



Catholic Social Thought and Integral Human Development

Pope Paul VI spelled out a vision of genuine and integral development in 1967.¹ Addressing divisions between developed and underdeveloped nations, Pope Paul promoted a demanding concept of integral development in two senses: the whole person and every person. Development must first engage each person in the work of self-fulfillment.

For all people, authentic development must move “from less human conditions to those which are more human”: from material deprivation, selfishness, and oppressive social structures to possession of necessities, knowledge, culture, respect for others’ dignity, cooperation, a desire for peace, and spiritual values [21].² Paul stressed development “at the service of humanity” [34], including not just sharing earth’s goods, industrialization, and productive work, but also literacy, family life, and pluralism. He urged respect for culture, the arts, intellectual life, and religion.

Paul challenged the injustice of unfettered free trade, insisting upon trade restrictions, development aid, and support for poorer nations. A just economic order must be built, not on principles of free market capitalism, but upon solidarity with poor, dialogue, universal charity, and structural changes that promote economic security for all within the context of a regulated market economy.

Development and Peace

The second part of Paul’s vision was that, “the complete development of the individual must be joined with that of the human race and must be accomplished by mutual effort” [43]. He recognized a new “moral fact”³—interdependence connecting every person to the problems of unequal distribution. He called it a “duty of solidarity” for individuals and nations [48]—and for advanced nations a serious obligation to assist developing ones.

This obligation included sharing wealth, ending the “scandalous and intolerable crime” of the arms race [53], debt relief, trade equity, eliminating nationalism and racism, and multilateral, international collaboration. “World unity ... should allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny” [65]. Excessive economic, social, and cultural inequalities among nations arouse conflicts and endanger peace, which can be built only upon justice achieved by constant effort [76]. The pope concluded that “development is the new name for peace” [76].

A Moral Framework

In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI furthered Pope Paul’s development work in *Charity in Truth*.⁴ The world had become more speedily and pervasively globalized, yet marked by the “scandal of glaring inequalities” [22]⁵ reflected in the reality of many underdevelopment nations in contrast to the “super-development” of some nations and even wealthy people within underdeveloped nations. “The risk for our time is that the *de facto* interdependence of people and nations is not matched by ethical interaction of consciences and minds that would give rise to truly human development” [9]. This theme of a needed moral framework for development runs throughout the encyclical.

Benedict maintained that “*authentic human development concerns the whole of the person in every single dimension*” [11]. Thus, “*progress of a merely economic and technological kind is insufficient*” [23]. True development requires: action by public authorities [24]; social security systems [25]; trade unionism [25]; labor protections in a mobile world economy [25]; the importance of culture [26]; ending hunger [27]; religious freedom vis-a-vis fundamentalism and atheism [29]; inter-disciplinary and multi-level analyses and responses [30], including the interaction of faith, theology, metaphysics, and science [31]; access to steady employment [32]; eliminating high tariffs on exports of poorer nations [33]; and ending all forms of colonialism [33].

Addressing inequality, Benedict wrote that appearances of being connected globally must be transformed into true communion and that development depends “*on a recognition that the human race is a single family ... not simply a group of subjects who happen to live side by side*” [53]. A globalized society “makes us neighbors, but does not make us brothers” [19].

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Pope Paul VI. (1967). *Populorum Progressio: The Development of Peoples*, 24.
- ² Numbers in brackets refer to the paragraph numbers in *Populorum Progressio*.
- ³ Pope John Paul II. (1989). *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis: On the Church’s Social Concern*, 9.
- ⁴ Pope Benedict XVI. (2009). *Caritas in Veritate: Charity in Truth*.
- ⁵ Numbers in brackets in the rest of the article refer to the paragraph number in *Caritas in Veritate*. Italics are in the original.