



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARDINAL PETER KODWO APPIAH TURKSON
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR
JUSTICE AND PEACE**

To my Venerable Brother

Cardinal PETER KODWO APPIAH TURKSON

President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

On the occasion of the Plenary Assembly, I would like first of all to thank the Dicastery for its multi-faceted commitment to helping the whole Church, particularly this Apostolic See, in a renewed *evangelization of the social context* at the beginning of the third millennium. In the face of injustices and glaring inequalities, not only individuals but also peoples and the great human family are waiting for words of hope, fullness of life and an indication of the One who can save humanity from its radical evils.

As I recalled in my Encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* — following in the footsteps of the Servant of God Paul VI — the proclamation of Jesus Christ is “the first and principal factor of development” (n. 8). It is thanks to this proclamation, in fact, that it is possible to walk on the path of integral human growth with the ardour of charity and the wisdom of truth in a world in which falsehood often threatens men and women, society and sharing. It is by living “charity in truth” that we shall be able to offer a more profound gaze, in order to understand the great social questions and point out some essential perspectives for their solution in a fully human sense.

Only with charity sustained by hope and illumined by the light of faith and reason, will it be possible to achieve objectives of the integral liberation of man and of universal justice. Fostered by assiduous meditation on the Word of God, by regular participation in the sacraments and by communion with the Wisdom that comes from on High, the life of communities and individual believers increases in its capacity for prophecy and for the renewal of cultures and public institutions. The *ethos* of peoples can thus enjoy a truly solid foundation that reinforces social

consensus and substantiates procedural rules.

The commitment to build the city needs consciences that are led to God by love and for this reason are naturally oriented to the goal of a good life, structured on the primacy of transcendence. "*Caritas in veritate in re sociali*": I thus felt it appropriate to describe the social doctrine of the Church (*cf. ibid.*, n. 5), in accordance with its most authentic root — in Jesus Christ, the Trinitarian life that he gives us — and, with its full force, it can transfigure reality. We are in need of this social teaching, to help our civilizations and our own human reason to grasp all the complexity of reality and the grandeur of the dignity of every person. Precisely in this regard, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* is a help in perceiving the richness of the wisdom that comes from the experience of communion with the Spirit of God and of Christ and from sincere acceptance of the Gospel.

In the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, I mentioned the fundamental problems that affect the future of peoples and of global institutions, as well as of the human family. The upcoming anniversary of the Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* of Bl. John xxiii urges us to consider with constant attention the social, sectorial, and national imbalances between resources and poor populations and between technology and ethics. In the present context of globalization, these imbalances are far from having disappeared. The individuals have changed, as have the dimensions of the problems, but coordination among the States — often inadequate, because it is geared to the quest for a balance of power rather than to solidarity — leaves room for renewed inequalities, for the peril of the predominance of economic and financial groups that dictate the political agenda — and intend to so continue — to the detriment of the universal common good.

With regard to an ever more interconnected social question in its varied spheres, the commitment to form the Catholic laity in the social doctrine of the Church seems particularly urgent. In fact, it is the immediate duty of the lay faithful to work for a just social order. As free and responsible citizens, they must commit themselves to promoting a correct configuration of social life with respect for the legitimate autonomy of earthly realities.

The social doctrine of the Church is thus the essential reference for the planning and social action of the lay faithful, as well as for their lived spirituality, which is nourished and framed in ecclesial communion: a communion of love and truth, a communion in mission.

The *christifideles laici*, however, precisely because they draw energy and inspiration from communion with Jesus Christ by living integrated with the other members of the Church, must have alongside of them priests and Bishops who are able to offer their tireless work for the purification of consciences, together with indispensable support and spiritual help for a consistent lay witness in society. Of fundamental importance, therefore, is a profound understanding of the Church's social doctrine, in harmony with her entire theological patrimony and strongly rooted in the affirmation of man's transcendent dignity, in the defence of human life from its conception to its

natural end, and of religious liberty.

Understood thus, the social doctrine must also be part of the pastoral and cultural training of those members of the ecclesial community who are called to the priesthood. It is necessary to train lay faithful who can dedicate themselves to the common good, especially in the more complex areas such as the world of politics. However, it is also urgent to have pastors who, with their ministry and their charism, can contribute to invigorating and disseminating in society and in institutions an upright life in accordance with the Gospel, with respect for the responsible freedom of the faithful and of their own role as pastors who have a mediated responsibility in these areas.

Almost 50 years ago the above-mentioned *Mater et Magistra* proposed a true and proper mobilization, in accordance with charity and truth, on the part of all associations, movements, Catholic organizations and those of Christian inspiration so that all the faithful, with commitment, freedom and responsibility, might study, disseminate and put into practice the Church's social doctrine.

My hope, therefore, is that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace may continue its work of giving assistance to the ecclesial community and all its members. May the Dicastery thus continue this work, not only in constantly updating the social doctrine of the Church, but also in testing these innovations with that *method of discernment* which I pointed out in *Caritas in Veritate* and which specify that by living in communion with Jesus Christ and with one another, we are “founded” both by the Truth of salvation and by the truth of a world that has not been created by us but has been given to us as a home to share in brotherhood. In order to globalize the Church's social doctrine, it seems opportune to increase the number of centres and institutes that foster its study, dissemination and implementation throughout the world.

After the promulgation of the *Compendium* and of the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, it is natural that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace should be dedicated to studying new elements in depth, and, in collaboration with others, to seeking more suitable ways to convey the content of the social doctrine, not only in the traditional Christian formative and educational courses of every kind and at every level, but also in the important centres of the formation of world thought — such as the great organs of the secular press, the universities and the numerous centres for economic and social reflection — which in recent times have developed in every corner of the world.

May the Virgin Mary, honoured by the Christian people as *Speculum Iustitiae* (Mirror of Justice) and *Regina Pacis* (Queen of Peace), protect us and obtain for us with her heavenly intercession the strength, hope and joy we need to continue to dedicate ourselves generously to bringing about a new evangelization of society.

As I once again express my gratitude for the work of all the members of the Dicastery, I express the hope that your work will be fruitful and I very willingly impart the Apostolic Blessing to you all.

From the Vatican, 3 November, 2010

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