

## COMPENDIUM ON CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING PART 5

### Fulfilling our destiny in God

By Leela Ramdeen 03.07.2005

In this article, I focus on Part 1, Chapter 1, III “c” and “d” entitled: “The disciple of Christ as a new creation” and “The transcendence of salvation and the autonomy of earthly realities”.

We read that personal and social life, as well as human action in the world, is always threatened by sin. However, by suffering for our sins, Jesus not only gave us an example, so that we might follow in His footsteps, but He also “opened up a way.” As is stated in *Gaudium et Spes*: “If we follow this path, life and death are made holy and acquire a new meaning.”

If we as Christ's disciples adhere, in faith and through the sacraments, to Jesus' Paschal Mystery, our “old self”, with its evil inclinations, is crucified with Christ. As a new creation each of us is then enabled by grace to “*walk in newness of life*” (Rom 6:4).

As is stated in *Gaudium et Spes*, this “holds true not only for Christians alone, but also for all people of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the Paschal Mystery.”

A prerequisite for transforming our relationships with others is our own inner transformation. Our Catechism (1888) tells us: “It is necessary, then, to appeal to the spiritual and moral capacities of the human person and to the permanent need for his inner conversion, so as to obtain social changes that will really serve him. The acknowledged priority of the conversion of heart in no way eliminates but on the contrary imposes the obligation of bringing the appropriate remedies to institutions and living conditions when they are an inducement to sin, so that they conform to the norms of justice and advance the good rather than hinder it.”

Because we are all responsible for each other, it is not possible to love our neighbour as ourselves without “the firm and constant determination to work for the good of all people and of each person.” *Gaudium et Spes* states that “they also have a claim on our respect and charity that think and act differently from us in social, political and religious matters. In fact the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through kindness and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them.”

This path requires grace which God offers us, *inter alia*, to assist us in forming authentic and honest relationships with each other and with the created universe. We are urged to love the things of God's creation: “*All (things) are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's*” (1Cor 3:22-23).

The world and humankind attain their authentic and full truth in Jesus Christ – brought about in the Incarnation of Jesus, who gave himself on the cross. We read that “the more that human realities are seen in the light of God's plan and lived in communion with God, the more they are empowered and liberated in their distinctive identity and in the freedom that is proper to them.”

There is a relationship of love between God and humankind “in which the world and the fruits of

human activity in the world are objects of mutual gift between the Father and His children, and among the children themselves, in Christ Jesus”.

Let us not forget that everything we receive is a gift from God: “If the expression ‘the autonomy of earthly affairs’ is taken to mean that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator, anyone who acknowledges God will see how false such a meaning is. For without the Creator, the creature would disappear.” (*Gaudium et Spes*).

Our ultimate end is God Himself “who has revealed Himself to men in order to invite them and receive them into communion with Himself” (*Dei Verbum*). As we read in *Centesimus Annus*: “Man cannot give himself to a purely human plan for reality, to an abstract ideal or to a false utopia. As a person, he can give himself to another person or to other persons, and ultimately to God, who is the author of his being and who alone can fully accept his gift.”

For this reason, “a man is alienated if he refuses to transcend himself and to live the experience of self-giving and of the formation of an authentic human community oriented towards his final destiny, which is God. A society is alienated if its forms of social organisation, production and consumption make it more difficult to offer this gift of self and to establish this solidarity between people.” (*Centesimus Annus*).

The section ends with some powerful words: “The human person cannot and must not be manipulated by social, economic or political structures, because every person has the freedom to direct himself towards his ultimate end (which is the fulfillment of our destiny in God)... Any totalitarian vision of society and the State, and any purely intra-worldly ideology of progress are contrary to the integral truth of the human person and to God’s plan in history.”