

INTRODUCTION

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It is said many times that Catholic social teaching (CST) is the Church's "best-kept secret," because this body of teachings on the engagement between evangelization and social reform and transformation has not had the wider hearing and impact that it deserves. Theological reflections on poverty, exercise of politics, war and peace, and environmental protection, among others, stand on the principle that the promotion of peace and justice is a "constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel," as the 1971 Synod of Bishops emphatically exhorts the People of God (JW 6). Far from the *fuga mundi* mode of engagement with the world, Catholic social teaching calls on all Christians to directly engage with the world of human misery, brokenness, and suffering, and to make the Gospel message of salvation relevant in addressing hunger, violence, and injustice wherever they are found.

The articles in this issue of *Hapag* respond to this call for Christian social engagement by taking stock of the beauty, relevance, and where present, the pitfalls of the received tradition of our Catholic social doctrine. Sometimes referred to as "Catholic social tradition" or "Catholic social discernment," the Catholic social teaching is a powerful witness to the enduring impact of the Gospel message in the struggles for a just and humane society. The witness of our Church's "best-kept secret" becomes all the more necessary and urgent as aspirations for wellbeing and development present new challenges that call for a reflection and response in faith. This act of "witnessing" is what the authors of the present issue have embarked upon in their respective articles.

Rolando A. Tuazon, CM's article "Catholic Social Tradition: An Overview from the Perspective of the Poor and

Marginalized” hinges the Church’s received wisdom on the “social question” to the need for a *hermeneutic mediation* that identifies with the experiences of the poor. Sifting through the teaching of several papal encyclicals, and synodal and episcopal conference documents, the article foregrounds the rereading of the Catholic social tradition in the Gospel message of the coming of God’s Kingdom. The reign of God radically delegitimizes unjust social structures and offers a wider and fuller vision for authentic development and human liberation in modern society. Through a “normativity of the future” approach in biblical interpretation, the article reframes central themes in Catholic social tradition that engage marginal positionalities as privileged loci of theological reflection, prayer, and faith-based social action.

Reynaldo D. Raluto’s article “The Catholic Social Teaching on Stewardship: Respect for Human Dignity and the Integrity of Creation” interrogates how the Church’s social doctrine can contribute toward providing a clearer vision for ecological integrity. The article reviews magisterial teachings on the environment, ecology, and stewardship, and highlights the increasing importance of systemic analysis of ecological issues in drawing attention to sustainability and the common good. It also critically assesses instances of latent anthropocentrism in the Church’s framing of the relationship between human beings and the rest of creation. The article advocates for the “greening of Catholic social teaching (CST)” by drawing upon the Philippine experience of environmental activism for the protection of forests; conservation movements that protect biodiversity; and sustainable development that integrates environmental issues in policy-making and implementation.

Carlos G. Ronquillo, CSsR’s article “Toward a Change of Paradigms and Moral Response for Peace in the Context of Social Conflicts in the World Today” privileges the intrinsic relationship between the Gospel message of salvation and peacebuilding in assessing Catholic social teaching on war and violence. The article identifies two key positions: the “just war theory” developed by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, and the “Christian pacifism” of Erasmus and Christian humanists of the Middle Ages. These two poles in the Church’s social doctrine have been reinterpreted in

the course of the centuries, but the increasing urgency of the “war question” after the Second World War necessitated a rethinking of the response to violent conflict in today’s world. Drawing on contemporary papal and episcopal conference documents responding to terrorism, the invasion of Iraq by US forces during the Gulf War, and calls for a just new global order, the article recommends several trajectories for further reflection and action to reorient Catholic social teaching toward modern aspirations for peace.

Johan Verstraeten’s article “The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and Pope Francis’ Contribution to Catholic Social Discernment” analyzes the impact of the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*) in Francis’ teaching on social justice and option for the poor. The article mentions key insights in the pastoral constitution that speaks of a “new moment” in the Catholic Church’s relationship with the modern world, thus pushing the frontiers of Catholic social teaching. It then traces the development of these insights in subsequent papal and synodal statements, reaching new heights in Francis’ timely message on the radical nature of the Church’s option for the poor in his recent pastoral exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, insofar as it is *par excellence* the path that follows the example of Jesus in the gospels.

Diego G. Quejada’s article “Catholic Social Teaching and Human Labor” situates Catholic social teaching in *Rerum novarum*, the landmark papal encyclical on social concerns written by Leo XIII in 1891. The concerns of *Rerum novarum*, however, reflected the over-all economic and political situation in Western Europe, and thus spoke little of the social and economic questions of workers in the Philippines. The integration of economies in the era of globalization eventually internationalized the issues and concerns of the working classes, insofar as global relations produced new forms of inequality and injustice in the work place. The article demonstrates how the workers’ movements from all parts of the world called for workers’ rights, and church-based groups in the Philippines responded to the challenges of

globalization by critically assessing the effects of contractualization of labor on the plight of workers.

The aim of the articles in this current issue is to start a conversation that will give Catholic social teaching the recognition that it truly deserves in our life of faith. In some cases, conversations have started, and what is needed is to reevaluate trajectories taken in the light of new realities on the ground. We hope that readers may find in the articles an inspiration to ignite the passion and zeal for realizing the vision of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II) for the *Church of the Poor*, for, as St. Vincent de Paul reminds us, it is in the poor, marginalized and forgotten that the living memory of Jesus is found.

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