

THE MAGNITUDE OF ‘WALKING IN THE TRUTH’ (3 JN 1)

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*Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God
(Mt 5:9)*

As the organiser Professor Russ Hittinger pointed out, nearly fifty years have passed since the historic encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (*PT*), the most complete, thorough and successful document of the Magisterium on the subject of peace. *PT* echoes the historical period in which it was written, as well as the Gospel’s core values and the principles of patristic and medieval thought and its modern development, that is to say, the perennial principles of the Magisterium of the Church.

In his Message for the celebration of the 36th World Peace Day (2003), which marked the 40th anniversary of *Pacem in Terris*, the Blessed Pope John Paul II said: ‘Looking at the present and into the future with the eyes of faith and reason, Blessed John XXIII discerned deeper historical currents at work. Things were not always what they seemed on the surface. Despite wars and rumours of wars, something more was at work in human affairs, something that to the Pope looked like the promising beginning of a spiritual revolution’.¹

With the prophetic spirit that characterised him, John XXIII identified the essential pillars for peace as the four deepest needs of the human spirit, which were empowered by the Gospel of Christ. These pillars and aspirations were indicated in the sub-title of the encyclical which reads: ‘On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty’. Like the transcendentals of philosophy, these aspirations of the human soul correspond to each other or belong to each other, but for reasons of space I will only briefly analyse the subject of truth in relation to its perennial value, current development and transcendent power.

Veritas liberavit vos

The words of the Gospel, ‘the truth will set you free’,² have a perennial value and illuminate with a divine spark all human activity that strives to look for, and bear witness to, truth. Truth is the end of the universe, ‘*ultimus*

¹ 36th World Day of Peace Message, Vatican City, 2003, § 3.

² Jn 8:32.

finis totius universi est veritas, as St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest geniuses of thought in history, wrote.³ *PT* declared that every human being has ‘the right to be free to seek out the truth, the duty to devote oneself to an ever deeper and wider search for it’ (29). Naturally, the Pope’s Magisterium refers primarily to ‘the truth of salvation’, that is to say those truths that lead us to eternal life, such as the existence and Providence of God, salvation by the grace of Christ the Redeemer, and its extension in the Church until the end of time. However, there are many other philosophical and scientific truths connected to these that are necessary in order to live a good and happy individual, social, national and global life in the cities of this world. Some developments of these truths, especially those of the natural sciences and the social sciences, were unknown fifty years ago. The encyclical, however, courageously exhorts us to adapt every institution to the new things of that time: ‘The age in which we live needs all these things. It is an age in which men, having discovered the atom and achieved the breakthrough into outer space, are now exploring other avenues, leading to almost limitless horizons’ (156).

As regards the ‘truths of salvation’, it must be said immediately, without fear of error, that many have been obscured by the growing process of secularisation that has been accelerating since *PT*, with the rapid spread, above all in Europe and the West, of agnosticism and a pragmatic, relativist and nihilist atheism, on the one hand, and the propagation of a process of ‘demythisation’ which has even led to a denial of the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth, on the other. It is clear that the great and Blessed Pope John Paul II, who was as great as Gregory the Great and Leo the Great, led a successful battle against atheistic Communism in Central Europe. But perhaps he was not as successful in reversing this secularising tendency and in healing the West of a pervasive pragmatic atheism. Thus, since the beginning of his pontificate Pope Benedict XVI has placed at the centre of his teaching and his Petrine mission the programme of starting afresh from God and Christ the Saviour (the subject of three of his bestselling books). This is also why we invited H.E. Msgr. Ladaria to speak about these publications. Indeed, Benedict XVI, to implement this programme, chose to proclaim 2012 ‘Year of the Faith’, to bring forth again the profound joy of Faith, Hope and Charity, renewed in the Church and in every Christian, with a consequent flow of beneficial fruits of the Spirit and of peace towards all people of good will.

³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gent.*, I. 1, c. 1.

The Pillars of Transcendent Truth

One of Pope Benedict XVI's strongest statements, which he made during his apostolic visit to Brazil in 2007 on the occasion of the Latin American Synod of Aparecida, is of particular importance for us. With his acknowledged theological and philosophical wisdom, Benedict XVI asked what truth is: 'What is this 'reality'? What is real? Are only material goods, social, economic and political problems 'reality'? This was precisely the great error of the dominant tendencies of the last century, a most destructive error, as we can see from the results of both Marxist and capitalist systems. They falsify the notion of reality by detaching it from the foundational and decisive reality which is God. Anyone who excludes God from his horizons falsifies the notion of 'reality' and, in consequence, can only end up in blind alleys or with recipes for destruction'.⁴

In this epoch, which is more disenchanting than that of *PT*, one can never, with Benedict XVI, lay enough emphasis on this transcendent reality, which St. Augustine proposed as 'God and the soul'⁵ and which had already been announced in the Gospel of John when it declared that 'no one has ever seen God',⁶ although the Word made flesh presented Him to us. In the same way, the soul lies unseen in the interior of each human being, but it testifies to its presence through the acting of which the person is the beginning and the end, and thus Jesus Christ asks us in impelling way: 'What does it benefit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul? – τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ' (Mk 8:37). You can change the order and go from God to the soul, to the world and again from the human being to Christ and to God following the descendent process of a Christian theological character. Or one can go from human actions to the soul and from the soul to God according to the ascendant process of an Aristotelian character, which St. Thomas Aquinas employs in particular in his last works which have an anthropological basis. There is a text by Aquinas that can shed light on the importance of these truths which are very intimately connected with faith and which come to his aid and almost act as preambles to it: 'Faith cannot universally precede understanding, for it would be impossible to assent by believing what is proposed to be believed, without understanding it in some way. However, the perfection of understanding follows

⁴ *Aparecida Address*, 13 May 2007.

⁵ 'Deum et animam scire cupio' (S. Aurelii Augustini, *Op. Omnia*, PL 32, *Soliloquiorum*, lib. II, 2 A).

⁶ Jn 1:18.

the virtue of faith: which perfection of understanding is itself followed by a kind of certainty of faith'.⁷

The Truth of the Natural and Social Sciences

This is where the 'anthropological' question (as it is called today in Italy, and increasingly in Europe) presents itself again. Today we can throw new light on the crucial age-old question in which the West has been engaged, starting with the ancient Greeks and the famous controversy between Socrates (and his school - Plato, Aristotle) and the Sophists, empiricists and cynics; continuing with the famous Paris debate between St. Thomas and the Averroists and the Avicbronists and then the German classical philosophy of freedom; until reaching the present day with the fierce debate with positive science. The question today presents itself again in the following terms: what is the status of a human being in a culture dominated by science? To what extent does he participate in nature and in what ways is he different from it? In short, no one can deny that truth, in its classical notion of correlation between reality and intellect (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*) can also be found in the natural sciences and in the social sciences considered specifically in the totality of their research and their proven discoveries. The Pontifical Academy of Sciences highlighted this in an excellent book that takes stock of the findings of the second half of the last century from the composition of matter, the advances in astrophysics and astronomy, the developments of quantum mechanics, to the contributions of biology (cells, the DNA double helix), and on to the neurosciences, computer science and nanotechnologies.⁸ When faced with the exaggerated subjectivism of the philosophies of the 20th century, the natural sciences required a new type of realism which led Popes, starting with Pius XI, and continuing with Pius XII, the Blessed John XXIII and Paul VI, up to the present day, to take them into serious consideration. In contrary fashion, if the sciences are seen as the only form of absolute, autonomous and self-referential truth, they be-

⁷ *S. Th.*, II-II, q. 8, a. 8 ad 2um. According to the Catholic tradition that follows St. Thomas, faith *ut tenenda* are those truths that the human reason is able to investigate but that divine mercy beneficially provides that it should instruct us to hold by revelation: 'salubriter divina providit clementia ut ea etiam quae ratio investigare potest, fide tenenda praeciperet: ut sic omnes de facili possent divinae cognitionis participes esse' (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gent.*, l. 1, c. 4, n. 6).

⁸ AA.VV., *Paths of Discovery*, Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo (ed.), Acta 18, Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Vatican City 2006, pp. LXVII-299, online at www.pas.va/content/accademia/en/publications/acta/discovery.html

come unsustainable, inhumane and ultimately contradictory. The statement that the only reality and truth is that which can be experienced and measured, fatally reduces the human being to a product of nature, and as such he is neither intelligent nor free, and he is susceptible to being treated as just another animal. Thus, unlike the natural sciences and social sciences, which, as a whole, embrace the horizon of nature and the human being, philosophy and Christian theology today have the urgent task of opening and strengthening the field of transcendence, starting from the truths of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.

Ever since its origins theology has developed in cooperation with philosophy. This cooperation today continues to be fundamental but it must also extend to dialogue with the natural and social sciences. It is undoubted that theology can benefit from encounter with sociology, economics, comparative law, psychology, medicine and pedagogics. Indeed, when, for example, theologians employ statistics they are using a social science, whether they are aware of this or not. What is at stake here is truth itself. This means that when science states that life passes by way of a cell that has a genetic code, which is transmitted to all the other cells of the same organism, this statement is not a fantasy of scientists but corresponds to what in reality takes place in nature. Naturally, this is not the whole truth. However, it is participation of truth by essence which only the Word of God possesses, or, expressed better, which He is fully, and which is revealed directly to us by Him in what concerns our salvation. Thus to be reliable, contemporary theology and philosophy must proceed starting from the truths that science offers so generously, taking advantage of these as an aid and a preamble. Otherwise, they would be not very reliable, above all for the new generations that study in today's secularised universities which are often dominated by a scientific vision of the world. In other words, it is useless to begin to fight a battle, lost from the outset, in order to accept the facts and the constants of nature and society, which are those truths that science is able to offer us. If it were not possible to reinterpret the natural data of the sciences and social sciences in the light of sound philosophy and theology we would be destined to simple repetition or error, in contrast with the pursuit of truth.

Of course this is not the right place to dwell on this task, which has been discussed on other occasions, especially within this Academy and our sister Academy of Sciences. However, I think I can say, regarding *PT*, that there are three new subjects that emerge within interdisciplinary exchange that must be further examined today with a view to a real exchange between the objective or naturalistic approach of science and the philosophical-theological approach, starting with the aforementioned analysis of human praxis which

is based upon the Socratic ‘know yourself’, that is to say a fundamental anthropology, which, with *Fides et ratio*, we can well call ontological.

These three points which particularly concern the natural sciences but also social sciences that do not want to separate from the data of biology, are the following. First, the field of biology as regards the beginning and the end of human life; then the domain of the neural sciences, with the progressive discovery of the centrality of the brain (that marvel in the architecture of our bodies); and, lastly, the genetic sciences which converge with the theories of evolution.⁹ To these subjects of fundamental anthropology we must add the emerging question of the human habitat or that part of nature that is within the reach of human beings. I am referring to climate change and global warming, which can now be understood, predicted, diagnosed, and directed; to the subject of genetically modified foods which can help to increase the quality of food and to solve the growing tragedy (in absolute and relative terms) of hunger; and, lastly, to the question of a preferential choice for renewable energies, those that have accompanied man’s life on earth from the outset and which today are called to play a new and decisive role for the good of the habitat and for peace. In addition, today we know that these questions of environmental ecology are closely related to those of human ecology and vice versa. These are all truths that *PT* did not address.

Pope Benedict XVI who, at the summit of the hierarchy of the Church, is probably the person most convinced of these realities, summarised the subject with a clear and decided principle that he has emphasised since the beginning of his pontificate: ‘If you want to cultivate peace protect Creation’.¹⁰ The Holy Father added: ‘We can no longer do without a real change of outlook which will result in *new life-styles*’.¹¹ If culture tends toward nihilism, if not in a theoretical sense then at least in a practical sense, nature undoubtedly is suffering the consequences, as we can see today. When human ecology is respected in society, environmental ecology also benefits. The Pope bases his reasoning on that theology and anthropology that we cited above and thus

⁹ Cf *Scientific Insights into Evolution of the Universe and of Life*, Werner Arber, Nicola Cabibbo, Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo (eds), Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Acta 20, Vatican City, 2009, pp. LXVII-622, online at www.pas.va/content/accademia/en/publications/acta/evolution.html

On the same subject, cf also Werner Arber, *Contemplation on the Relations Between Sciences and Faith*, online at www.pas.va/content/accademia/en.html

¹⁰ *World Day of Peace Message*, Vatican City, 2010.

¹¹ *Ib.*, n. 11.

constitutes a further innovation as regards *PT*. This interdisciplinary approach shows that the sciences do not constitute intellectual worlds that are separated from each other and reality, but, on the contrary, demonstrate that such branches of knowledge are related to each other and reality in such a way that each one finds in the others its foundation and all of them strive to manifest their various ways of being entities. In this way the natural sciences and the social sciences are fused with fundamental anthropology, each with its respective function and focus. By this route, a breach is made which places them in communication and keeps the mind always vigilant and in movement.

A first statement that we can make as regards the programme for a new evangelisation, is that as academicians it should be our task critically to discern and give an order to these new truths of the sciences and social sciences, like St. Paul at the Areopagus of Athens in relation to Greek philosophy, recognising how these new truths can operate as new preambles for faith.

The New Settings of Truth

Another new question is the controversial topic of new authorities or pseudo-authorities, the settings of truth (*locus veritatis*) or pseudo-truth, and their communication, which the encyclical had already foreseen: '[Man] has a natural right, also, to be accurately informed about public events' (12) and to receive a 'good general education' (13), according to St. Paul's principle: 'Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbour, for we are members one of another'.¹²

In order to follow the indications of the encyclical today, we should, first of all, quickly provide education to all the human beings of the planet, a primary need that we are behind hand in achieving, as was underlined by a joint workshop held by both our Academies in November 2005 entitled *Globalization and Education*.¹³ To explain the new educational approach for a Catholic vision of the world (*Weltanschauungen*) and the human being, we have invited Cardinal Rouco Varela, who, *inter alia*, deserves the principal credit for the success of the 26th World Youth Day in Madrid.

PT emphatically returns to the topic of truth in politics when it says that 'The first point to be settled is that mutual ties between States must be governed by truth' (86, 114). And on the topic of information and communication

¹² Ep 4:25.

¹³ AA.VV., *Globalization and Education*, Joint Workshop P.A.S. and P.A.S.S., 16-17 November 2005, Extra Series 7, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-New York, 2007, pp. XXI-290, online at www.pas.va/content/accademia/en/publications/extraseries/globalization.html

it adds that 'Truth further demands an attitude of unruffled impartiality in the use of the many aids to the promotion and spread of mutual understanding between nations which modern scientific progress has made available. This does not mean that people should be prevented from drawing particular attention to the virtues of their own way of life, but it does mean the utter rejection of ways of disseminating information which violate the principles of truth and justice, and injure the reputation of another nation' (90).

One of the new settings where opinions and trends are shaped is undoubtedly the Internet, simply by enabling its users to communicate with one another but also by making it harder to cover up the secrets of diplomacy, politics and banks. As you are well aware, this is creating a real revolution at all levels of society. Much of this information seems destined to lay bare not only the North American scenario, but also that of the other powers, launching a new era, one where the kingdoms that have been founded on secrets since the beginning of time (the reign of secrets that Machiavelli justifies on the basis of the principle of *raison d'état*) are inevitably destined, if not to die out, at least to be notably reduced. In this sense, what could happen if the most serious truths come to light? Think of the revolution underway in the Arab world, unthinkable only a few years ago, which began with the self-immolation of a desperate young Tunisian named Mohamed Bouazizi and spread like wildfire via mobile phones, blogs, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter before it was picked up by the international media. In Egypt, although the government tried to cut off mobile and Internet communications, a young Google executive named Wael Ghonim created a Facebook page called 'We are all Khaled Said', a young Egyptian who was tortured to death by police in Alexandria, causing the irrepressible uprising of masses of people in the main squares, some of them hungry and some of them requesting respect for human rights and social justice. Further examples are the *Indignados* movement in Spain and *Occupy Wall Street* in the USA.

Precisely as a tribute to truth, from St. Thomas Aquinas to John Locke, Western doctrine has given people the 'right to resist oppression'. So what is it that has made this ancient principle so pertinent today? The communications revolution. This revolution, expressed by innovations such as YouTube, Google, Facebook, Twitter and other similar Internet products, is *horizontal* because it does not just connect broadcasters with an audience, it also connects the people that make up the audience with one another, *peer-to-peer*. People are now able to communicate truths among themselves and by themselves. Thanks to this revolution, Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans were able to get connected despite their despotic governments. Thanks to

this revolution, the Syrians, the Chinese and the Iranians are also getting connected, reflecting the universal aspiration to human dignity, freedom and democracy. The latest news is that the same revolution allowed Burma's Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi to win a by-election for parliament, meaning she could become president in 2015. The attempt of these various ideologies to control their peoples' aspirations can now be criticised by the people themselves within their own nations and on a global scale thanks to these new horizontal forms of communications.

When speaking about Providence and trust in God, Aquinas, following on from St. Paul, says that the things and events of this world are destined by Providence to the good of people of good will who love the Lord.¹⁴ Could this observation be applied, *servatis servandis*, by analogy to democracy? If the disclosure of state or banking secrets, or simple transparency in communications, serves people, why should it not be encouraged? Should it not be judged more strictly only if it affects people negatively? All kinds of information are useful for genuine democracies, which should live in truth, in accordance with *PT*, because they can help them make transparent decisions for the common good. In fact, only dictatorships, especially single-person ones, very often based on corruption, are afraid of transparency and of spreading the truth about what is happening.¹⁵

Here I should add other subjects connected with the new truths of the social sciences that have been progressively developed over the fifty years since *PT* (many of which have been studied by our Academy) and are intrinsically related to the Christian faith and often derive from the message of Christ.¹⁶ I mean, for example, the conceptualisation of the person in the social sciences, including other related and somewhat overlapping notions such as the self as a constitutive relational subject, freedom as possibility of being-one's-self and

¹⁴ 'Sub praedestinatione cadit omne beneficium salutare, quod est homini ab aeterno divinitus praeparatum; unde eadem ratione omnia beneficia quae nobis confert ex tempore, praeparavit nobis ab aeterno' (*Super Rom.*, c. 8, l. 6).

¹⁵ Cf. AA.VV., *Democracy in Debate, Reports*, Miscellanea 5, Hans Zacher (ed.), Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Vatican City, 2005, online at www.pass.va/content/scienzesociali/en/publications/miscellanea/democracyreports.html

¹⁶ Pius XI praises the Academy's search for scientific truth and observes that Christ, who was the Word and Divine Truth, was a teacher who sent out his Apostles with the mandate to teach. He concludes by expressing the hope that the Academy 'will become an increasingly rich source of that beneficial charity which Truth is' (*Papal Addresses*, Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo (ed.), Scripta Varia 100, Vatican City, 2003, p. 25 f., online at www.pas.va/content/accademia/en/publications/scriptavaria/papaladdresses.html). Cf also Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, Intr., especially § 1.

collective responsibility, and capability as ability to perform the acts of each person. I may also add the characterisation of the human in general as regards rights and agency; friendship as oneself as another; and the person's claim for mutual recognition (*Anerkennung*), which has a close relationship with the idea of citizenship in a national, international and global context. Much has been done but much still needs to be done from the point of view of theoretical analysis and social praxis. The new evangelisation is called to take these truths into account if it wants to imitate the first evangelisation based on St. Paul's model, to which we have already referred.

In a way, the contribution of the social sciences, as well as that of the natural sciences, of which our academicians are authentic representatives especially in this Year of the Faith, must be to help the Church find new and perennial truths in the current social context. These should serve as an aids for, or as preambles to, the social doctrine of the Church, theology and even faith, to make easy for our contemporaries the path from reason to faith and from faith to reason, as indicated in *Fides et ratio*. Not because of the insufficiency of the Gospel but because of the weakness of our intellects which, not perceiving directly the truth by essence of God in this life, are led more easily, almost by the hand, from the truths known in the various dimensions of reason (from which the sciences derive) to knowledge of the divine truths of faith. St. Thomas Aquinas, who was ahead of his times with his clear distinction and complementarity between faith and reason, wrote that 'theology – although all other sciences are related to it in the order of generation, as serving it and as preambles to it – can make use of the principles of all the others, even if they are posterior to it in dignity' (*Super Boetium de Trin.*, q. 2, a. 3 ad 7). As the statutes say, the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences 'offers the Church the elements which she can use in the development of her social doctrine' (art. 1): this is why the Church needs you, your critical sense of research, and your love of truth.

Thus Christian theology and philosophy can rely upon, and participate in, both these worlds, both in the world of nature and society and in the world of faith and reason. From nature and society they take the truths of ordinary life, those about birth and death in normal life, about paternity and filiation, about friendship and mutual appreciation, about violence and freedom, and above all about good and evil and justice and injustice. From faith, a human being obtains illumination of the new value that these terms acquire in the personal relationship both with God and with their world and (as a consequence) of the new value of the personal relationship of men and women with God as children with the Father; as friends of, and in, the Son; as fellow citizens of the angels and saints. God in this new light is not

specifically an object: He is a subject and He manifests Himself only in that person-to-person relationship which participates in the interpersonal relationship of the Divine Persons. This is the relationship from I to you, and to us, which gives tone and splendour to the sacred liturgy and divine symphony of the Psalms, beginning with the prayer taught to us by Jesus Christ and which begins with the social invocation 'Our Father' and continues with 'Give us this day our daily bread'. When this circularity between faith and reason, between theology, philosophy and science, does not exist, then the great question of humanity leaves the domain of reason and truth and are abandoned to the irrational, to myth, or to indifference, with great damage being done to the humanity itself of human beings, to peace on earth, and to man's ultimate destiny – heaven.

Veritatem facientes in charitate, crescamos (Eph 4:15)

Being truthful as a person (ἀληθεύοντες), speaking and defending the truth with simplicity and conviction, and bearing witness to it in life, are therefore exacting and indispensable forms of love for each other and charity.¹⁵ The world's greatest shortage is not of oil, clean water or food, but of true and moral leadership, i.e. of leaders who walk in the truth, who act according to the truth in their own lives. With a commitment to truth – Christian, philosophical, scientific, ethical, and personal truth – a society can overcome the many crises of poverty, disease, hunger and instability that confront us. Yet power abhors truth, and battles it relentlessly. So let us pause to express gratitude to the Blessed John XXIII and the Blessed John Paul II but also to all those lay leaders who have given a generation the chance to live in truth. Just as lies and corruption are contagious, so, too, truth and courage spread from one champion to another.

Much of today's struggle – everywhere – pits truth against deceit and greed. Even if our challenges are somewhat different from those faced by John XXIII and John Paul II, the importance of walking in the truth has not changed.

Today's reality is of a world in which, often, wealth translates into power, and power is abused in order to increase personal wealth, at the expense of the poor and the natural environment. As those in power destroy the environment, launch wars on false pretexts, foment social unrest, ignore the plight of the poor and the fifth of humanity that goes hungry, they seem unaware that they and their children will also pay a heavy price.

Moral leaders, who walk in the truth, nowadays should build on the foundations laid by John XXIII and John Paul II, whom St. Peter's successors acknowledged as Blessed, that is to say as celestial intercessors and mod-

els for us. Many people, of course, now despair about the possibilities for constructive change. Yet the battles that we face – against powerful corporate lobbies, relentless public-relations spin, and the many lies and mistakes of our governments – are less daunting than what the Blessed John Paul II, and others, faced when confronting the brutal Soviet-backed regimes.

Today, in addition to the tools available to these champions of truth, we are empowered with the instruments of the social media to spread our words, overcome isolation and mobilise millions in support of reform and renewal. Many of us enjoy protection of speech and assembly, though these are inevitably hard won, imperfect and fragile. Yet we are also blessed with the enduring inspiration of John Paul II's life in truth, which is of the profoundest importance and benefit to humanity. Moreover, true Christians have always been able to count on the power of the grace of Christ and the gifts of his Holy Spirit. As the object of God's love, men and women become participants in His divine nature and are called to make themselves dispensers and communicators of grace, and to weave networks of truth and charity.¹⁷

¹⁷ It is well known that the notion of grace as 'participation in the divine nature' comes from St. Peter (2 Pt 1: 4). St. Leo the Great considered such participation the highest dignity of the human being (*Sermo I, de Nativitate*). Pope Benedict XVI develops this decisive doctrine saying that authentic Christians are agents of a mutual flow and reflow of Christ's grace: '[men and women] are called to make themselves instruments of grace, so as to pour forth God's charity and to weave networks of charity. This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church's social teaching, which is *caritas in veritate in re sociali*; the proclamation of the truth of Christ's love in society' (*Caritas in Veritate*, § 5).