

**CARITAS EUROPA SPRING ACADEMY**  
**3rd April 2017**

**INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**  
**(related to 50 years of Populorum Progressio)**

**Mgr. Victor Grech**

It is my pleasure to be invited to introduce this Spring Academy. I hope that my synthetic presentation about a great Encyclical “The Development of People”, with special emphasis on integral human development and its impact in these last 50 years, might help us to have an animated discussion afterwards.

Whatever tensions, question marks and unfinished business that still lie after 50 years of this Encyclical, the basic commitment is one and the same. It is to let God touch the core of our humanity and free us to admit that man, who is created for joyful sharing in God’s life, should be at the centre of any authentic development.

## **1.0 Preliminary Observations about Economic and Social Development**

I would like to clarify some notions about “Development” before I consider “Integral Human Development.”

Different societies may define “development” diversely at various point in their history. In conventional economics it usually means the size of a country’s economy.

**1.1 However, taking development simply as something economic and numerical cannot give a complete picture of what development means.** At best, the Gross Domestic Product or the Gross National Product can tell us how big is the

economy of a country. **These measurements do not show how evenly wealth is distributed.** It is possible for a “rich” country to have large pockets of poverty, while a “poor” country has a relatively low poverty levels. For example, a very rich country like U.S.A. has relatively high level of poverty and income inequality.

- 1.2 Evidently, there is more difficulty for “poor” countries to achieve economic growth as consumer spending is restricted to the most basic goods and services.
- 1.3 **According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), almost 1.5 billion people in 91 developing countries are deprived of health care and education, and suffer poor general living standards, (UNDP - 2014).**
- 1.4 A diversified approach is required to lessen material poverty. It is not simply enough to provide high employment, a just minimum wage, social benefits and support. These requisites are necessary together with job flexibility, family-friendly measures, and proper support services which include social, educational, as well as job skills for those who lag behind in society.
- 1.5 Besides, due consideration should also be given to good governance, transparency, accountability, meritocracy, democratic principles, human values, as well as respect for civil, ethnic, social and environmental rights.
- 1.6 A meaningful definition of “development” is given by the Indian Nobel Prize Winner for Economics: Amartya Sen (1999):

**“Development is a process of expanding the real freedom that people enjoy.”**

**In other words, development is about the possibility of living in freedom away from repression and intolerance.**

True development means giving to each human being, regardless of race, creed, gender, ability and sexual orientation, the possibility to actively participate in the integral development of one's country.

**2.0** I have made this rather long clarification about economic and social development in order to help you appreciate better the rich contribution of Pope Paul VI about Integral Human Development in his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* in which the concept of new humanism is being proposed in order to further integral human development.

### **3.0 The Theological and Social Framework of *Populorum Progressio***

This Encyclical strikes me as an appeal from the heart of Pope Paul VI for mobilisation: “The hungry people of the world cry out for help to the rich nations and to the Church.”

*Populorum Progressio* is inspired by the vision of *Lumen Gentium* which presented the Church as a sign of the unity of Christ.

This is a highly personalised encyclical. It was the first social encyclical after Vatican Council II which established a new way of looking at the relationship between the Church and the world.

Pope Benedict XVI considers *Populorum Progressio* as the cornerstone of the Church's Social Teaching in which Pope Paul VI outlined relevant ideas for the integral development of humanity and the modern world.

According to relevant sources, economist Louis-Joseph Lebret and the philosopher Jacques Maritain contributed the theoretical framework of the encyclical, particularly the concept of “integral humanism” and “the relationship between the temporal and the spiritual order.” Maritain believed that the leavening presence of committed Christians in society is necessary for the social project to succeed.

#### **4.0 Man’s Complete Development**

In the first section, Pope Paul VI repeatedly acknowledges that progress is a “two-edged sword.” He explains that colonialism has led to technological advances but has often entailed self-seeking activities. Missionary work has spread the Gospel through charitable activity but has also engaged in cultural imposition. Industrialisation has led to economic growth but has encouraged the evils of unbridled liberalism as well as the neglect of moral and spiritual values.

In order to avoid the negative effect of progress, Pope Paul proposed that social activity should seek to address the whole person. With this holistic view in mind Pope Paul provides a list of conditions necessary for human development.

Pope Paul admits that every person has certain aptitudes and tasks to contribute to society and the building of God’s kingdom.

#### **4.1 Global Solidarity**

Global Solidarity, as promoted in this Encyclical, fosters greater social cohesion and harmony. Global solidarity requires ensuring that our global trade, financial and economic systems incorporate ethical and moral structures which recognise our responsibilities to our communities, locally and globally, and to our common home.

**Responsible Corporations and Charitable Aid are not sufficient for proper development.** Governance at the national and global level is necessary according to Pope Paul VI. The Government must play an important role in co-ordinating development within a country. It is the duty of public authorities to establish and lay down the desired goals, the plans to be followed, and the methods to be used in fulfilling them provided that the Government does not dampen private initiative. Since development is an international problem, co-ordination among nations, particularly through international institutions, is also required. We have seen, in these last 50 years, that some international economical institutions have, in fact, often proved as a hindrance to true human development by limiting social services in the name of economic efficiency.

## **5.0 Integral Human Development**

Pope Paul VI introduced the notion of Integral or Authentic Development as a contrast to the notion of development favoured by many economists of the 1950's and 1960's.

The centrality of the human person and the promotion of the dignity and worth of all persons without distinction are fundamental in order to avoid a reductionist approach that views the human person as an obstacle to development, or even worse, as the cause of his under-development.

- 5.1** The model proposed in this Encyclical cannot be imposed from outside. Rather, it should be built from within communities and societies that invest in and provide the structures necessary to allow their members adequately to satisfy their basic needs, such as food, housing, health care and work, and enjoy less tangible yet fundamental rights, such as education, freedom of expression and religious freedom.

**5.2** Pope Paul VI sustains that development should not focus on mere accumulation of material wealth but on the whole person. Quoting a well-known phrase from the Encyclical:

“True development allows people  
to seek to do more,  
know more,  
and have more  
in order to be more.”

**5.3** Pope Paul VI identifies the highest human value as union with Christ leading to a “transcendent humanism” which surpasses human nature and bestows new fullness of life.

**5.4** The concept of true humanism, in Italian “umanesimo plenario”, which is embodied in this Encyclical, is not closed in itself but it is open to the values of the Spirit and of God. For Pope Paul VI a humanism closed off from God ends up being directed against humanity. This is not a question of proselytism but an attitude which is well described by Pope Benedict XVI in *Deus Caritas Est*:

“Often, the deepest cause of suffering is the very absence of God. Those who practice charity in the Church’s name should never seek to impose the Church’s faith upon others. A pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love.” (*Deus Caritas Est*, para.32)

“We are dealing with human beings and human beings always need more than technical care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern.” (*Deus Caritas Est*, para.31a)

It is very interesting to note that throughout history the great pioneers of social concern were, in most cases, mystics. They were people whose understanding of the needs of others was rooted in an inner sensitivity which they drew from their prayer life and intimacy with God.

## **6.0 Pope Paul VI's Admonitions**

- Pope Paul VI affirms that material goods are necessary for proper human development but they can enslave people through materialism, which is the result when the proper scale of values is not maintained.
- Pope Paul VI particularly associates materialism with economic liberalism which has been the primary economic model of the West.
- The Pope warns against “technocracy.” We have to avoid seeing technology as a panacea for human development. Technology must be at the service of human well-being rather than the other way round.
- He also warns against progress that is merely economic and technological which does not overcome inequalities and injustices. Besides, misguided development can be detrimental to human cultures when development comes into conflict with aspects of traditional culture.

## **7.0 The Responsibility of the Laity**

Pope Paul VI clearly reflects Jacques Maritain's views when he describes the responsibility of the laity to improve the temporal order and to infuse a Christian spirit into people's mental outlook and daily behaviour so that their activity will be permeated with the spirit of the Gospel.

## **8.0 Spiritual Development**

The dramatic crisis of the global economy is to be found in a current self-centred and materialistic way of thinking that fails to acknowledge the limitations inherent in every human being.

Pope Paul VI affirms in his Encyclical that it is not possible to talk about human development without mentioning spiritual development and a person's relationship with God.

## **9.0 Gospel-based Foundation for Development Work**

Pope Paul VI emphasises the need to put Gospel-based foundation for development work. In paragraph 81 of the Encyclical, the Pope calls lay people to strive resolutely to permeate “the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live with the spirit of the Gospel.” He hints at the new type of the spirituality of justice.

## **10.0 The Church's Vocation and Mission**

The Church accomplishes its vocation and its mission when it is present in the ruptures which crucify humanity in its flesh and in its unity.

Like Peter, we may be hypnotised and paralysed and resist the invitation to get up and walk with the Lord to Jerusalem, and share in his Death and Resurrection.

## **11.0 The Impact of *Populorum Progressio* on the Church and on the World**

After fifty years from *Populorum Progressio*, the urgency of the appeal made by Pope Paul VI in 1967 for the Development of People is still pertinent today and demands a response from everyone.

The scenario of the world has changed considerably in these last 50 years. We have witnessed

- poverty present in all continents,
- the extremes of liberal capitalism,
- global economic and financial crisis,
- the challenge of climate change,
- the rise of fanatic radicalization of youths,
- mass emigration, and
- a bad distribution of wealth.

*Populorum Progressio*, however, has

- contributed to the new concept of development in Catholic Social Teaching;
- improved a greater presence of the Church among the poorest of the poor;
- developed the Church's preferential option for the poor;
- helped the growth of Social and Foreign Aid Agencies to combat poverty and social exclusion, and support Development Projects;
- inspired Catholic Social Agencies, like Caritas Europa, to support the United Nations Development Project (UNDP, 1990) which drew up a holistic Classification of Development; and present every year a Human Development Index (HDI);
- inspired Church Social Organisations, like Caritas Europa, to be the voice of the poor at the European, National and International level; and to promote humanitarian projects;

- given rise to base Christian Communities at the grassroot level;
- encouraged a Gospel-based foundation for Development Work;
- introduced a new type of spirituality: a “spirituality of justice” which has been developed by subsequent Popes.

## 12.0 Caritas Malta Experience

Having been Director of Caritas for 37 years, I thought of sharing with you very briefly Caritas Malta Sensibilisation Programme which led to social projects and services in support of people in difficulty.

Caritas Malta started in 1977 with a small group of 20 volunteers. After six months of training based on the Social Teaching of the Church and Gospel Values as well as a Course in Management by Objectives, the volunteers met the poor in the slum areas of Valletta and Cospicua, and later on in other villages. The poor made us aware of

- **what were the services needed in the community,**
- **why were these services needed,**
- **where had we to look for support to voice their needs, and**
- **how were we going to sensibilise the Government of the day and the rest of the people about their needs.**

Building on the experience of people in need at the grassroot level, Caritas Malta launched a Research Team with the help of a well-known Sociologist at that time, Fr. Benny Tonna. We established a Poverty Watch and published three consecutive Reports which provided a realistic picture about the nature of poverty in Malta, poverty zones, basic human and social needs of the most vulnerable

group of people and their expectations to live a decent life. All the Rehabilitation Programmes and Social Projects and Services provided by Caritas Malta were inspired by the needs of people who felt marginalised.

In these last five years, besides the various projects and support services provided by Caritas Malta, Leonid McKay, the present Director, together with a team of professionals wrote two consecutive Reports titled “A Minimum Budget for a Decent Living” focussing on 3 low-income Household Categories, and which were published by Caritas Malta in Year 2012 and in Year 2016.

The situation of the poor in an affluent society is paradoxical given that Malta has a high economic growth, financial stability, high employment rates, and related indicators. Caritas Malta is calling on the Government to raise the Minimum Wage. The phenomenon of the “Working Class Poor” exists in our society. These are the people who are in employment but still find it difficult to make ends meet due to an increase in prices of essential goods, housing rents, as well as basic lifestyle expectations.

Poverty is not in the interest of any nation. It poses a severe threat to socio-economic stability and security in the world. Fighting poverty is a fight for basic rights.

### **13.0 The Uncertain Future of Europe**

The implications of the increasing uncertainty about the future of the European Union is a great threat to economic growth, migration and security.

The European Union should come closer to its citizens, not through “a glossary of technical terminology, procedures, laws and regulations, and high-level

statements,” but by answering to the concerns of its citizens, such as migration, quality employment, security, fair distribution of wealth, and climate change.

The system of economic liberalisation and competitive ethos generates wealth, but it also creates pervasive discrimination between the have’s and have-not’s.

We have to re-discover the true ideals and aspirations of the European Union Funding Fathers. The road map for an integrated Europe should rest not only on financial and economic components but also on human, social and spiritual values.

<><><><><>mg9march2017