

**“Towards a Social Economy: Plurality, Participation and the Realization of the Common Good, with explicit references to the opportunities, accomplishments, setbacks and challenges experienced in North America.” Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, on the occasion of an International Congress to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mater et Magistra, May 16, 2011.**

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I propose to begin with a few pertinent observations on CIV [Caritas in Veritate], followed by a brief comparison with MM [Mater et Magistra]. Then I will discuss the social economy and, finally, (with apologies, drawing largely on personal experience <sup>1</sup>) share some Canadian, and very briefly a few American experiences and experimentation with Catholic social teaching over the last 50 years.

### Caritas in Veritate [CIV]

The fundamental search—one might even say, the consuming passion that animates this remarkable letter—is a theological and pastoral effort to engage all of us with the question of what it means to become fully human in a globalizing world. Now that we are so massively interconnected with each other on the material and practical level, how will we learn to take personal and collective responsibility—each in his or her own measure—for the integral human development of each person and of all persons? How will we develop the capacity to “love our neighbours as ourselves”, now that the whole planet is our neighbourhood?

CIV accepts economic globalization as a fact and as a world-transforming cultural event. It is the *res novum* of this 21<sup>st</sup> century *Rerum Novarum*. But Pope Benedict is not greatly concerned with analysing this phenomenon, or with assigning it to a moral category. It will be what people make of it, he reiterates (par.42), quoting John Paul II. No, CIV is consumed with the question of how we can civilize the global economy, how we can penetrate it with the values, insights, networks and institutions that will in fact make room for the full human emergence of everyone. Yes, this will require “an expansion of reason”, a “broadening of our concept of reason” (par.31). Yes, the effort can only be sustained by radical love, remembering that “intelligence and love are not in separate compartments: love is rich in intelligence and intelligence is full of love.”(par.30) And finally, yes, this transcendent and mighty effort can only be fulfilled in faith which gratefully contemplates God’s infinite love, incarnate in Jesus Christ, making all the difference—the crucial difference—in human history.

This quest for a new and transcendent “global” humanism is truly a sign of the times, because even in the secular world, in recent years, there has been a growing consensus that we need a new paradigm, mindset, or vision - a new way of seeing the present-day world. Our present models and tools are proving inadequate; we seem to be walking where there is no clear path or purpose.

In a recent seminar on CIV in Rome, Stefano Zamagni, an economist at the University of Bologna and a friend of Pope Benedict, suggested deeper reasons why Benedict also sees the need for a whole new way of seeing, understanding and evaluating our present global situation and why we cannot simply return to the economy of the 60s and 80s. He sees that we have, in recent decades, lost our way because powerful ideologies have broken the basic bonds of meaning by separating the economic from the social dimension of our lives; by separating labour from the origins of wealth; and, finally, by separating the market from democracy. These bonds, broken by avarice and greed, can only be replaced by restoring a dimension of love, fraternity or friendship in all our interrelationships including those in economic and commercial life.<sup>2</sup> This conviction is not new to Catholic social teaching, but CIV expresses it with a fullness that might penetrate many minds and many networks in this searching generation.

Benedict’s holistic paradigm or vision is at once spiritual, theological and anthropological. It is a vision of faith. God, Divine Love, present and sustaining all creation, offers Godself as the transforming, respectful partner to every human heart. Our hearts come into their own, as it were, when the fire of God’s love has enkindled in them its own flame, as if in a new hearth. Enlightened by the wisdom that springs from faith and reason in dialogue, and educated by the virtues as well as through human cultures, institutions and structures, persons can enter human history as partners of the saving, creative love of God. Thus Divine Love is at work shaping, and bringing about a civilization of love through the processes of integral human development, which however imperfectly, already prefigure the promised new heaven and new earth.

Because human persons are capable of such a life-transforming response to Divine Love, it follows that generosity will be the inner law of our growth and of our efficacy. As Benedict repeats often, we are ‘made for gift.’ This law is so deeply true of our humanity that it seeks expression not only in family life and personal friendship, but equally in political and economic life. Integral human development flourishes when space has been made for the dimension of love or friendship in all our attitudes, actions and enterprises.

The word used in CIV for this spontaneous, sustained, sometimes institutionalized but always free generosity, is “gratuitousness”. Unfortunately, that particular word has lost its music, even its meaning, in contemporary English. As an alternative, I will use the phrase “the spirit of gift”, even if something is lost in that translation. The concept, however named, is of fundamental importance in the social theology of CIV.

The spirit of gift brings about a human society that is the antithesis of putting a price on everything and getting ahead of one’s neighbour. I believe that many of the commentators on CIV have not taken seriously Benedict’s suggestion that a basic conversion from our individualist, consumerist, utilitarian culture is required to enter into the holistic vision of creative, redemptive generosity which marks every paragraph of the encyclical.

#### Mater et Magistra [MM] and Caritas in Veritate [CIV]

For insiders, Pope John’s social encyclical in 1961 was a bombshell. Le Monde of Paris headlined ‘End of German Jesuit Hegemony.’<sup>1</sup> It reported the replacement of the German Jesuit Gustav Gundlach, who drafted Pius XII’s social documents, with Msgr Pietro Pavan who would also draft Pacem in Terris.

MM was dramatic in at least two aspects. One novelty was the naming of the concept “socialization”, which recognized the multiplicity and growing complexity of twentieth-century social relationships as a phenomenon that can contribute to genuine human development, and not only as a danger to traditional faith and morals. (Some saw this vocabulary—and indeed, this optimism--as a sellout to socialism.) A second break with precedent was that the idea of a Third Way, the vocational or corporate society promoted by Pope Pius XI in Quadragesimo Anno in 1931, was quietly shelved. MM also replaced the hegemony of natural law in previous documents with a more biblical approach which heralded the emphasis on the human person found in Octagesimo Adveniens and Gaudium et Spes. MM also shifted labour relations in western countries from centre stage, in order to highlight poverty in the developing countries as a crucial concern of the social magisterium.

It is remarkable how many ideas and phrases found in CIV already appear in MM fifty years earlier. One could cite many examples. There is no doubt that both encyclicals breathe a passion and a great hope for solidarity and for authentic human development. (The long section in MM about the agricultural economy, with its vision of the rights, dignity and competence of rural workers and its sense of how each sector of the global

economy must contribute to the flourishing of the other sectors, is a moving example.) Each encyclical is about culture as much as about economics; each recognizes that "The Church's goal is to humanize and to Christianize the modern civilization." (MM 256). There is no doubt that in both letters, the social hope being proposed is rooted in an understanding of charity as Divine Love opening human hearts to God's creative, redemptive love of everyone. Indeed, both encyclicals are about conversion. As MM puts it, "It is not enough to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the church's social doctrine, the light of which is Truth, Justice as objective, and Love as its driving force." (MM 226)

### Social Economy

Although Benedict appears to be the first pope to use the term "social economy" in social teaching, he is, in fact, simply naming what is already becoming quite visible in the globalized world and already being experimented with in CST and practice. After World War II there were experiments with different formulae of co-management, with workers as members of the Boards of Directors or Management, with profit sharing, etc. And, of course, cooperatives of production, distribution and consumption are already common in many countries, a fact that will be celebrated in 2012 by the United Nations through its Year of Cooperatives, highlighting the good that has been achieved by this form of "social enterprise" in more than 100 countries. More recently, micro-credit and social businesses have become more common, especially in developing countries. Perhaps best known for his leadership and writings in this area is Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus from Bangladesh. Micro-credit represents a significant shift in thinking - a realization that the very poor are credit-worthy. Yunus sees the failure of free market theory as due to 'a conceptualization failure' - a failure to capture the essence of what it is to be human."<sup>ii</sup>

Yunus offers the following definition: "a social business is designed and operated as a business enterprise, with products, services, customers, markets, expenses, and revenues - but with the profit-maximization principle replaced by the 'social-benefit principle.'"<sup>iii</sup> Social business seeks to achieve a social objective.

When we examine CST, we see that it has always been trying to overcome class warfare between workers and owners or managers. At many moments, the documents of the tradition have been seeking patterns of reform that could channel any business enterprise in the direction of being a community with the common good on its mind, rather than simply a group of individuals aiming at profit or needing a wage. Pope Pius XI,

having lost his confidence that capitalism could achieve this goal, endorsed in QA a “third way” between capitalism and socialism, namely, vocational or corporate society patterned on the mediaeval guilds. This vision, called “corporatism”, was studied and experimented with to a degree, but not found realizable or even acceptable, partly because of its affinity with questionable experiments making news at that time in states with “corporatist” inclinations such as Portugal, Italy and Germany.

Pope John in MM, in 1961, is more confident that the free market system can be reformed. He sees the global economy creating a great deal of wealth, and the welfare state compensating for some of its failures. He shelves vocational society thinking and turns his attention to the steady increase in social relationships of all kinds which he calls ‘socialization.’ He urges us to consider how the multiplication of social relationships can contribute to building human community. He sees a new positive role for government in promoting socialization, but is anxious that such an increased role not infringe on the freedom and initiative of individuals and groups—concerned as he was for the principle of subsidiarity. He picks up Pope Leo’s great concern that human work not be considered merely a commodity, and approves Pius XII’s recommendation that the wage contract should be modified and take on more of the elements of partnership (par.32). Noting the great disproportion between salaries and wages, he rejects the idea that wage determination can be left solely to the laws of the marketplace (par.70). He strongly endorses collective bargaining and giving workers a more determining voice in the life of companies and also in the affairs of the state (par.90-91).

In CIV, Benedict speaks directly to the social economy as belonging to the real economy, not limited to the sidelines as a peripheral social organization. But perhaps it is best to indicate first how he wants the global economy to be changed. CIV includes some vivid descriptions of malfunctions and distortions in the existing, and emerging, global market economy. How can we judge the economy, how can we know when it is malfunctioning? By remembering that the economy exists “to serve the national and global common good” (par.41). Economic action must never be separated from moral conscience, from social responsibility, from human solidarity. Because Pope Benedict wants the entire economy to be humane, therefore he wants the ‘social economy’ enhanced.

His approach is to suggest that there is not only one market economy, there are several kinds. As mentioned already, he sees that all of them need an orientation to mutual generosity—a tending towards “a world in which all will be able to give and receive” (par 39)—in order to work effectively in today’s world. This, for Pope Benedict, is not

utopianism; it is practical ethics, and it is theology. Remember that for him Divine Love is the ultimate driving force in any historic movement towards integral human development in charity and truth. Thus the true criterion for measuring success in any human institution is how fully it contributes to integral human development. He repeats what his predecessors said strongly about the rights of workers to working conditions and compensation in accord with their human dignity and their family and communal responsibilities. He upholds their right to unions and collective bargaining.

In the present circumstances, as CIV points out, governments are often impeded from fulfilling their social responsibilities or playing their regulatory role effectively. Sometimes this powerlessness is due to the transnational nature of contemporary business; sometimes the problem is poverty, a lack of resources and/or of carefully developed national laws and institutions. Benedict insists that corporations must lift more of the new social burdens. He wants all stakeholders to be recognized in the decisions companies must make. Investors, and the managers who work for them, must not have the only determinative voice in the production process. And he wants to see a just distribution of earnings accomplished primarily within the production process itself, and not as something later done by government. He is harsh on financiers' greed and selfishness - those who make huge profits on money and credit rather than on economic production; and he deplores the lack of adequate supervision of banking and investment houses. And he is concerned that those who use non-renewable resources pay their full social costs.

Different generations of Catholic social teaching tend to emphasize a particular shape of social hope that seems to hold promise for the social ills most troublesome in that generation. Thus, unions and workers' organizations were recognized as important vessels of social hope in *Rerum Novarum*. *Mater et Magistra* envisioned a new flowering of the agricultural sector, in which farmers' organizations and a larger, more visionary role for farmers in socio-economic life as a whole would correct the current imbalance of power which oppresses rural workers. For CIV, it is the energy and proliferation of socially-oriented forms of business that especially embody social hope in the near and medium term.

These social business forms may or may not aim at profit, but they have other more primary goals of social and human welfare. CIV offers no developed examples of social enterprise, but Pope Benedict is known to admire such inspiring non-profit businesses as those initiated by the Focolare movement. Founded in 1943 in northern Italy by the charismatic Chiara Lubich, members of the movement have by now launched more

than 750 businesses, situated in scores of countries. The spirituality of the Focolare movement gives priority to everything that builds unity and communion. The virtue and practices of giving and receiving, so dear to Benedict, are central to the movement's life. In their business undertakings, Focolare members speak of, and aim at, an "economy of communion." Citizens of my own country might recognize in this new flowering of social enterprise the same values and energies that gave rise to the Antigonish movement in Nova Scotia in the early 20th century, or the "Social Gospel movement" that inspired so many co-operatives throughout the Canadian prairies a little later.

It is in these 'civil markets' where there is a much more communal approach to taking initiatives and making decisions and sharing earnings that the human vocation to become a gift to others can play a much fuller role than in regular corporate businesses. Benedict hopes that the growth of social enterprise will provide alternatives to powerful corporate structures. And not only as "another way"; he foresees that the growing plurality of business forms will influence "mainstream" business for the good, and will help bring about more civilized, less monopolistic markets.

Catholic Social Teaching in Canada, 1964-1990:  
Bishops find partners for new efforts to speak and act<sup>iv</sup>

The Canadian bishops, especially those whose adult education had included the demanding experience of Vatican II, recognized their need to be backed up by competent expertise if they were to dialogue effectively with other Christians, with secular leaders and with the world generally. Thus in February 1964 their bilingual Conference Administrative Board decided to organize "a dynamic and top-quality secretariat oriented towards study and research, equipped to give specialized and competent service promptly, able to discern social changes, to observe and analyze all problems of interest to the Church, whether in Canada as a whole, in the English and French sectors, or in the numerous regions and provinces of our vast country."<sup>v</sup>

The intensity of the work of the bishops and their new professional staff can be judged from the fact that they issued 140 Conference and Commission statements, in both French and English, from 1964-1990 - half of them focussing on social justice and peace issues. It was estimated that in that period the Canadian bishops were producing almost ten per cent of all the social statements offered by episcopal conferences world-wide. The respected American Jesuit sociologist, John Coleman sj, recently wrote a succinct evaluation of these statements. I quote him:

"The Canadian social documents can serve as a useful prism for illuminating continuities and changes in international CST. Many of the Canadian bishops' documents represent explicit responses to, or more concrete applications of, papal encyclicals, such as *Mater et Magistra*, *Populorum Progressio*, *Laborem Exercens*, or the 1971 Synod of World Bishops' document *Justice in the World*. Over time, Canadian social teaching shifted from its original natural law-based catechesis of fundamental social rights and duties, often arrived at deductively, to an inductive and experiential sense of the social teaching as integral to evangelization, grounded in a deeper ecclesiology and articulating the theological motifs of sin and liberation. The Canadian bishops' documents mirror shifts, as well, in international CST from a focus on the common good as, primarily, a national reality to questions of international development and liberation. Remarkably, the Canadian bishops responded to the documents of the Latin American episcopate at Medellin in 1969 as early as 1970. Canadian documents persistently link social teaching also to special sessions of the United Nations on justice issues, programs for a new international economic order, and the environment.

Over time, one sees in the Canadian bishops' documents a more generous citing from economics and political analysts, including secular experts, than is usual in international CST. The Canadians have spoken quite strongly - much more than the US bishops did in their letter on the economy - in referring to their own current economic reality as embodying "social sin" or of "a much larger structural crisis in the international system of capitalism." They say of Canada (and not only, as Pope Paul VI did in *Populorum Progressio*, of the Third World) "what is required is nothing less than fundamental social change."<sup>vi</sup>

Fully as interesting as the Canadian statements are some of the actions the bishops took in harmony with their published words. Here I share a few of the more public examples.

In the 1960s, some remarkable Canadian politicians and public servants were seriously promoting the possibility of a publicly-funded health care system that would serve all Canadians, regardless of their personal income or lack of it. Much of the pioneering work had been led in the 1950s by the premier of Saskatchewan, a Baptist minister named Tommy Douglas. In 1961, the federal government set up a Royal Commission on Health Services to study the question and propose a way forward. It was chaired by a judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, Mr. Justice Emmett Hall. The Hall Report was delivered in 1964. It proposed ways and means for establishing publicly-funded

medicare for all Canadians.<sup>vii</sup>

That same year, the bishops commissioned a study by their Social Action Office of the 900-page Hall Commission Report. So when the president of the Canadian Labour Congress invited the Conference to become a partner with organized labour in promoting universal medicare, the bishops accepted the invitation—a significant development in terms of public opinion, since Catholics at that time represented over 40% of the Canadian population. Having accepted a partnership with labour, the bishops then took the initiative to invite the major churches in Canada to join them in a coalition, which set its sights on achieving a universal healthcare program for Canadians. The resulting network organized a national conference in Ottawa that played no small part in persuading the Canadian parliament to quickly establish universal medicare.<sup>viii</sup>

The CCCB's justice agenda was not limited to such national issues. In 1967—the centennial celebration of the Canadian federation itself—the bishops launched a new agency, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace as a Catholic agency for international aid and domestic education for global social justice. From the beginning, Development and Peace was entrusted to lay leadership. Its first director, Romeo Maione, brought to his position years of formative experience with the Young Christian Workers movement at national and international levels. A nation-wide Lenten collection, operative in every parish of every diocese, was a significant source of funding for the new agency. Soon CIDA, the Canadian government's own agency for foreign aid, was choosing to match or even double-match the funding CCODP was able to direct to some of its chosen projects in the global South.

Another significant effort was the broad-based "Poverty at Home and Abroad" Conference held in Montreal in 1968. The fact that a Canadian, Cardinal Maurice Roy, was President of the then flourishing new Secretariat for Justice and Peace in Rome meant that its Secretary, Msgr Joe Gremillion, built strong bonds with CCCB's Social Action Office, as did his associate (the economist) Barbara Ward. They arranged for the present author to be part of the Canadian ecumenical delegation to the World Council of Churches conference on "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolution," in 1966. As a follow-up to this Geneva meeting, the Canadian delegates organized the Montreal Poverty Conference, held in 1968, with Barbara Ward and Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife, Brazil, among the speakers.

Canadians from all walks of life participated in the Conference, including, briefly, a boisterous group from the poor of Montreal. Out of this widely acclaimed public conference there evolved a National Coalition for Development, initially joined by some forty English and French speaking national groups - even including, for a while, the Chamber of Commerce - committed to working together on "Third World" development, aboriginal rights in Canada, building community groups to sustain local pressures for social justice, and making the Canadian tax system more sensitive to the needs of the poor.<sup>ix</sup>

This very large coalition proved after a few years to be premature or too ambitious to be sustainable. However, in the meantime, much smaller ecumenical groups had been forming around specific justice issues—inspired, often, by returned missionaries made militant by their first-hand experience of suffering in the global South, with its roots in exploitative forces within the emerging global economy. Collaboratively, several major Canadian churches nurtured these ad hoc ecumenical coalitions. Staff members of the different national churches—and later the staffs of the ad hoc coalitions themselves—joined forces to study, educate and exert political pressure to promote justice in international trade relations; human rights at home and abroad; corporate responsibility, and the rights of refugees.

The supportive role in this development of the Canadian religious, especially women religious, cannot be exaggerated. They provided moral and financial support, commissioned some of their members to offer skilled participation and leadership, and welcomed the ecumenical and socially progressive orientation of the work. Likewise, the very visible supportive role of lay groups such as the Catholic Womens' League, as well as of lay and priestly leaders of social justice initiatives in local dioceses is an exciting story in itself which can only be alluded to here.

The decision to work ecumenically on social justice problems has been an invigorating one. It has also had some inhibiting effects. For example: because the bishops had already chosen to work as partners with other national churches on social justice issues, they resisted Cardinal Roy's repeated urging that the Canadian bishops should develop a Justice and Peace Commission on the model of the one in Rome.

A third significant event was the overwhelmingly positive response on the part of the Canadian public to the bishops' statement "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis," in 1982.<sup>x</sup> The statement was prepared by the Social Affairs Office and was later endorsed

by the Plenary Assembly of the CCCB. At the time, national statistics were reporting that at least 12% of Canada's work force was unemployed. The statement called this situation "a moral disorder" and challenged Canada's leaders to change it. The federal government's main economic focus at the time was on controlling inflation; the CCCB's statement strongly differed with Ottawa's methods, insisting that the obligation to promote employment must be a higher priority. Canada's largest-circulation newspaper, the *Toronto Star*, headlined and featured *Ethical Reflections*—and then the statement rapidly became even more newsworthy when Cardinal Emmett Carter, the archbishop of Toronto, publicly stated that he felt that the bishops, himself included, had not been adequately consulted in the shaping of the statement.

The Cardinal chose to organize his own public hearings on the statement. Under the chairmanship of the Chancellor of the University of Toronto, Dr George Ignatieff, the hearings proved very successful. The major tenets of the statement stood up well under that rather sophisticated scrutiny.<sup>xi</sup>

Why did the *Ethical Reflections* of 1982 generate more public attention than any other statement issued by the CCCB, including their much discussed statement on *Humanae Vitae*? Perhaps it was the clear criteria they recommended for evaluating economic policy. These goals, succinctly expressed in *Ethical Reflections*, carried in themselves insights crystallized out of much preceding social struggle and pastoral concern, especially in Latin America. This is how they were expressed:

- 1) the needs of the poor have priority over the wants of the rich;
- 2) the rights of workers come before the maximization of profits;
- 3) the participation of marginalized groups has precedence over the preservation of a system that excludes them.

Contrary to what some have suggested, there is little evidence of United States church influence in the CCCB's statements in those years. But there is clear evidence of the influence of the Commission for Justice and Peace in Rome, of the Medellín Conference of the Latin American bishops, of the World Council of Churches and of Canadian missionaries working in Latin America, China and other regions of the world.

The experience of working on their own social teaching gave Canadian bishops a healthy confidence that they would have something of value to say also in international assemblies. They took very seriously their preparation for various Roman Synods. The

bishops who were elected to the Synod would prepare their interventions after wide consultation and with the help of Conference staff. It became customary that these draft notes would be discussed and voted on by the annual Plenary Assembly. Thus, Canadian bishops at the Synod always spoke in the name of the whole Conference.

The bishops were particularly active at the Synod on Justice in the World in 1971. A biennial meeting of the Inter-American episcopal conferences held in Mexico City, a few months before the Synod took place, put the work of the coming Synod high on the agenda of its meeting. The American and Canadian bishops had asked the present author and US theologian Joe Komonchak to prepare a discussion paper for the meeting. The paper was titled "Liberation of Men and Nations - Some Signs of the Times,"<sup>xii</sup> responding to the preparatory document for the Synod. The growing solidarity among the bishops can be judged by the fact that the Canadian and Latin American bishops endorsed the draft enthusiastically. The US bishops were somewhat divided; Cardinal Dearden voted in favour and Cardinal Krol against the draft.

At the Synod itself in Rome, Bishop Alex Carter's intervention on the potential for abuse inherent in the unregulated power of multinational corporations resulted in an invitation for him to visit the ILO offices in Geneva. Cardinal Flahiff's statement on education for justice won him personal congratulations from Pope Paul VI. Cardinal Flahiff's theme was that academic knowledge of social teachings is not enough; we should now take as our basic principle that: "only knowledge gained through participation is valid in this area of justice; true knowledge can be gained only through concern and solidarity. We must have recourse to the biblical notion of knowledge - experience shared with others. We have too frequently separated evangelization from social action and reserved social involvement to elites and, eventually, to the clergy. Unless we are in solidarity with the people who are poor, marginal or isolated we cannot even speak about their problems..."<sup>xiii</sup>

And when Pope John Paul II visited Canada in 1984, he confirmed in strong language the priority thus given by the Canadian bishops to the global dimension of the search for justice. For example, speaking to a huge crowd at Edmonton airport he shouted into the howling wind:

"Yes, the South - becoming always poorer; and the North - becoming always richer.... Nevertheless, in the light of Christ's words (Mt: 25) this poor South will judge the rich North. And the poor people and poor nations - poor in different ways, not only lacking

food, but also deprived of freedom and other human rights - will judge those people who take {these things} away from them, amassing to themselves the imperialistic monopoly of economic and political supremacy at the expense of others."<sup>xiv</sup>

It is obvious that the bishops, even in this active period, also faced frustrating challenges, difficulties and failures in trying to promote social teaching in Canada.

One crucial issue that has remained unresolved is the relationship between the CCCB and the Catholic laity. The bishops already supported several lay organizations, principally Development and Peace, but in 1967 they began discussing the feasibility of initiating a Canadian Pastoral Council, to represent all the members of the Church. The proposed Pastoral Council would work closely with the CCCB to foster renewal of the Church in Canada. Unfortunately, no consensus could be achieved among the laity and lay organizations. One reason for this lack of a shared approach was that the Quebec Church, after the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, was very different from the Church in the rest of Canada. Other reasons can no doubt be found within the internal culture of Catholicism in everyday parish and diocesan life, wherein silence and a certain passivity on the part of the laity has too often been taken for granted, or even promoted by the clergy, because passivity makes governance easier, if less fully human.

Whatever the intertwined causes, there was no strong tradition of lay participation in policy-setting and decision-making to build on when a national Pastoral Council was proposed. The CCCB settled for establishing a small pastoral team within its own organization. But the inevitable result was that the CCCB has remained largely unknown to most Catholic laity.<sup>xv</sup> And the lack of a recognized Catholic public voice other than that of the bishops is all too evident.

The confidence that had begun to grow within the Canadian bishops as a body was diminished somewhat when proposals they had carefully considered—proposals that seemed to make eminent sense when seen through the lens of cultural patterns in Canada—went nowhere when raised with officials in Rome. For example, the CCCB had consistently worked for the promotion of women in both church and society. They were careful to avoid language which had begun to be seen as ignoring or excluding women—ie: they learned to write in “inclusive language”. Especially, they hired competent women as staff. But their efforts to raise the delicate issue of encouraging historical research on the ordination of women to the diaconate were rebuffed in Rome -

as were their requests for permission to ordain married indigenous clergy to serve Canada's native people.

The corporate confidence of the Canadian bishops declined further as voices started to be raised in Rome questioning the theological foundations and theological authority of episcopal conferences as such. If the structure itself—the national episcopal conference—was going to be received suspiciously by authorities at the centre, then centripetal forces within Canada itself would become much harder to contain.

Nevertheless, there were signs that the CCCB's two decades and more (1964 to about 1990) of particularly active effort to teach and apply Catholic social doctrine had developed, for many active Catholics, a deeper sense of what social justice can mean as a dimension of Christian mission and witness.

It is profoundly sobering, then, that one heavy issue has bifurcated this emerging shared vision during the past two decades. I am thinking of the problem of abortion. One reason why the split is so tragic is that there is no great doctrinal disagreement here: the various Catholic agencies and movements involved all consider abortion to be a moral evil. But the issue of how to deal politically, legally and culturally with abortion does divide Catholics, sometimes bitterly, on the practical level. And it has begun to break down the bishops' solidarity.

Catholics whose activism is expressed primarily through the pro-life movement see the legislated (and cultural) tolerance of access to abortion in Canada as the most flagrant, even in some cases the only social injustice that Catholics must band together to oppose with all possible means short of lethal violence. Some pro-life leaders and publications seem to have re-invented in lay 21<sup>st</sup> century terms the ancient category of "excommunicatus vitandus". They believe that Catholics should never be seen to associate themselves with people who try to legitimize access to abortion, even when "pro-choice" persons are seeking collaboration with Catholics on some other issue which in itself is obviously a social good—such as practical measures to reduce poverty and to shrink the growing gap between rich and poor. This "vitandus" flavour extends, sometimes, to a refusal to have anything to do with any Catholic leader who has ever co-operated, on any topic, with a social movement that supports access to abortion as a right. This rigorism has led to some divisive refusals of diocesan and/or local hospitality in the recent past. And it has its roots, not only in the painful history of the pro-life/pro-

choice struggle in Canada, but also in the new ways in which even a small group can use the electronic media to create sudden, borderless storms of controversy.

The pro-life/pro-choice struggle in Canada became particularly painful after the Supreme Court had found the current abortion legislation to be unconstitutional and, in 1991, when draft legislation to replace it, known as Bill C-43, was passed in the Commons but narrowly defeated in the Canadian Senate in a tie vote. It would have adopted a gradualist approach which the bishops saw as the most hopeful path for public action at that moment. That defeat returned Canada to the dark situation of having no legal bar to abortions and no remaining legal principle to build on.<sup>xvi</sup>

To some consciences, of course, such legal silence is to be preferred to a weak and permissive (and therefore misleading) law. The bishops' support of Bill C-43 enraged the Pro Life movement, which saw support for a weak law as a counter-witness and a failure of courage. From that time on, tension with a strong and confrontational Pro Life movement has become a factor that is never far from anyone's mind. The constant high visibility of this one important social issue has tended to fray the bishops' own solidarity. The tensions evoked seem to have drained the bishops' energy for evangelizing on the broader range of issues that make up what Pope Benedict calls integral human development within "a culture of life".

As the whole world knows, a very dark cloud has overshadowed the public discourse of the Catholic Church in several Western countries in more recent years. In fact, all episcopal advocacy has been undermined by the present atmosphere of public mistrust caused by genuine scandals of sexual abuse of minors by clerics, and by repetitive media emphasis on those scandals.

Finally, it has never been evident that the excellent social teaching of the Canadian bishops (or of the popes, for that matter) has been successful in reaching the majority of Catholics. The recent developments mentioned above have exacerbated the situation, but it has always been difficult for ordinary people, in their daily struggle to cope with "the way things are", to actively receive the message that "another world is possible".

Political and business leaders tend to resist the social magisterium, interpreting it as interference in their own sphere of expertise, rather than as an invitation to them to understand their own responsibilities more profoundly. But the bishops themselves and the clergy share some responsibility for the fact that most lay Catholics remain ignorant

of this social teaching which is an essential dimension of our Catholic faith and practice. Well-prepared sermons on these statements, in seminaries and parishes, remain rare. Earlier movements—like Young Christian Workers and similar movements inspired by the great Cardinal Cardijn of Belgium—did not flourish for very long in Canada. Although Cardijn himself was one of the influences shaping *Mater et Magistra* and some themes of the Second Vatican Council, it is sadly ironic that at least in Canada, his associations for engaging young workers and students with a transforming mission in their own real world faded quickly in North America after the Council.

These present years in Canada seem to be characterized by a loss of confidence among Catholic priests and bishops. Now, as time passes, the bishops who lived the stimulating experience of Vatican II are mostly dead or retired; clerics with second or third degrees in science or social science are fewer. There are fewer priests, and fewer people frequenting the churches. Under these circumstances the dioceses and the CCCB have fewer human and financial resources to prepare competent social statements for a culture wherein powerful elites co-operate to keep religion out of the public square. New social teaching becomes rare, and often remains on the shelves or in academic articles. Unless a new way of social evangelization is discovered and practiced, there is grave danger that the Church's social teaching in Canada will, in the future, remain largely academic.

There remain organizations such as Development and Peace, the Catholic Women's League, "Les journées sociales du Québec" which continue to try new and old ways to interpret the challenge of the social magisterium to the Catholic laity. On a more intellectual level, ecumenical groups such as KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives and Citizens for Public Justice continue to advocate for a faith-based vision of global justice, and to support various forms of Pope Benedict's 'social economy.' These are hopeful presences on the scene; but no-one would describe the opening years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Canada as a "golden age" for a faith-based Catholic hope for the transformation of society in the light that comes from the Gospel.

### USA Experience

Here I will be very brief, since my personal experience of living and working in the American church is now quite dated.

The bishops in the USA have over the years issued a series of remarkable social statements—for example, on the nuclear threat, the war in Vietnam, the Middle East, health care, immigration, and welfare reform. Only three of these statements seemed to have had wide resonance—perhaps more because of their process than of their content.

The first two were *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response* in 1983, and *Economic Justice for All* in 1986. In preparing those two documents, the bishops used a public strategy of wide consultation with experts, open hearings, feedback on preliminary drafts etc. before issuing the final statement. A similar process was used to produce a unique joint letter by American and Canadian bishops in a particular Western bioregion in 2001, entitled *The Columbia River Watershed: Caring for Creation and the Common Good*.

These three statements won wide praise for their participatory process. Critics worried that the involvement of non-bishops compromised episcopal authority; but most commentators were convinced that it greatly enhanced it. The bishops planned a fourth statement on the role of women following the same method - but after meeting with intense controversy they abandoned that project.

Earlier, in 1976, under Cardinal Dearden's leadership, the bishops organized a Call to Action Conference in Detroit. It was preceded by a two-year preparatory period of consultations at all levels which produced an excellent set of documents. The plan was to submit the documents to a process of voting by the 1340 delegates, including the 100 bishops in attendance. Although the delegates were chosen by the bishops, the amendments that were introduced in discussion and supported by delegates' votes, particularly on issues of sexuality and women in the church, revealed a major gap between the thinking of the bishops and that of the laity. Subsequently, little came from the conference by way of episcopal action. But a network of impatient Catholics has continued to convene conferences with the same name: Call to Action.

Some scholars, such as Charles Curran, believe that American culture is impervious to accepting influence from Catholic social teaching, because opinion leaders see "the role of the Church as a political actor trying to have its position enshrined in law and public policy, and not primarily as an intellectual interlocutor engaged in public dialogue about what is best for the country."<sup>19</sup> In recent years, excellent academic scholarship on Catholic social teaching in the USA has appeared more frequently in theological journals and in an increasing number of Catholic universities. But it is not clear what practical

public influence this work is having. Some suggest that over time the Church's social justice influence is being most successfully implemented by the bishops' vigorous longtime support of organizations such as the Campaign for Human Development.

And yet one cannot help but feel there is a tremendous potential for enriching and implementing social teaching in the American Catholic Church. I recall that when the US bishops set up the Center of Concern in Washington in 1970, the new Center promptly engaged the Synod document on Justice in the World. An inexpensive tabloid was published, interpreting the document and suggesting local applications. It quickly had a run of 350,000 copies, and was the agenda for dozens of workshops. Pope Benedict's *Caritas in Veritate* would benefit from that kind of support. In Canada, most of the bishops have engaged CIV in regional study sessions. The CCCB has published in both French and English a short workbook which develops the major themes of *Caritas in popular language*. This "Guide for Discussion and Action"<sup>20</sup> encourages small groups at all levels of the church to share and discuss in a friendly atmosphere (not in the manner of a debate) the commentary, the practical examples, the suggested questions and resource material provided.

Obviously, it takes more than good magisterial documents, more than competent interpretation, and more than approved projects and experiments, for Catholic social teaching to be truly understood and effectively implemented. Why? Because its goal is no less than the transformation of the world, in the light of the Gospel.

Becoming an instrument of such transformation demands profound conversion, as *Caritas in Veritate* makes luminously clear. And it requires a special kind of holiness—a "world-loving" holiness that combines the faith-courage of a martyr with a lively and hope-filled social imagination.

One senses just such a joyful social imagination in many paragraphs of *Mater et Magistra*, and indeed one often saw it lived by Pope John XXIII. To become a powerful movement of redemption, the social magisterium needs to be seeded in men and women with a radical trust in the all-inclusive love God has for the human family, combined with a well-informed, concrete, unafraid and loving immersion in, and dialogue with, the world as it is. Such love, such light, and such immersion can ground discernment—holy, but social and historical discernment—that opens the way for truly renewing action in the world of one's own time. We know in faith that the triune God offers such grace. May the whole Church, in all its parts, hunger to receive it.

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<sup>1</sup> The author served as Co-Director of the Canadian Catholic Conference [CCC] Social Action Office 1964-1970; and as General Secretary 1984-1990; and as Founding Director of the Center of Concern in Washington DC, at the US bishops' invitation, 1970-1978. Please note that in 1977 the Canadian Catholic Conference became the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB).

<sup>2</sup> Stephano Zamagni, "When economy divorces from fraternity: the message of *Caritas in Veritate*" a paper presented at a seminar entitled: The Logic of Gift and the Meaning of Business (Rome, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Feb 22-26 2010)

<sup>i</sup> Philip S. Land, *Catholic Social Teaching: As I Lived it, Loathed it, and Loved it* (Loyola University Press, 1994) 24.

<sup>ii</sup> Muhammad Yunus, *Creating a World without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism* (Public Affairs, New York, 2007).

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>iv</sup> My four principle sources for this section are: John Coleman, sj "North American Culture's Receptivity to Catholic Social Teaching," in Daniel McDonald sj, ed, Catholic Social Teaching in Global Perspective (Orbis, 2010) 195-218; William F. Ryan sj, "Personal Recollections and Reflections on the Implementation of the Second Vatican Council by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (1964-1990)", (Canadian Catholic Historical Association, *Historical Studies*, 73, 2007) 45-62; Edward Sheridan sj's two-volume compilation and interpretation of the major social statements of the CCCB, entitled *Do Justice! Love Kindness! (1945-1989). The Social Teaching of the Canadian Catholic Bishops* ) Editions Paulines, Sherbrooke & The Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, Toronto, 1987 & 1989). And, Bernard Daly, *Remembering for Tomorrow – A History of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops* (Ottawa: CCCB, 1995; and *Beyond Secrecy – the Untold Story of Canada and the Second Vatican Council* (Ottawa, Novalis, 2003).

<sup>v</sup> Archives of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops [CCCB], meeting minutes of CCCB Administrative Board (Feb 14 1964, vol.3, no35, 296)

<sup>vi</sup> John Coleman, *op cit.* 210-211.

<sup>vii</sup> Justice Emmett Hall, *Report of the Royal Commission on Health Services*, vol I, tabled in the House of Commons, June 19, 1964 (Ottawa, Government of Canada). The Commission which called for "A Health Charter for Canadians," was chaired by Justice Hall.

<sup>viii</sup> Recounted in Daly, *Beyond Secrecy*, 197-199.

<sup>ix</sup> Strategy Committee Report to the Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Catholic

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Conference, *Poverty and Conscience – A Church Response and Towards a Coalition for Development - Recommendations: A Unified Strategy for the 1970's; Priority Steps in 1969* (Ottawa: CCC, 1969).

<sup>x</sup> E. Sheridan, *Do Justice*, doc 55, "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis," Dec 22, 1982.

<sup>xi</sup> *Canada's Unemployed – The Crisis of Our Times*. Report of the Hearing Panel on "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis" (Toronto, Archdiocese of Toronto Mission Press, 1983).

<sup>xii</sup> William F. Ryan sj. and Rev. Joseph Komonchak, "Liberation of Men and Nations – The Role of the Church in the Americas," *The Catholic Mind* (New York, America Press, 1971) 17.

<sup>xiii</sup> Bernard Cardinal Flahiff, "Christian Formation in Justice," Sheridan, *Do Justice*, doc 28, 219.

<sup>xiv</sup> John Paul II, "The Poor South will Judge the Rich North," homily given at Edmonton Airport, Sept 17, 1984, in *Canada Celebrating our Faith* (Boston, Daughters of St Paul, 1985) 272.

<sup>xv</sup> CCCB Archives, Pastoral Council Files, doc 7-C, Archbishop Plourde's introductory remarks at the opening of the consultation for a Canadian Pastoral Council. See also Daly, *Remembering for Tomorrow*, 91-99, where he describes the lengthy process of consultation.

<sup>xvi</sup> In 1988, after years of dramatic legal and media battles led by Dr. Henry Morgentaler, the Supreme Court of Canada found to be unconstitutional the section in Canada's criminal code that held abortion to be a criminal act except under defined circumstances. The 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms influenced the Court to read the Constitution in this new way. This highly controversial 1988 decision left Canada without any legal restrictions on abortion. The pro-choice movements rejoiced; the pro-life movements, and some churches, planned a range of attempts to challenge the new legal situation.

One line of pro-life effort took a somewhat pragmatic approach. Reasoning that the cultural and legal atmosphere in Canada by that time made a thorough-going pro-life victory impossible, a quiet coalition of Christian activists worked to promote a compromise law. The draft that was developed would, by prohibiting late-term abortions and restoring other limitations, restore a law-based "state interest" in the subject, reverse the new concept that abortion is a private matter between a woman and her doctor, and provide a basis for gradually restoring the principle that unborn life is human life with legally enforceable human rights.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Curran, "The Reception of Catholic Social and Economic Teaching in the United States," in Ed. Kenneth R. Himes et al., *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Georgetown University Press, Wash. DC, 2005) 484.

<sup>20</sup> Social Affairs Commission, Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, *Caritas in Veritate – On Integral Human Development*, A Guide for Discussion and Action (CCCB Publications Service, Ottawa, 2010).