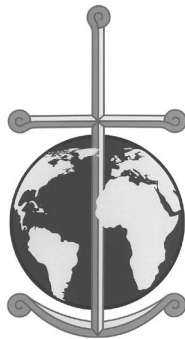


THE CARITAS IN VERITATE FOUNDATION WORKING PAPERS
“The city of God in the Palace of Nations”

***International Catholic Organizations
& Catholic Inspired NGOs***

*Their Contribution to the Building of
the International Community*



With a selection of texts from the Church's Teaching

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FIRST PART

I. A History of Engagement

The representation of the Catholic Church at the United Nations in Geneva 11

H. E. Mgr. Silvano M. Tomasi, c.s.

Mgr. Silvano M. Tomasi presents the history of the mission of the Holy See at the United Nations in Geneva. He states the importance and reasons for this presence, showing the permanent commitment of the Catholic Church to the United Nations system. He especially reflects on the grounds for such involvement and the pertinent way for the Catholic Church to participate in multilateral diplomacy.

The Order of Malta and the United Nations in Geneva 21

H. E. Marie Thérèse Pictet Althann

The Order of Malta is one of the main non-state international health providers at the world level. H. E. Marie Thérèse Pictet Althann recalls the presence of the Sovereign Order of Malta at the UN in Geneva and how it came to be granted observer status. She explains the work done by its ambassadors and the relevance of its presence at the level of multilateral-diplomacy.

The Christian Presence at the United Nations in Geneva. Between past and future perspectives 27

Dr. J. Joblin, s.j.

Dr. Joblin s.j, as a direct witness of the catholic presence at the UN, shows the pioneer work done by International Catholic Organizations since the creation of the United Nations system in Geneva. Faith inspired NGOs were eager to collaborate and participate in the rebirth of an international forum after World War II to preserve international peace and to further justice. Dr. Joblin shows how this presence of International Catholic Organizations has evolved over the years and is actually manifold but important and complementary to the representation of the Holy See.

II. Christian Identity and Multilateral Engagement

Why is the Holy See engaged in international life? 37

H. E. Mgr Silvano M. Tomasi, c.s.

Mgr. Silvano M. Tomasi reflects on the evolving nature of the Holy See's presence at the United Nations system in Geneva (the Catholic Church is the only religion represented at the UN as an observer state). He looks toward the role it can play in an evolving world where globalization increases the need for recourse to international governance. He identifies the commitment of the Catholic Church to multilateral diplomacy as being grounded in the values it represents, defends and promotes on the international level. As an observer state without economic, political or territorial interests to defend, it has a freedom of speech which other member states do not enjoy. This position in international organization is precious and must be honored.

The diakonia of truth and the mission of Catholic Inspired NGOs 45

Prof. Mathias Nebel

Dr. Mathias Nebel uses John Paul II and Benedict XVI's notion of "serving the truth" as an element for reflecting on the mission of Catholic inspired NGOs in an evolving, multicultural and secularized United Nations system. Sticking to truth is shown as a means to attaining rational dialogue and a crucial element for the Catholic presence at the UN.

III. Between Past and Future: International Catholic Organizations and Catholic Inspired NGOs in Geneva

Faith-based NGOs: What contribution at the United Nations in Geneva? 55

H. E. Mgr Silvano M. Tomasi, c.s.

The article begins with a review of the resurgence of religion in the public sphere through singular events as well as through a more positive recognition of the role of religion in the public sphere. The reasons for the Catholic NGOs involvement at the UN in Geneva are then developed, looking at the very different and positive results they have achieved over the years. Finally Mgr. Tomasi shows the path for new forms of involvement of Catholic NGOs at the UN.

SECOND PART

Key Elements of the Texts 65

Prof. Mathias Nebel

Some Texts of the Magisterium regarding ICOs and CINGOs 69

Keyword Index to the Texts 103

Editorial

A vast change has occurred pertaining to the status of religion in the public arena in the last decade. We may state it this way: “Many of our dominant stories about religion and public life are myths that bear little relation to either our political life or our everyday experience. Religion is neither merely private (...), nor purely irrational. And the public sphere is neither a real or straight-forward rational deliberation nor a smooth space of unforced assent.”¹

Indeed, it seems common sense to state that faiths are rational, not absurd. We have spoken and can still speak about them in the open, public sphere, for they are essential parts of any culture’s coherence. We cannot understand a society without realizing how theological arguments have shaped – and still do – its vision on such topics as human nature and social interactions. Quite simply stated: he who wants to understand politics should also devote time to understanding the religious faiths of the social actors. Why is it then so difficult to shake off the myths?

Some western countries, especially their elites, seem to hold on to the old mantra whereby religious beliefs are thought to be private and therefore of no public or political consequence. Since the political sphere must remain rational and transparent in order to be a place for public debate, religious belief, so says the mantra, can have no place within it, because faith has no rational intelligibility. Religions are excluded from the debate, for faith escapes the rationality thereof. In addition, the intrusion of faith into public discourse is met with fears of disrupting the rationale of politics, thereby bringing about some violent or theocratic rule of the country. Such fears often translate into an intolerant stance regarding such participation.

Most of these arguments prove to be false, in two respects. First, secularity is not a religion-neutral concept, but a much more complex construction. The enduring myth has certainly more to do with a mirror projection of the state’s own original violence on religious communities than the reverse. It is the fear of religions as transnational communities resisting the emerging state that has historically motivated the French Republic’s intolerance and indeed violent exclusion of religions from the public sphere. Secondly, in order to understand current political events and the social actors involved (e.g. 9/11; the Arab Spring), it is essential to understand the underlying religious rationalities. Political irrelevance of religions is politically irrational.

¶ *Religions in the public arena*

¶ *The city of God
in the
Palace of Nations*

The Catholic presence at the United Nations in Geneva is led by the Holy See, the Sovereign Order of Malta and over 30 Catholic-inspired NGOs. Together, they represent, articulate and advocate the Catholic tradition to the international community: its values, its many social works, and its political relevance in international affairs.

For the different actors involved, we can identify different strategies. Most Catholic-inspired NGOs engage the UN system through information and advocacy for victims of injustice, violence or neglect. They usually do so from their own specific constituency and field of social work, be it child protection, health organizations, education or care for migrants. The Holy See, on the other hand, has a more classic strategy, representing and advocating the Catholic Church's positions at the UN as an observer state. Together though, they struggle to bring forward the political intelligibility of Catholic positions beyond conventional secular arguments.

The nature of international diplomacy, the embedded institutional rationality, is such that it may restrain and limit the possibility to express religious views on political issues or international negotiations. These views are entangled in an institutional language where religious arguments are deemed irrelevant to the debate.

To avoid such constraints is a hard task indeed, since it is not only the Catholic representative who is involved, but also his interlocutor, whose goodwill is required. More fundamentally, there is a need to change the current narrative on religion in the public square and in international practices. Obviously this goes beyond the possibility of individuals alone at the UN.

We must therefore work in the system as it exists today. However, this doesn't mean that we should conform to the dominant narrative that would actively undermine Catholics' ability to express the reasons for their actions. We should dare to present the theological reasons for our positions as being helpful and interesting to our international interlocutors; as part of a dialogue which must not end at a supposed "gate" of "politically irrelevant belief systems". By doing so, we act not as proselytizers but out of a will to explain the full coherence and intelligibility of our actions. More not less theology then seems to be the lemma: because it is useful for dialogue; because it helps the cause of justice and peace; because it helps understand the world as it is.

A certain amount of daring is certainly needed, although such daring should never come without some prudence, for our interlocutor might turn out to be quite intolerant to such language and we may risk losing our credibility. But let us not too easily assume the prudent stance, for the dominant narrative is very effective at silencing our best reason to do what we do.

The United Nations system is unique and valuable. For all its well known bureaucracy and the slow pace of its work, it is the international forum where states gather, talk and try to address issues we can only solve together. Geneva, in particular, with its specialized international organizations is the place where global governance on health, human rights, intellectual property, telecommunication standards, disarmament, refugees and migrants, meteorology, international trade is thought out, negotiated and settled through international agreements and their implementation supervised. No other international forum of similar importance and international legitimacy exists to date.

Well aware of this importance, Catholics have been present in the United Nations system in Geneva since its beginning, first through International Catholic Organizations and later on through the mission of the Holy See. This first working paper of the *Caritas in Veritate Foundation* shows the relevance of this presence and the importance of the work done by religious groups at the UN. But with more than 30 Catholic NGOs working at the UN in Geneva, the case for the creation of a new foundation must be made.

The *Caritas in Veritate Foundation* aims to provide expertise and counsel at the request of these Catholic NGOs. It will act as a bridge between the work done at the UN and Catholic professionals or people of culture; a bridge between highly skilled persons willing to help and Catholic representatives involved in the complex procedures of international organizations, so that their contributions may be even more useful and effective.

On some important and pressing questions, the Foundation also intends to create a long range perspective. Commissioning reports to research centres around the world, it looks for new ways to think about old issues; tomorrow's world is shaped by many forces, one of which certainly being new ideas.

The *Caritas in Veritate Foundation* hopes to enhance the Catholic presence at the UN: A better hedge in practical advocacy through pertinent expertise; a capacity to be creative in deadlocked situations; the ability to see trends and act accordingly for the long term. It seeks, in other words, to serve the intelligibility of Catholic positions and actions on the international scene, a work of great value to Catholics engaged at the UN, and to international negotiations today.

NOTE

1 MENDIETA, E., VANANTWERPEN, C., *The power of religion in the public sphere*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 1.

**¶ Caritas in Veritate:
another new foundation?**

FIRST PART

I. A History of Engagement

SILVANO M. TOMASI, c.s.¹

The Diplomatic Representations of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations

Globalization, with all its complexity, has been a social process long in the making, but it has gained greater speed in recent decades. Communications, financial investments, open markets, technological advances have changed the planet into a “global village”. A decision made in the Tokyo or New York stock markets has immediate consequences in London, Cairo or Singapore. It is a new world landscape. Transnational problems, such as massive population movements for economic or political reasons, trafficking of human persons, terrorist networks, or trade imbalances, force nation-states to look for solutions through concerted efforts and negotiated decisions. For this purpose, especially since the end of World War II, international and regional structures have emerged as mechanisms of collaboration and preparation of collective agreements. Their juridical and organizational forms vary, as does their effectiveness. However, without a doubt, they represent a characteristic feature of the international scene

today, a pragmatic response to the aspirations of peoples for functional and peaceful coexistence, and a vehicle for States to provide for enlightened self-interest. In the course of history, the political community has tended to organize itself in various forms and at different levels: local, national, supra-national and international. At the international level, the League of Nations began, in Geneva, during the period of 1919-20. It represented the beginning of a variety of global organizations. Now the intergovernmental international structures appear like a “patchwork” of entities, many of which may be in need of reform. Peace and security are handled by the Security Council, the only United Nations body with decisional powers. The General Assembly and ECOSOC offer recommendations on social questions. The World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund deal with development and the economy and have the power to force the implementation of their decisions, although the modalities of partici-

¶ *Introduction*

pation in decision-making is open to criticism. A variety of U.N. Specialized Agencies deal with disarmament, Human Rights, humanitarian law, work, economic issues, environment, migration and refugees, and not without ideological differences. But world governance also is affected by non- U.N. realities, like television and internet, transnational religions, and civil society organizations.

The Church has accompanied and supported the development of multilateral institutions and has called for a world authority based on justice and law. Such authority should respect the equality of all the members of the international community, promote collective responsibility for the common destiny, and act in such a way that its decisions and activities be directed to the service of human dignity. In 1931, Pope Pius XI already was calling for international cooperation to prevent the damaging consequences of wild capitalism and nationalism, and for a regulation of procedures of the world economy.² The social teaching of Pope John XXIII and of the Second Vatican Council addressed the issue of interdependence and the necessity of global governance. A public universal authority would have to emerge as the result of agreement and not imposition, be directed to the pursuit of the common good, and be respectful of the principle of subsidiarity. This world community would not be a super-state, but it would have power in order to create an environment where the public authorities

of respective political communities, their citizens and the intermediate bodies, could carry out their tasks, fulfil their duties, and exercise their rights with greater assurance: this, in fact, would constitute global governance with a “human face”.³

Some conditions must be met for the credibility and efficiency of this world or universal authority: in the management of interdependence and mediating role, it must have an ethical dimension based upon the moral law written in the heart of every man and woman.⁴ While supporting the United Nations, the Holy See has also pointed out the need of reform for greater political and juridical efficiency and the adoption of a common ethical code. Dialogue opens up new opportunities to interject a spiritual perspective into difficult and complex debates and to promote higher ethical values in support of social cohesion and of the common good.⁵ This possibility is constantly renewed. In fact, inter-state relations are not fossilized in a specific moment in history; they are dynamic and change continuously and, in their evolution, they present the need for adaptation. For some time now, as the most visible and significant manifestation of the tendency to converge for common action, the United Nations system has been seeking to update itself and to exert greater influence on the global arena. The bold ambition for the United Nations reform is outlined in the March 2006 report: “Investing in the U.N.: For a Stronger Organization Worldwide.” This report,

“The Church has accompanied and supported the development of multilateral institutions and has called for a world authority based on justice and law.”

as other related texts, articulates the goal to achieve system-wide coherence involving all U.N. agencies and independent intergovernmental organizations, with the objectives of attaining more effective governance and of reaching the Millennium Development Goals that would provide a more equitable participation of all people in the goods of the earth and in a better quality of life.

In this evolving context of globalization, or, perhaps to put it more accurately, of global interdependence, and of the felt need for convergence and coordination of all actors on the world scene, the multilateral diplomacy of the Holy See finds its place. It contributes to a specific vision of the future and proposes some practical means for its achievement. The presence of the Holy See⁶ is active and extensive. It relies on a rather limited number of persons and resources but succeeds in keeping its voice heard.

On a small scale, for more than twenty years, I have been afforded the opportunity to observe the Holy See directly fulfilling its role of daily interaction with individual governments and with a variety of international organizations. For example, participation in the institutional building and functioning of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which has replaced the old Commission on Human Rights, and in the negotiations of the cluster munitions Convention (2008) have provided a special experience. As a signer with Salim Ahmed Salim, then Secretary General of the OAU, of the first “Agreement of

Cooperation Between the Holy See and the Organization of African Unity” (19 October 2000), when I was serving as Apostolic Nuncio in Addis Ababa, I was able to discern the benefits for dialogue and mutual collaboration, both of which are usually possible when we relate to intergovernmental organizations in an open and constructive manner.

One might easily speculate that the interplay among States, and among international entities, will intensify and therefore conclude that everyone’s participation in the management of international relations is a “must”. At a time when, in most countries, a plurality of cultures, religions, and life-styles has come to coexist side by side, the Holy See can contribute to the governance of international relations by offering a specific ethical and value-oriented perspective. This perspective has the potential for a realistic impact on such issues as the relationships between rich and poor, developed and developing countries, on reconciliation, on the maintenance of peace and on concerns related to disarmament.⁷

The bilateral diplomacy of the Holy See is rooted in distant history. From the earliest centuries of the existence of the Church, even before the birth of modern Nation-States, the Holy See has made use of special envoys, and eventually of Nunciatures or embassies. On the part of the Holy See, the discernment and interest to be engaged in international organizations started after World War I. At

g Historical development

that time, States such as Germany requested that the Holy See consider its possible participation in the League of Nations Conference. Subsequently, support was given for the employment of a priest advisor at the International Labour Organization (ILO); such an appointment was first made in 1926 by then Director General Albert Thomas. It was Pope Pius XII, however, who initiated the formulation of an organic doctrine of the Church's involvement in international life. In his speeches, most especially in the Allocution of 24 December 1939, "The pacific coexistence of peoples," and in his Radio Messages, he outlined the essential characteristics for developing the future international order. It seemed logical, therefore, that informal contacts with the new United Nations organizations should begin immediately after the founding of the organization in 1945, and indeed they began on the two issues of refugees and of the holy sites in Palestine.

At that time, because of its international standing and network for social assistance, the Holy See was among fifteen States invited by the U.N. Economic and Social Council, through Resolution 393B (XIII), to serve as member of an Advisory Committee on Refugees, a major human and political problem left behind by World War II. In 1947, a delegate of the Holy See was charged to go to Latin America in order to make contact with Governments and Catholic organizations and thus to ensure their full acceptance of the plan for resettlement

devised by the then International Refugee Organization. Due in part to these contacts and relationships, in 1951, when the U.N. General Assembly decided to convene a conference of plenipotentiaries with the task "to consider the Draft Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the draft Protocol Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons," an invitation to participate was extended to some States that were not members of the U.N., including the Holy See, which, in fact, participated with full rights. This was one of the first intergovernmental conferences in which the Holy See took part. The Conference produced one of the first conventions signed and subsequently ratified by the Holy See. This also marked the first occasion on which the United Nations Organizations called upon the Holy See to take full part in one of its organs, and such confidence has been maintained ever since.⁸ The UNHCR continues to serve as a forum where the right to protect refugees and displaced persons is sustained on the juridical level as well as in the field. For example, in 2007, at the international conference on the plight of four million Iraqis uprooted within their country or forced into exile, convened in Geneva, I had the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Holy See, as I did in subsequent years on related issues, in order to remind the community of nations of the collective responsibility to respond to so much suffering.⁹

As a member of the 'Family of Nations', the Holy See was invited to the 1955 Conference on the

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peaceful uses of atomic energy in Geneva and participating countries, even those from Eastern Europe, appreciated the presence of a spiritual 'power'. Then, in 1956, the Holy See adhered to the Treaty and became a full founding member of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It already was a member of two other technical organizations, the International Telecommunication Union and the Universal Postal Union, which, since 1947, had been integrated as specialized Agencies of the United Nations.

The first specialized Agency of the United Nations, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), was formally established October 16, 1945, with its headquarters based in Rome since 1951. Its goal is to improve the standards of nutrition and quality of life, the production and distribution of agricultural products, and the condition of rural populations. The highly humanitarian objectives of the FAO could not escape the sensibility of the Holy See. Although the status of Permanent Observer was inexistent in the Organization's statutory norms, it was created deliberately for the Holy See in 1948 by reason "of the special circumstances characterizing the Holy See, and without relations to the territorial extent of the Vatican City over which it exercises its sovereignty."¹⁰ Regular and frequent exchanges between the FAO and the Holy See are favoured by physical proximity, but, most of all, by the common goals that include food security, the right to water, a better deal for the still enormous rural

population.

The Catholic tradition always has placed a high value on education and, over the centuries, the Holy See has pursued the establishment of universities and lower-level schools, and, even at the present time, it continues on this path. The most recent Statistical Yearbook of the Catholic Church as well as information from the Congregation for Catholic Education provides some significant data in this regard. Some 50 million primary and secondary school children are estimated to be educated in Catholic schools worldwide. Some 1,300 Catholic Universities render their service through the formation of youth and the advancement of knowledge. New Catholic universities are opening up in Africa and on other continents. In addition, for the preparation of Church personnel, there are many ecclesiastical universities and institutes of higher education.¹¹ Thus it seemed quite "natural" for the Holy See to accredit a Permanent Observer to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), since it has priorities similar to the provisions contained in UNESCO's charter: "...to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security by furthering collaboration between nations through education, science and culture in order to ensure universal respect for justice, law, the rights of man and fundamental freedoms for all." In 1952, the Nuncio to France at that time, Archbishop Angelo Roncalli, future Pope who took the name of John XXIII, was accredited as the

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"The highly humanitarian objectives of the FAO could not escape the sensibility of the Holy See."

first Permanent Observer to UNESCO and, subsequently, in 1953, a separate Representation was established.

The social question brought about by the industrial revolution of the 19th century prompted the Holy See to address, in a systematic way, issues such as the workers' struggle for a just wage, the value of work, the relationship between capital and work, the condition faced by workers in their employment environment. In addition to addressing the latter question, the international community turned its attention to others, including: the situation of women, the communications revolution, the disarmament question, the ecological question. Labor relations were changed in the process, but their importance remains as a critical chapter in human experience as well as in the social doctrine of the Church. Several papal encyclicals were dedicated to the significance of work and to its function for the dignity of individuals and for the common good of society. The first Director General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) was quite aware of the close association of the purpose of his organization with the vision of the Holy See with regard to human work and workers' rights. On several occasions, ILO groups and Directors were received by the Popes; the social documents of the Church were reported or commented in the official journal of the ILO, the *International Labour Review*. In 1967, an exchange of official correspondence took place between the ILO Direc-

tor General and the Holy See and led to the agreement of extending to the ILO the accreditation of the Permanent Observer to the United Nations Office in Geneva "since the Holy See and the Organization have very similar and often the same preoccupations in the matter of social policy."¹² The regular interventions of the Holy See at the annual ILO Conferences include discussion of topics relevant to the evolving circumstances in the world of labour, including the significance of work, the rights of workers, the responsibility to create new and decent jobs, fair conditions of employment, and the role of labour unions.

Since 1952, the Holy See has always been represented, as an Observer State, at the World Health Assemblies. It was invited to the WHO Assembly in Rome in 1949, and its participants were received in audience by Pope Pius XII. In the field of health, especially with regard to some areas of human behaviour, ethical differences between the Holy See and the international community have become strident, and, in high-handed fashion, the media love to focus occasionally on these differences. But, in this vast area of human concern, there exists real potential for collaboration on most issues that affect the health of people, from poverty, to HIV and AIDS as well other pandemics such as malaria and tuberculosis. It could be helpful to keep in mind some recent data. The Catholic Church is engaged, to a significant degree, in the care of AIDS orphans and persons living with HIV, as well as in HIV

"The Catholic Church is engaged, to a significant degree, in the care of AIDS orphans and persons living with HIV, as well as in HIV prevention activities."

prevention activities; it is estimated that 26.7% of the world's treatment centres for people living with HIV or AIDS are Catholic Church-based¹³. Through its care institutions, which include some 5,236 hospitals, 16,679 dispensaries, 656 leprosaria, 14,794 homes for elderly and chronically ill, some 10,000 orphanages and as many nurseries and 28,751 special re-education centres and other related institutions throughout the world, the Church assists literally millions of needy people.¹⁴ The Holy See has developed a regular dialogue with both World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS and has stressed the need for equitable access to medicines and technology and for recognition of the enormous contribution of faith-based institutions in health care, especially in developing countries, and their right to share in international and national funding.

The advancement of international public health aims at reaching the people at the grassroots level. In pursuing this objective, governmental and civil society structures and networks are equally valid and therefore deserve equal attention and support from the international community. The Holy See participates in deliberations related to the specialized international public health agencies in order to remind everyone that, through respectful cooperation and the unequivocal defence of the fundamental right to life from conception to natural death, the human person can be maintained fully at the centre of health concerns.

In concluding this summary and incomplete review, I will provide

some additional comments on Human Rights, disarmament and economic mechanisms. It appears that the uneven, but steady, historical journey that has led the Holy See to engage in direct and wide-ranging relations in the intergovernmental arena show how its role articulates and supports the activity of the whole Church, which it represents, and places no ethnic or religious limits in reaching out to the whole human family. As mentioned previously, this role of the Holy See, moreover, adds a necessary spiritual and ethical dimension to the debates regarding the complex problems confronting today's society.

In this spirit and understanding of their respective identities, an exchange of notes, dated respectively 16 and 28 October 1957, settled the question that the Holy See, and not the Vatican City State, is represented by delegations accredited by the Secretariat of State to the different sessions and the various organs of the United Nations. Then, in 1964, a Permanent Observer was accredited to the United Nations headquarters in New York and, in 1967, one was appointed to the Geneva Office of the United Nations. Finally, in 2004, U.N. Resolution 58/314, passed by consensus in the General Assembly, formally defined the participation of the Holy See as an Observer State in the work of the United Nations and gave it practically all the rights of U.N. Members, except the right to vote, a position that the Holy See has chosen in order to remain *super partes*.¹⁵

“The Holy See adds a necessary spiritual and ethical dimension to the debates regarding the complex problems confronting today's society.”

NOTES

1 Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, c.s., Apostolic Nuncio, is the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva.

2 Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno*, 90, 103-109.

3 Cf. JOHN XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, 137-138: “ Today the universal common good presents us with problems which are world-wide in their dimensions; problems, therefore, which cannot be solved except by a public authority with power, organization and means co-extensive with these problems, and with a world-wide sphere of activity. Consequently the moral order itself demands the establishment of some such general form of public authority. But this general authority equipped with world-wide power and adequate means for achieving the universal common good cannot be imposed by force. It must be set up with the consent of all nations. If its work is to be effective, it must operate with fairness, absolute impartiality, and with dedication to the common good of all peoples. The forcible imposition by the more powerful nations of a universal authority of this kind would inevitably arouse fears of its being used as an instrument to serve the interests of the few or to take the side of a single nation, and thus the influence and effectiveness of its activity would be undermined. For even though nations may differ widely in material progress and military strength, they are very sensitive as regards their juridical equality and the excellence of their own way of life. They are right, therefore, in their reluctance to submit to an authority imposed by force, established without their co-operation, or not accepted of their own accord”. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 81: “working for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent. This goal undoubtedly requires the establishment of some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all and endowed with the power to safeguard on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights”. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 913: “Concern for an ordered and peaceful coexistence within the human family prompts the Magisterium to insist on the need to establish “some universal public authority acknowledged as such by all and endowed with effective power to safeguard, on the behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights”. In the course of history, despite the changing viewpoints of the different eras, there has been a constant awareness of the need for a similar authority to respond to worldwide problems arising from the quest for the common good: it is essential that such an authority arise from mutual agreement and that it not be imposed, nor must it be understood as a kind of “global super-State”. Political authority exercised at the level of the international community must be regulated by law, ordered to the common good and respectful of the principle of subsidiarity. “The public authority of the world community is not intended to limit the sphere of action of the public authority of the individual political community, much less to take its place. On the contrary, its purpose is to create, on a world basis, an environment in which the public authorities of each political community, their citizens and intermediate associations can carry out their tasks, fulfil their duties and exercise their rights with greater security” (*Ibid.*, 915).

4 Pope John Paul II developed these concepts on his address at the United Nations in New York in 1995. *The Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations Organization: Address Of His Holiness John Paul II United Nations Headquarters (New York), Thursday, 5 October 1995*: “As we face these enormous challenges, how can we fail to acknowledge the role of the United Nations Organization? Fifty years after its founding, the need for such an Organization is even more obvious, but we also have a better understanding, on the basis of experience, that the effectiveness of this great instrument for harmonizing and coordinating international life depends on the international culture and ethic which it supports and expresses. The United Nations Organization needs to rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution and to become a moral centre where

all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a "family of nations". The idea of "family" immediately evokes something more than simple functional relations or a mere convergence of interests. The family is by nature a community based on mutual trust, mutual support and sincere respect. In an authentic family the strong do not dominate; instead, the weaker members, because of their very weakness, are all the more welcomed and served. Raised to the level of the "family of nations", these sentiments ought to be, even before law itself, the very fabric of relations between peoples. The United Nations has the historic, even momentous, task of promoting this qualitative leap in international life, not only by serving as a centre of effective mediation for the resolution of conflicts but also by fostering values, attitudes and concrete initiatives of solidarity which prove capable of raising the level of relations between nations from the "organizational" to a more "organic" level, from simple "existence with" others to "existence for" others, in a fruitful exchange of gifts, primarily for the good of the weaker nations but even so, a clear harbinger of greater good for everyone. (...) This is the high road which must be followed to the end, even if this involves, when necessary, appropriate modifications in the operating model of the United Nations, (...) Now is the time for new hope, which calls us to expel the paralyzing burden of cynicism from the future of politics and of human life." (n.14) Pope Benedict XVI continues in the same direction the Church's teaching on international relations and he writes in his encyclical letter *Caritas in veritate*: "In the face of the unrelenting growth of global interdependence, there is a strongly felt need (...) for a reform of the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth. One also senses the urgent need to find innovative ways of implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect and of giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making. This seems necessary in order to arrive at a political, juridical and economic order which can increase and give direction to international cooperation for the development of all peoples in solidarity (...). Such an authority would need to be regulated by law, to observe consistently the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, to seek to establish the common good, and to make a commitment to securing authentic integral human development inspired by the values of charity in truth. Furthermore, such an authority would need to be universally recognized and to be vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for rights. Obviously it would have to have the authority to ensure compliance with its decisions from all parties, and also with the coordinated measures adopted in various international forums. Without this, despite the great progress accomplished in various sectors, international law would risk being conditioned by the balance of power among the strongest nations. The integral development of peoples and international cooperation require the establishment of a greater degree of international ordering, marked by subsidiarity, for the management of globalization. They also require the construction of a social order that at last conforms to the moral order, to the interconnection between moral and social spheres, and to the link between politics and the economic and civil spheres, as envisaged by the Charter of the United Nations". (n. 67).

5 Cf. JOSEPH JOBLIN, "L'Eglise et la construction de l'ordre international." *La Documentation catholique* 2373, 4 février 2007, pp. 120-128.

6 The difference between the Vatican City State and the Holy See has been clearly and authoritatively stated by Pope John Paul II in his letter of November 20, 1982, to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Secretary of State, where he states: "(...) Occorre tener presente il loro significato oggettivo e, contemporaneamente, la natura specifica della Sede Apostolica. Quest'ultima – benché, come ho sopra accennato, le sia strettamente connessa l'entità designata come lo Stato della Città del Vaticano – non ha la configurazione dei veri Stati, che sono soggetto della sovranità politica di una data società. D'altra parte lo Stato della Città del Vaticano è sovrano, ma non possiede tutte le ordinarie caratteristiche di una comunità politica. Si tratta di uno Stato atipico: esso esiste a conveniente garanzia

dell'esercizio della spirituale libertà della Sede Apostolica, e cioè come mezzo per assicurare l'indipendenza reale e visibile della medesima nella sua attività di governo a favore della Chiesa universale, come pure della sua opera pastorale rivolta a tutto il genere umano; esso non possiede una propria società per il cui servizio sia stato costituito, e neppure si basa sulle forme di azione sociale che determinano solitamente la struttura e l'organizzazione di ogni altro Stato. Inoltre, le persone che coadiuvano la Sede Apostolica, o anche cooperano al governo nello Stato della Città del Vaticano, non sono, salvo poche eccezioni, cittadini di questo (...). La Sede Apostolica – mentre per ben più importanti aspetti trascende i ristretti confini dello Stato della Città del Vaticano fino ad estendere la sua missione a tutta la terra – nemmeno sviluppa, né può sviluppare, l'attività economica propria di uno Stato; ed esulano dalle sue finalità istituzionali la produzione di beni economici e l'arricchimento da redditi...” Cf. also Robert John Araujo, “The International personality and Sovereignty of the Holy See”. *Catholic University Law Review*, vol. 50, 2 (Winter 2001), pp. 291-360.

7 BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, n. 28 : “(...) the Church wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest. Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which every generation must take up anew. As a political task, this cannot be the Church's immediate responsibility. Yet, since it is also a most important human responsibility, the Church is duty-bound to offer, through the purification of reason and through ethical formation, her own specific contribution towards understanding the requirements of justice and achieving them politically.”

8 HENRY DE RIEDMATTEN, “The Part Played by the Holy See in International Organizations.” *Concilium*, vol.8/6 (October 1970), pp. 74-93.

9 SILVANO M. TOMASI, “Rispondere alle necessità immediate degli sfollati e ricostruire l'Iraq sulla base della riconciliazione.” *L'Osservatore Romano*, maggio 2007, p. 2.

10 QUOTED IN VINCENZO BUONOMO, “The Holy See in the Contemporary International Community: a Juridical Approach According to the International Law and Practice.” *Civitas and Justitia*, 04/III/1, p. 38

11 HOLY SEE SECRETARIAT OF STATE, *Statistical Yearbook of the Church*, vol. 203, Vatican city, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006. Address by H. E. SILVANO M. TOMASI, “Christianity before the Challenges of the Modern Era: the Perspective of the Catholic Church.” *Inter-parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy*, 12th General Assembly, Geneva, June 23 2005.

12 Address by DAVID A. MORSE, Director General, to His Eminence Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, Secretary of State, 10 July 1967.

13 United Nations General Assembly. High-level meeting and comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. Statement by Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, President of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care. New York, 2 June 2006.

14 HOLY SEE SECRETARIAT OF STATE, *Statistical Yearbook of the Church*, Vol 203, pp. 356-366.

15 U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY. Fifty-eight session. Agenda item 59. A/RES/58/314. 16 July 2004.

H. E. MARIE THÉRÈSE PICTET ALTHANN¹

The Order of Malta and the United Nations

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta is a religious lay Order of the Catholic Church with a 900-year old tradition of caring for the poor and the sick, whatever their religion, origin or race. From its founding in Jerusalem in the middle of the 11th century and right up to the present day, the Order has been assisting people of all beliefs – Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish. It strives to deliver medical and humanitarian aid to those who need care and comfort in the face of poverty, conflict or disaster. This has always been and remains its mission today as we face a world where fighting poverty and alleviating suffering have been recognized as priorities by all states through the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration in September 2000.

Subject of international public law, the Order is sovereign, neutral, impartial and non-political by vocation. Its sovereignty dates back to 1310 when the Order settled in Rhodes and later in 1530

in Malta. In 1798 the Order lost its territory in Malta, but its sovereignty was confirmed by the treaty of Amiens in 1802. Today the Order is extended across the world as never before. It does not depend on any other state or government and it does not pursue economic or political goals. On the operational level it is a major global professional institution in terms of the humanitarian aid, medical care and emergency medicine it provides. The Order is active in 120 countries on all continents, where its 59 organizations initiate and sustain projects that include medical and social assistance, disaster relief in the case of armed conflicts and natural catastrophes, emergency services and first aid corps, help for the elderly, the handicapped and children in need, support for refugees and internally displaced persons. Its worldwide organization for emergency relief and rehabilitation, Malteser International, currently conducts around 100 projects in more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas. The Order's work is carried out by its 13,500 members, as well as approximately 80,000 trained volunteers and 25,000 employees, the

¶ Introduction

¶ Characteristics

majority of whom are medical personnel.

§ *Bilateral diplomacy*

“The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta is a religious lay Order of the Catholic Church with a 900-year old tradition of caring for the poor and the sick, whatever their religion, origin or race.”

The Order is encouraged by the unique trust and recognition it receives which allows it to work with states in every region and every ethnic and religious tradition throughout the world. At present it has bilateral diplomatic relations with 104 countries and official relations with 6 countries. The diplomatic activities of the Order are distinct from those of nation states, as they are closely linked to the Order’s humanitarian mission, providing a unique network which is both a demonstration of its sovereignty and an operational instrument for its humanitarian activities. The tasks of the Order’s embassies are: to ensure that aid can be delivered promptly and effectively; to provide diplomatic protection when required; to initiate contacts; to conclude agreements or to resolve difficulties.

§ *Multilateral diplomacy*

The Order attaches particular importance to multilateral diplomacy which promotes peace through constant dialogue amongst nations.

On 30th August 1994 the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/48/265 granting observer status to the “Sovereign Military Order of Malta”. In acknowledging the Order’s “long-standing dedication in providing humanitarian assistance and its special role in international humanitarian relations” the General Assembly expressed its desire to “enhance

cooperation between the United Nations and the Order of Malta”.

The Order of Malta’s acceptance into the United Nations has had numerous positive ramifications, for example, in the area of international cooperation.

The number of states formally extending recognition to the Order of Malta in the modern era is growing. In the 1950s, the Order enjoyed formal diplomatic relations only with five states. By the time the General Assembly extended Permanent Observer status to the Order, it had established diplomatic relations with 67 countries and since 1994 that recognition has enlarged to 104 Member States. This creates new prospects for the Order of Malta’s participation in international agreements and social works, especially in the fields most interrelated to its humanitarian mission such as protecting the health, freedom and dignity of persons, promoting civil and social progress, working to prevent violence and fostering peaceful international coexistence.

In addition to its Permanent Observer status at the United Nations and its specialized agencies in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, the Order also has permanent observer missions to the UN Education Science and Culture Organization in Paris (UNESCO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP) in Rome, the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna. Furthermore, it

has delegations or representatives to the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, the International Committee of Military Medicine, the International Institute of Humanitarian Law, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Unión Latina. The Order's active presence in the UN and its representation to these institutions serves to strengthen the coordination and effectiveness of the Order's humanitarian and disaster relief activities.

The main tasks of the Order's diplomatic Observer Missions are to develop and strengthen its relations and initiate cooperation with the United Nations, other international organizations and civil society represented at the UN, to inform the community of nations on its action worldwide, to participate in meetings of specialized institutes and think tanks, as well as to promote its ideals which are closely linked to the UN Charter's principles and the goals expressed in the UN Millennium Declaration signed by Member States at the Summit meeting in 2000.

In the United Nations, Observers do not have a vote but they have a voice. The positive consequences of the Order of Malta's acceptance into the United Nations have become increasingly evident with time, and it is certain that this trend will continue.

The Order of Malta opened its first multilateral diplomatic delegation in Geneva in 1952. At the time several international humanitarian organizations had established their headquarters in this city. In light of the Order's mission it was only too natural to cover the work of the United Nations and its agencies such as the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as other international organizations such as the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (now IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

At the invitation of the government of the Swiss Confederation, the Order of Malta was invited to attend with observer status the following conferences:

- The Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law applicable in Armed Conflicts (CDDH) which was held in Geneva from 1974 to 1977. The Conference drew up and adopted two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts and the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts.
- The multilateral Conference called by the United Nations in January and February 1977 to discuss the conclusion of an in-

§ Diplomatic representation in Geneva: historical developments 1952-1993

ternational convention on territorial asylum. The conference failed to adopt a text and only three articles were endorsed of the ten originally proposed.

- The International Conference, which met in Geneva in 1993 to discuss the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

¶ Diplomatic representation in Geneva : 1994 - today

The Order's humanitarian action and its commitment to help the most vulnerable fight poverty, defend human rights, combat diseases, provide health and sanitation services as well as alleviate suffering in man-made and natural disaster situations are reflected in the fields of activity covered by the United Nations, its specialized agencies and other inter-governmental organisations based in Geneva. Therefore, its Permanent Observer Mission is engaged in forging active relationships with the major international organizations involved in humanitarian work, seeking to operate in partnership with key international players, in particular with the humanitarian agencies with which the Order works in the field.

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR

The Order has a longstanding cooperation with UNHCR on projects in many areas of the world. It has acted as UNHCR's implementing partner in the Great Lakes' region of Africa, the Balkans, Thailand/Myanmar, Afghanistan and it assists refugees and internally displaced

persons (IDPs) in several countries in Africa and Asia.

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – OCHA

OCHA is responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies and thereby plays a key role in operational coordination in crisis situations. The Order is engaged on the ground in partnerships, particularly within the so-called "clusters" which are groups of organizations (UN and non-UN) working in the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. shelter and health. In Geneva OCHA gives regular country briefings for Permanent Missions during which it provides detailed reporting and evaluations of ongoing relief and emergency operations. The Order is a contributor to the Central Emergency Response Fund.

UN Economic and Social Council - ECOSOC

Every other year ECOSOC holds its Substantive Session and its Annual Ministerial Review in Geneva. ECOSOC serves as the central forum for the discussion of international economic, social, humanitarian and environmental issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the UN system. During its Humanitarian Affairs Segment the Council discusses special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, thereby playing a key role in fostering international cooperation and in setting priorities for action. The Order joins the dis-

cussions related to its humanitarian activities.

UN Human Rights Council - HRC

The Order shares the aspirations of the United Nations as proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly in 1948. The HRC is responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of these rights and freedoms which are founded on the dignity of the human person. In this context the Order focuses on themes directly related to its humanitarian principles and its commitment to helping those members of society who suffer from discrimination, poverty or violence. These include the rights of the child, of women, refugees, migrants, as well as the rights to freedom of opinion and expression and to freedom of religion, the rights to health, food, safe drinking water and sanitation.

World Health Organization – WHO

The Order's tradition of caring for the sick is pursued through its worldwide medical, health and social welfare activities. Through its extensive network of hospitals, medical and social centres, it provides first aid, basic health care, vaccination programmes, care for leprosy victims, for AIDS victims and for those suffering from disease, hunger, homelessness. As WHO is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda and setting norms and standards, the Order follows developments in these areas and participates in the annual

World Health Assembly.

International Organization for Migration – IOM

In 2007 the Order and IOM formalized their longstanding relationship by signing a cooperation agreement which emphasizes in particular emergency and post-emergency situations, including possible reconstruction stages. The cooperation involves providing medical and social assistance to migrants, assistance and protection to victims of traffickers and other vulnerable groups as well as the promotion of human rights on an international level.

Furthermore, the Order's Permanent Observer Mission covers the activities of other institutions, such as the: International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva Peace building Platform, Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Global Forum in Migration and Development. It also participates in debates organized by academic circles on humanitarian issues.

In keeping with its tradition and spirituality, the Order of Malta stands ready to meet the great challenges of the modern age in the same spirit that inspired its founders 900 years ago. A precursor of to-day's international humanitarian institutions, it is aware of its role in the world as an independent and impartial member of the international community and recognizes the need to take on new responsi-

9 Concluding remarks

lities in the face of change. Its policy of close interaction, combined with the active involvement of its members in the large social movements of our time, enable the Order to respond to the needs of a fast-changing world.

NOTE

1 H. E. MARIE THÉRÈSE PICTET ALTHANN is Permanent Observer of the Sovereign Order of Malta to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva.

PÈRE JOSEPH JOBLIN, s.j.¹

The Catholic Presence at the UN in Geneva

Note on the past - future perspectives

It is difficult to imagine today the extent of the spiritual upheaval at the end of the Second World War. After the horror of destruction, there was hope of seeing humanity enter an era of peace and harmony without renewing the errors that had marked the end of the First World War. The creation of the United Nations (1945) seemed to make this dream into reality, all the more since the Charter of the UN opened with this declaration: “We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, Determined... to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, ...have resolved to combine our efforts...”. For this purpose, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was created by article 61 and subsequent articles of the Charter to constitute a kind of “think tank” for the world community. It was thought that ECOSOC would function democratically since the Council was authorized to take all useful measures to consult

the non governmental organizations dealing with questions falling under its competence (art.71). This provision oriented the Christian presence at the level of international affairs. It was at this point in time that the International Catholic Centers of Paris (Mgr. Rupp), New York (Mrs. Schaeffer) and Geneva (Miss de Romer) were founded.

Miss Hedwige de Romer, of Polish nationality, was a functionary of the League of Nations (LON). She remained in Switzerland during the war and became familiar with the Conference of Presidents and with the international role played by the bishops of Freiburg, in particular Mgr Mermillod and, during the period between the wars, by Mgr Marius Besson. She was therefore well disposed, to making the most of the new situation created by the Charter of the UN and, in particular, by the provisions of article 71. Whereas the Holy See and Catholic associations had not been associated organically in international affairs

¶ Introduction

¶ At the origins of the International Catholic Center in Geneva

¶ *Father de Riedmatten*

during the period between the wars, a door seemed to open, thus enabling them to take their place on the international scene. While the Holy See remained excluded from the international assemblies, as it had been in 1919, consultative status offered an opportunity to the Catholic movements to take part in the reorganization of the world. This possibility, however, did not occur without ambiguity. In 1945, the world was no longer under the exclusive influence of the Western society, as it had been exerted since the Renaissance, when colonial domination never ceased to expand. The nature of international relations had however begun to change. The international scene was to quickly become the ground of an ideological battle between the East and the West at a time when new forces, such as the Non-Aligned Movement of Bandoeng, African independence, access to independence of continents with civilizations older than those in the West, etc., came to disturb the play of the Cold War.

base the Christian participation on fidelity to the Church, Miss de Romer was fortunate to count on Father Henri de Riedmatten as Ecclesiastical Advisor (1953).²

Father Henri de Riedmatten, o.p. (1919-1979) came from a family of illustrious diplomats from the Valais region of Switzerland, the Torrenté. He was raised by his uncle, who excelled as a Swiss diplomat and concluded his career as ambassador in London. Fr. de Riedmatten's upbringing enabled him to be perfectly at ease with the diplomats he met and to attain real prestige and a great sympathy among them. He felt at home in the diplomatic world; he could feel the truth in a visceral manner, seeing it as a necessary tool to introduce notable changes into international relations. He made his mark on the international environment, which had hitherto been closed to Catholic organizations, bringing awareness of the existence of Christian movements and the need to give to these movements the consideration that they deserved. Fr. De Riedmatten's stroke of genius was in using his knowledge of the nongovernmental environment to allow the Holy See to be considered as a partner in diplomatic life. Discerning the new conditions that Christianity would need to fulfill in order to exert an influence at the international level, he fully understood that it was no longer just a question of repeating the traditional teaching on natural law and the social doctrine of the Church, but that it would be neces-

"De Riedmatten's stroke of genius was in using his knowledge of the nongovernmental environment to allow the Holy See to be considered as a partner in diplomatic life."

Faced with a situation becoming more complex each day, the International Catholic Organizations (ICOs) risked becoming disorientated and disarmed. Miss de Romer therefore took the initiative to create the Center in Geneva in order to provide them with documentation on UN agenda items, inform them about the political climate, and to allow them to participate effectively on the international scene. Concerned about recklessly engaging herself in the adventure, and eager to

sary to reach the delegates in the depths of their religious convictions to make them aware of the spiritual concerns upon which every person reflects.

The World Health Organization (WHO) was the chosen ground for implementing this strategy of presence. Father de Riedmatten was able to establish relations of respect and mutual benevolence with the Brazilian director of WHO, Dr. Candau. These relations led to the appointment of a representative of the Holy See at certain meetings of the CI-CIAMS (Catholic nurses), which had obtained the status of observer at WHO. After having been invited on an ad hoc basis, some general provisions were made to ensure the regularity of this presence (1953), especially since, in the meantime, the Holy See had become Observer at FAO (1948) and at UNESCO (1952).³ Thus ended some twenty years during which Christianity was reintegrated into the international scene. This was a long way from the marginalization of the Holy See at the time of the 1899 conference of the Hague, from its exclusion during the second conference in 1907, and from its choice not to attend the peace conferences in 1919 and 1945⁴.

The reasons for this reintegration are crucial for understanding what we can expect from Catholic associations today. The reintegration of the Holy See in the international scene came from the patient action of the general secretaries of the Center, in particular Thaddée Szminkowski and Fred Martinache, who

developed the presence of Christianity within the international environment in accordance with some main lines of action.

With the disappearance of the Papal States and the conclusion of the Lateran agreements (1929), the Church of Rome was no longer perceived as a political power seeking alliances in order to pursue worldly goals. As David A. Morse, Director General of the International Labor Office, wrote in his letter to the Holy Father inviting him to address the delegates of the 1969 International Labor Conference (ILO): his authority is in developing an outline for the mission for justice and peace. Yet such is the universal aspiration of the present world: Every effort should be made ... to impress more vividly upon nations the combined role of spiritual and social factors in a changing world ... so that the contribution of religious forces to the material progress and spiritual development of nations may be emphasised afresh. Indeed, Paul VI unveiled before the ILO delegates a law for the development of humanity that included the acquisition of spiritual values, and he obtained agreement from all, even from the unions.

Thus the welcome given to the Holy See's participation in international life extended beyond the prejudices inherited from past struggles and arrived at the truly essential issue: the existence of spiritual values that guide behaviours. The journey of Paul VI to the Gene-

g Main lines of action

"The Church of Rome was no longer perceived as a political power seeking alliances in order to pursue worldly goals."

¶ *A dual mode of presence
in the world*

“We passed from an international society composed by the juxtaposition of sovereign states, to an understanding of the duty to build a global community.”

ral Assembly of the United Nations (1965) confirms this. His words, “War never again”, and “Here you are equal” express not just a social philosophy. They invite each person to recognize the existence of a desire for moral growth within humanity, shared by all, and which constitutes such a strong aspiration that it would be futile to expect to stop in one generation. Faced with this “fact of moral nature”, each one is invited to behave ethically.

We find, therefore, two dimensions of the Christian presence at the international level. The Observers of the Holy See are, above all, the prophets of the spiritual dimension of existence, even if, on certain days, they need to fight against erroneous orientations. They give witness to the intuition of Pope Pius XII, in his 1954 and 1956 Christmas messages. He was not satisfied merely to condemn Communism by announcing the deadlock in which it was likely to engage humanity. He also explained that Christianity would triumph over Communism because Christianity respects the human values which are constitutive of a world of peace. This vision paved the way for nongovernmental organizations and the bridging role they ought to play by gathering all people of good will over the iron curtain.

Pius XII, therefore, did not put his trust solely in diplomacy, as its direction and force come from the aspirations of public opinion being in line with reality. As proclaimed by the Charter of the United Nations : We, Peoples decided... One ought

not, therefore, isolate diplomatic action from that more profound action which brings about the support of public opinion.

At this point it is necessary to recall the double transformation of political society that occurred after the Second World War: on one hand, we passed from an international society composed by the juxtaposition of sovereign states, to an understanding of the duty to build a global community. On the other hand, having rejected totalitarian projects, which sought to unify people by imposing an ideology (in particular those of Nazism and Communism), the world community came to understand the need to be built, as *Gaudium and Spes* reminded, on the free adherence by all to the principles of what Pius XII called a “healthy democracy”⁵.

The conditions for Christian presence in the world were thereby modified. It was no longer a question of imposing truth; Paul VI would write to the Cardinal Roy in his letter Octogesima Adveniens”: “Faced with such varied situations, it is difficult for Us to pronounce a unique word, as well as to propose a solution which has universal value” (par.4).

From that time onward, the task would be to persuade other human beings to build a world based on solidarity while yielding to the requirements imposed by such a task. The challenge posed to Christianity had changed. Believers would be obliged to demonstrate, through their

behaviour, the capacity to take part in a democratic regime in which all the trends of public opinion were to be faithfully placed on an equal footing, and where no one could be presented as the owner of a truth for which he alone knew the admission requirements.

The danger here is that of a “rupture” between life and Christian faith⁶, i.e. of a relativism (Benedict XVI) giving preference to a purely rationalist interpretation of the societal problems over that of the faith. The acceptance of a pluralistic society implies that all the social forces cooperate for the good of the human person, but the Christian’s concern, at the same time, is to seek the content of justice in charity rather than in an ideology to which one would entrust a normative role. The “realism” of Christians enables them to reevaluate current reality by considering the historical mission of Christ and of the Church in society; this gives them a comprehensive view of history and founds their confidence in the future.

Christian associations in today’s world are the ambassadors of the Gospel in that they convey to their partners that they do not want to impose a solution a priori, but that they seek instead to solve the concrete problems encountered in the name of the universal good. They actively implement the famous speech of Maritain at the inauguration of the second UNESCO conference, in Mexico (1947): we are not here to discuss respective doctrines and their merits, but to consider the issues that pose an immediate pro-

blem and to ask ourselves what improvement we can make together.

The strategy followed to develop the course of action of Christian associations, and NGOs in general, since the Second World War, allows us to understand the intermediary role which they are expected to play in the international community giving essential support to the Observers of the Holy See while, at the same time, retaining their own mission. It must be recognized that this can be a cause of tension. The strength of the Holy See at the international level is that even prejudiced minds cannot ignore its capacity to form public opinion which is capable of resisting the pressures that certain ideologies claim to exert in the political realm. Even better, there are many non-Christians who see in the Church, and all religions with which the Church shares a certain connivance concerning values, an indispensable witness to ethical requirements, without which our existence would cease to be human. The choice of the engagements assumed by Christian associations could, however, become the subject of debate. Thus, one observes a certain aid organization bringing food to populations subjected to forced displacement, thereby seeming to endorse the discriminatory policy of the government. Yet another organization, anxious to create ties with the communist world, might finance a cooperative project in a country that has no contact with the Western world. More frequently, one hears denunciations of human rights violations in one or ano-

“We are not here to discuss respective doctrines and their merits, but to consider the issues that pose an immediate problem and to ask ourselves what improvement we can make together.”

ther country at the Human Rights Council, whereas the Observer of the Holy See might be engaged in negotiations with the delegates of those same countries in order to obtain an alleviation of certain restrictions imposed on fundamental freedoms. These examples show that frictions can occur between the leaders of Catholic associations and the Holy See. They are the expression of two different tactics.

The Center is in the midst of such tensions on the Geneva scene and its independence makes it the essential component for alleviating them. Receptacle of information from various actors, (Christian or non-Christian international functionaries, representatives of the Holy See), specialist in the social teaching of the Church, and witness of the new challenges to which the leaders of the Christian associations are particularly sensitive, the Center has the possibility of balancing the international Christian environment by facilitating mutual knowledge of the actors and the formation of a shared sensitivity.

the Catholic Information Center as well as the ICO representatives in Geneva. One can never emphasize enough the devotion of the latter in following the sessions at the UN and in making contacts there. Their periodic meetings create a diversified environment where reflexion on the stakes of the Christian presence in the international environment can be developed. Thus, at the international level, one trend of thought tackles various problems from the perspective of their own specific concerns. This group has a specificity which distinguishes it from the other movements: apart from certain ideological movements to which it is opposed, one could say that group is accepted as representing aspirations which are entitled to be respected. This group is quantitatively limited, but its unity and strength come from the fact that it gives priority to the values with which it aligns itself and that the teachings of the Holy See echo throughout the world.

In addition to this group, which is dedicated to giving priority to the Catholic presence in international life, to the point of suppressing its personal interests, there is a large group of delegates or functionaries, who give equal credit to Christian values, but who do not consider themselves to be exclusively and primarily at the service of the Holy See. They do not refuse to be known as Christian but they dedicate their energy to those needs to which they have accorded a high degree of priority. They perceive as their primary duty to combine their family and

“Many differences exist among those who agree to be labelled as Christians on the international scene, all of which depend on the level of interiorization of their engagement.”

¶ Catholic representatives on the international scene

Many differences exist among those who agree to be labelled as Christians on the international scene, all of which depend on the level of interiorization of their engagement. A first group comprises those who agreed, first and foremost, to be witnesses of Christian social thought and to promote it; this group is composed of the personnel who sustain the Permanent Delegation of the Holy See, the staff of

professional obligations in order to secure an education for their children in a stable family and to open future opportunities for them. Admittedly, some illusions can slip into this balancing effort; for example, one may wish to pursue a career in order to arrive at the top and, at that moment, be able to serve the Church. Without generalizing these exceptional cases, it should be understood that the desire of many people to serve the Church is lived out in dependence on natural obligations that are considered essential. The best people in this category certainly make themselves available but their engagement is often contingent on various considerations. The Holy See does not consider them *ad nutum*, all the more so since their status as international functionaries or diplomats at the service of a country prohibits them this type of dependence (on service to the Church).

A third category of functionaries cannot be considered as belonging to the Catholic sphere, but it maintains a spiritual approach to international issues. These are men and women from different backgrounds who are convinced of their duty to build the human community on values enshrining the dignity of the human person, to which all will eventually give the same meaning. For them, international life is the place where the conscience of humanity is refined⁷. Recognizing in the Christian movement an energy that goes in this direction, they appreciate its collaboration “in the service of the world community (even) in

institutions where God is not recognized explicitly as the author and the legislator of the universe”. The relief of material miseries, the development of a basic education, the recognition of the inviolable nature of the person and the dignity of the family are some of the causes in the service of which “are found generous souls and higher spirits likely to understand ... that a truly collective destiny of humanity implies recognition of the absolute value of each person”⁸.

The experience of the ICOs and of the Geneva Center during the Cold War was dominated by the historical circumstances of this period. It would be futile to look at this past with nostalgia because the past does not come round again. Some remarks can nevertheless be made since all new situations are rooted in the past.

1. The representatives of the ICOs and the Center representatives made up a specific environment on the Geneva scene; it was characterized by their cohesion, even if different positions could be defended on the issues of the time. All the participants had a deep conviction of being at the service of the Church. The relations established by the members among themselves, as well as with some international functionaries, diplomats or members of other NGOs, made the headquarters of the Center, at Rue de Varembeé, a sounding board where a composite judgment on current problems was developed.

g Conclusion

2. One of the strong points of this contribution took place monthly at a meeting followed by a lunch to which the Holy See Observer, in addition to several international top-ranking executives was invited. Thus unfolded an integration of the Christian milieu into international affairs, and with it, a broadening of perspectives.

3. The decline of the Cold War period, starting from the 80s, and leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall, modified the importance attached to values in international affairs. It seems that we have arrived at a certain kind of general conformism where the discussions on mankind and his meaning no

longer have a place, since public opinion has come to deem moral that which the law does not prohibit, and to be outlawed that which it condemns.

4. It seems that one mission of the religious associations should be to bring the international community to question its values; their objective could be to uphold, in the present time, the meaning of "all men and all mankind". Such a questioning could be made about new issues that arise. In doing so, Christian and religious organizations would contribute to the creation of an ethical fabric of society. This could be the major challenge in the years to come.

NOTES

1 Former special chancellor of the International Labor Organization (ILO) (1956-1981); professor emeritus Gregorian Pontifical University, former CICIAMS ecclesiastic chancellor.

2 T. SZMITKOWSKI, "Le père de Riedmatten et les Organisations internationales" in *Le courrier de Genève* 17 mai 1979.

3 The Holy See becomes UN observer state in New York in 1964 and in Geneva in 1967.

4 About the Holy See in the international scene cf. among others: A. CASAROLI, "Le Saint-Siège et la communauté internationale". *Documentation catholique* 1975 n° 1673 ; P. POUPARD, *Connaissance du Vatican*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1974 2ème ed. p. 205 ; A. DUPUY, *La diplomatie du Saint-Siège après le IIème concile du Vatican*, Paris, Téqui, 1974, p. 344 ; about the ICOs, F. RUSSO, "La Saint-Siège et les Organisations internationales", *Etudes*, July 1976 ; T. SWMITKOWSKI & H. DE RIEDMATTEN, "La politique internationale et l'Eglise catholique", *Schweitzer Rundschau*, Soleure 13 Mars 1967 ; J. JOBLIN, "Paul VI et les Institutions internationales", *Ecole Française de Rome, Paul VI et la modernité dans l'Eglise*, 1984, pp. 429-546.

5 Radio message 24 December 1944.

6 Radio message 24 December 1956.

7 Address of Paul VI at the International Labor Conference, 10 June 1969.

8 Address of Paul VI to Pax Romana, 25 March 1957.

FIRST PART

II. Christian Identity and Multilateral Engagement

SILVANO M. TOMASI, c.s.

Why is the Holy See engaged in International Life?

The reasons that prompt the Holy See to actively participate in the daily struggles of the human family are neither economic, nor related to military or political ambitions. Pope John Paul II gave a pertinent answer when he told the various diplomatic missions participating at his installation as Pontiff:

“...there can be no true human progress nor durable peace without the courageous, loyal, disinterested search of a growing cooperation and unity among the peoples. For this reason the Church encourages every initiative that can be undertaken, every step that can be realized, both on a bilateral and multilateral level.”

He added that respect for the fundamental demands of the human person is required.

“Christians are more attentive to this vocation of men and women to cooperation and to unity because, in the plan of salvation, the Gospel message reveals to them that Jesus of Nazareth died to gather into one the dispersed

children of God’ (John 11, 52)...The Church...in the same way is convinced to be able to contribute effectively to this work of reconstruction of the human family and of its history, thanks to evangelical love (cf. Gaudium et Spes, 40). It is for this reason also that the Holy See establishes relations with each of your Governments and takes part in the activity of international organizations.”

This line of thinking has remained consistent since the beginning of the Holy See’s involvement with international organizations. It is developed fully in such landmark documents as the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of Vatican II, other encyclicals like *Populorum Progressio*, *Centesimus Annus*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, and *Caritas in veritate*, just to mention a few, as well as in various speeches by the Popes. Basic themes frequently mentioned in these statements include the unity of the human family, its common destiny, the inalienable dignity of every person created in the image of God, and attention to the poor and

“There can be no true human progress nor durable peace without the courageous, loyal, disinterested search of a growing cooperation and unity among the peoples.”

least privileged.²

Today some areas of concern seem to dominate and guide the involvement of the Holy See in the international organizations: Human Rights, peace, and solidarity.

¶ *Human Rights, a global language*

“The language of the U.N. Human Rights discourse and that of the Holy See converge to a very significant degree.”

The list of resolutions of the U.N. Human Rights Council³, established in 2006, offers a panorama of sensitive issues confronting the international community. After the crimes and horrors of the Second World War, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the U.N. in 1948, gave rise to several institutions and international treaties, including the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, of which the present Council is the successor. The defence of and respect for the human person were placed at the centre of these concerns, as the U.N. Charter indicated in its Preamble:

“We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental Human Rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, and for these ends to practice tolerance and

live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.”

In these words, one finds a new model of international relations; force no longer regulates them, but such fundamental principles as respect for Human Rights, auto-determination of peoples, equality among all States, justice, equity, solidarity and cooperation, and good faith. It is worth noting that the language of the U.N. Human Rights discourse and that of the Holy See and of the social doctrine of the Church converge to a very significant degree.

Presently, one observes increasing efforts to change the content and meaning of the words used in conventions and declarations; this probably is due to pressure from some trends in Western public culture. In its interventions throughout the U.N. system and in intergovernmental bodies, the Holy See upholds the original ideals of the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and consistently points out the four pillars on which the social order should rest. These were formulated as follows by Pope John XXIII in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*:

“...nations are the subjects

of reciprocal rights and duties. Their relationships, therefore, must likewise be harmonized in accordance with the dictates of truth, justice, willing cooperation, and freedom. The same law of nature that governs the life and conduct of individuals must also regulate the relations of political communities with one another."⁴

During the regular and special sessions of the Human Rights Council and other U.N. bodies, the Holy See, inspired by this attention to the rights of every human person, argues on behalf of all categories of people in need of protection because of their minority status or the prejudices of history on the basis of natural ethic and of the reason common to all of us. Thus, interventions delivered by the Permanent Observers of the Holy See often focus on themes such as the integrity of the family as basic unit of society and the special needs of women, children, migrants and refugees. These categories of people should be constantly kept before the eyes of the international community since their need of protection is obvious and is based upon evidence provided by United Nations data. Let us take, for example, the situation of children as a case in point; the world still tolerates today that 200,000 child soldiers, some as young as eight years, are exploited in armed conflicts; that 10 million children are victims of today's sex industry; that an estimated 250 million children are engaged in child labour, with nearly 70% of them working in hazardous conditions; that 3.2 million children under 15

years of age are living with HIV and only a small number of them have access to life-saving anti-retroviral medications.

Freedom of religion takes a privileged place in the Holy See interventions. For example, it would be interesting to analyze in detail the lively exchange that took place in the Human Rights Council following Pope Benedict's lecture in Regensburg (12 September 2006) and the position taken by groups of States and by the Holy See with regard to freedom of religion and freedom of expression as well as on the role of religion in public life. Currently, the debate focuses on defamation of religions, Islamophobia, the dialectical relation between individual and collective rights in the area of religion and conviction.

In the Social Teaching of the Church, one will find the recurrent theme of peace, which is characterized as a deep aspiration of every human being, a gift from God. The annual papal Message for the World's Day of Peace elaborates the manifold dimensions and implications of peace. For example, Pope John Paul II wrote:

"It must be forcefully repeated: authentic peace is only possible if the dignity of the human person is promoted at every level of society, and every individual is given the chance to live in accordance with this dignity. Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every

"Authentic peace is only possible if the dignity of the human person is promoted at every level of society, and every individual is given the chance to live in accordance with this dignity."

¶ Peace

*human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations which flow directly and immediately from his very nature. And these rights and obligations are universal, inviolable and inalienable.' The truth about man is the keystone in the resolution of all the problems involved in promoting peace. To teach people this truth is one of the most fruitful and lasting ways to affirm the value of peace*²⁵

The Church educates with the aim of achieving peace. But the Social Teaching of the Church also has moved along the road of concrete international engagements and has done so together with other countries. The awareness of the tragedies generated by all previous conflicts, especially after World War II, led the human family to identify, as the top priority in the world. The development of conditions for a just and durable peace. The Holy See, therefore, took the decision to sign, ratify and accede to practically all the treaties relating to disarmament. Of course, this was not done in order to disarm any 'Vatican divisions' but to encourage the international community to set up and strengthen ethical and pragmatic norms that would make it possible to live together in peace.

In this perspective, the Holy See is a State Party to the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and State member of the International Agency for Atomic Energy (IAEA), to the Convention on Biological Weapons

(BWC), to the Convention on Chemical Weapons (CWC), to the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines, and to the Convention on certain conventional weapons and its Protocols (CCW).

On a regular basis, the Holy See takes part, as an Observer State, in the activities of the Conference on Disarmament. I will mention, for example, only two areas in which the Holy See exerts active efforts to promote effective answers on the part of the international community. The first such example is found in the Ottawa Convention which deals with anti-personnel mines that provoke serious humanitarian consequences in many countries. The Holy See, State Party to this Convention, looks at this international instrument as one of the most successful in the area of disarmament. The contribution of the Holy See is expressed, in particular, by its commitment on behalf of the victims of anti-personnel mines and by its participation in the Group of contact seeking to universalize this Convention and thus by making good use of its bilateral relations to convince, as much as possible, those States that are not yet party to the Convention to join the 153 that already are.

The second example relates to the problem of cluster munitions which, since the Second World War, have been used with devastating humanitarian results for thousand of persons, particularly for children, and with destructive effects on vast surfaces of land that thus remain unusable for agriculture. The Holy

See is of the opinion that the negative humanitarian consequences of these weapons far surpass their military benefit. In recent years, with the goal of arriving at an international agreement in this regard, the Holy See has called repeatedly for a moratorium in the use of these arms. In 2006, together with five other countries, the Holy See signed a document asking the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) to adopt a specific mandate to negotiate a new treaty on cluster munitions. Thus, within the CCW framework and outside of it, the Holy See has participated actively, and in concert with a growing number of other States in the negotiations that led to the successful signing in Oslo of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions that enacts concrete measures that can end the disastrous effects of these weapons⁶.

The expansion of the concept of peace is another pertinent contribution of the Holy See to the international debate. Peace is not seen simply as the absence of war, but as an orderly system of just relations sustained by a spiritual dimension and the generosity of love. Pope Paul VI spoke of development as the “new name for peace” because “extreme disparity between nations in economic, social and educational levels provokes jealousy and discord, often putting peace in jeopardy.”⁷ Again, in this area, the Holy See and the international community are speaking on the same wave length. A U.N. Deputy Secretary General commented:

“Peacekeepers and preventive diplomacy remain essential tools in our efforts to silence guns and implement ceasefires, but by themselves they are not enough to counter humanity’s worse instincts...the search for a durable peace...requires the spread of values, attitudes and behaviours and embrace tolerance, justice and respect for Human Rights.”⁸

If a culture of peace is a requirement for its achievement, a culture of solidarity is equally necessary for the proper functioning of the global economy. Since the first great encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, issued in 1891, to *Caritas in veritate* of Pope Benedict XVI the theme of economic relations among States have formed a major chapter of the Church’s social doctrine, and this preoccupation is articulated in a similar manner by some of the international organizations. In the U.N. family of agencies, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), established in 1964, promotes the “development-friendly” integration of developing countries into the world economy. UNCTAD has progressively evolved into an authoritative knowledge-based institution, the work of which aims to help shape current policy debates and thinking on development. Within the work of UNCTAD, one notes a particular focus on ensuring that domestic policies and international action are mutually supportive in bringing about sustainable development.

¶ Solidarity

“Peacekeepers and preventive diplomacy remain essential tools in our efforts to silence guns and implement ceasefires, but by themselves they are not enough to counter humanity’s worse instincts.”

UNCTAD also seeks to serve as a forum for intergovernmental deliberations aiming at consensus building, by undertaking research, policy analysis and data collection and by providing technical assistance tailored to the specific requirements of developing countries. The Holy See is a member of the UNCTAD Assembly and pays special attention to the needs of the least developed countries.

From July 1997, the Holy See has been a Permanent Observer to the World Trade Organization (WTO), to its Ministerial Conference, to its General Council and subsidiary bodies. This position is somewhat exceptional, since the Holy See is the only Observer country that does not have the obligation to start negotiations for membership, as is the case with every other State. The goal of the organization is the integration of all countries into a system of mutual exchanges based upon rules of trade. "At its heart are the WTO agreements, negotiated and signed by the bulk of the world's trading nations and ratified in their parliaments. The goal is to help producers of goods and services, exporters, and importers conduct their business." In this way, the WTO becomes the barometer of globalization that, beyond commercial and economic plays, shows the challenges posed by political decisions. A similar observation applies for the Holy See's presence in the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The Holy See follows the main debates from the particular lens of the need to include the poorer countries

and to advocate for fair treatment of such countries so that the benefits of globalization may be fairly distributed. It is not rare that the great powers cajole and coerce the smaller countries which disagree with them into accepting the same rules even though these latter have the burden of a very uneven starting point. On the occasion of Ministerial Conferences, but also in other moments, the point of view of the Holy See is made known: the centrality of the human person before all the rules and commercial mechanisms; the duty of subsidiarity for States and for international institutions; the responsibility of solidarity toward the less advantaged. The 1967 encyclical of Pope Paul VI remains very timely forty years after it was issued. It also offers some food for thought with regard to trade when it says:

"Efforts are being made to help the developing nations financially and technologically. Some of these efforts are considerable. Yet all these efforts will prove to be vain and useless, if their results are nullified to a large extent by the unstable trade relations between rich and poor nations. The latter will have no grounds for hope or trust if they fear that what is being given them with one hand is being taken away with the other... It is evident that the principle of free trade, by itself, is no longer adequate for regulating international agreements. It certainly can work when both parties are about equal economically; in such cases it stimulates progress and rewards effort. That is why industrially developed nations see an element of

"It is evident that the principle of free trade, by itself, is no longer adequate for regulating international agreements."

justice in this principle. But the case is quite different when the nations involved are far from equal... Now in trade relations between the developing and the highly developed economies there is a great disparity in their overall situation and in their freedom of action. In order that international trade be human and moral, social justice requires that it restore to the participants a certain equality of opportunity. To be sure, this equality will not be attained at once, but we must begin to work toward it now by injecting a certain amount of equality into discussions and price talks.” (56-61)

Open markets and globalization can be positive developments if both accept an ethical dimension that not only controls their excesses and greed but also enhances the quality of the human participation.

In an environment of much media reporting on violent conflicts, on the financial and economic crises, on clash of civilizations and clash of cultures, the Holy

See puts forward the vision of a civilization of love⁹. The diplomacy of the Holy See walks along with the peoples of the world in the “ups” and “downs” of their history. The Holy See also keeps alive a light of hope and, through its action within the international organizations, it strives to contribute this hope for a better and more peaceful and fraternal world.

Several questions can be raised: is this diplomacy effective? Are practical results evident? Are political priorities in international action best changed through the ratification of treaties and the participation in international conferences?

The voice of the Holy See finds an echo in the conscience of people and, from there, some fruits will mature in due time.¹⁰ The link between the conscience and God is the best guarantee for respect of man; man, in turn, becomes the way to God and to peaceful coexistence among individuals and peoples. Multilateral diplomacy could not aim at a higher or more noble goal.

“The diplomacy of the Holy See walks along with the peoples of the world in the ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ of their history.”

NOTES

1 Address of JOHN PAUL II to the head of States, October 23 1978.

2 For an exhaustive review and reporting of original texts of the Holy See’s areas of concern and of the philosophical and theological foundations on which rest such concern, Cf. ANDRÉ DUPUY, *Words that Matter: The Holy See in Multilateral Diplomacy. Anthology (1970-2000)*, New York, The Path of Peace Foundation, 2003. p. 752. See also in French FRANÇOIS BLIN, *Repères pour l’histoire de la Conférence des Organisations Internationales Catholiques (1927-2008)*, Genève, Ecclectica, 2010.

3 UN, Sixtieth session. A7RES760/251. 3 April 2006.

4 JOHN XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, n. 80.

5 JOHN PAUL II, *Message for the XXVIII World Day of Peace*, 1995, n.1.

6 Cf. *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, Banning Cluster Munitions : Government*

Policy and Practice, Toronto, Mines Action Canada, 2009, pp. 87-88. This report is available online at www.lm.icbl.org/cm/2009. “The Holy See signed and ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo on 3 December 2008. It was one of four countries to both sign and ratify the convention on the same day. The Holy See has never used, produced, or stockpiled cluster munitions. The Holy See is party to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), and ratified Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War on 28 June 2005. In September 2006, shortly before the Third Review Conference of the CCW, the Holy See called for a moratorium on the use of cluster munitions and for their restriction under international law. In November 2006, during the Review Conference, the Holy See and five others tabled a proposal for a mandate to negotiate a legally binding instrument addressing the humanitarian concerns posed by cluster munitions. When it became apparent that the proposal would not garner consensus, the Holy See was one of 25 States that supported a declaration calling for an agreement that would prohibit the use of cluster munitions “within concentrations of civilians,” prohibit the use of cluster munitions that “pose serious humanitarian hazards because they are for example unreliable and/or inaccurate,” and require destruction of stockpiles of such cluster munitions. The Holy See subsequently played a leading role in the Oslo Process. As part of the “Core Group,” it shared responsibility with Norway, Austria, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, and Peru for the guidance of the process. It participated in the initial conference of the Oslo Process, in Oslo in February 2007, and all three of the international conferences to develop the convention text in Lima, Vienna, and Wellington, as well as the formal negotiations in Dublin....Upon signing the convention in Oslo in December, the Holy See stated that it was ratifying the convention on the same day as it signed “in order to send a strong political signal and to express to the victims the human closeness that the Holy See and its institutions are keen to emphasize.”

7 PAUL VI, *Populorum Progressio*, n. 76 (1967).

8 United Nations Deputy Secretary General ASHA-ROSE MIGIRO. UN News Service, 27 February 2007.

9 JOHN PAUL II, Address to the Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, New York, October 5, 1995 : “We must overcome our fear of the future. But we will not be able to overcome it completely unless we do so together. The “answer” to that fear is neither coercion nor repression, nor the imposition of one social “model” on the entire world. The answer to the fear which darkens human existence at the end of the twentieth century is the common effort to build the civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice, and liberty. And the “soul” of the civilization of love is the culture of freedom: the freedom of individuals and the freedom of nations, lived in self-giving solidarity and responsibility.” (n.18)

10 POPE BENEDICT XVI, Address to the Holy See’s International Diplomats, Rome, 18 March 2006. “The increased participation of the Holy See in international activities is a precious incentive to ensure that it can continue to give a voice to the conscience of all who make up the international community. It is a sensitive and difficult service, founded on the apparently inert but ultimately prevalent force of the truth, through which the Holy See intends to collaborate in building an international society that is more attentive to the dignity and true needs of the human person.”

MATHIAS NEBEL¹

The diakonia of truth and the mission of Catholic Inspired NGOs

The notion of “diakonia of truth” harkens back to the encyclical of John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, in which the concept essentially denotes the responsibility of the Church to serve the truth (a responsibility especially ascribed to the Magisterium). “*The Church is no stranger to this journey of discovery, nor could she ever be. From the moment when, through the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life, the Church has made her pilgrim way along the paths of the world to proclaim that Jesus Christ is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). It is her duty to serve humanity in different ways, but one way in particular imposes a responsibility of a quite special kind: the diakonia of the truth.*” (*Fides et Ratio* 2). It is worth emphasizing that God’s truth is a *gift* and, as such, sends the Church on a pilgrim’s journey across the world to witness and teach Christ’s truth². To announce the Gospel is an integral part of the mission of the Church. And, as the mission results directly from the following of Christ’s Gospel, the Church cannot depart from announcing Christ’s truth to the world.

This is all quite classic. What may strike us as new is the fact that such an announcement of the truth is considered as a *service*. John Paul II refers, in fact, to the kind of service which is described by the Greek New Testament term “*diakonia*”³. According to John Paul II, such *diakonia* has a double dimension: “(1) *This mission on the one hand makes the believing community a partner in humanity’s shared struggle to arrive at truth; (2) and on the other hand it obliges the believing community to proclaim the certitudes arrived at, albeit with a sense that every truth attained is but a step towards that fullness of truth which will appear with the final Revelation of God*” (*Fides et Ratio*, 2). This service, therefore, entails two tasks. There is the properly human charge to follow the emergence of truths in the human community by taking part, discussing and debating, working out the truth at the light of natural reason for all it can achieve. The second task is the duty to announce the revealed truth in the world. The encyclical *Fides et ratio* develops the two dimensions of this *diakonia of truth*, although it does so by stressing the reciprocity existing between

¶ *Fides et ratio*

faith and reason, between philosophy and theology. As one reads the text it may seem that the *diakonia of truth* is an assignment imparted mainly to Christian philosophers and to the Magisterium, with the former responsible for believing in the full capacity of natural reason, and working for the truth through study and discussion, and the latter responsible for developing the research of natural reason beyond itself, to the realm of revealed truth, and showing what understanding we can gather from it. Benedict XVI stated subsequently that this *diakonia of truth* is actually imparted to all Christians and especially to the intellectuals engaged in public dialogue.

An urgent need emerges from this reflection. Emphasising the task of a *diakonia of truth* goes hand in hand with a reading of the signs of the times. It is the social loss in public debate – a gradual, incremental loss – of the consensus on the role and value of truth that gives the Church her mission of serving the truth in all its present relevance.⁴ Indeed *Fides et ratio* points toward the status of reason in the West as the situation addressed by the document:

I judge it necessary to do so because, at the present time in particular, the search for ultimate truth seems often to be neglected. Modern philosophy clearly has the great merit of focusing attention upon man. (...) Yet the positive results achieved must not obscure the fact that reason (...) seems to have forgotten that men and women are always called to

*direct their steps towards a truth which transcends them. Sundered from that truth, individuals are at the mercy of caprice, and their state as person ends up being judged by pragmatic criteria based essentially upon experimental data (...). This has given rise to different forms of agnosticism and relativism (...). Recent times have seen the rise to prominence of various doctrines which tend to devalue even the truths which had been judged certain. A legitimate plurality of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid, which is one of today's most widespread symptoms of the lack of confidence in truth. (...) On this understanding, everything is reduced to opinion; and there is a sense of being adrift. While, on the one hand, philosophical thinking has succeeded in coming closer to the reality of human life and its forms of expression, it has also tended to pursue issues—existential, hermeneutical or linguistic—which ignore the radical question of the truth about personal existence, about being and about God. (...) With a false modesty, people rest content with partial and provisional truths, no longer seeking to ask radical questions about the meaning and ultimate foundation of human, personal and social existence. (*Fides et ratio*, 5)*

The long quote expresses the Magisterium's surprise and concern that such a deep-seated intellectual paradigm shift would cause the society which experiences it to accept a profound reversal of the values underlying

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ing its coexistence, a transformation of the institutions achieving those values in society, a change of the Law translating those values into reciprocal rights and duties. John Paul II – and even more pointedly, his successor Benedict XVI – identifies the rejection of truth in our Western world as the tipping point of a reversal that results in a social fracture within our societies⁵.

Truth stands as both the foundation and the horizon of research, discussion or dialogue. It gives value to them. Without truth being attained, research is vain, discussion remains fruitless and dialogue is reduced to pointless monologue. Alienated from the horizon of a possible truth, communication between human beings loses its capacity to build bridges between two thoughts; alienated from the capacity of reason for reaching truth, thoughts remain alone and self-secluded. It is faith in reason that is being lost, states John Paul II⁶. This is not occurring in every discipline though, especially since hard science still relies on the capability of reason to reach universal truths. However, other fields, such as religion, ethics, and aesthetics have undergone a loss of faith in reason for a long period of time, and more recently, this same phenomenon has affected such areas as law, politics and international relationships. In these domains, those who stand for a capacity of true knowledge, for the capacity of a discussion to achieve the truth have progressively become a minority and have been replaced by new generations who hold alter-

native opinions that are shared with or imposed upon others. Since there is no more room for discussion of such opinions, it has become impossible to search for any common consensus on the criteria with which to debate (truth).

Thus the Pope sees in the Christian's confidence in the capability of reason to seek the truth the grounding for a genuine apostolate of the truth, vis-à-vis the post-modern social loss of truth. A genuine part of the Church's mission may be understood as the diakonia of truth and such service of the truth is considered a crucial contribution to a more human world⁷. This latter claim was presented in embryonic fashion by John Paul II but later was developed by Benedict XVI who, reaching out beyond philosophers and theologians, asks every Christian to live up to the diakonia of truth.

The first social encyclical of Benedict XVI⁸ gives a whole new breadth to the notion of *diakonia of truth*. Indeed, the strong and necessary connection established by the Pope between charity and truth deepens its social dimension and outlines the diakonia of truth as a specific task for the Christian. We may say that for the Pope *diakonia of charity* and *diakonia of truth* are but two different sides of the same personal and social reality. From the very first paragraph, he identifies the fundamental reciprocity between love and truth: "*Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection,*

¶ *Caritas in veritate*

is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity” (*Caritas in veritate* 1). We must call attention to the following point: what is at stake is a “*driving force*”, specified as being “*essential*” to a person or a society’s authentic “*development*”. Charity in truth is therefore not to be confounded with a concept, for it is, rather, a force, a power to act. First on a personal level: “*To defend the truth, to articulate it with humility and conviction, and to bear witness to it in life are therefore exacting and indispensable forms of charity. Charity, in fact, “rejoices in the truth” (CiV 1).* The Pope’s premise, however, reaches beyond this personal level: “*Through this close link with truth, charity can be recognized as an authentic expression of humanity and as an element of fundamental importance in human relations, including those of a public nature.*” (*CiV 3*)⁹. It is through truth that charity enters into the public sphere and within the public space is seen as essential to social relationships. The diakonia of *charity in truth* is a human power for the human person that provides humanizing service. Benedict XVI articulates most clearly and specifically the achievements of such diakonia: “*Truth, by enabling men and women to let go of their subjective opinions and impressions, allows them to move beyond cultural and historical limitations and to come together in the assessment of the value and substance of things. Truth opens and unites our minds in the logos of love: this is the Christian proclamation and testimony of charity.*” (*CiV 4*).

The exercise of a diakonia of charity in truth within the public square is therefore absolutely crucial. It opens up the public space to universality, requiring the pursuit and the acknowledgement of the essence of politics beyond national, cultural and historical particularities; it creates a consensus, built on the nature and value of things rather than on a simple convergence of interests; it unites spirits « from within » through the communion created by the logos of love.

Benedict XVI calls in particular, for the public dimension of theological discourse to be recognized, that is, for the public and political relevance of a diakonia of charity and truth to be acknowledged. It is, however, precisely the public dimension of theology that is increasingly seen as irrelevant by an ever more agnostic society. To the contrary, some read the Pope’s call as a setback to a nineteenth century’s Kulturkampf; others brandish it, in completely negative fashion, as the ever dangerous role of religion in politics (religious wars); some express fear for the secular state; and others complacently interpret the Pope’s call as the return of an endemic nostalgia for a bygone Church, or the Church’s self-absorption in the midst of an identity crisis. Such explanations are superficial and outdated. They have more to do with some sort of academic Pavlovian reflex than with real political or historical knowledge. Benedict XVI’s speeches and interventions in the public sphere give ample evidence that this is not the case. There is no

will to re-establish any would-be theocracy, to promote any form of inter-religious violence, to dispute the role and function of the state, and certainly no form of nostalgia for the past or identity crisis. On the contrary, Benedict XVI is keen to consider the present situation in an objective way and to discern its most likely outcome. The speeches of Benedict XVI seem, in fact, more in phase with the modern world than the investigations of many academics. What is at stake, on one hand, is a serious confrontation of the loss of the social value of truth and its outcome for our human co-existence; and, on the other hand, is the claim that the Church, with its theological and rational narrative, just as any other social group, could participate in the public debate. The latter claim should be perceived as completely legitimate in the context of a democracy; however, in present-day Europe, the Catholic Church, in the light of all its associated social and political fantasies, is often portrayed in a suspect manner. It is indeed such suspicion, this previously mentioned outdated Pavlovian reflex, which is challenged and refuted by Benedict XVI in his public interventions. Faith in Christ and the values it entails is not indifferent to the construction of the human world. Personal freedom, justice, rights, the common good, hope, solidarity as well as love, are at the core of the Christian faith and find, in this specific faith, their deep coherence. But such faith is not irrational. It can be communicated in a discourse founded on reason,

a reason which is both individual and social because it is personal. Public reason, on the other hand, must relinquish the irrational fantasy that it can be neutral in relation to the question of transcendence. The state or political government is never neutral on this question, and never has been so. Throughout the world, and certainly not just in Europe, public reason always has been deeply influenced by and extremely sensitive toward existing communities within the state, and especially so toward religious communities.

In this perspective, the following statement by Benedict XVI holds much significance: "In the present social and cultural context, where there is a widespread tendency to relative truth, practising charity in truth helps people to understand that adhering to the values of Christianity is not merely useful but essential for building a good society and for true integral human development." (CIV, 4). This statement acknowledges that for the Catholic community, to renounce the social role of truth and charity is also to renounce an essential part of what constitutes our human coexistence. To renounce truth and charity in the public sphere, is to renounce a part of our humanity; it is about accepting a world which is less human. A Christian is not able to do this, precisely because of his Christian beliefs.

The diakonia of truth does not only apply to academics or to the Church Magisterium, but indeed to all Chris-

"In the present social and cultural context, practising charity in truth helps people to understand that adhering to the values of Christianity is not merely useful but essential for building a good society and for true integral human development."

¶ *The construction of an international community*

tians and, more precisely, to all who engage in the construction of an international community. Within international institutions the diakonia of truth distinguishes Christian engagement from that of others. Our Christian faith requires us to be at the service of truth in our search for information, in our discussions and contacts, in our advocacy work, in the positions we defend or in the negotiations we undertake.

Such service has two different but reciprocal aspects. The first is serving the unfolding of truth that is proper to human realities. Here Christians stand out for their confidence in our shared capacity to attain truth: setting apart lies from truth, legitimate information from manipulation, denouncing what no one dares to say or to see, building a valuable knowledge base, etc. The second is bearing witness to the transcendent truth, which surrounds and grounds human truths. "The Church's mission, in fact, involves her in humanity's struggle to arrive at truth. In articulating revealed truth she serves all members of society by purifying reason, ensuring that it remains open to the consideration of ultimate truths. Drawing upon divine wisdom, she sheds light on the foundation of human morality and ethics, and reminds all groups in society that it is not praxis that creates truth but truth that should serve as the basis of praxis".¹⁰

With regard to the difficulty experienced by so many International Catholic Organizations in explicitly

integrating their Christian identity into their engagement for the construction of an international order, Benedict XVI believes that a diakonia of truth can be, in fact, a force for development: "Far from undermining the tolerance of legitimate diversity, such a contribution illuminates the very truth which makes consensus attainable, and helps to keep public debate rational, honest and accountable. Similarly the Church never tires of upholding the essential moral categories of right and wrong, without which hope could only wither, giving way to cold pragmatic calculations of utility which render the person little more than a pawn on some ideological chess-board."¹¹ In order to avoid reducing our engagement in international institutions to power games, influence and special interests, it is crucial that we recognize the value and praxis of a diakonia of truth in charity.

In conclusion, we cite the final words of a short and touching address made by John Paul II to the communication staff at the UN in New York (1979): "And I say to you—take it as my parting word to you—that the service of truth, the service of humanity through the medium of the truth—is something worthy of your best years, your finest talents, your most dedicated efforts. As transmitters of truth, you are instruments of understanding among people and of peace among nations."¹²

"And I say to you—take it as my parting word to you—that the service of truth, the service of humanity through the medium of the truth—is something worthy of your best years, your finest talents, your most dedicated efforts."

NOTES

1 MATHIAS NEBEL is Director of the Caritas in Veritate Foundation and Maître de Conférence at the Institut Catholique de Paris.

2 Truth means more than knowledge: knowing the truth leads us to discover the good. Truth speaks to the individual in his or her entirety, inviting us to respond with our whole being. This optimistic vision is found in our Christian faith because such faith has been granted the vision of the Logos, God's creative Reason, which in the Incarnation, is revealed as Goodness itself. Far from being just a communication of factual data – “informative” – the loving truth of the Gospel is creative and life-changing – “performative”. Address of Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with catholic educators, 17 April 2008.

3 In the New Testament diakonia refers to the function fulfilled by a person as a go-between, in the name of the person who has sent him. Applied to Christ, it denotes the mission he receives from the Father setting him up in its function of mediator of the Father's love for the World. The usual but mistaken interpretation of the notion of diakonia as meaning “low and humble service at table” - and by extension serving the humble and poor – is not correct. Cf. COLLINS, J.N., *Diakonia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990.

4 This is not without irony, for the Church defends today the universality of reason which Modernity had opposed him in the sciences and worked out as the corner stone of its own legitimate autonomy.

5 “Without a doubt, our culture is marked by an epistemological subjectivism. In the sphere of philosophy, the posterity of Kant in its modern tenant does not acknowledge things in themselves but how they are for myself.” Conférence du CARDINAL PAUL POUPARD, *De la tolérance au respect mutuel : pour un humanisme plénier*, du 17.12.1998.

6 It makes little sense to refer here to the numerous thinkers – philosophers and social scientists – of what has been called post-modernity. The Magisterium doesn't make use of a given theory to explain a social phenomenon, but rather the phenomenon is taken as a given, an obvious fact which we would be foolish to ignore.

7 Adding thus to Paul VI's list the service of truth: “What are truly human conditions? The rise from poverty to the acquisition of life's necessities; the elimination of social ills; broadening the horizons of knowledge; acquiring refinement and culture. From there one can go on to acquire a growing awareness of other people's dignity, a taste for the spirit of poverty, (18) an active interest in the common good, and a desire for peace. Then man can acknowledge the highest values and God Himself, their author and end. Finally and above all, there is faith—God's gift to men of good will—and our loving unity in Christ, who calls all men to share God's life as sons of the living God, the Father of all men.” PAUL VI, *Populorum progressio*, 21.

8 BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, June 19. Quoted as CiV from here on.

9 “In the truth, charity reflects the personal yet public dimension of faith in the God of the Bible, who is both Agápe and Lógos: Charity and Truth, Love and Word. Because it is filled with truth, charity can be understood in the abundance of its values, it can be shared and communicated. Truth, in fact, is lógos which creates diá-logos, and hence communication and communion.” (CiV 3-4).

10 BENEDICT XVI, *Address for the meeting with catholic educators*, München, April 17 2008.

11 Ibidem.

12 JOHN PAUL II, *Address to the communications staff*, New York, October 2 1979.

FIRST PART

III. Between Past and Future : International Catholic Organizations and Catholic Inspired NGOs in Geneva

SILVANO M. TOMASI, c.s.¹

Faith-based NGOs: What contribution at the United Nations in Geneva?

For decades, the conviction that religion is inherently conservative and reactionary has dominated the discourse of people engaged in the international arena, and, in particular, among those promoting development and Human Rights. On the basis of this assumption, religion has been ignored by many such advocates and activists and thus has been consigned to the “private” sphere of life at the level of individuals. A long period of study and discussion would be required in order to understand why this perception has emerged. Perhaps a simple explanation rests with the view that, after the various revolutions that highlighted the individual (American and French revolutions), religion has been perceived as limiting the freedom of a person and, therefore, as an obstacle to innovation.

In the last ten years or so, however, the taboo against an active “presence” of religion in public life has been broken. Several events have given visibility to the public role of religion: the 1979 Iranian revolution, the emergence of the Evangelical right as a political force in the

United States, the role of the Catholic Church in the democratic transition in Eastern Europe, the growth of the Pentecostal movement in Latin America, and the 9/11/2001 events and subsequent emergence of militant Islamism. In addition, religious organizations involved in development and humanitarian aid, have assumed greater visibility or the world has become more aware of them. These religious organizations have been recognized as promoting a more holistic and people-centred kind of development than that promoted by dominant neo-liberal approaches.

Against this background, international religious NGOs have found a place in the U.N. system. The Charter of the United Nations, in fact, has a provision for cooperation between the U.N. and the representatives of the civil society. Article 71 gives the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) authority to “make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence,” i.e., matters related to international economic and social

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development. Consultative status grants the organizations the possibility to participate in a range of U.N. meetings and conferences as well as to publish written and, in some cases, oral statements related to the topics being discussed at such fora, thus functioning as a way for organizations to gain influence at the UN.

Of the 3,183 NGOs with consultative status at ECOSOC, 320 or 10.1 per cent, can be characterised as religious, i.e., NGOs that describe and understand themselves as religious, referring in their name, activities, mission statements to religious traditions. The fact that these NGOs have been granted consultative status at ECOSOC means that they are, in one way or another, engaged in activities related to international development and humanitarian aid. The religious dimension does not seem to be a determining criterion for acceptance or rejection, but the social service provided, on the other hand, is crucial. The breakdown of affiliation among the religious NGOs is as follows:

Religious affiliation	No. of organizations	% of all religious NGOs
Christian	187	58.4 %
Muslim	52	16.3 %
Jewish	22	6.9 %
Buddhist	14	4.4 %
Hindu	3	0.9 %
Spiritual	25	7.8 %
Multi	11	3.4 %
Other	6	1.9 %
<i>Total</i>	320	100 %

A preliminary study shows that, among the religious NGOs, the largest group, 47 per cent, focuses solely on secular fields of work, while few, 14 per cent, focus only on religious promotion. A significant number of organizations, almost 39 per cent, however, focus on both secular fields and goals and on religious promotion, and most of these are Christian. Just as with the goals and fields of work, the concrete methods utilized by religious NGOs in order to achieve these goals can be divided into secular and religious. For purposes of this reflection, the term “secular methods” is meant to refer to such methods as implementation of projects, research, conferences, lobbying, and advocacy. The term “religious methods”, on the other hand, is utilized with reference to prayer, mission, religious education and theological studies. An important structural and typical aspect of Catholic NGOs relates to their attachment or affiliation with established religious structures and institutions.² A characteristic aspect of Catholic-inspired NGOs, this linkage with a wider organization (the Church), gives them a sense of representation that entails as a consequence a special responsibility.

NGOs relate to the UN through a range of different activities, including lobbying, implementation of projects and monitoring. Some activities, such as advocacy, often take place at the global level, in relation to the UN headquarters in New York and Geneva in particular and at global conferences as it has been the case at the well-known Cairo

International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Implementation of projects and monitoring are activities that take place at a national or local level, often as individual partnerships between specific NGOs and UN agencies. Tensions can emerge between UN members and religious NGOs. These often involved theoretical or political discussions rather than practical consensus-seeking. Moreover, as representatives of 'absolute truths', religious NGOs potentially might become, or at least be perceived as, difficult partners in negotiations, or in relations with other NGOs, for example, on issues such as abortion, or so-called reproductive "rights", or so-called "rights" of homosexuals. The divide between progressive and conservative religious NGOs might become even wider than that between religious and non-religious NGOs.³ At the root of the different outlooks are philosophical principles and religious convictions that sustain an understanding of the human person and of the person's dignity and nature .

The repositioning of religion and religious NGOs in society that has taken place in recent years offers an opportunity to revisit the specific role of Catholic NGOs. Religious communities have influenced the work of the United Nations in a strong way, for example, when the future John XXIII assisted the French Delegation in the formulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and when Ameri-

can Protestants were engaged in the drafting of the U.N. Charter, especially in the inclusion of religious freedom⁴. The reason why Catholic NGOs are engaged in the UN system is found in Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. It is a long quotation, but basic:

"Since, in virtue of her mission received from God, the Church preaches the Gospel to all men and dispenses the treasures of grace, she contributes to the ensuring of peace everywhere on earth and to the placing of the fraternal exchange between men on solid ground by imparting knowledge of the divine and natural law. Therefore, to encourage and stimulate cooperation among men, the Church must be clearly present in the midst of the community of nations both through her official channels and through the full and sincere collaboration of all Christians—a collaboration motivated solely by the desire to be of service to all. This will come about more effectively if the faithful themselves, conscious of their responsibility as men and as Christians will exert their influence in their own milieu to arouse a ready willingness to cooperate with the international community. Special care must be given, in both religious and civil education, to the formation of youth in this regard. (n.89) An outstanding form of international activity on the part of Christians is found in the joint efforts which, both as individuals and in groups, they contribute to institutes already established or to be established for the encouragement of coope-

"The repositioning of religion and religious NGOs in society that has taken place in recent years offers an opportunity to revisit the specific role of Catholic NGOs."

ration among nations. There are also various Catholic associations on an international level which can contribute in many ways to the building up of a peaceful and fraternal community of nations. These should be strengthened by augmenting in them the number of well qualified collaborators, by increasing needed resources, and by advantageously fortifying the coordination of their energies. For today both effective action and the need for dialogue demand joint projects. Moreover, such associations contribute much to the development of a universal outlook—something certainly appropriate for Catholics. They also help to form an awareness of genuine universal solidarity and responsibility. Finally, it is very much to be desired that Catholics, in order to fulfil their role properly in the international community, will seek to cooperate actively and in a positive manner both with their separated brothers who together with them profess the Gospel of charity and with all men thirsting for true peace.” (90)

“On a daily basis, the role and engagement of Catholic NGOs within the UN processes aim to influence the definition of standards and, as far as possible, to promote their implementation.”

This text is quite rich. It starts with the specific mission of the Church, an all-embracing and incarnated mission in the midst of the community of nations where it operates both at the official level and through Catholic associations. Dialogue, joint projects, universal solidarity and a universal outlook in cooperation with others are then indicated as the qualities of the method of work and of the goals to be pursued.

On a daily basis, the role and engagement of Catholic NGOs within

the UN processes aim to influence the definition of standards and, as far as possible, to promote their implementation. Recently, these organizations have emphasized another role, that of serving as the voice of the voiceless, for and with the persons whose Human Rights are violated and who have few or no other advocates. At the same time, this engagement specifically represents the presence of religion in the public space with an open attitude as made evident by the sharing in the common language of Human Rights. The effectiveness of this service is difficult to evaluate, but, when the possibility is offered, as in the case of an active participation in informal negotiations, more practical and positive results can be produced. The task is complex, but it aims at creating both a public culture that reflects the message of the Gospel and norms that embody the ethics that derive from the Gospel. Therefore, the action of Catholic-inspired NGOs remains authentic if it is not cut off from its roots, the mission of Christ and of the Church. The convergence of divine and natural law helps Catholic NGOs to avoid a sectarian approach that would expose them to the accusation of partiality and instead makes them advocates of universal values. The realism that comes from such adherence to the reality of creation prevents the construction of an ideological superstructure that, once applied to gender and rights, might lead to self-destructive situations for the human person. Thus, contributions from Catholic NGOs pres-

ent a correct understanding of the human person, of integral development, of solidarity, of the common good, etc., all of which principles are articulated in the Social Doctrine of the Church.

The action of Catholic NGOs is not a one-way street aimed in the direction of UN agencies and initiatives, but it has also another critical dimension, that of reporting back to their constituencies. In fact, the link with communities on the ground provides credibility, insights and an agenda for service. The flow of information has to be kept going in order to achieve mutual benefits, and to this end the development of small coalitions could be helpful, given the scarcity of resources. Catholic NGOs, for example, that are supported by religious orders and whose charisms not only justify but also qualify their action, can sensitize and inform their communities about the international situations that most directly affect them.

There is a Christian motivation at the root of the activities of religious-inspired NGOs, an openness to dialogue, communication and communion within the Church through the structures to which these NGOs are linked. The question that is raised at this juncture is that of the relationship between Catholic identity and the specific service provided. The masterful encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, addresses this point. "In the words of Pope Paul VI, "evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's

concrete life, both personal and social."⁵ On the basis of this insight, Paul VI clearly presented the relationship between the proclamation of Christ and the advancement of the individual in society. Testimony to Christ's charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of evangelization, because Jesus Christ, who loves us, is concerned with the whole person. These important teachings form the basis for the missionary aspect⁶ of the Church's social doctrine, which is an essential element of evangelization⁷. "The Church's social doctrine proclaims and bears witness to faith. It is an instrument and an indispensable setting for formation in faith."⁸ There is some tension between these two aspects of service and evangelization. On the one hand, Christian values are an indispensable, but not exclusive, contribution that is offered to the international community in its search for a better world and, on the other hand, the uniqueness of the Catholic faith demands an urgent, specific and irreplaceable responsibility in a cultural and social environment that needs redemption. Between the two poles of this tension, Catholic NGOs carry on their work.

For years, NGOs have introduced important social concerns into the political agenda, but they have not succeeded in gaining access to a share in decision-making. They try to convince with evidence, persuasion and the results of their experience; hence, the necessity of competence. But this process often can lead to frustration when organiza-

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tions are confronted with the inaction and lack of response on the part of decision-makers. A unique resource available to Catholic NGOs in order to counteract such disappointment is faith that can enter the picture and turn into a powerful force for change. In the long run, faith becomes more effective than techniques. The Holy Father Benedict XVI observed at the UN in New York in 2008: “The United Nations remains a privileged setting in which the Church is committed to contributing her experience “of humanity”, developed over the centuries among peoples of every race and culture, and placing it at the disposal of all members of the international community.” Humanizing society requires that NGOs use all the tools available: preparation, Human Rights norms, networking, motivation, an understanding of natural law. However, the dynamism generated by faith remains the most effective. The contribution of faith-based NGOs can be found more in the area of ‘why’ actions are undertaken than in the area of ‘how’ they are done, even though the rich experience of such organizations at grassroots level certainly can offer practical and proven methods of action. In the end, a correct answer to the “why” has the potential to enhance the “how”.

We have seen that Christian NGOs are not the only religious NGOs; thus cooperation in areas like justice and peace and the integrity of creation becomes important for achievement of goals that are commonly shared by such organi-

zations. It has been noted, however, that interfaith coalitions are likely to support quite general and abstract language about issues of justice and Human Rights. Such a methodology often is adopted in an effort to preserve unity among different religious communities. But there are some critical issues about which we will have to take unilateral positions in order to be faithful to the Gospel. Christian faith is specified by the Incarnation, by a personal presence of God in our human history. This fact is the unique aspect of Christianity when it is compared to other religions, and the consequence is a realism that extends to the particular presence of Catholic NGOs in the international arena. Flexibility, cooperation, and dialogue are needed, but these must not be allowed to threaten or compromise the unique realism that is rooted in the Incarnation, and this interaction constitutes another interesting area of reflection for NGOs.

In conclusion, NGOs are a precious witness of charity and evangelization. They cannot escape a certain tension in their work, but continue to provide good ideas, examples of effective action, influence for the development of just norms and policies. Involved in the city of man, the Christian confronts its developments, needs, the tough questions it raises, as well as the evil that at times pervades it. But rooted in the City of God, the Christian finds the needed energy to affirm the Good News of the Gospel, the priority of God’s laws, and the dignity of man. Also caught up in

this tension between the earthly and heavenly cities, both as individuals and in association with others, are those persons engaged in the international arena. In a way, these persons find themselves at the cutting-edge of Christian witness in the public culture within which we live. They are like frontier people active at a critical centre of the city of man, striving as much as possible to keep it moving in the direction of the City of God.

NOTES

1 ARCHBISHOP SILVANO M. TOMASI, Apostolic Nuncio, is the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva.

2 On the history and internal Church debate on Catholic-inspired NGOs, Cf. FRANÇOIS BLIN, *Repères pour l'histoire de la Conférence des Organisations Internationales Catholiques (1927-2008)*. Genève, Centre International Catholique de Genève, 2010, pp. 262.

3 This preliminary part has is largely based on MARIE JUUL PETERSEN, "International Religious NGOs at the United Nations: A Study of a Group of Religious Organizations." *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* November 17, 2010.

4 SEAN MACBRIDE, "The Universal Declaration – Thirty Years After," in ALAN D. FALCONER, Ed., *Understanding Human Rights: An Interdisciplinary and Interfaith Study*, Dublin, Irish School of Ecumenism, 1980. JOHN NURSER, *For All Peoples and All Nations: Christian Churches and Human Rights*, Geneva, WCC Publication, 2005, pp. 220.

5 JOHN PAUL II, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 29.

6 JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41.

7 JOHN PAUL II, *Centesimus Annus*, 5.

8 BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 15.

SECOND PART

*Some Texts of the Magisterium Addressed to International Catholic Organizations*¹

¹ For an exhaustive review and citation of original texts by the Holy See related to the areas of concern and to the philosophical and theological foundations on which such concerns are rooted, cf. ANDRÉ DUPUY, *Words that Matter: The Holy See in Multilateral Diplomacy. Anthology (1970-2000)*, New York, The Path of Peace Foundation, 2003. p. 752. See also in French FRANÇOIS BLIN, *Repères pour l'histoire de la Conférence des Organisations Internationales Catholiques (1927-2008)*, Genève, Ecclectica, 2010.

Key elements of the texts

The broad spectrum of the Papal speeches and addresses related to International Catholic Organizations and Catholic Inspired NGOs (ICOs and CINGOs) ranges from initial and strong enthusiasm to confident but nonetheless prudent support for collaboration with ICOs and CINGOs at the UN. The overall perspective includes a beginning of hope-filled and high expectations and later on, the development of a more realistic, perhaps sober, and more routine coexistence between the Holy See representatives and a very broad band of CINGOs active at the UN. To say the least, the difficulties in terms of the plurality of these Catholics NGOs - plurality in terms of topics covered and expertise, in terms of political and theological sensitivity, in terms of representation and advocacy, in terms of distance taken from the Magisterium - probably were underestimated at the outset by the different popes and by the NGOs themselves. However the Magisterium never relinquished its support and its commitment to the existence and work of ICOs and CINGOs in the United Nations system. On the contrary, the value of their work regularly receives praise and recognition. We shall outline some recurrent themes in the various interventions of the Holy Fathers with regards to ICOs and CINGOs.

First of all, the Magisterium never distanced itself from the stated conviction that it was good, indeed absolutely necessary, for Catholics to take part in the construction of the international community, to engage in international dialogue and, specifically, to be present, as organizations of *christifideles laici* at the United Nations system. The Church never renounced its aim to seek the unity of mankind, the unity of the community of all men and women. This goal is strongly linked to another consistent stance of the Magisterium: Nation-states cannot totally absorb the sphere of politics. Indeed they should not even question the notion that the political dimension of present-day social questions go beyond the political capabilities of nation-states, thus requiring international governance. This stance, however, cannot be reduced to the mere confluence of respective national interests, or to some power plays rewarding only the interests of the most powerful nations. We are constantly reminded by the Magisterium that international relationships must be based on a higher ground, namely on the good of the human person, the common good. The Holy Fathers have warned that international relationships must be based on the spiritual nature of human beings; international relationships must be ethical or face failure. The texts constantly point out that the end goal of the UN is peace in the strong sense of the word, as a realm of human

¶ *International engagement: the christifideles laici*

dignity, freedom and solidarity.

¶ The goals, responsibilities and identity of ICOs

The texts also give a clear picture of what ICOs and CINGOs are asked to do at the UN. They should contribute by their Catholic spirit, by their deep and real knowledge, experience and expertise, on the basis of their international constituencies, to working toward a world that will be a place of justice and peace for all. Their work contributes to the community of a future generation and forms part of Church's work to build up Christ's body into the fullness of humanity. Therefore, their work cannot become estranged from that of the Church as a whole. The Holy Fathers maintain that ICOs and CINGOs should consider their Catholic identity not as a hindrance to their work, but as the core value of their efforts and should therefore clearly understand the subsidiarity in which their actions are taking place. The papal texts state that, in fact, within the Church's wider mission, the contributions of ICOs are not only important, but truly essential. No other organization can fulfill this mission.

The responsibilities of ICOs go hand by hand with their mission. They must promote, from within the diversity of areas which they represent, the full development of the human person, of each man/woman and of all men/women. They are accountable for their actions to their collective conscience, to their constituency, to the Church, to all people, and finally to God. However, this is always a shared responsibility, for it is a shared mission: the share of Christ's mission imparted to them. The Holy Fathers list an entire series of requirements to be fulfilled in order to complete these tasks: they shall be competent in their area of expertise, truly representative of their constituency, well informed, able to discuss and dialogue, to negotiate, to bear witness to their faith and hope, etc. In other words, the Holy Fathers ask ICOs and CINGOs to fulfill the standards of international practices and of the Church. But more than stressing the responsibilities of ICOs, these texts underscore the value of their achievements. The Holy Fathers acknowledge that the Church is indebted to their work and stress the difference they have made through their engagement on so many different topics, both at the international and the local level. They praise their courage and perseverance within a world where obtrusive self interest of groups or nations impede the satisfaction of basic needs.

Acknowledgement of Christian identity, however, is the point raised most strongly in these texts. ICOs and CINGOs should stand up for their Catholic identity and harbor no fear in bearing witness to their faith. The denial, or cover-up, of their identity brings about the loss of their specificity and thus of the legitimacy of their involvement as Catholic organizations. Even more importantly, the loss of identity entails a qualitative loss of their actions. As a result of renouncing the Christian horizon and spirit of their work, their agenda will be diminished to the level of partisan negotiations, the mere defence of self-interest within their respective constituencies. If

they want to preserve authority and legitimacy, they should not abandon their Catholic identity.

Another feature of the texts is the constant recognition of Human Rights (HR) as the cornerstone of international relationships. The Holy Fathers recognise these as a crucial instrument of the New International Order. ICOs and CINGOs should thus work to enhance the recognition of human rights, monitor their application, and advocate for people suffering from violations of such rights. The Magisterium is also fully aware, however, of the conflictive interpretations of HR. They can easily be manipulated for ideological purposes; they may be organized according to several priorities. Therefore they should not be taken as sufficient in themselves. The Holy Fathers remind us that rights also entail duties. Human rights must be open to ethics and a generosity that goes beyond the mere rule of law.

Another constant topic of papal addresses is the role of ICO's regarding the construction of a community of nations which is said to be subsidiary to the role of the Church. The notion is complex and never fully developed in the texts that are presently available. It refers, however, to the Vatican II document on the apostolate of the laity (*Christifideles laici*). Practically, it means that if ICOs are called to engage specific topics at the UN, they are present as part of the Catholic Church and within the boundaries of its official positions or doctrines. At the level of representation, ICOs do not speak in the name of the Church, whereas the Magisterium can engage the Church. The ambiguities of the notion are clearly seen throughout the documents and are partly unavoidable as part of the eschatological tension encompassing the Church's actions. This tension accounts for different positions taken by the Magisterium with regard to the engagement of ICOs at the UN: it should be free of institutional or particular interests and seek the true common good of humanity; that is, such action should not be politically motivated but neither should it be apolitical. It should strive for and invest itself with the authority of what is beyond present-day interest: the true common good of humanity. The authority of their engagement will come from this moral and spiritual goal.

¶ Human Rights

¶ Subsidiarity of their role

Vatican II Council, Pastoral constitution Gaudium et Spes

In order to build up peace above all the causes of discord among men, especially injustice, which foment wars must be rooted out. Not a few of these causes come from excessive economic inequalities and from putting off the steps needed to remedy them. Other causes of discord, however, have their source in the desire to dominate and in a contempt for persons. And, if we look for deeper causes, we find them in human envy, distrust, pride, and other egotistical passions. Man cannot bear so many ruptures in the harmony of things. Consequently, the world is constantly beset by strife and violence between men, even when no war is being waged. Besides, since these same evils are present in the relations between various nations as well, in order to overcome or forestall them and to keep violence once unleashed within limits it is absolutely necessary for countries to cooperate more advantageously and more closely together and to organize together international bodies and to work tirelessly for the creation of organizations which will foster peace.

84. In view of the increasingly close ties of mutual dependence today between all the inhabitants and

peoples of the earth, the apt pursuit and efficacious attainment of the universal common good now require of the community of nations that it organize itself in a manner suited to its present responsibilities, especially toward the many parts of the world which are still suffering from unbearable want.

To reach this goal, organizations of the international community, for their part, must make provision for men's different needs, both in the fields of social life—such as food supplies, health, education, labor and also in certain special circumstances which can crop up here and there, e.g., the need to promote the general improvement of developing countries, or to alleviate the distressing conditions in which refugees dispersed throughout the world find themselves, or also to assist migrants and their families.

Already existing international and regional organizations are certainly well-deserving of the human race. These are the first efforts at laying the foundations on an international level for a community of all men to work for the solution to the serious problems of our times, to encourage progress everywhere, and to obviate wars of whatever kind. In all

**¶ *Setting up an
International Com-
munity***

of these activities the Church takes joy in the spirit of true brotherhood flourishing between Christians and non-Christians as it strives to make ever more strenuous efforts to relieve abundant misery.

85. The present solidarity of mankind also calls for a revival of greater international cooperation in the economic field. Although nearly all peoples have become autonomous, they are far from being free of every form of undue dependence, and far from escaping all danger of serious internal difficulties.

The development of a nation depends on human and financial aids. The citizens of each country must be prepared by education and professional training to discharge the various tasks of economic and social life. But this in turn requires the aid of foreign specialists who, when they give aid, will not act as overlords, but as helpers and fellow-workers. Developing nations will not be able to procure material assistance unless radical changes are made in the established procedures of modern world commerce. Other aid should be provided as well by advanced nations in the form of gifts, loans or financial investments. Such help should be accorded with generosity and without greed on the one side, and received with complete honesty on the other side.

If an authentic economic order is to be established on a world-wide basis, an end will have to be put to profiteering, to national ambitions, to the appetite for political supremacy, to militaristic calculations, and to machinations for the sake of

spreading and imposing ideologies.

86. The following norms seem useful for such cooperation:

a) Developing nations should take great pains to seek as the object for progress to express and secure the total human fulfillment of their citizens. They should bear in mind that progress arises and grows above all out of the labor and genius of the nations themselves because it has to be based, not only on foreign aid, but especially on the full utilization of their own resources, and on the development of their own culture and traditions. Those who exert the greatest influence on others should be outstanding in this respect.

b) On the other hand, it is a very important duty of the advanced nations to help the developing nations in discharging their above-mentioned responsibilities. They should therefore gladly carry out on their own home front those spiritual and material readjustments that are required for the realization of this universal cooperation.

Consequently, in business dealings with weaker and poorer nations, they should be careful to respect their profit, for these countries need the income they receive on the sale of their homemade products to support themselves.

c) It is the role of the international community to coordinate and promote development, but in such a way that the resources earmarked for this purpose will be allocated as effectively as possible, and with complete equity. It is likewise this community's duty, with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity,

so to regulate economic relations throughout the world that these will be carried out in accordance with the norms of justice.

Suitable organizations should be set up to foster and regulate international business affairs, particularly with the underdeveloped countries, and to compensate for losses resulting from an excessive inequality of power among the various nations. This type of organization, in unison with technical cultural and financial aid, should provide the help which developing nations need so that they can advantageously pursue their own economic advancement.

d) In many cases there is an urgent need to revamp economic and social structures. But one must guard against proposals of technical solutions that are untimely. This is particularly true of those solutions providing man with material conveniences, but nevertheless contrary to man's spiritual nature and advancement. For "not by bread alone does man live, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Every sector of the family of man carries within itself and in its best traditions some portion of the spiritual treasure entrusted by God to humanity, even though many may not be aware of the source from which it comes.

87. International cooperation is needed today especially for those peoples who, besides facing so many other difficulties, likewise undergo pressures due to a rapid increase in population. There is an urgent need to explore, with the full and intense cooperation of all, and especially of

the wealthier nations, ways whereby the human necessities of food and a suitable education can be furnished and shared with the entire human community. But some peoples could greatly improve upon the conditions of their life if they would change over from antiquated methods of farming to the new technical methods, applying them with needed prudence according to their own circumstances. Their life would likewise be improved by the establishment of a better social order and by a fairer system for the distribution of land ownership.

Governments undoubtedly have rights and duties, within the limits of their proper competency, regarding the population problem in their respective countries, for instance, in the line of social and family life legislation, or regarding the migration of country-dwellers to the cities, or with respect to information concerning the condition and needs of the country. Since men today are giving thought to this problem and are so greatly disturbed over it, it is desirable in addition that Catholic specialists, especially in the universities, skilfully pursue and develop studies and projects on all these matters.

But there are many today who maintain that the increase in world population, or at least the population increase in some countries, must be radically curbed by every means possible and by any kind of intervention on the part of public authority. In view of this contention, the council urges everyone to guard against solutions, whether publicly or privately supported, or at times

even imposed, which are contrary to the moral law. For in keeping with man's inalienable right to marry and generate children, a decision concerning the number of children they will have depends on the right judgment of the parents and it cannot in any way be left to the judgment of public authority. But since the judgment of the parents presupposes a rightly formed conscience, it is of the utmost importance that the way be open for everyone to develop a correct and genuinely human responsibility which respects the divine law and takes into consideration the circumstances of the situation and the time. But sometimes this requires an improvement in educational and social conditions, and, above all, formation in religion or at least a complete moral training. Men should discreetly be informed, furthermore, of scientific advances in exploring methods whereby spouses can be helped in regulating the number of their children and whose safeness has been well proven and whose harmony with the moral order has been ascertained.

88. Christians should cooperate willingly and wholeheartedly in establishing an international order that includes a genuine respect for all freedoms and amicable brotherhood between all. This is all the more pressing since the greater part of the world is still suffering from so much poverty that it is as if Christ Himself were crying out in these poor to beg the charity of the disciples. Do not let men, then, be scandalized because some countries with a majority of citizens who are

counted as Christians have an abundance of wealth, whereas others are deprived of the necessities of life and are tormented with hunger, disease, and every kind of misery. The spirit of poverty and charity are the glory and witness of the Church of Christ.

Those Christians are to be praised and supported, therefore, who volunteer their services to help other men and nations. Indeed, it is the duty of the whole People of God, following the word and example of the bishops, to alleviate as far as they are able the sufferings of the modern age. They should do this too, as was the ancient custom in the Church, out of the substance of their goods, and not only out of what is superfluous.

The procedure of collecting and distributing aids, without being inflexible and completely uniform, should nevertheless be carried on in an orderly fashion in dioceses, nations, and throughout the entire world. Wherever it seems convenient, this activity of Catholics should be carried on in unison with other Christian brothers. For the spirit of charity does not forbid, but on the contrary commands that charitable activity be carried out in a careful and orderly manner. Therefore, it is essential for those who intend to dedicate themselves to the services of the developing nations to be properly trained in appropriate institutes.

89. Since, in virtue of her mission received from God, the Church preaches the Gospel to all men and dispenses the treasures of grace, she

contributes to the ensuring of peace everywhere on earth and to the placing of the fraternal exchange between men on solid ground by imparting knowledge of the divine and natural law. Therefore, to encourage and stimulate cooperation among men, the Church must be clearly present in the midst of the community of nations both through her official channels and through the full and sincere collaboration of all Christians—a collaboration motivated solely by the desire to be of service to all.

This will come about more effectively if the faithful themselves, conscious of their responsibility as men and as Christians will exert their influence in their own milieu to arouse a ready willingness to cooperate with the international community. Special care must be given, in both religious and civil education, to the formation of youth in this regard.

90. An outstanding form of international activity on the part of Christians is found in the joint efforts which, both as individuals and in groups, they contribute to institutes already established or to be established for the encouragement of cooperation among nations. There are also various Catholic associations on an international level which can contribute in many ways to the building up of a peaceful and fraternal community of nations. These should be strengthened by augmenting in them the number of well qualified collaborators, by increasing needed resources, and by advantageously fortifying the coor-

dination of their energies. For today both effective action and the need for dialogue demand joint projects. Moreover, such associations contribute much to the development of a universal outlook—something certainly appropriate for Catholics. They also help to form an awareness of genuine universal solidarity and responsibility.

Finally, it is very much to be desired that Catholics, in order to fulfil their role properly in the international community, will seek to cooperate actively and in a positive manner both with their separated brothers who together with them profess the Gospel of charity and with all men thirsting for true peace.

The council, considering the immensity of the hardships which still afflict the greater part of mankind today, regards it as most opportune that an organism of the universal Church be set up in order that both the justice and love of Christ toward the poor might be developed everywhere. The role of such an organism would be to stimulate the Catholic community to promote progress in needy regions and international social justice.

91. Drawn from the treasures of Church teaching, the proposals of this sacred synod look to the assistance of every man of our time, whether he believes in God, or does not explicitly recognize Him. If adopted, they will promote among men a sharper insight into their full destiny, and thereby lead them to fashion the world more to man's surpassing dignity, to search for a brotherhood which is universal and

more deeply rooted, and to meet the urgencies of our ages with a gallant and unified effort born of love.

Undeniably this conciliar program is but a general one in several of its parts; and deliberately so, given the immense variety of situations and forms of human culture in the world. Indeed while it presents teaching already accepted in the Church, the program will have to be followed up and amplified since

it sometimes deals with matters in a constant state of development. Still, we have relied on the word of God and the spirit of the Gospel. Hence we entertain the hope that many of our proposals will prove to be of substantial benefit to everyone, especially after they have been adapted to individual nations and mentalities by the faithful, under the guidance of their pastors.

To the International Catholic Organisations

Address of Pope Paul VI

11 November 1963

Dear Sirs,

I am very pleased to welcome you here today to the session of your “Committee”, that is, to this distinguished and selected group of International Catholic Organisations (ICO). I take the occasion to convey to you, with joy, the high esteem the Church has for the good work you have done and still do in the sphere of the apostolate of the laity.

For some time now, I have been following your work. In all justice, I even can claim to have been, under the directive of Pope Pius XII of revered memory, one of the first to support the need for the movement of lay Catholics to organise at the international level. And I have warmly encouraged their first steps in this new path, which seems to me so closely bound to the universal dimension of the Gospel and at the same time, so harmonious with the evolution of the structures and pace of modern society.

Experience has not deceived the hopes held by the Church for this new form to be given to its apostolate. And it is with joy and pride that She sees today, forty years later, International Catholic Organisations working at the global level.

I stressed again recently - on the occasion of the feast of Saint Vincent Pallotti, the great figure and precursor of the Catholic Action - “Today, more than ever, is the time of the laity. It is for them to step up and help the Church in its work; for them to make up for the numerical decline of the clergy; for them to discover the modern path on which to advance the message of Christ”. (cfr. *L’Osservatore Romano*, 2 September 1963).

Their role is of such importance to us that, in this historical moment in which the Church, gathered in a Council, does, in a way, its examination of conscience and proceeds to a huge census of its apostolic forces (...), I thought that some qualified representatives of the laity could and should be associated, as auditors, to this huge “revision of life”, and admitted to sit at the Council. To this proposal, I turned immediately to the International Catholic Organisations, the movements able to represent with major authority and wider audience the laity.

We have greeted with pleasure the echo this nomination of “Auditors” has created in the world. The discussions which have just taken

place, under the ceiling of the Vatican Basilica, concerning the role of the laity in the Church have shown all the opportunity and fecundity of such an initiative. And I wish to think that it may come to know further developments in the future.

This is to say, dear gentlemen, how warmly you are welcome here today and the desire I have to see your beneficial engagement to the service of Church and to your human brothers expand ever more. My support, and I do want to say it, will

never fail you. And, in your regard, I know that I can rely on your dedication and on the gracious spirit that leads you and by which you will answer the trust the Church has shown to you.

In accordance with these sentiments I invoke on you and on all those you represent here, the gifts and divine favours; that I give to you, and to all the International Catholic Organisations, a strong and paternal apostolic blessing.

Translated to English by M. Nebel

To the International Catholic Organisations

Address of Pope Paul VI

6 December 1975

*Dear daughters and sons,
Dear members of International
Catholic Organisations,*

First of all, I wish to express my great pleasure in meeting you, on this occasion, at the General Assembly of the Conference bringing together your Organisations, as part of the Holy Year and at the centre of the Church, in this city of Rome, enriched by the supreme witness of faith of the first apostles Peter and Paul.

It is at the well of this faith that you come to draw the spiritual strength needed for your ministry; it is to the Apostolic See that you come to seek the light that may enlighten your work. I cannot fail, by reason of my mission as Pastor, to answer your filial request.

I must congratulate you and indeed express gratitude for taking your work under the sign of the Holy Year, in the perspective of the inner renewal and reconciliation that we have proposed to all the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church.

It must be noted that your session in Rome fortunately brings together, on one hand, the reflexion you are undertaking in your enga-

gement and activities as International Catholic Organisations within an international community and human relationships, and, on the other hand, the concern you show to develop these thoughts in the spirit of the Church and in communion with our pastoral orientations.

There are two enduring constraints for the ICOs: to work in the world to transform it in a more just and humane society, and at the same time, to witness that this action is inspired by the transcendent and spiritual mission of the Church.

Some ICOs have at their core a mission of presence and action inside temporal realities, whether it be the field of culture, education, health, social and international justice or human relationships or dialogue between peoples. Other ICOs are directly engaged in an apostolate. The Church, by the voice of its Popes as well as of the Second Vatican Council, has frequently encouraged her children to assume this dimension of a Christian presence in the world. The Church has highlighted the special importance of Associations or International Catholic Groups working for the construction of an International

Community of Peoples, as required by the Gospel.

In the past, I confirmed the great value of this work, when I addressed the leaders of your Conference some years ago. I supported their project “bound so tightly to the universal dimension of the Gospel and at the same time, so harmonious with the evolution of the structures and pace of modern society”. (*L’Osservatore Romano*, 13 November 1963).

You know by experience through the insertion of your Organisations into the realities of the world, that you may come across traditions of thought and social concepts permeated by ideologies, probably animated by respectful humanist and philanthropic intentions, but leading to a philosophy of Man that denies his transcendent destiny and conceives of his happiness by merely referring to collective social progress, based on a materialistic and immanent perception of human existence.

The temptation can be great for Christians and Catholics to borrow some analytical tools or actions from these philosophies or ideologies in order to engage and fight the injustices of a society progressing much too slowly on the road toward more humane conditions of life for the benefit of so many persons and peoples.

Without refusing the task, it is important, however, that Organisations claiming the name of Catholic preserve at any cost the specificity of their vocation and their mission in the world.

I beg you most ardently, in the

name of the pastoral responsibilities which have been imparted to me for all the sons and daughters of the Church, and in virtue of the communion binding you to my apostolic mission: your witness must stand as one of Church communities, as one of the Church’s work in the world.

Firstly as witness of faith: faith inspired, nourished and asserted by referring to the Gospel of the Lord and the teaching of the Church. It is by drawing back continuously to the well of the Gospel’s message that we may all conform our apostolate to the ways and mind of Christ: “I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.” (Jn, 17, 15-16). It is also by relying on the Teaching of the Church that a Catholic may protect himself against any arbitrary use of the Gospel and receive from it a light on the questions that life may always awaken in its path.

May your witness also be that of the internal unity of the Church. It is the ardent wish of the Lord: “May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you”. Unity among yourselves, who are indeed bound together in the same communion of faith; unity with the Holy See; unity with your pastors. In a work characterised as a collaboration with the apostolic mission of the Church, it is relevant that all share the charismas and functions that are proper to the bishops: to sanctify, to govern, to teach, and to the laity who have the mission to

pass on and incarnate Christ's message in our daily life, even temporal. "Such conjunction, I have recently said, shall always respect the characteristics of the charismas and functions of the bishop's mission, as well as their respective order: only in such harmony lies the secret fecundity of apostolic action" (L'Osservatore Romano, langue française, 24 janvier 1975).

The third specific note of the witness we expect from all International Catholic Organisations is to bring the Gospel's values to all areas of life, each according to its specific mission. This means that in your programs, publications and activities, there should figure very clearly the ecclesial motives and perspectives specific to your Organisations. We cannot witness to a cause that we conceal. Did not the Lord Himself invite his apostles to be open about Him: "It is by your love for one another, that everyone will recognise you as my disciples."? In such a context, the collaboration that your Associations may promote with other Christian groups shall only increase by operating from the clarity of your respective identities.

Yes, dear friends, keep alive the will to present your associations in the integrity and truth of what they

seek to announce. They have to be communities of open ecclesial life, welcoming, respectful of others who do not share the same frames of reference. What prophetic meaning would they maintain were they to appear as any humanitarian or social organisation that seems indistinguishable from all others? They risk no longer offering to apostolic souls the place of encounter and support which the latter seek for understanding their faith and engagement.

I renew, dear friends of the ICOs, our encouragement and wishes. May the Conference bringing you together take the whole breath of your role in the Church and the society. You can only serve this role by being authentically inside the Church. In a world which is seeking, not only an organisation able to respond to its problems, but mainly an international soul – if such a notion may be used – you can be, in your role, through your associations and the Catholic spirit that animates them, a source of hope and a reference for a more fraternal world in accordance with the Lord's design.

This is the message we give to you with our Apostolic benediction.

To the representatives of Intergovernmental and Non-Governmental Organisations

Address of His Holiness John Paul II

New York, Tuesday 2 October 1979

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to extend my greetings to the representatives of the Intergovernmental and Non-governmental Organizations who are present here, and to thank you for your cordial welcome.

Your presence at the centre of the United Nations' activities is a consequence of the growing awareness that the problems of today's world can only be solved when all forces are joined together and directed towards the same common aim. The problems that the human family faces today may seem overwhelming. I for my part am convinced that there is immense potential with which to face them. History tells us that the human race is capable of reacting and of changing direction every time it perceives clearly the warning that it is on the wrong course. You are privileged to witness in this building how the Representatives of the nations endeavour to chart a common course in order that life on this planet will be lived in peace, order, justice and progress for all. But you are also aware that

every individual must work towards the same end. It is individual actions put together which bring about today and tomorrow the total impact which is either beneficial or harmful for humanity.

The various programmes and organizations that exist within the framework of the United Nations Organization, as well as the Specialized Agencies and other intergovernmental bodies, are an important part of that total effort. In the area of its own specialization—be it food, agriculture, trade, environment, development, science, culture, education, health, disaster relief, or the problems of children and refugees—each one of these organizations makes a unique contribution not only to providing for people's wants, but also to fostering respect for human dignity and the cause of world peace.

No organization, however, not even the United Nations or any of its specialized agencies, can alone solve the global problems which are constantly brought to its attention, if its concerns are not shared by all

the people. It is then the privileged task of the non-governmental organizations to help bring these concerns into the communities and the homes of the people, and to bring back to the established agencies the priorities and aspirations of the people, so that all the solutions and projects which are envisaged may be truly geared to the needs of the human person.

The Delegates who drafted the Charter of the United Nations had a vision of united and cooperating governments, but behind the nations, they saw also the individual and they wanted every human being to be free and to enjoy his or her fundamental rights. This fundamental

inspiration must be preserved.

I wish to express my best wishes to all of you here who work together to bring the benefits of concerted action to all parts of the world. My cordial greeting goes to the Representatives of the various Protestant, Jewish and Moslem associations, and in a particular way to the Representatives of the International Catholic Organizations. May your dedication and your moral sense never become blunted by difficulties, may you never lose sight of the ultimate aim of your efforts: to create a world where every human person can live in dignity and loving harmony as a child of God.

To the delegate of International Catholic Organisations

Address of Pope John Paul II

Paris (France), Monday 2 June 1980

Dear brother and sister in Christ,

1. I really wanted to meet the representatives of International Catholic Organisations and from the International Catholic Centre during my visit to the UNESCO. I know you closely follow the works and activities of this Organisation of the United Nation system according to the status you've been given here as NGOs. I thank you for your presence and your interest.

As I have done recently during my visit to the United Nations in New York, I wish to emphasize, by my presence at UNESCO, the Holy See's interest in International Organisations: interest in the meetings where the major problems of our world are discussed, interest in the many efforts toward international cooperation seeking to promote in the world a common life marked by justice and respect for the inalienable Human Rights. As my predecessor John XXIII - one of the first Permanent Observers to UNESCO - said in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: socialisation at world level is a now a fact. Such fact requires now more than ever the creation of a new order of international relationships founded upon ethical bases constituted

by justice, respect of the Human Person, a full recognition of the sovereignty of every nation, and solidarity.

2. In this context, it seems necessary to promote exchanges among peoples, as a way to allow each one to be accorded its own identity. An identity founded on a dynamic conception of culture, with deep roots in the past, learning from historical events, and becoming creative with new cultural expressions, while staying at the same time true to its own values and open to those of the others with regard to future progress.

The Church cannot stay on the margin of such an enterprise, she who, according to her own peculiar condition, is not linked to the strategies of political power or to special economic interests, but is inspired only by the mission she has received from Christ.

Indeed, on the strong basis of her mandate from Christ to announce the Gospel to all the people, the Church is present to all the nations and cultures as a universal sacrament of salvation and unity for the world. Through her, humanity is reconciled to the Father; through her, a fraternity in Christ is opened up to all men

and women; finally, through her, the Gospel empowers the moral and religious energies to give an original contribution to the construction of a culture, a civilisation, based on the primacy of the Spirit, justice and love.

3. In this perspective, I express my esteem and my encouragement to all Catholics who assume their share of responsibility for international life, be they the many here present, those who are at the service of the UNESCO, or those in the International Catholic Organisations, who have well understood the important part they have to play on this level.

To be sure, an irreplaceable contribution is made by the International Catholic Organisations to the study of the great international problems, to forge awareness of them in public debate, through their status as NGOs, as well as through the Centres of the Conference of ICOs.

I do not underestimate the necessity for technical capacities in order to take on the delicate and complex questions raised at the international level. However, your own contributions must consist in an effort to constantly see and put at the heart of these problems, where the destinies of persons and peoples are bound together, an ethical and religious dimension essential to our human condition. No solution is possible through negotiation alone at the sole level of politics, economics or technicalities – however needed these are – if it is not also inspired by these essential dimensions. May respect and tolerance, or the will to promote

loyal collaboration and dialogue never be an excuse to dismiss or hide the original contribution that must be yours from the truth of Christ, source of the truth of man and his dignity.

4. This contribution shall be even more efficient if it can be founded on the experience and reflexions coming from the groundwork basis of your organisations and movements and from the diversity achieved through them (places, nations and continents). This is one of the positive aspects of ICOs. Through their structures and the origins of their members, they will know how to overcome the limited horizons of nationalism or regionalism; they will know how to avoid a vision and a praxis of internationalism, seen as the privilege of an elite of the powerful or the exclusive domain of experts. Through the breath of their presence reaching beyond all geographical and cultural environments, through the density of their local and national structures of coordination and information, through their deep communion with the Church at all levels where international cooperation comes into being, International Catholic Organisations already give and must give ever more their witness as well as their important contribution to the construction of the city of Man and the Kingdom of God.

Dear friends, dear sisters and brothers, may God bless you, you and your families, may He bless your work at UNESCO and all the Christifideles from the ICOs you represent.

Translated to English by Mathias Nebel

To the delegates of the International Catholic Organisations in Geneva

Address of Pope John Paul II

Tuesday, 15 June 1982

Dear Sister and Brothers,

1. I am very pleased to greet, in Geneva, the representatives of the International Catholic Organisations (ICOs) and the members of the Coordination Centre, as I have done elsewhere, in New York and Paris, for example. I am especially grateful for the welcome address by the President of the Conference of the ICO and the convictions he shared with us.

International Organisations in the United Nation system – is it really worth repeating this in Geneva and to you who are already convinced? – pursue, as a community of Nations, a very important work of confrontation and collaboration to achieve conventions, recommendations, and useful actions to the development of peoples in such fields as Human Rights, Social Justice, Public Health, etc.

Even if these are imperfect instruments, not as efficient as wished, achieving mixed results and open to criticism, the Church has much esteem, and you know it, for the humanitarian goals of each of these Institutions, and sees in them the

necessary path of humanity seeking unity. My visit this morning to the International Labour Organisation, my presence at the UN See in Geneva and the meeting I had this morning with the directors of the Specialised Institutions all serve as witness to this esteem.

2. Hence the Church indeed places trust in the people who assume the responsibility of these International Organisations, each accountable to his own moral conscience, and does not restrain its encouragement for the moral progress that this may provide. The Church obviously wishes that Christians and its own Catholic children may understand the necessity of such work, may personally engage in and collaborate on it, with all the required competence and a Christian understanding of the world.

This is why I now greet the members of the Groupe Catholique des Organisations Internationales, for it seems to me that such community sustains their faith and their friendship, and at the same time gives them the possibility to assume personally, as lay Christians, their res-

possibilities in serving the international community.

For it seems certain that such organic presence of the Church is of crucial importance at this level.

The Holy See is present, officially, by its Permanent Observer and I was able to thank him as well as his collaborators at the Permanent Mission, who, however small a team, achieve a very useful work.

But at another level, the Church is present through you, delegates of the ICO, whose witness, as associations, and action, directed at the International Organisations, are extremely important and recognised as such through your consultative status as NGOs. Many ICOs maintain their main office here; others at least a qualified representative in Geneva or in the region, in order to follow the activities at the United Nations in the name of their Organisation and to speak on its behalf.

3. I cannot name every one of these ICOs, nor even mention their fields of action, since these are extremely varied and complementary. But I would add, however, my encouragement and all my best wishes, by saying that without the ICOs, there would be something missing in the fruitful vitality of the Church, with regard to its apostolic and prophetic mission toward the contemporary International Community.

I would like to mention one precise word about your originality - catholicity. What does the "catholicity of the ICOs mean? It means that ICOs find their essential vitality in the source of the Gospel, as lived in the ecclesial community. The terms

"catholic" places your organisations in an organic relationship to the Church and its Magisterium. In this sense, you enjoy a privileged bond to the Holy See as instruments of the mission of the Bishop of Rome toward the Universal Church.

But you have a specific place in such a mission and it requires a specific engagement. This is what I shall describe as the mediation stage between the Gospel and the present society, between the Universal Church and the community of nations. The ICOs form, by their very existence and presence, one element of this mediation, and so to speak, one of the hinges between the Catholic Church and the International Community, where the Church cannot speak since the issue relates to a ? that is too technical, but where you, precisely, must intervene.

4. You may do so since your International associations of lay Christians empowers you to bring together a considerable amount of Christian thought, experiences and influences, thanks to the many contributions stemming from the all the ecclesial communities in your specific field; this empowers you to use them in a responsible and free way toward Intergovernmental Organisations.

I will not speak about the many current initiatives and interventions that you may face on specific projects. But I wish to add that, beyond such concrete Christian engagement, or more so, in order to enable them, your ICOs should be a place of detained reflexion. Reflexion required to reach the entire breadth of

international actions in such fields as: The philosophical and juridical conception of an International Society; an educational theory and movement serving peace; an ethics applied to the New International Economical Order and to the North-South dialogue; a Christian anthropology sustaining Human Rights: the protection and functioning of the family; the insertion of the law of love into the spheres of international relationships; the formation of conscience and of international public opinion in the various crucial fields; all things in need of very faithful adherence to Christian principles and a deep experience of the concrete field of actions. This is the huge and exalted sphere that is opening itself to your specific apostolate; opening itself to your Christian courage. Through such action, you could enrich the International Community, the other ICOs and their Conference, and the Holy See

itself.

5. The ICOs find information and a stimulating means of collaboration in The Information Centre for International Catholic Organizations. Here I must thank its president and all the staff. I cannot but remember all the work of our beloved and missed Father Henri de Riedmatten, who was a long-counsellor of this team and, after that, served as Permanent Observer of the Holy See. I am also convinced that the witness of the Centre is important to the other NGOs and even to the large International Organisation in Geneva.

(...)

May the Lord enlighten your spirit and your heart to a charity without borders! May He assist you in your work and make it flourish! May He help your ICOs to fulfil the ecclesial role expected from them! I bless you affectionately, as well as your families and all those whom you love.

Translated to English by M. Nebel

For the 50th anniversary of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations Organi- zation for education, science and culture (UNESCO)

Message of John Paul II to Mons. Francesco Follo
Permanent Observer of the Holy See at UNESCO

Vatican, 25 November 2002

1. The 50th anniversary of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See at UNESCO enjoys a special importance, and I am happy to join in spirit and cordially greet all the participants in the colloquium called to observe this event. On this occasion, I am pleased to recall the illustrious memory of your predecessor, Mons. Angelo Roncalli, Blessed Pope John, who was the first Permanent Observer of this Mission of the Holy See.

2. Created in the 20th century immediately after the Second World War, the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) was born of the desire of the nations to live in peace, justice and freedom, and to provide one another with the means to promote this peace actively through a new international cooperation, marked by a spirit of mutual assistance and founded on

the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity. It was natural for the Catholic Church to be associated with this great project because of the unique sovereignty of the Holy See, but, as I said to this assembly in 1980, also and especially, by reason of the "organic and constitutive link which exists between religion in general and Christianity in particular, on the one hand, and culture, on the other" (Address to UNESCO, 2 June 1980, n. 9; ORE, 23 June 1980, p. 10).

3. The intuitions that prevailed at the foundation of UNESCO more than 50 years ago, stressed the importance of education for peace and solidarity, not losing sight of the fact that "if wars are born in people's minds, it is in the human spirit that the defences of peace must be built" (Constitution of UNESCO, 16 November 1945). Today these in-

tutions have been fully confirmed. The phenomenon of globalization has become a reality defining economics, politics and culture, bringing with it positive and negative values. They are areas that offer a challenge to our sense of responsibility so that a truly worldwide solidarity can be organized that alone can give our earth a secure future and lasting peace. In the name of the mission she has from her Founder to be the universal sacrament of salvation, without ignoring any situation, the Church never ceases to speak and act in favour of justice and peace, inviting nations to dialogue and understanding. Thus she bears witness to the truth she has received about man, his origin, his nature and his destiny. She knows that this search for the truth is the person's innermost pursuit and that it is not defined by what he possesses but by what he is, by the capacity to surpass self and to mature in humanity. The Church also knows that, by inviting our contemporaries to seek the truth about themselves with burning rigor, she calls them to their true freedom, while other voices, enticing them to take an easier path, contribute to enslave them to the renewed fascination and power of today's idols.

4. The Catholic Church, in her mission to all the peoples of the earth, is not identified with any race, nation, or culture. In the course of her history, she has always used the resources of many cultures to make known to humanity the Good News of Christ because she is fully conscious that the faith that

she proclaims can never be reduced to one cultural element, but is the source of salvation for the whole human person and his activity. However, it is through the diversity and multiplicity of languages, cultures, traditions and mentalities, that the Church expresses her catholicity, unity, and faith. She does her best to respect every human culture, because in her missionary and pastoral activity she follows the rule that "whatever good is found sown in the minds and hearts of men or in the rites and customs of peoples, these not only are preserved from destruction, but are purified, raised up, and perfected for the glory of God, the confusion of the devil and the happiness of man" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 17).

For these reasons, the Catholic Church holds in high esteem the nation, since it is the forge in which the sense of the common good is created, where one learns what it means to belong to a culture, through language, the transmission of family values and formation in the common memory. Similarly, the multiform experience of human cultures that she possesses because she is "catholic", that is, universal in both space and time, makes her desire to help people abandon an excessive particularity and narrow and exclusive nationalism. We should keep in mind that "every culture, as a typically human and historically conditioned reality, necessarily has its limitations" (*Message for the World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2001, 8 December 2000, n. 7; *ORE*, 20/27 December 2000, p.

10). Thus, "in order to prevent the sense of belonging to one particular culture from turning into isolation, an effective antidote is a serene and unprejudiced knowledge of other cultures" (ibid. n. 7).

It is precisely the noble mission of UNESCO to foster such reciprocal knowledge of cultures and to encourage their institutional dialogue by all sorts of projects at the international level, namely, meetings, exchanges, formation programmes. Building bridges between human beings, and, even sometimes rebuilding them when the folly of war has worked to destroy them, is a long-term, never-ending project that entails the formation of consciences, the education of youth and the change of mentalities. This is a major opportunity for a globalization that will not produce a homogenization of values or reduce everything to the laws of the global market, but rather bring about the possibility of pooling the legitimate treasures of each nation in order to serve the good of all.

5. For her part, the Catholic

Church rejoices in what has been done, even if she knows its limitations, and she continually encourages the peaceful encounter of human beings through their cultures and the consideration of the religious and spiritual dimension of individuals, which is part of their history. This really is the reason for the presence of the Permanent Observer of the Holy See at the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture, who for 50 years has been a vigilant witness to the catholic nature of the Church and to her resolute dedication to the service of the human community.

May the observance of this anniversary strengthen everyone's dedication to work tirelessly to serve true dialogue among the peoples through their cultures, so that everyone may be more conscious of belonging to the same human family and peace in the world may be better guaranteed!

To you and to those taking part in the colloquium, I cordially grant a special Apostolic Blessing.

*To the representatives of
the Holy See,
To International Organisations
and to participants in the Forum
of Catholic-Inspired Non-Govern-
mental Organisations*

Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 1st December 2007*

*Your Excellencies,
Representatives of the Holy See to
International Organizations,
Dear Friends,*

I am pleased to greet all of you who are assembled in Rome to reflect on the contribution which Catholic-inspired Non-governmental Organizations can offer, in close collaboration with the Holy See, to the solution of the many problems and challenges associated with the various activities of the United Nations and other international and regional organizations. To each of you I offer a cordial welcome. In a particular way I thank the Substitute of the Secretariat of State, who has graciously interpreted your common sentiments, while at the same time informing me of the goals of your Forum. I also greet the young representative of the Non-governmental

Organizations present.

Taking part in this important meeting are representatives of groups long associated with the presence and activity of the Catholic laity at the international level, along with members of other, more recent groups which have come into being as part of the current process of global integration. Also present are groups mainly committed to advocacy, and others chiefly concerned with the concrete management of cooperative projects promoting development. Some of your organizations are recognized by the Church as public and private associations of the lay faithful, others share in the charism of certain institutes of consecrated life, while still others enjoy only civil recognition and include non-Catholics and non-Christians among their mem-

bers. All of you, however, have in common a passion for promoting human dignity. This same passion has constantly inspired the activity of the Holy See in the international community. The real reason for the present meeting, then, is to express gratitude and appreciation for what you are doing in active collaboration with the papal representatives to international organizations. In addition, this meeting seeks to foster a spirit of cooperation among your organizations and consequently the effectiveness of your common activity on behalf of the integral good of the human person and of all humanity.

This unity of purpose can only be achieved through a variety of roles and activities. The multilateral diplomacy of the Holy See, for the most part, strives to reaffirm the great fundamental principles of international life, since the Church's specific contribution consists in helping "to form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 28). On the other hand, "the direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper to the lay faithful" – and in the context of international life this includes Christian diplomats and members of Non-governmental Organizations – who "are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity" and "to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respec-

tive competences and fulfilling their own responsibility" (*ibid.*, 29).

International cooperation between governments, which was already emerging at the end of the nineteenth century and which grew steadily throughout the last century despite the tragic disruption of two world wars, has significantly contributed towards the creation of a more just international order. In this regard, we can look with satisfaction to achievements such as the universal recognition of the juridical and political primacy of Human Rights, the adoption of shared goals regarding the full enjoyment of economic and social rights by all the earth's inhabitants, the efforts being made to develop a just global economy and, more recently, the protection of the environment and the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

At the same time, international discussions often seem marked by a relativistic logic which would consider as the sole guarantee of peaceful coexistence between peoples a refusal to admit the truth about man and his dignity, to say nothing of the possibility of an ethics based on recognition of the natural moral law. This has led, in effect, to the imposition of a notion of law and politics which ultimately makes consensus between states – a consensus conditioned at times by short-term interests or manipulated by ideological pressure – the only real basis of international norms. The bitter fruits of this relativistic logic are sadly evident: we think, for example, of the attempt to consider as Human Rights the consequences of cer-

tain self-centred lifestyles; a lack of concern for the economic and social needs of the poorer nations; contempt for humanitarian law, and a selective defence of Human Rights. It is my hope that your study and reflection during these days will result in more effective ways of making the Church's social doctrine better known and accepted on the international level. I encourage you, then, to counter relativism creatively by presenting the great truths about man's innate dignity and the rights which are derived from that dignity. This in turn will contribute to the forging of a more adequate response to the many issues being discussed today in the international forum. Above all, it will help to advance specific initiatives marked by a spirit of solidarity and freedom.

What is needed, in fact, is a spirit of solidarity conducive for promoting as a body those ethical principles which, by their very nature and their role as the basis of social life, remain non-negotiable. A spirit of solidarity imbued with a strong sense of fraternal love leads to a better appreciation of the initiatives of others and a deeper desire to cooperate with them. Thanks to this spirit, one will always, whenever it is useful or necessary, work in collaboration either with the various non-governmental organizations or the repre-

sentatives of the Holy See, with due respect for their differences of nature, institutional ends and methods of operation. On the other hand, an authentic spirit of freedom, lived in solidarity, will help the initiative of the members of non-governmental organization to create a broad gamut of new approaches and solutions with regard to those temporal affairs which God has left to the free and responsible judgement of every individual. When experienced in solidarity, legitimate pluralism and diversity will lead not to division and competition, but to ever greater effectiveness. The activities of your organizations will bear genuine fruit provided they remain faithful to the Church's magisterium, anchored in communion with her pastors and above all with the successor of Peter, and meet in a spirit of prudent openness the challenges of the present moment.

Dear friends, I thank you once again for your presence today and for your dedicated efforts to advance the cause of justice and peace within the human family. Assuring you of a special remembrance in my prayers, I invoke upon you, and the organizations you represent, the maternal protection of Mary, Queen of the World. To you, your families and your associates, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

Meeting with Catholics engaged in the life of the Church and society

Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI

*Concert Hall, Freiburg im Breisgau
Sunday, 25 September 2011*

*Mr President of the Federal Republic,
Mr Minister President,
Mr Mayor,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,*

I am glad to be here today to meet all of you who work in so many ways for the Church and for society. This gives me a welcome opportunity personally to thank you most sincerely for your commitment and your witness as “powerful heralds of the faith in things to be hoped for” (Lumen Gentium, 35 – *validi praecones fidei sperandarum rerum*); this is how the Second Vatican Council describes people like you who do dedicated work for the present and the future from a faith perspective. In your fields of activity you readily stand up for your faith and for the Church, something that, as we know, is not at all easy at the present time.

For some decades now we have been experiencing a decline in religious practice and we have been seeing substantial numbers of the baptized drifting away from Church life. This prompts the question: should the Church not change?

Must she not adapt her offices and structures to the present day, in order to reach the searching and doubting people of today?

Blessed Mother Teresa was once asked what in her opinion was the first thing that would have to change in the Church. Her answer was: you and I.

Two things are clear from this brief story. On the one hand Mother Teresa wants to tell her interviewer: the Church is not just other people, not just the hierarchy, the Pope and the bishops: we are all the Church, we the baptized. And on the other hand her starting-point is this: yes, there are grounds for change. There is a need for change. Every Christian and the whole community of the faithful are called to constant change.

What should this change look like in practice? Are we talking about the kind of renewal that a householder might carry out when reordering or repainting his home? Or are we talking about a corrective, designed to bring us back on course and help us to make our way more swiftly and more directly? Certainly these

and other elements play a part and we cannot go into all these matters here. But the fundamental motive for change is the apostolic mission of the disciples and the Church herself.

The Church, in other words, must constantly rededicate herself to her mission. The three Synoptic Gospels highlight various aspects of the missionary task. The mission is built first of all upon personal experience: “You are witnesses” (Lk 24:48); it finds expression in relationships: “Make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19); and it spreads a universal message: “Preach the Gospel to the whole creation” (Mk 16:15). Through the demands and constraints of the world, however, this witness is constantly obscured, the relationships are alienated and the message is relativized. If the Church, in Pope Paul VI’s words, is now struggling “to model itself on Christ’s ideal”, this “can only result in its acting and thinking quite differently from the world around it, which it is nevertheless striving to influence” (*Ecclesiam Suam*, 58). In order to accomplish her mission, she will need again and again to set herself apart from her surroundings, to become in a certain sense “unworldly”.

The Church’s mission has its origins in the mystery of the triune God, in the mystery of his creative love. And love is not just somehow within God, it is God, he himself is love by nature. And divine love does not want to exist only for itself, by nature it wants to pour itself out. It has come down to humanity,

to us, in a particular way through the incarnation and self-offering of God’s Son: by virtue of the fact that Christ, the Son of God, as it were stepped outside the framework of his divinity, took flesh and became man, not merely to confirm the world in its worldliness and to be its companion, leaving it to carry on just as it is, but in order to change it. The Christ event includes the inconceivable fact of what the Church Fathers call a *sacrum commercium*, an exchange between God and man. The Fathers explain it in this way: we have nothing to give God, we have only our sin to place before him. And this he receives and makes his own, while in return he gives us himself and his glory: a truly unequal exchange, which is brought to completion in the life and passion of Christ. He becomes, as it were, a “sinner”, he takes sin upon himself, takes what is ours and gives us what is his. But as the Church continued to reflect upon and live the faith, it became clear that we not only give him our sin, but that he has empowered us, from deep within he gives us the power, to offer him something positive as well: our love – to offer him humanity in the positive sense. Clearly, it is only through God’s generosity that man, the beggar, who receives a wealth of divine gifts, is yet able to offer something to God as well; that God makes it possible for us to accept his gift, by making us capable of becoming givers ourselves in his regard.

The Church owes her whole being to this unequal exchange. She has nothing of her own to offer to him

who founded her, such that she might say: here is something wonderful that we did! Her *raison d'être* consists in being a tool of redemption, in letting herself be saturated by God's word and in bringing the world into loving unity with God. The Church is immersed in the Redeemer's outreach to men. When she is truly herself, she is always on the move, she constantly has to place herself at the service of the mission that she has received from the Lord. And therefore she must always open up afresh to the cares of the world, to which she herself belongs, and give herself over to them, in order to make present and continue the holy exchange that began with the Incarnation.

In the concrete history of the Church, however, a contrary tendency is also manifested, namely that the Church becomes self-satisfied, settles down in this world, becomes self-sufficient and adapts herself to the standards of the world. Not infrequently, she gives greater weight to organization and institutionalization than to her vocation to openness towards God, her vocation to opening up the world towards the other.

In order to accomplish her true task adequately, the Church must constantly renew the effort to detach herself from her tendency towards worldliness and once again to become open towards God. In this she follows the words of Jesus: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (Jn 17:16), and in precisely this way he gives himself to the world. One could almost say

that history comes to the aid of the Church here through the various periods of secularization, which have contributed significantly to her purification and inner reform.

Secularizing trends – whether by expropriation of Church goods, or elimination of privileges or the like – have always meant a profound liberation of the Church from forms of worldliness, for in the process she as it were sets aside her worldly wealth and once again completely embraces her worldly poverty. In this she shares the destiny of the tribe of Levi, which according to the Old Testament account was the only tribe in Israel with no ancestral land of its own, taking as its portion only God himself, his word and his signs. At those moments in history, the Church shared with that tribe the demands of a poverty that was open to the world, in order to be released from her material ties: and in this way her missionary activity regained credibility.

History has shown that, when the Church becomes less worldly, her missionary witness shines more brightly. Once liberated from material and political burdens and privileges, the Church can reach out more effectively and in a truly Christian way to the whole world, she can be truly open to the world. She can live more freely her vocation to the ministry of divine worship and service of neighbour. The missionary task, which is linked to Christian worship and should determine its structure, becomes more clearly visible. The Church opens herself to the world not in order to win

men for an institution with its own claims to power, but in order to lead them to themselves by leading them to him of whom each person can say with Saint Augustine: he is closer to me than I am to myself (cf. *Confessions*, III,6,11). He who is infinitely above me is yet so deeply within me that he is my true interiority. This form of openness to the world on the Church's part also serves to indicate how the individual Christian can be open to the world in effective and appropriate ways.

It is not a question here of finding a new strategy to re-launch the Church. Rather, it is a question of setting aside mere strategy and seeking total transparency, not bracketing or ignoring anything from the truth of our present situation, but living the faith fully here and now in the utterly sober light of day, appropriating it completely, and stripping away from it anything that only seems to belong to faith, but in truth is mere convention or habit.

To put it another way: for people of every era, and not just our own, the Christian faith is a scandal. That the eternal God should know us and care about us, that the intangible should at a particular moment have become tangible, that he who is immortal should have suffered and died on the Cross, that we who are mortal should be given the promise of resurrection and eternal life – for people of any era, to believe all this is a bold claim.

This scandal, which cannot be eliminated unless one were to eliminate Christianity itself, has unfortunately been overshadowed in recent

times by other painful scandals on the part of the preachers of the faith. A dangerous situation arises when these scandals take the place of the primary skandalon of the Cross and in so doing they put it beyond reach, concealing the true demands of the Christian Gospel behind the unworthiness of those who proclaim it.

All the more, then, it is time once again to discover the right form of detachment from the world, to move resolutely away from the Church's worldliness. This does not, of course, mean withdrawing from the world: quite the contrary. A Church relieved of the burden of worldliness is in a position, not least through her charitable activities, to mediate the life-giving strength of the Christian faith to those in need, to sufferers and to their carers. "For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 25). At the same time, though, the Church's charitable activity also needs to be constantly exposed to the demands of due detachment from worldliness, if it is not to wither away at the roots in the face of increasing erosion of its ecclesial character. Only a profound relationship with God makes it possible to reach out fully towards others, just as a lack of outreach towards neighbour impoverishes one's relationship with God.

Openness to the concerns of the world means, then, for the Church that is detached from worldliness,

bearing witness to the primacy of God's love according to the Gospel through word and deed, here and now, a task which at the same time points beyond the present world because this present life is also bound up with eternal life. As individuals and as the community of the Church, let us live the simplicity of a great love, which is both the simplest and hardest thing on

earth, because it demands no more and no less than the gift of oneself.

Dear friends, it remains for me to invoke God's blessing and the strength of the Holy Spirit upon us all, that we may continually recognize anew and bear fresh witness to God's love and mercy in our respective fields of activity. Thank you for your attention.

Keyword Index to the Texts

- Advocacy** 93
- Charity** 72-73, 87, 100
- Church** 70, 72-79, 83-86, 89-91, 93-95, 97-101
- Human dignity** 81, 94
- Human rights** 83, 85, 87, 94-95
- ICOs/CINGOs** 70, 72, 74, 76-79, 82, 84-87, 90, 94, 98
 And the Magisterium 86, 95
 Identity 83
 Mission 72, 77-79, 83, 86, 89-91, 98-99
 Responsibility 72-73, 84-85, 90, 94
 Subsidiarity 70
- International community** 69-70, 73, 77-78, 86-87, 94
- Justice** 71, 73, 75, 77, 81, 83-85, 89-90, 94-95
- Justice and peace** 90, 95
- Lay** 75, 85-86, 93-94
- Love** 73-74, 79, 84, 87, 95, 98, 101
- Solidarity** 70, 73, 83, 89-90, 95

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