how to go about dislodging sin from its lairs.

We should not dismiss the idea that the Spirit will address us directly in order to show us new paths and solutions and mark them out for us, but only those persons who possess the Spirit will be capable of hearing and understanding the Spirit adequately, wherever he may manifest himself. Saint Paul tells us that, just as no one knows “what is truly human except the human spirit that is within,” “so also no one comprehends what is truly divine except the Spirit of God.” But Paul then makes this tremendous statement: we have received “the Spirit that is from God so that we understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Those who are unspiritual [natural, *psychikos*] do not receive the gifts of God’s spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Spiritual persons discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny. ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ!’<sup>44</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This is the ideal human being, the person who is the goal of our educational efforts. This the spiritual or “pneumatic” person, guided and sustained by the *Pneuma* of God, by the Holy Spirit. This is no longer *homo faber*, the clever tool-maker who at the dawn of history began to be radically differentiated from other animals and to rise toward world domination. Nor is it simply *homo sapiens*, the species whose intelligence



and wisdom raised it above the rest of creation and gave it the ability to understand and explain the universe. It isn't even *homo prometheanus*, who is conscious of sharing in the creative power of God and who is called not only to contemplate the world but to transform it.

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Neither is it *homo politicus*, who is fully aware of the complexity of this world and adroit in finding and tapping into the neuralgic points that determine the great transformations. Nor is it simply *homo ludens*, who is endowed with the capacity to live life to the full and to rejoice in the intrinsic beauty and value of all creatures. All these aspects of human reality, as valuable as they are in themselves, do not reach the heights of what Saint Paul calls *homo psychicus*, that is, the spiritual person in the sense of one endowed with the human spirit or psyche, the purely natural human being. Such a person does not exist concretely but is simply an ambivalent abstract possibility that, to a greater or lesser extent, is either humanized or dehumanized. Such a person can become, on the one hand, *homo lupus*, a wolf preying on other human beings, or on the other, *homo humanus*, *homo concors*, *homo philanthropus*, that is, a profoundly human and passionate lover of concord and fellow human beings.

Normally, such a person will also be *homo religiosus*—open to transcendence—and, if the religious spirit is genuine, committed to the indestructible unity of love of God and love of neighbor. But such an ideal is ultimately not within our reach without the action of God, who transforms us into *homo novus*, the new human person, the new creature whose ultimate vital principle is the Holy Spirit. This is *homo spiritualis*, the person who is capable of loving even sworn enemies in this iniquitous world, and who is therefore also capable of transforming that world. And

<sup>46</sup> John 16:7-15. Because such a person has the charism of discernment, he or she is capable of discovering and actively bonding with the deepest, most

effective dynamism of history, the one that is powerfully impelling the already initiated construction of the Kingdom of God.

This Spirit who makes us spiritual is also the Spirit of Christ, who makes us Christians and makes us other Christs. In this task of promoting justice, Christ is everything: our Way, our Truth, and our Life. He is par excellence the “man for others,” the one who goes before us in the construction of the Kingdom of Justice; he is our model and our obligatory point of reference. His words and his life provide us the stability we need in order not to lose our way in this ever-changing world. But most importantly, Jesus is still alive, and he is the Lord of this history that is moving swiftly forward. He is seated at the right hand of the Father and continues to help his Church. Through his Spirit he sheds more light on and gives ever deeper meaning to the words that fell from his lips in former times. In this way they become new words, capable of illuminating the darkened paths of history.<sup>45</sup> Thus even his absence is in a way a lively presence: “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ... When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. ... He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”<sup>46</sup>

Finally, Christ is also the foundation of that very Ignatian “magis” which moves us never to put limits on our love, but rather to say “more” and “more,” and to seek always the “greater glory of God,” which will be realized concretely in our greater commitment to human beings and the cause of justice.

<sup>46</sup> John 16:7-15.

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<sup>45</sup> John 14:26.

<sup>46</sup> John 16:7-15.