

COMPENDIUM ON CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING PART 15

Historical notes on the Church's social doctrine (2)

By Leela Ramdeen 11.09.05

The next encyclical to which the *Compendium* refers is Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). This followed the grave economic crisis of 1929 and was also issued in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*.

Pope Pius XI "reread the past in the light of the economic and social situation in which the expansion of the influence of financial groups, both nationally and internationally, was added to the effects of industrialisation.

"It was the post-war period, during which totalitarian regimes were being imposed in Europe even as the class struggle was becoming more bitter. The encyclical warns about the failure to respect the freedom to form associations and stresses the principles of solidarity and cooperation in order to overcome social contradictions. The relationships between capital and labour must be characterised by cooperation."

The *Compendium* continues by reminding us that *Quadragesimo Anno* "confirms the principle that salaries should be proportional not only to the needs of the worker but also to those of the worker's family. The State, in its relations with the private sector, should apply the principle of subsidiarity, a principle that will become a permanent element of the Church's social doctrine.

"The encyclical rejects liberalism, understood as unlimited competition between economic forces, and reconfirms the value of private property, recalling its social function.

In a society in need of being rebuilt from its economic foundations, a society which itself becomes completely 'the question' to deal with, "Pius XI felt the duty and the responsibility to promote a greater awareness, a more precise interpretation and an urgent application of the moral law governing human relations...with the intent of overcoming the conflict between classes and arriving at a new social order based on justice and charity." (Congregation for Catholic Education, Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests (1988)).

"Pope Pius XI did not fail to raise his voice against the totalitarian regimes that were being imposed in Europe during his pontificate. Already on June 29, 1931 he had protested against the abuse of power by the totalitarian fascist regime in Italy with the Encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*.

"He published the encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge*, on the situation of the Catholic Church under the German Reich, on March 14, 1937. The text...was read from the pulpit of every Catholic Church in Germany, after having been distributed in the greatest of secrecy.

The encyclical came out after years of abuse and violence, and it had been expressly requested from Pope Pius XI by the German bishops after the Reich had implemented ever more coercive and repressive measures in 1936, particularly with regard to young people, who were required to enroll as members of the Hitler Youth Movement.

“The Pope spoke directly to priests, religious and lay faithful, giving them encouragement and calling them to resistance until such time that a true peace between Church and State would be restored. In 1938, with the spreading of anti-Semitism, Pope Pius XI affirmed: ‘Spiritually we are all Semites’”

With his encyclical, *Divini Redemptoris* (1937), on atheistic communism and Christian social doctrine, Pope Pius XI offered “a systematic criticism of communism, describing it as “intrinsically perverse”, and indicated that the principal means for correcting the evils perpetrated by it could be found in the renewal of Christian life, the practice of evangelical charity, the fulfillment of the duties of justice at both the interpersonal and social levels in relation to the common good, and the institutionalisation of professional and interprofessional groups.”

Next week we will consider the development of the social doctrine of the Church by focusing on some of the encyclicals of Pope Pius XII, Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II. You may find the following useful:

List of Papal Encyclicals and Some Official Documents on Social Questions: In chronological order

- *Rerum Novarum (On the Condition of Labour)* -- Pope Leo XIII, 1891
- *Quadragesimo Anno (After Forty Years)* -- Pope Pius XI, 1931
- *Divini Redemptoris: (Errors of Communism)* - Pope Pius XI 1937
- Mater et Magistra (Christianity and Social Progress)* -- Pope John XXIII, 1961
- *Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth – Establishing Universal Peace)* – Pope John XXIII, 1963
- *Ecclesiam Suam (Dialogue with the World)* – Pope Paul VI, 1964
- *Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) Vatican Council II, 1965 (And see Dignitatis Humanae: Declaration on Human Freedom)*
- *Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples)* -- Pope Paul VI, 1967
- *Octogesima Adveniens (A Call to Action)* -- Pope Paul VI, 1971
- *Justitia in Mundo (Justice in the World)* -- Synod of Bishops, 1971
- *Evangelii Nuntiandi (Evangelization)* – Pope Paul VI, 1975
- *Redemptor Hominis (Redeemer of Man)* – Pope John Paul II, 1979
- *Laborem Exercens (On Human Work)*-- Pope John Paul II, 1981
- *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern)* -- Pope John Paul II, 1987
- *Centesimus Annus (The Hundredth Year)*-- Pope John Paul II, 1991
- *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)* -- Pope John Paul II, 1995
- *Fides et Ratio (Faith and Reason)* -- Pope John Paul II, 1998