



From *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*

Person, Nature, & Human Flourishing

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§4: *Discovering that they are loved by God, people come to understand their own transcendent dignity, they learn not to be satisfied with only themselves but to encounter their neighbour in a network of relationships that are ever more authentically human.* Men and women who are made “new” by the love of God are able to change the rules and the quality of relationships, transforming even social structures. They are people capable of bringing peace where there is conflict, of building and nurturing fraternal relationships where there is hatred, of seeking justice where there prevails the exploitation of man by man. Only love is capable of radically transforming the relationships that men maintain among themselves. This is the perspective that allows every person of good will to perceive the broad horizons of justice and human development in truth and goodness.

§575: *In modern society, people are increasingly experiencing a new need for meaning.* “Man will always yearn to know, at least in an obscure way, what is the meaning of his life, of his activity, of his death” [Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 41: AAS 58 (1966), 1059.]. It is difficult to meet the demands of building the future in a new context of an even more complex and interdependent international relations that are also less and less ordered and peaceful. Life and death seem to be solely in the hands of a scientific and technological progress that is moving faster than man's ability to establish its ultimate goals and evaluate its costs. Many phenomena indicate instead that “the increasing sense of dissatisfaction with worldly goods which is making itself felt among citizens of the wealthier nations is rapidly destroying the treasured illusion of an earthly paradise. People are also becoming more and more conscious of their rights as human beings, rights that are universal and inviolable, and they are aspiring to more just and more human relations” [John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*: AAS 53 (1961), 451.].

§576: To these basic questions about the meaning and purpose of human life the Church responds with the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, which

liberates the dignity of the human person from changing opinions and ensures the freedom of men and women as no human law can do. The Second Vatican Council indicated that the mission of the Church in the contemporary world consists in helping every human being to discover in God the ultimate meaning of his existence. The Church knows well that “God alone, whom she serves, can satisfy the deepest cravings of the human heart, for the world and what it has to offer can never fully satisfy it” [Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 41: AAS 58 (1966), 1059.]. Only God, who created man in his image and redeemed him from sin, can offer a fully adequate answer through the Revelation wrought in his Son made man. The Gospel, in fact, “announces and proclaims the freedom of the sons of God, it rejects all bondage resulting from sin; it scrupulously respects the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice; it never ceases to encourage the employment of human talents in the service of God and of man, and finally, it commends everyone to the charitable love of all” [Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 41: AAS 58 (1966), 1059-1060.].