

## COMPENDIUM ON CHURCH'S SOCIAL TEACHING PART 7

### **The renewal of social relations**

**By Leela Ramdeen 17.07.2005**

I continue focusing on Part 1, Chapter 1 (iv) of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church - sections b – d:

- b) The Church, the kingdom of God and the renewal of social relations
- c) New heavens and a new earth
- d) Mary and her “fiat” in God’s plan of love.

Our society and our world are plagued with social divisions of various types. Catholics know that “God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person but also the social relations existing between men.”

We recall Paul’s teaching that life in Christ makes the human person’s identity and social sense emerge fully and in a new manner: “For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ” (Gal 3:26-28).

In this perspective, the Compendium states, “Church communities, brought together by the message of Jesus Christ and gathered in the Holy Spirit round the Risen Lord... offer themselves as places of communion, witness and mission, and as catalysts for the redemption and transformation of social relationships.

“The transformation of social relationships that responds to the demands of the Kingdom of God is not fixed within concrete boundaries once and for all. Rather, it is a task entrusted to the Christian community, which is to develop it and carry it out through reflection and practices inspired by the Gospel.”

It is the Spirit of the Lord that will inspire new and appropriate ways for humanity to exercise its creative responsibility. *Redemptor Hominis* tells us that this inspiration is given to the community of Christians “who are a part of the world and of history, and who are therefore open to dialogue with all people of goodwill in the common quest for the seeds of truth and freedom sown in the vast field of humanity”.

We must not forget, though, that this renewal must be “firmly anchored in the unchangeable principles of the natural law, inscribed by God the Creator in each of his creatures...and bathed in eschatological light through Jesus Christ”.

In 1 Jn 4:8 Jesus reveals to us that “God is love” and, as stated in *Gaudium et Spes*, he teaches us that “the fundamental law of human perfection, and consequently of the transformation of the world, is the new commandment of love.

He assures those who trust in the love of God that the way of love is open to all people and that the effort to establish a universal brotherhood will not be in vain”.

We read that the transformation of the world is a “fundamental requirement of our time also. To this need the Church’s social Magisterium intends to offer the responses called for by the signs of the times, pointing above all to the natural love between human beings, in the sight of God, as the most powerful instrument of change, on the personal and social levels.

God’s promise and Jesus’ resurrection raise in Christians ‘the well-founded hope that a new and eternal dwelling place is prepared for every human person, a new earth where justice abides’. (See 2 Cor 5:1-2; 2 Pet 3:13)

“The good things – such as human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, all the good fruits of nature and of human enterprise – that in the Lord’s Spirit and according to his command have spread throughout the earth...belong to the Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, of love, and of peace that Christ will present to the Father, and it is there that we shall once again find them.

The words of Christ in their solemn truth will then resound for all people: ‘Come, O Blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me...as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me’ ” (Mt 25:34-36,40).

Human activity is significant and effective for the establishment of God’s Kingdom. “Such activity, when it respects the objective order of temporal reality and is enlightened by truth and love, becomes an instrument for making justice and peace ever more fully and integrally present, and anticipates in our own day the promised Kingdom.”

By her “fiat” to the plan of God’s love (Lk 1:38), in the name of all humanity, Mary “accepts in history the One sent by the Father, the Saviour of mankind. In her Magnificat she proclaims the advent of the Mystery of Salvation, the coming of the “Messiah of the poor” (Is 11:4; 61:1).”

The God of the Covenant, whom Mary praises in song as her spirit rejoices, is the One who “casts down the mighty from their thrones and raises up the lowly, fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty, scatters the proud and shows mercy to those who fear him” (Lk 1:50-53).

Looking to the heart of Mary, to the depth of her faith expressed in the words of the Magnificat, Christ’s disciples are called to renew ever more fully in themselves “the awareness that the truth about God who saves, the truth about God who is the source of every gift, cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love of preference for the

poor and humble, that love, which, celebrated in the Magnificat, is later expressed in the words and works of Jesus” (Redemptoris Mater).

We should strive to be like Mary who was “totally dependent upon God and completely directed towards him by the impetus of her faith”.