

From *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*
Person, Nature, & Human Flourishing
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NOTE: To access endnotes, indicated in square brackets, please see on-line full text at

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html

41. *Personal and social life, as well as human action in the world, is always threatened by sin.* Jesus Christ, however, “by suffering for us ... not only gave us an example so that we might follow in His footsteps, but He also opened up a way. If we follow this path, life and death are made holy and acquire a new meaning”[41]. Christ's disciple adheres, in faith and through the sacraments, to Jesus' Paschal Mystery, so that his *old self*, with its evil inclinations, is crucified with Christ. As a new creation he is then enabled by grace to “walk in newness of life” (*Rom 6:4*). This “holds true not for Christians alone but also for all people of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly. For since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the Paschal Mystery”[42].
42. *The inner transformation of the human person, in his being progressively conformed to Christ, is the necessary prerequisite for a real transformation of his relationships with others.* “It is necessary, then, to appeal to the spiritual and moral capacities of the human person and to the permanent need for his inner conversion, so as to obtain social changes that will really serve him. The acknowledged priority of the conversion of heart in no way eliminates but on the contrary imposes the obligation of bringing the appropriate remedies to institutions and living conditions when they are an inducement to sin, so that they conform to the norms of justice and advance the good rather than hinder it”[43].
43. *It is not possible to love one's neighbour as oneself and to persevere in this conduct without the firm and constant determination to work for the good of all people and of each person, because we are all really responsible for everyone*[44]. According to the Council's teaching, “they also have a claim on our respect and charity that think and act differently from us in social, political and religious matters. In fact the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through kindness and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them”[45]. This path requires grace, which God offers to man in order to help him to overcome failings, to snatch him from the spiral of lies and violence, to sustain him and prompt him to restore with an ever new and ready spirit the network of authentic and honest relationships with his fellow men[46].

44. Even the relationship with the created universe and human activity aimed at tending it and transforming it, activity which is daily endangered by man's pride and his inordinate self-love, must be purified and perfected by the cross and resurrection of Christ. "Redeemed by Christ and made a new creature by the Holy Spirit, man can, indeed he must, love the things of God's creation: it is from God that he has received them, and it is as flowing from God's hand that he looks upon them and reveres them. Man thanks his divine benefactor for all these things, he uses them and enjoys them in a spirit of poverty and freedom. Thus he is brought to a true possession of the world, as having nothing yet possessing everything: 'All [things] are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's' (1 Cor 3:22-23)"[47].
108. *The fundamental message of Sacred Scripture proclaims that the human person is a creature of God (cf. Ps 139:14-18), and sees in his being in the image of God the element that characterizes and distinguishes him: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). God places the human creature at the centre and summit of the created order. Man (in Hebrew, "adam") is formed from the earth ("adamah") and God blows into his nostrils the breath of life (cf. Gen 2:7). Therefore, "being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. Further, he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead"[204].*
19. *The Church, the sign in history of God's love for mankind and of the vocation of the whole human race to unity as children of the one Father[21], intends with this document on her social doctrine to propose to all men and women a humanism that is up to the standards of God's plan of love in history, an integral and solidary humanism capable of creating a new social, economic and political order, founded on the dignity and freedom of every human person, to be brought about in peace, justice and solidarity. This humanism can become a reality if individual men and women and their communities are able to cultivate moral and social virtues in themselves and spread them in society. "Then, under the necessary help of divine grace, there will arise a generation of new men, the moulders of a new humanity"[22]*
193. *The new relationships of interdependence between individuals and peoples, which are de facto forms of solidarity, have to be transformed into relationships tending towards genuine ethical-social solidarity. This is a moral requirement inherent within all human relationships. Solidarity is seen therefore under two complementary aspects: that of a social principle[415] and that of a moral virtue[416].*

Solidarity must be seen above all in its value as a moral virtue that determines the order of institutions. On the basis of this principle the "structures of sin"[417] that dominate relationships between individuals and peoples must be overcome. They

must be purified and transformed into *structures of solidarity* through the creation or appropriate modification of laws, market regulations, and juridical systems.

Solidarity is also an authentic moral virtue, not a “feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a *firm and persevering determination* to commit oneself to the *common good*. That is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are *all* really responsible *for all*”[418]. Solidarity rises to the rank of fundamental *social virtue* since it places itself in the sphere of justice. It is a virtue directed *par excellence* to the *common good*, and is found in “a commitment to the good of one's neighbour with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to ‘lose oneself’ for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to ‘serve him’ instead of oppressing him for one's own advantage (cf. *Mt* 10:40-42, 20:25; *Mk* 10:42-45; *Lk* 22:25-27)”[419].

547. The lay faithful should act according to the dictates of prudence, the virtue that makes it possible to discern the true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means for achieving it. Thanks to this virtue, moral principles are applied correctly to particular cases. We can identify three distinct moments as prudence is exercised to clarify and evaluate situations, to inspire decisions and to prompt action. The first moment is seen in the reflection and consultation by which the question is studied and the necessary opinions sought. The second moment is that of evaluation, as the reality is analyzed and judged in the light of God's plan. The third moment, that of decision, is based on the preceding steps and makes it possible to choose between the different actions that may be taken.
548. *Prudence makes it possible to make decisions that are consistent, and to make them with realism and a sense of responsibility for the consequences of one's action.* The rather widespread opinion that equates prudence with shrewdness, with utilitarian calculations, with diffidence or with timidity or indecision, is far from the correct understanding of this virtue. It is a characteristic of practical reason and offers assistance in deciding *with wisdom and courage* the course of action that should be followed, becoming the *measure* of the other virtues. Prudence affirms the good as a duty and shows in what manner the person should accomplish it[1146]. In the final analysis, it is a virtue that requires the mature exercise of thought and responsibility in an objective understanding of a specific situation and in making decisions according to a correct will[1147].