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Love in the Service of Hope

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Love in the Service of Hope

C. G. ARÉVALO, S.J.

I: Introduction. A few texts from John 23rd and Paul VI

Preparation of the material for this paper required the careful reading of addresses of Pope John 23rd and Paul VI. What was undertaken was not thorough research, certainly. Taking the ten-year index of the periodical *Documentation Catholique*, the word *charity* was singled out and references given checked. This reading was directed at finding out the content of the notion of charity, as it emerged from these texts.¹

John 23rd in some statements of the year 1960 spoke of charity in the more "traditional" sense: of aid to the victims of natural calamities, earthquakes, floods and the like; to the poor who do not have enough to eat; to the displaced; to victims of (we might surmise) totalitarian regimes who have been persecuted and exiled. . . and so on. However, in his letter on the tercentenary of the death of St. Vincent de Paul

¹ This paper is an expanded and revised version of a conference given at the Caritas Internationalis Asian Continental Seminar held in Hong Kong 13-16 December 1971, under the presidency of Bishop Francis Hsu. Participants at the seminar were for the most part people *directly involved* in charitable, relief and/or development tasks. The paper was meant to provide a take-off point for discussion on "a renewed understanding of charity." Hence the approach, the style, and the self-imposed limitations which are to be found in it.

Incidentally, the ten-year period indicated was not a purely arbitrary choice. Vatican II ended in 1965, so that we have roughly five years on each side of that dividing line.

(20 February 1960) and in his address to the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis (27 June 1960), Pope John speaks of "the necessity of charity and of the demands of charity today." He asks for a wider vision of charity: it should be collocated within the larger framework of the entire world and the one family of nations; it should look towards peoples in distant parts of the world and regard their needs. In the address to Caritas, he points out that "charity demands in our time more than the traditional practices; it asks for new initiatives, new methods." After mentioning the needs of "victims of recent catastrophes," citing a recent earthquake in Chile, and "those who cannot provide bread for their own needs," he urges also the need of "long term aid, no less important, which allows developing nations to arrive at a healthy economy which will permit them to have access to a more fully human life."

Paul VI, in his address to the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis on 10 September 1965, speaks of our age calling for deeds of charity in a manner more urgent than ever; the Church and the Christian must more than ever practice a generous charity as the authentic sign of the Christian faith. The most modern organizational systems and the most modern techniques should be placed at the service of charity. The faithful must make ever-larger financial assistance available to the truly poor of the earth: this is a call to self-sacrifice for Christians. Then, in an important paragraph, Pope Paul says, "Thus will your seventh General Assembly be a milestone in your history. In the spirit of the Council, you will adapt your structures to the needs of today. You will collaborate with the economic development of the young nations; you will take pains to respond more adequately to the miseries of men; . . . and you will go forward along the way of ecumenical collaboration."²

² A footnote on this particular text: It begins by speaking of works of charity as deriving from the law of love basic to Christianity, as flowing from the Eucharist and all that the bond of charity means to the Church. From these bases follow the duty and right of the Church to have "pity for the needy and the sick," to do "works of charity and mutual aid intended to relieve human needs of every kind: needs of food, drink, clothing, housing, medicine, employment, education,

An address of special importance for our present context is the one addressed by Pope Paul VI to the study group headed by Msgr. Edward Swanstrom and Msgr. Jean Rodhain of Caritas Internationalis (11 May 1966) on applying *Gaudium et Spes*. He speaks of the role of the universal Church "in arousing the catholic community towards fostering the development of poorer regions and promoting social justice among nations." The Pope lists some of the efforts that are part of this task: to combat throughout the world the conditions of life which are incompatible with human dignity; to struggle against famine; to try to bridge the gap which grows between the rich nations and the poor nations; to work for the reign of justice and solidarity among men. He understands that this will involve "changing the entire system of world economics and finance, seeking out new sources of subsistence in the areas of

health..." The obligation is on all, but above all on every prosperous person and nation.

Towards the end of the section, however, a paragraph of crucial importance makes its appearance: first, the affirmation of a fundamental spirit, that of "paying attention to the image of God in the neighbor" who is being helped. Thus the freedom and dignity of the person being helped should be respected with the utmost delicacy, and the purity of one's charitable intentions should not be stained by a quest for personal advantage or by any thirst for domination." A second principle: "The demands of justice should first be satisfied, lest the giving of what is due in justice be represented as the offering of a charitable gift." A third: "Not only the effects but also the causes of various ills must be removed. Help should be given in such a way that the recipients may gradually be freed from dependence on others and become self-sufficient."

Documentation Catholique, LXII/47, 1965: Paul VI to the general assembly of Caritas Internationalis 10 September 1965, col. 1676-1678.

Other references from *Documentation Catholique*:

LVII/42, 1960: John 23rd on the tercentenary of the death of St. Vincent de Paul, letter to V. Rev. William Slattery, 20 February 1960, col. 385-388; John 23rd to the general assembly of Caritas Internationalis, col. 999-1002.

We are at this point limiting ourselves to papal pronouncements. Later on in the paper I will touch on a rather important text in the second Vatican Council's decree on the apostolate of the laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, chapter 2, section 8.

the world which are not yet cultivated, increasing productivity, transforming the mechanisms of world trade. . . ."³

In the face of this new challenge to Christians, what is their task, what is the task of the Church? This is the Pope's answer: to mount an effort to make the facts of the contemporary situation of underdevelopment known in all their dramatic breadth; to help discover their truly gigantic dimensions, and above all to arouse a sharper awareness of the new obligations which arise from the universal brotherhood of men. "The goods and products of this world are made for all. No persons, nor human communities have the right to reserve them exclusively for themselves; on the contrary, all have the serious duty to place them at the service of all.

The Pope then reminds the Christian that in doing all this he will not forget what the progress is that he is working for. That he is seeking a civilization of universal solidarity which must still be built. Hence it is not a question merely of reducing the shocking (and growing) inequality which places 85% of the world's resources in the hands of 15% of mankind; nor a question merely of setting in motion technical and economic development in the underdeveloped nations. "Rather we are to be concerned for the integral and harmonious development of the human person, which will allow each one to live a life in accordance with his own dignity—the dignity of one created to the image and likeness of God."

This address was delivered less than a year before the publication of *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), the post-Vatican II Church's magna charta for the poor peoples of the earth: Pope Paul's letter for the Third World *La Croix* would call it "one of the greatest documents in human history" (*l'un des plus grands textes de l'histoire humaine*), and the British *Clergy Review* would say (in Fr. Michael Richards' July 1969 editorial) that it was not just an encyclical about 'the social teaching of the Church', but in fact a "summing up and

³ *Documentation Catholique* LXIII/48, 1966, Paul VI, an address in response to Msgr. Jean Rodhain, at the conclusion of a meeting of *periti* on the church's involvement in development, Rome, 11 May 1966.

declaration of the entire point and purpose of the Church in today's world."

With *Populorum Progressio* the enlargement of content in the contemporary Church's understanding of "works of mercy" is decisive; the transition, we might say, from the more traditional understanding to the 'sensus plenior' of our age is complete. The Church's involvement in charity, her great *work of mercy* for our time is first of all collaboration in the immense task of the development and liberation of peoples. If the new name for peace is development, we might say—in the same line — that the new name for charity is the development and liberation of the poor peoples of the world.

- 2: From these texts: an enlarged field for "Christian charity" ... a "new understanding of charity"?

We can at this point make a hurried (and not very systematic) attempt to bring together some of the converging lines of a new—an enlarged—understanding of the "works of mercy" which emerges from these and other texts, to discern, if we can, new dimensions and new perspectives of charity indicated in them.

1. With the increased awareness we have of the entire world as one world (the wide world has become our parish); the ambit of Christian charity for all of us embraces all men and all peoples, no matter how distant from us. All men and all nations are caught up in the "workings" of an increasingly interdependent world. *Populorum Progressio* says that "the great fact which we must grasp is that the social question has become worldwide."

2. Christian charity must make use of the most effective modern methods and techniques—in organization, in planning and concerted action, in the exercise of its mission to mankind. It must make use of the mediation of the social (human) sciences and technology in realizing its objectives. (Hence the entrance of the tools of social analysis and the like, in the exercise of charity!)

3. Christian charity must make efforts to go beyond the mere relief of the effects of injustice and deprivation and search out their causes. It should seek to lay the axe to the roots: Christian charity must take on a realism commensurate with the times—with the true dimensions of the social question in the world of today.

4. This realism of charity will have this result: it will necessarily go beyond the narrower area of the purely interpersonal, or the relief of immediate, sudden needs—natural catastrophes and the like. It will instead see men “steadily”, their needs, aspirations and possibilities, within the historical and concrete contexts in which the harsh realities of their lives are lived. It will come to a realization that *structures*—institutions, social and economic systems, existing legal and political patterns—very often constitute what the Latin American churches call “institutionalized violence” and “structures of injustice” and domination; that these very effectively block the realization of true freedom and participation by (more often than not!) the majority of nations in the world. Profound structural transformations are thus necessary both within nations and among nations, for justice to be operative, and for a just unity and peace to be made possible.⁴

To sum up: charity becomes operative, not only in the area of personal needs, or in response to particular here-and-now calamitous situations, but in the transformation of the structures of society.—From this derives what contemporary theologians sometimes call “the political involvement of charity.”⁵

⁴ Cf. Philippe Laurent, “Realisme de la charité,” *Christus*, VX/1968, 320-332; Jean-Yves Calvez, “Technique et charité” in *L’Evangile de la miséricorde*, ed. Alphonse Goetmann, Cerf, Paris, 1965, pp. 357-362.

⁵ This point is well worth developing; we cannot develop it now. In the notes distributed to the participants of the conference, the document from *Caritas Latin America* can be singled out as of special relevance here. Document B-10 of the Asian Continental Seminar papers, Conclusions of the Sixth Latin American Congress, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 23-29 April, 1970, pp. 1, 4, 5.

Some weeks after this paper was completed, I finally was able to read a copy of Rene Laurentin’s *Nouvelles dimensions de la Charité*, Paris, Apostolat des éditions, 1970. Particularly interesting on this point are pp. 97-117 on Fr. Louis Lebreton, which begin with a quotation

5. Christian charity, while seeking to make its activity effective and "professional", must never lose sight of an objective which is particularly its own: "to pay attention to the image of God in the neighbor" who is being helped. Its objective is to serve the human person and to create the reality of human community. It seeks to serve the human person as a whole, as person, as son of God, as called to communion in love with his fellow man in community, and to communion in love with God. Hence for Christian charity, he who receives is never merely the "object of charity", but "subject" — worthy of reverence, never to be manipulated or dominated, but rather by the very act of charity enabled to be more truly himself, more capable of freedom, initiative, participation in society, of creativity, of the giving of self to others.

6. Hence the particular modality of the Church's involvement in development and liberation: to enable each man, and each people, to become more fully themselves, free to develop in their own ways, free to make their own contribution, their own giving — of what they can do, and of what they are — to their fellows, to the rest of mankind.⁶

from him, "La miséricorde passe par les structures." "La charité doit-elle être politique?" is the sub-title for the last section of the chapter.

For many of us, the insight formulated in the citation from Lebreton has not been caught yet, not yet understood.

⁶ The 36th Peruvian Episcopal Conference could, for instance, conclude its analysis of concrete Peruvian realities in this way:

This view of our present situation from a Christian perspective compels us to do our part in the creation of a new humanity. All our proposed social reforms are aimed ultimately at transforming our way of being human beings. This process of humanization requires the People of God to proclaim "the liberation of the oppressed" (Is. 61:2).

The liberation of Peruvians implies many things. Each and every Peruvian must move from an inhuman condition to a more human living condition (*Populorum Progressio*, 20-21.) All Peruvians must be the active protagonists of their own destiny. We must create a new order in which human beings are the shapers of their own history rather than simply its objects. This process of *personalization* and *socialization* means:

1) We must become cognizant of the fact that the existing structures are unjust;

2) People must be made capable of reacting against these structures;

3: Justice and charity

The first question which arises is the seeming confusion evident in what we have just said, between justice and charity. If the task of charity is the task of loving — loving God, loving the neighbor — then why should charity wander away from its proper sphere and instead lose itself in the sphere of development — essentially a sphere of justice? Populorum Progressio's burden and the burden of the Synod's new text on the same theme is *Justice in the World*: the right of the poor peoples of the earth to development, and the "social space" for social justice within nations and among nations which will enable this development to be realized.

What is the proper role of Christian charity in all this?

The working paper written for the 1971 Roman Synod by its Secretariat does in fact address itself to this question. Since it does, it might be best for us to take up its answer first:

Briefly, the document's argument is that "the justice of God", *dikaiosune tou Theou*, in the Scriptures is his fidelity to his promises to liberate his people; its plenitude is his gift to us of Christ his Son for our salvation. Man's response, his righteousness, his "justice" becomes his response to God's love in Christ, and it is a response that unites love of God and love of neighbor.⁷

Hence Christian charity is betrayed if it is conceived as something different from, or added to, the duties of justice toward others. Charity is above all a demand for justice, i.e. the concrete recognition of the rights of every man, individually and collectively.

3) New structures must be created in accordance with their legitimate needs and aspirations.

Cf. *Between Honesty and Hope*, issued by the Peruvian Bishops' Commission for Social Action, Maryknoll Publications, Maryknoll, New York, 1970 — an excellent introduction to the mind of the Latin American Church today. Gustavo Gutierrez's preface provides a framework for insertion of the texts and for reflection on their thrust.

⁷ "Justice in the World," text of the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, published in *The Catholic Mind*, September 1971, 29-42.

"But justice, from the Christian point of view, is not total if it does not include love for the others; love is not authentic if it does not include an acceptance of all that the person of the other requires of us. Since every man is for his neighbor the concrete image of God, the living brother of Christ, we meet God Himself in every man, with His absolute demand for justice and love, as a response to His justice, which is His love for us, in Christ.

"Thus, if Christian charity is authentic, it deepens and fortifies the sense of justice; it will have to be the soul of justice. A lack of sensitivity to problems of social justice reveals the absence of a genuine Christian charity."⁸

At this point it might be useful to say a few words on the interrelation of charity and justice, because it is important (I suggest) that we see their linkage as effected, not from outside, as it were, but from within, because charity (as the Synod working-paper says) could be considered as "the soul of justice".

Love cannot find secure footing, it cannot endure in an unjust society. A just society might be described as one where each individual person is able to exercise his rights and fulfill his responsibilities and through this to become fully himself, through this come to the genuine fulfillment of his personhood, in interchange and communion with others. In a just society the rights of each one are established and acknowledged, and society is so ordered that individuals can live together in order and peace. For social life should not erase individuality; it merely allows individuals to co-exist and live together without unduly infringing on each other's rights and hemming in each other's lives.

Justice in society has two seemingly opposed functions. Justice organizes the whole, the totality. As distributive, as social, this is its task. But justice also recognizes and fosters the individual person and his integrity; as commutative, justice affirms the person, the individual and his selfhood. To or-

⁸ Doc. cit., section 32.

ganize totalities, justice in some measure must necessarily subordinate the members of society to the whole. To affirm persons, justice must guarantee their uniqueness, their autonomy, their initiative; justice must enable them to be themselves, to develop freely and responsibly, and thus to come to fulfillment. — To accomplish these seemingly opposed complexes of tasks, justice sets down lines and limits, establishes rights and duties, organizes the "social space" and regulates human living, creating "room" for each member and "room" for all. These structures in turn form a total situation which allows charity to take root and remain among men — not as coming from outside, as a guest of justice, but as flowering from within, as the soul of justice.⁹

Summing up, then: It is charity which establishes the order of authentic justice, so that it can bring to it its ultimate flowering in unity, in communion, in love. And when justice is not present, it is charity that seeks to bring justice about. Charity seeks the oneness of men; it seeks the communion of men in love. But — facing the realities of human selfishness and sin — charity makes use of the mediation of justice, to bring to realization a control and ordering of instinctive drives, of egoistic and individualistic, separatist forces. Charity, through justice, creates "room for selfhood and equality" so that men can be themselves in the face of others. Through justice it brings individuals together, but face to face with each other — defines them as others, as equals, as sharers.

What is said here paradigmatically of individuals we must apply to human groupings, communities, nations. "The great fact of the present age is that the social question has become world-wide." (Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, par. 2)

⁹ "The relationship between justice and charity is intrinsic; the two are like arcs of the same circle. Justice is the structuring of the conditions for love; love needs to create the order of justice within itself ... at least within time, before the coming of perfect communion and reciprocity."

Cf. Gabriel Madinier, *Conscience et Amour*, Paris, P. U. F., 2e. 1947, "La réalisation de l'amour et la médiation de la justice," pp. 115-139.

4: The pattern of Christian charity and human liberation

Christian charity looks first at the dignity of the person who will be the recipient of charity. A sample text: "Attention is to be paid to the image of God in which our neighbor has been created. . . . The freedom and dignity of the person being helped should be respected with the utmost delicacy, and the purity of one's charitable intentions should not be stained by a quest for personal advantage or by any thirst for domination. (Cf. John 23, *Mater et Magistra*, AAS 53/1961, pp. 442-443). . . . Help should be given in such a way that the recipients may gradually be freed from dependence on others and become self-sufficient."¹⁰

The objective of Christian charity is "to give a man to himself" — as subject, as free, as responsible — for his own self, his own life, for his giving of self to others in community, as participant in the decisions of his community. That each man may be the chief artisan of his coming to fullness as a person, in self-possession, of his acquiring the capacity for (and realization of) friendship, love, sharing . . . of gratitude and obedience toward God, and the like.

Similarly, the task of Christian charity is to enable human communities, peoples, to become subjects of their own history, subjects and chief artisans of their own destinies. Hence the need of liberation from the domination and dependencies which prevent their arriving at this self-possession: liberation from all forms of neo-colonialism, political and economic domination from without, cultural domination, other forms of exploitation (with the greater world powers as neo-colonial agents from without, or within, the domination exercised by those elites which concentrate wealth and power in their own hands). *Populorum progressio* and other documents of Paul VI, as well as the working paper on Justice in the World, for the 1971 Roman Synod stress this. Communities, peoples, must be freed from

¹⁰ Vatican II, Decree on the apostolate of the laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, chapter 2, section 8.

the domination which will not let them be truly be the chief shapers of their own histories.¹¹

This pattern can be related to a significant passage in *Octogesima adveniens*: There is in every man, and (by extension) in every people a twofold aspiration, and a twofold aspiration that grows in the measure that a man, or a people, come to fuller knowledge or self-awareness: "the aspiration for equality, and the aspiration for participation: two forms of the dignity and the freedom of man".

"At the very time that scientific and technological progress continue to overturn the landscape of man, his ways of knowing, of working, of consumption and his relationships, a double aspiration always expresses itself within these new contexts, a twofold aspiration which becomes more living in the measure that his information and his education grow: the aspiration for equality, and the aspiration for participation; two forms of the dignity of man and the freedom of man."¹²

The pattern of Christian charity is a prolongation of the economy of the Incarnation/Redemption: God saves man by giving him in Christ "the gift of self-redemption".¹³

¹¹ It would take us too far afield to take up a question that bears discussing and is of rather fundamental importance. One manner of placing the question may be seen in John Coutinho's "The Church and the Third World" (See *Mission and Development*, Cardinal Bea Studies I, ed. P. S. de Achutegui, Ateneo de Manila University, 1970, pp. 46-62, especially pp. 56-62.) "The Church... tends to approach the problem of justice to the world of the poor without adequate criticism of its historical understanding of charity. ... Not more than the rich, ... does the Church seem able to confront the consciousness of the poor." Coutinho's article has its weak points, and the anger in it turns to turn off "the rich" among its readers. But it asks a question that we cannot evade: for this reason I consider it a really important item in any discussion of "liberation and development," in any consideration of the Church vis-a-vis the Third World.

¹² Paragraph 22 of *Octogesima adveniens*, the letter of Pope Paul VI to Cardinal Maurice Roy and the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, on the occasion of the 80th. anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, 14 May 1971.

¹³ Cf. August Brunner, "Geschenkte Selbsterloesung," *Stimmen der Zeit*, 159/1956-57, 348-357. Condensed in *Theology Digest*, 1958, 131-135.

In the concrete, historical working out of the redemption of men, God gives man to himself: not merely a gift from outside man. Rather, God's gift of redemption, in Christ, gives also the power to receive the gift: the gift to make the gift truly one's own. This is the proof of the utter selflessness and nobility of God's love for man: God's redemptive love unconditionally *affirms man himself*. In Christ, man is given the power to redeem man. In Christ, God gives to man the gift of self-redemption.

Christian charity, operative within the tasks of liberation and development, merely tries to echo in our time what God's salvation has done for man in Christ.

5: Charity and the Kingdom of God

May I submit that we will only understand this "fuller sense" of charity when we see it, as the Caritas Internationalis circular itself explicitly suggests, within the context of the dimension of eschatology so much at the center of contemporary theological preoccupation?

What, in simple terms, does this "dimension of eschatology" mean? Briefly, and in a vastly oversimplified way, this: (I give here what might be called for our purposes, an understanding of biblical eschatology underlying the texts of Vatican II — a theological position which is "extreme center"!)

That the kingdom of God whose arrival Jesus announced and brought to some real actualization, is not exclusively actualized, not completely actualized in his first coming, nor in the "event of faith"; rather, its full, definitive, complete actualization and manifestation is really future, is really "yet to come".

Furthermore, the coming of the kingdom is conceived of as the final transformation, by God's gift, of this real world in which we are. this real world which we know. The kingdom is not simply "somewhere beyond" — somewhere beyond space, beyond time, beyond history (the "heaven in the skies" of our childhood catechism classes). The realm of space, time and history in which we are is not moving toward destruction and

annihilation at the end of time. Rather, it is in the process of being shaped, readied, in some ways already being transformed — to “become” the kingdom of God. This “becoming” is not finally, of man’s doing; *it remains finally God’s gift*. But what man does, bears, in God’s design, an intrinsic relationship to God’s kingdom as it will be given. For this world is not meant to be discarded, cast aside, junked, when history is over and done with; it is meant to be saved, too, renewed, made over into God’s lasting city and man’s future home. (Surely the cosmic images of the biblical writers graphically express their secure faith and hope in God’s future transformation of this same earth and world in which we live and move into a new heaven and a new earth.)

This is not at all the same as an immanentism which substitutes evolution, creative or otherwise, for God. The final manifestation of the kingdom will not be an earthly achievement. It will burst distinctively into history from above just as it began in Jesus Christ, not as an emergent novelty, but as God’s transcendent act. . . . (For) God is (even) now guiding all the processes of nature and history in preparation for the fulfillment just as all history before Christ was preparation for Him who came in the fullness of time and as the fulfillment of all times.¹⁴

If this is what revelation tells us about this world of ours, then the task of the Christian is not merely to wait out his time, do his good deeds, lessen as he can the pain and suffering he meets here, to help right whatever wrongs he is able to, and for the rest, wait till he is transferred, through death, into another world, the world of eternal life. Rather, his task is to take this city and this world seriously, this life, this history, the fate of mankind on this side of eternity. Because it matters, for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

All that is pure, honorable and of good report, whether it develops within the explicitly Christian sphere or not, whether it is specifically religious or apparently secular in character will enter into the final consummation. [Some theologians] insist that genuine human advances of all sorts have eternal value. The course of earthly history and the worldly tasks which necessarily occupy the attention of most men of the time are not simply a meaningless background to spiritual realities, but enter into their very constitution.¹⁵

¹⁴ From George A. Lindbeck, *The Future of Roman Catholic Theology*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1970, p. 19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* — The Second Vatican Council’s *Gaudium et Spes*, sections 39 and following are being here summarized by Dr. Lindbeck.

If this is true, it is the framework into which we must insert our understanding of charity: the "works of mercy" must be integrated into the work of mercy which is the total task of redemption—building up of the human community according to the shape and pattern of the kingdom of God which is to come. The feeding of the hungry, the care and healing of the ill, the giving of sight to the sightless, and of hearing to the deaf, the restoration of limbs to the crippled and lame, the release of those in prison—these deeds of mercy are meant to be signs of the greater deed to which they point, and in which they find their fuller meaning, the total healing of man, the healing and whole-ing of his communities, the at-one-ment of all mankind. For the raising up within the community of mankind of "an order grounded on truth, guided by justice, motivated by charity, realized in freedom, flowering in peace"¹⁶ is thus where the heart of the Church's mission is to be found now.

How immeasurably larger the vision of mercy is, in this showing, and how much more demanding, more exigent are its tasks and assignments for our time!

How immeasurably larger its field of vision, because now identified—in a true sense, with the plan of God and its actualizing, with the *missio Dei*, the 'doing' of God in the world. It looks to the redemptive task in its totality: it broadens its whole concern to whatever brings about the healing and whole-ing of man and of human society. "I have come that they may have life, that they may have more abundant life" (John 10, 10).

And how immeasurably more exigent in its tasks because it is asked not merely to rescue the victims of structures of disparity and violence, but to work for the changing of those structures themselves—to change the existing order in its innermost workings.

In a prior static view of society, the view born at the time when some of the most important associations for works of

¹⁶ This is the leitmotif of Pope John 23rd's document, *Pacem in terris*, 11 April 1963. Formulated in slightly different ways, it recurs in the key passages of the encyclical.

mercy were begun in the Church, the social order that had evolved historically was accepted, quite simply, as part of a divinely created order which was assumed as a permanent "given"—a misconception which prevented men of the time from seeing the dynamic and changeable nature of social structures. Disparity in society, the gaps between poor and rich, the better-off and the deprived, were to be met by appeals to the charity of the economically and socially favored . . . appeals to kindness and generosity toward the less favored. But rarely, if ever was the demand made—from the norms of social justice—to do something about the laws themselves, and the relationships (economic, social, political) and patterns obtaining in society which created and perpetuated social disparities and social injustice.

We will not develop this theme any further now, but let us simply add this note: the participation of the Church and the Christian in the building up of the earthly city is not merely a socio-economic, or political, or cultural contribution. Rather the Church and the Christian collaborate in the raising up of "the new city" so that human society which is being constructed may have room within it for the presence of the dimension of "the depth, the transcendence and mystery" in human life. So that there may be room for "the full reality of man", not merely for a truncated vision of him. For, as Pope Paul says, (quoting Henri de Lubac) in *Populorum Progressio*, "Man can, indeed, organize the world without God, but only against himself."¹⁷ "Unless God build the house, they labor in vain who build it."

The Christian collaboration in liberation and development is meant to be, in deeds more than in words, a proclamation that:

"Man needs God to be man; that without God, man becomes a devourer of his fellow man: *homo homini lupus*. The

¹⁷ Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, section 42. The rest of the paragraph reads: There is no true humanism but that which is open to the Absolute and is conscious of a vocation which gives human life its true meaning. Far from being the ultimate measure of all things, man can only realize himself by reaching beyond himself. As Pascal has said so well, "Man infinitely surpasses man."

presence of the Church to man's making (of the earthly city) is a necessity lest, without God, man should destroy himself. In the Church's very engagement within the secular . . . she cannot cease to challenge men to reach out for self-transcendence, to find their destiny in the mystery of God."¹⁸

6: *Tam beatae passionis...*

Further, the Church's presence in the building up of the city of man is, once again, a proclamation that it is only in the self-transcendence and *kenosis*, whose paradigm is Christ crucified and risen, that the human person and the human community can really come into its own. For the Church, as she turns to do her work in the world, can never cease to be the bearer of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Church's presence, the Christian's presence in the construction of this world is meant, consequently, to be a proclamation that it is only in a self-giving love, a love like that placarded in the Deed of Mercy that is the cross of Christ, that the task can be accomplished for man, and not against him. For the very reality of brotherhood is something that is God's gift to us in Christ, and can be had by us only in him.

We may perhaps call the task of charity as "the service of hope" — love at the service of the hope of man. We do not speak merely of expectations, of rising expectations. For these are concerned largely with economic advancement: these look to fuller production, better distribution, to improved living conditions, health, education, access to goods and services, what we name better standards of living. But we speak of hope, of the hopes of man. And we do this, keeping in mind what Paul Verghese has so forcefully said

Someone may ask: but is not this universe, given to us... that is the object of development, especially scientific, technological and economic development? The answer is, no. It seems necessary to shout at the

¹⁸ Thomas E. Clark, "Distinctive living of the Paschal Mystery," in *The Spirit's Gift: Freedom for the World, papers by Thomas E. Clarke*, ed. C. G. Arevalo and K. C. Bogart, Ateneo de Manila University, 1971, p. 81 (mimeographed compilation; original article in *The Catholic Mind*, November 1968).

top of one's voice that the object of development is not the universe, but man. Once we lose sight of that fact, all our thinking is bound to go wrong. If we want to develop this world, it is not for the world's sake, but the sake of man, and the full manifestation of his being, which is after all the image of God, and redounds to the glory of God.

This man is mortal man, in time, caught in the meshes of evil, suffering and death. Man's emancipation must therefore rescue him from the power of evil and death. Man and the universe have both to be freed from their present evil—and death-bound existence and introduced into a world without evil and death.¹⁹

We speak of hope, for hope looks forward to the future of man as a total thing — to man as a total thing, to his future as a total thing. To man's integral development, with no loose ends hanging; to the humanization of his world, and in it, to his coming-to-be as a son of God in the city of brothers, which will also be the city of God.

The effective bringing of man to such growth: *his adulthood as son of God*: the bringing of society to such a pass: *that it should become truly a city of brothers*—both these things are beyond the power of man. The Christian, accepting the reality of human sin and human selfishness, believes this. He believes that only the grace of Christ can, finally, bring both these things to pass.

He thus believes that *the coming of the Kingdom must remain a gift*; it cannot be, simply, of man's making. But man can, by God's gift, labor at bringing into being a city of hope. Hope is born of promise, of the promise of one in whom we believe, of one who—we know—can make his word come true. Hope has the earnest; so it can bend eagerly toward the future, where the fulfillment awaits, both to be given and to be won. It has at hand pieces of the puzzle; it knows the other pieces can be had; they are in Someone's hands. By God's gift, then, man is meant to build on this earth the city of man's hope. How? By laboring at the things that bring man truth and freedom, justice, love, forgiveness, peace. By laboring at the bettering of the world, so it can be a home for man; by laboring

¹⁹ Paul Verghese, "This world and the other," in *Technology and Social Justice*, ed. Ronald H. Preston, London, SCM Press, 1971, pp. 186-201; citation from pp. 193-194.

at the straightening up of those who are bent and broken. For only the "upright man" in a just society can truly be the subject of hope. Only if he believes in his heart that the future is worthy of his striving, that the future holds fulfillment in its gift, can man truly embark on the way to that future.

To bring this hope into being: this is the task of love today. In the poor nations from which most of us come: you who work among our despairing and unhoping poor, among our restless and often hating young—you know how truly we can say this. You know, you whose hands are at these tasks, better than I can say, that the task laid on all of us, is "to bring the gladness of the future into the pain of the present."²⁰

We may cite here a few lines from a letter written by a young French missionary in Brazil to his parents:

. . . The other day at Bomfin (the leprosarium-island) a leper knocked at my door. He knew I was going to be away for some time in France; he asked me to thank my parents because they must have helped me to become a priest.

He said, 'I must tell you this: before you came I dragged along without any hope. Now it feels as though I've begun a new life. You've helped me make the whole thing different.'

I blush to tell you this; but there are some days when all the pain and suffering in the world bursts out into tears of joy. Joy is a tremendous force in a priest's life.

Here I stop, to fling myself into my hammock. I can't go on any longer today but I send you all my love.²¹

That is what hope is. Poverty, privation, hunger, despair . . . suffering and pain and death are about us; this is what it means to be poor, that this is the environment of one's life. And charity, love—the love of Christ that presses us—what does it compel us to? To love our peoples toward hope; to love them into hope. To translate that love into the deeds of mercy which make the future believable and hope truly possible. This is our

²⁰ Cf. Carl E. Braaten, *The Future of God*, New York, Harper and Row, 1969, pp. 109-140; Juergen Moltmann, *Hope and Planning*, London, SCM Press, 1971, The "Rose in the Cross of the Present," pp. 130-154.

²¹ Paul Gallet, *Freedom to Starve*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1970, p. 133.

task as servants, the task of the servant Church which our Bishops spoke of in their message to us last year.

Before Christ and our brothers—our Bishops declared—we commit ourselves with all earnestness “to whatever concerns the dignity of man.” For “it is far from true that because we are committed to Christ we are diverted from the duties and tasks of this earth. On the contrary, faith, hope and the love of Christ compel us to serve our brothers, knowing that as He laid down His life for us, we too, ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”²²

And this means, of course,—as the Bishops’ text itself indicates—the passion in our own lives as Christians. For was not Christ’s passion precisely for the sake of “bringing the gladness of the future into the pain of the present”? For sin and the structuring of sin in society create among men a violence which resists the breaking in of truth, of freedom, of justice, even of love. And that violence, resistant in Christ’s life, was the passion. For if the task of charity today is the freeing of man, above all of the poor and oppressed, for justice; and of the powerless for a fuller share in the shaping of the human community, then mercy is bound to encounter conflict, for “the powers of this world” will not let such mercy be meted. For mercy, for the poor and the powerless, the sort of mercy that brings justice and not alms and doles, that mercy can be seen as a dangerous thing. To bring the vision of the future, the promise of its gladness, to men in the vize of poverty, caught in patterns of injustice, bent over by oppressive structures, can indeed be the most dangerous thing in the world. For God meant hope to be subversive: it overturns the terms of this world; it promises what the Magnificat of Our Lady sings out (Luke 1, 46-55):

the little ones receive mercy; the proud are scattered in their conceit;

the mighty are put down from thrones and the lowly are raised up in their stead;

²² Message of the Asian Bishops’ Meeting, Manila, 29 November 1970, section 18, citing the Message to mankind of the Fathers of Vatican II, 20 October, 1962.

the rich are sent away with empty hands, but the hungry are filled with good things.²³

Such mercy must be doled out in small doses, lest it go up to people's heads and send their hearts racing, and the pulse of hope become a drumbeat in their souls. But we are meant by our lives to sow that mercy in lavishness, to plant it in prodigality. Such is the shape of Christian love. Such is its service to the hope of man.²⁴

²³ Cf. "The Church on the side of the poor," in *Philippine Studies*, 19/1, January 1971, 79-91 and especially the final chapter in Gustavo Gutierrez, *Teología de la liberación, Perspectivas*, Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, Puno 387, Lima, Peru, 1972, pp. 351-372, "Pobreza: solidaridad y protesta." In the English translation, *Liberation, Development and Salvation*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll Publications, Maryknoll, N. Y., 1972, of Rene Laurentin's well-known book on development and salvation, the chapter on "The rights of the poor," pp. 83-101 deserves careful reading.

²⁴ Re-reading this text as it goes to press (20 May 1972), I find myself, in the light of other things I have since read, or encountered in life, or discussed with others, wanting to rephrase, modify things said in this paper. I have just re-read Ivan Illich's *The Church, Change and Development*, ed. Fred Eychaner, Urban Training Center Press, Chicago, 1970, especially pp. 17-22, which emphasizes one aspect of the church/development relationship: "Only the Church can 'reveal' to us the full meaning of development. To live up to this task, the Church must recognize that she is growing powerless to orient or produce development. The less efficient she is as a power the more effective she can be as a celebrant of the mystery. This statement, if understood, is resented equally by the hierarch who wants to justify collections by increasing his service to the poor, and by the rebel-priest who wants to use his collar as an attractive banner in agitation. Both make a living off the social service the Church renders and both in my mind symbolize obstacles to the specific function of the Church, which is the annunciation of the Gospel." (p. 17). I have just spoken to a religious for whom the Gospel/development relationship is not a merely conceptual problem, but a matter (quite literally) of an entire life. —Perhaps our great need here is to think continually in a dialectical manner: to affirm one pole, to modify it with the other; to affirm the other pole, to modify that affirmation within the perspective of the other.