

COMPENDIUM ON CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING PART 3

The fulfillment of the Father's plan of love

By Leela Ramdeen 19.06.2005

When *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* was launched in October 2004, Cardinal Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and peace, rightly told reporters that the document is not a "catechism" that sets forth a fixed body of doctrine; rather, it is a systematic synthesis of documents on social issues produced by the Church magisterium from Pope Leo XIII to the current day.

In addition to traditional Catholic concerns e.g. the living wage, the promotion of peace etc, the *Compendium* covers other current issues such as terrorism, justice in warfare, and same-sex unions. The bulk of the text elaborates on the main themes of Catholic social doctrine, applying them to a wide variety of social issues. The final part, consisting of a single chapter, offers suggestions for the practical application of Catholic social teaching in the lives of the faithful, particularly the laity.

In this third article I focus on section 'b' of Part One entitled: "Jesus Christ, the Fulfillment of the Father's Plan of Love". This title says it all. Jesus, the Word made flesh, came not only to fulfill what was promised and what was awaited by Israel, but also "in the deeper sense...in Him the decisive event of the history of God with mankind is fulfilled." He proclaims: "*He who has seen me has seen the Father.*" (Jn 14:9).

Our social justice mandate comes from Luke 4:18-19;cf Is 61:1-2 when Jesus describes his "messianic ministry" with the words of Isaiah: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*"

Jesus invites all to follow Him "because he is the first to obey God's plan of love, and He does so in a most singular way, as God's envoy in the world". Jesus' followers are called "to live like Him and, after His Passover of death and resurrection, to live also *in Him* and *by Him*, thanks to the superabundant gift of the Holy Spirit, the Consoler, who internalises Christ's own style of life in human hearts." Jesus' Passover reveals Trinitarian love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The ultimate meaning of the Incarnation of the Son and his mission among us can be found in the New Testament e.g. St Paul writes: "*If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him?*" Rom 8:31 -32. Also see 1 Jn 4-10.

We are told that the Apostle John grasps the "profound meaning" and the most logical consequence of the "gratuitousness and superabundance of the Father's divine gift of the Son, which Jesus taught and bore witness to by giving His life for us". In 1 Jn 4:11-12 we read: "*Beloved, if God so loves us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.*"

The section ends with some powerful words: "The commandment of mutual love, which represents the law of life for God's people, must inspire, purify and elevate all human relationships in society and in politics. ...To be human means to be called to interpersonal communion", because the image and the likeness of the Trinitarian God are the basis of the whole of "human 'ethos', which reaches its apex in the commandment of love".

The modern cultural, social, economic and political phenomenon of interdependence, which intensifies and makes particularly evident the bonds that unite the human family, accentuates once more, in the light of Revelation, “a new *model* of the *unity* of the human race, which must ultimately inspire our *solidarity*. This supreme *model of unity*, which is a reflection of the intimate life of God, one God in three Persons, is what we Christians mean by the word ‘*communion*.’”

The section draws from a number of Church documents e.g. *Lumen Gentium* (1965), Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (1966), *Dei Verbum* (1966), *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988).

In our troubled land let us take the lead to build this new *model of unity* based on God’s command for us to love one another. However we can never be in “communion” with the wider community and with God if we are not in communion within our own Church. We will only be strong if we stand in solidarity with each other and start reading from the same page.

During this Year of the Eucharist let us open our hearts to the power of the Eucharist to transform and strengthen us in virtue. The Eucharist “spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us” in the family, at work and in society. From this social character of the Eucharist, each person’s mission in the Church receives its power and trust.” (*Lineamenta* 2001).

Come and hear more about the *Eucharist and Social Justice* at CCSJ’s Seminar at Our Lady of Fatima Church Hall on Saturday, July 2. Admission is free.