

COMPENDIUM ON CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING PART 4

The human person in God's plan of love

By Leela Ramdeen 26.06.2005

This section of Part 1 of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* comprises four parts:

- a) Trinitarian love, the origin and goal of the human person;
- b) Christian salvation: for all people and the whole person;
- c) The disciple of Christ as a new creation;
- d) The transcendence of salvation and the autonomy of earthly realities.

I shall focus in this article on “a” and “b” above. The section highlights the fact that the human person is called to discover the origin and goal of his/her existence and of history “in the communion of love that is God, and in which the Three divine Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) mutually love one another and are the One God... The revelation in Christ of the mystery of God as Trinitarian love is at the same time the revelation of the vocation of the human person to love. This revelation sheds light on every aspect of the personal dignity and freedom of men and women, and on the depths of their social nature.”

The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, teaches us: “the Lord Jesus Christ, when praying to the Father ‘*that they may be one...as we are one*’ (Jn 17:21-22), has opened up new horizons closed to human reason by implying that there is a certain parallel between the union existing among the divine Persons and the union of the children of God in truth and love. It follows, then, that if man is the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake, man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself (Lk 17:33)”.

We can only fulfill ourselves by “creating a network of multiple relationships of love, justice and solidarity with other persons” while we go about our various activities in the world. “Human activity, when it aims at promoting the integral dignity and vocation of the person, the quality of living conditions and the meeting in solidarity of peoples and nations, is in accordance with the plan of God, who does not fail to show His love and providence to His children.”

We are all created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27) and we are told that only in relationship with Him can we discover and fulfill the authentic and complete meaning of our personal and social lives; that in our “complementarities and reciprocity” we are “the image of Trinitarian Love in the created universe”; that to us the Creator has “entrusted the task of ordering created nature according to His design” (Gen 1:28). The Book of Genesis provides us with “certain foundations of Christian anthropology” e.g. the inalienable dignity of the human person, “the roots and guarantee of which are found in God’s design of creation”.

The document reminds us that Christian salvation is for all people and of the whole person: “it is universal and integral salvation. It concerns the human person in all his dimensions: personal and social, spiritual and corporeal, historical and transcendent.” Its completion, however, “is in the future, when we shall be called, together with all creation (Rom 8) to share in Christ’s resurrection and in the eternal communion of life with the Father in the joy of the Holy Spirit.”

But the salvation that God offers to us, His children, requires our “free response and acceptance. It is in this that faith consists, and it is through this that “man freely commits his entire self to

God”, responding to God’s prior and superabundant love (Jn 4:10) with concrete love for his brothers and sisters...”

The “universality and integrality of the salvation wrought by Christ” makes indissoluble the link between the relationship that each of us is called to have with God and the responsibility we have towards our neighbour in the “concrete circumstances of history.”

We are told that this link finds “a clear and precise expression in the teaching of Jesus Christ and is...confirmed by the supreme witness of the giving of His life, in obedience to the Father’s will and out of love for His brothers and sisters.”

We are reminded of Jesus’ answer to the scribe who asked him which commandment is the first of all (Mk 12:28). *“The first is...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”* (Mk 12:29-31).

“Inextricably linked in the human heart are the relationship with God...and openness in concrete love towards man, who must be treated as another self, even if he is an enemy (Mt 5:43-44). In man’s inner dimension are rooted, in the final analysis, the commitment to justice and solidarity, to the building up of a social, economic and political life that corresponds to God’s plan.”

Let us use this opportunity to reflect on God’s commandments. If we truly love God we must demonstrate that we love our neighbour by standing in solidarity with him/her and seeking justice for all God’s children.