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CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND LABOR

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INTRODUCTION

From *Rerum novarum* to *Centesimus annus*, the future of labor represents a basic theme of Catholic social teaching. The remarks that follow endeavor to summarize some of the more important social documents, paying attention not only to the central themes, but also to their development over the course of time. This paper consists of four parts. The first section concerns itself with "Labor and Class Society" (Leo XIII - Pius XI). The second is entitled, "On the Way to a Culture of Labor" (John XXIII, Vatican II, Paul VI, John Paul II). The third section is dedicated to the special problem, "Labor and Development". The conclusion sets out a number of questions and tasks.

One comment is prerequisite to a proper understanding of the statements of Catholic social doctrine on labor. The Church's teaching never attempts to present a rigorously scientific analysis of work, nor to develop detailed solutions to the problems of work. Instead, as John Paul II expressly puts it in *Laborem exercens*, the social encyclicals set out to put "the dignity and the rights of working men" at the very center of the problem of labor. The social teachings are to act as an ethical guide to the shaping of the world of labor. Consequently, they are intended both "to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated", as well as to motivate people to commit themselves to sociopolitical action for the "authentic progress by man and society" (1).

For all intents and purposes, these statements constitute the terms of reference for the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. The Academy undoubtedly will found its work on the basic principles of Catholic social teaching, especially on the principle of the dignity of man, and will always come back to them. These principles will be of particular importance when the Academy exercises the function of social criticism. In pursuing its tasks,

the Academy also will enter into a close dialogue with the social sciences, to ensure that its statements will not be alien to reality, but solidly anchored in facts. The Academy will foster this dialogue even more intensely whenever it is called upon to collaborate in shaping labor in a fashion more in keeping with the rights of man, thereby promoting the "authentic progress of man and society".

I. Labor and Class Society (Leo XIII - Pius XI)

It is a fact that Catholic social teaching in the stricter sense arose with and in response to the problem of labor in the early phases of the industrial economy. In pre-industrial society, labor substantially was integrated into a society constituted by peasants, artisans and a corporate system. This should not be taken to mean that there were no problems of labor in this society. But, what was new about labor in the industrial era was the fact that it was economically exploited and socially marginalised. Socialism saw the solution in the organization of labor as a "fighting class" whose engagement in a "radical class struggle" would result in the abolition of private property and thereby, the creation of an egalitarian society.

Leo XIII (*Rerum novarum*, 1891) was asked for guidance both by the bishops and the Catholic laity. Many concrete proposals were made to him as to how the Church could solve the problem of labor. A first proposal: the re-introduction of the prohibition of interest. If no interest were paid, there could be no formation of capital and, consequently, no capitalist economy. A second proposal: a class-based society could only be overcome if the workers were to become the owners of the enterprises. A third proposal: the creation of "Christian" factories, where the ideals of Christian justice and charity would be practiced in an exemplary manner: by common spiritual exercises, by ethical behavior, and by just wages.

In *Rerum novarum,* Leo XIII formulated the position of the Church in relation to work as follows:

1. The Pope used harsh words to criticize the rise of the two-class society, the full effects of which had begun to be felt in the industrial centers: on the one side, an excessively rich minority that dominates not only the economy but also the state, and on the other, the teeming masses of the laboring poor suffering under a yoke "little better than slavery itself" (2).

2. The solution proposed by Socialism, i.e., to force a classless society by the abolition of private property and mobilization for the class struggle

also was condemned by the Pope. Leo XIII dismissed Socialism not only because it denies the natural right to property, but also because it menaces the freedom of man (3). However, there is one insight that was fundamental for him: "Capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital" (15).

3. Consequently, a solution to the labor question has to be found that avoids the errors of socialism, and yet is rooted in the conviction that, as far as natural law is concerned, the workers are just as much citizens as the proprietors — and this not least because workers represent the greater part of the population (27). Succinctly stated, the solution must satisfy the following conditions: Working people must not be treated like slaves (16); just wages must be paid (34); the need for protective labor legislation must be recognized, particularly to safeguard women and children (33); workers must enjoy the opportunity to acquire private property (35).

4. Three actors will have to work together if these conditions are to be attained: firstly, the Church, through her moral teaching and her sponsorship of social action (13 ff.); secondly, the State, through enacting social legislation that will humanize the situation of labor (25 ff.), but without thereby dominating citizens by displacing them from roles and activities properly theirs; thirdly, the workers themselves, by means of self-help activities that find their expression in the formation of associations of an economic, social and spiritual and cultural character (36 ff.). These associations correspond to natural law and therefore, the State cannot, and must not, prohibit them (38). But, these associations should have religion as their foundation (43).

5. In summary: Leo XIII recognized that labor in these early stages of industrial society was being menaced by two dangers: liberal capitalism and socialism. He disclaimed both of these ideologies and, even at that time, put forward the essential and basic rights of labor that had to be realized by the social policy of the State in collaboration with the organizations of the working men. But in the Pope's eyes, the decisive contribution was to come through the activity of the Church, since his encyclical was essentially intended for the Catholic countries. He hoped that the moral action of the Church and the commitment of the Catholic associations would make it possible to create something like a "Christian environment" that would prove capable of solving the problems of modern labor at the higher level: namely, through a reform of conscience. The Pope was convinced that "if society is to be cured now, in no other way can it be cured but by return to the Christian life and Christian institutions" (22).

Pius XI. *(Quadragesimo anno,* 1931). Forty years after the publication of the *Rerum novarum,* labor once again found itself at a crossroads. There undoubtedly had been some improvements in the course of the intervening four decades (59), but class society had been anything but overcome. Quite the contrary: a concentration of power had been achieved on the side of liberal capitalism that not only exploited labor, but also sought to dominate the State (105 ff.). On the side of labor, there had been a similar power concentration through organization as a result of the influence of socialism, especially in its radical form of communism, that rendered the class struggle more acute and aimed at a classless society (101). Things were made even more difficult by the fact that there were far-reaching differences of opinion and conflicts even among Catholics. They concerned, above all, the question of private property, the relation between capital and labor, and the question of wages.

Totalitarian systems promised radical solutions: communism in the East, national socialism in Germany, fascism in Italy. Pius XI pursued two goals with his encyclical. The first was to eliminate the conflict among Catholics; the second was the offer of a new order of society that was to go beyond both liberal capitalism and collectivism, in either its fascist or communist forms. As far as labor is concerned, this is what the encyclical had to say:

1. Like *Rerum novarum, Quadragesimo anno* does not basically reject an economic system to which some people contribute capital and others contribute labor. The Pope repeats the phrase that had been used by Leo XIII: "Capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital" (53). That is why a capitalist economic system "as such is not to be condemned" (101). In saying this, the Pope basically upholds the right of private individuals to own the means of production, but at the same time, he stresses the social dimension of private property (46).

2. The decisive feature of *Quadragesimo anno,* however, rests in its elaboration of the relationship between capital and labor. Here, the encyclical repeats the basic ideas of *Rerum novarum,* but develops them further in several respects. It is noteworthy, for example, that the encyclical describes the procurement of places of work as a moral virtue (51). *Quadragesimo anno* also assumes a very critical position vis-à-vis the actual distribution of the social product between capital and labor. There are two ways in which this distribution is to be rendered more just: by increasing the opportunities for the ownership of private property by workers (61), and by the means of a just wage (63 ff.). The just wage is determined by the needs of the workman and his family (70), by the situation of the enterprise

and its capacity to survive (72), as well as by the consideration of the common good (74). It is noteworthy that *Quadragesimo anno* already mentions the possibility of going beyond the individual wage-contract towards kind of a partnership between capital and labor (65).

3. The measures just outlined are certainly practicable roads for introducing justice into labor relations. But they do not represent the ultimate goal. According to *Quadragesimo anno,* this just relationship only can be achieved through means of the "principles of right reason and Christian social philosophy regarding capital, labor and their mutual cooperation" (110). Its realization will come through the establishment of a new social order in which the conflict between capital and labor is eliminated by means of a corporative order (81 ff.). In this society there are no hostile classes of capital and labor, but only different social functions. With this proposal, the Pope seeks to make a contribution that will overcome both the errors of liberal capitalism and of collectivism.

4. There was one confrontation that Pius XI could not but expect. Italian fascism had instituted a "fascist corporative State". Although Pius XI, employing diplomatic language, recognized some positive aspects of this order, he left no doubt that in this system "the State is substituting itself in the place of private initiative" (95), and had thus reduced or even eliminated the responsibility of the social forces.

5. *Quadragesimo anno* therefore holds that the problem of work can no longer be considered in isolation, as something self-contained, but only in connection with far-reaching social reform which will encompass both a structural reform and a reform of the conscience. The structural reform embraces the domains listed in No. 2, but was to find its fulfillment in the guiding idea of the corporative order. Like *Rerum novarum* before it, *Quadragesimo anno* also stressed the importance of spiritual reform. This reform was to be accomplished, above all, by the Catholic associations, especially those of the workers, but also by a general Christianization of the social environment (139).

6. In summary: If we want to understand this first phase of the Catholic social teaching relating to labor, we must keep in mind the two goals it sought to attain. The first was the responsibility and concern for the exploited working class that had come into being in the wake of industrialization. Here, one already could speak of an "option for the poor". The second goal was the battle against two ideologies: on the one side there was liberalism with its economic counterpart of liberal capitalism; on the other there was socialism, which, notwithstanding the different forms

in which it appeared, accepted the class struggle and aimed at the creation of a classless society. The two ideologies were as anti-religious as they were anti-Church, and this undoubtedly was one of the reasons why the Church opposed them both.

That *Rerum novarum* and, even more so, *Quadragesimo anno* called both for appropriate state intervention and the self-organization of labor was by no means new, because at that time both already existed in most of the industrialized countries. But it is essential that the social documents of the Church formulated the decisive ethical principles for the solution of the labor question: the principle of the dignity of the worker as a person; the application of the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity as the coresponsibility of the social forces for the solution of social problems; finally, the principle of the common good, which obliges not only the authority of the State, but also the individual citizens and the social forces as well.

In this early phase, the Church was assigned a special task in the solution of the labor question. Although Leo XIII was in favor of social intervention by the State and self-help by the workers, he was profoundly convinced that the decisive force in the solution of the labor question would have to be the reform of the conscience and the reform of both attitudes and institutions in the Christian spirit. But, forty years later, Pius XI could not but note that this reform had not been achieved. Class society had erupted with full force, and both liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism had grown into potent menaces for the world.

Faced with this critical situation, Pius XI thought that with the idea of the corporative order, he could offer a solution that had its roots in the tradition of Christian social thinking and represented an alternative to the two existing systems: liberal capitalism and collectivism. But there was one thing that was equally clear to him: the model of his proposed corporative order could be put into practice only if it was possible to accomplish a general reform of mentality: this was to be done by means of an intensive organization of the Catholic workers and of employers' associations, as well as a generalized "Christianization of the environment". There can be no doubt that the Christian associations and the Christian trade unions made considerable contributions to the improvement of the situation of the workers and the overcoming of the class struggle. But they did not and could not create the conditions for the new corporative order.

II. On the Way to a "Culture of Labor" (John XXIII, Vatican II, Paul VI, John Paul II)

While the first period of the Catholic social doctrine concerning labor was relatively uniform and concentrated, above all, on overcoming class society and the exploitation of human labor, the second phase turned out to be extremely complex and dynamic. Rather than commenting the individual social documents, it seems more appropriate to highlight the central themes that seek to realize what Catholic social teaching itself designates as a "culture of labor". By way of introduction, it may be useful to indicate some of the essential elements of the changes which characterize the transition from the first to the second period. I shall do this once again by referring to the documents of Catholic social teaching. Let me remind you once more, however, that the Church was never concerned with putting forward an exhaustive scientific analysis, but rather some focal points which assume a particular importance for the "culture of labor".

Milestones of change

The far-reaching changes in the economic and social orders that took place subsequent to the publication of *Quadragesimo anno*, had a profound impact upon the Church's social teaching on labor. The various documents of Catholic social teaching stress the following factors:

1. *Economic and technical progress*:

The encyclical *Mater et magistra,* published in 1961, drew attention to economic and technological innovations, and in this connection mentions the discovery of atomic power, the growth of the chemical industry, and the spread of automatisation and worldwide communication (47). *Laborem exercens* subsequently speaks of the "great changes in civilization, from the beginning of the 'industrial era' to the successive phases of development through new technologies, such as the electronics and the microprocessor technology in recent years" (5). In the industrial countries, this caused a massive increase of productivity and a certain well-being of the masses (*Mater et magistra,* 48).

An essential part of this scientific and technical progress is represented by the internationalization of the markets. Although several social documents expressed substantial reserve about the concrete shape assumed by world trade (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 48; *Centesimus annus*, 58), Catholic social teaching is fully convinced that the present unity of the human race "demands the establishment of greater international cooperation in the economic field" (*Gaudium et spes*, 85).

2. *Social and political change:*

Here, too, *Mater et magistra* was the first of the social documents to draw attention to the ever greater social interdependence that was taking place in the industrialized countries of the West. The extension of state social policy and free access to education had led to growing democratization and to the gradual elimination of the class structure (61). Its place had been taken by a pluralism of group interests in rivalry with each other (48). But we certainly must not overlook the fact that this development went hand in hand with a growing depersonalization and a loss of solidarity.

Even though the class society of the 30s had changed, one may not deny that labor had not yet taken the place it should have in society. There still exists the danger of treating work as a special kind of "merchandise" (*Laborem exercens*, 7). This is the result of two forms of materialistic economisms. On the one hand, even in present-day capitalism, there are attitudes and practices that consider labor as nothing more than a factor of production, so that "the error of early capitalism can be repeated" (*Laborem exercens,* 7). On the other side, we have Marxist collectivism, which likewise degrades work into an object.

When we think of the collapse of this system in 1989, "it cannot be forgotten that the fundamental crisis of systems claiming to express the rule and indeed the dictatorship of the working class began with the great upheavals which took place in Poland in the name of solidarity. It was the throng of working people which forswore the ideology which presumed to speak in their name" (*Centesimus annus*, 23).

3. *Spiritual and religious change:*

It is striking how closely Catholic social teaching associates the change and future of labor with the spiritual and religious dimension. *Centesimus annus* admits quite openly that, as far as the industrialized countries are concerned, "for about a century the workers' movement had fallen in part under the dominance of Marxism" (26). This period witnessed a massive alienation from the Church by the working class. But here too, Catholic social teaching sees a far-reaching change. Its magnitude largely will be determined by the extent to which the Church and her social teaching will make themselves heard in favor of the concerns of workers, and the extent to which she will succeed in developing something like a theology and a spirituality of labor.

Elements of a "Culture of Labor"

John Paul II speaks repeatedly of the need to substitute the class struggle of yesterday with a culture of labor (*Centesimus annus*, 15). This culture of labor is realizable so far as economic and technical conditions are concerned, and it is a necessary aspect of social and political culture if we successfully are to face the challenges of the 21st century. Like every other culture, the culture of labor is made up of several elements, which the Church's social teaching subdivides into four dimensions: namely, the personal dimension, the economic dimension, the social dimension, and the spiritual and cultural dimension.

1. *The personal dimension of work*

We shall succeed in fully understanding the statements of Catholic social doctrine on labor only if we see them from the viewpoint of the fundamental personal dimension. As John Paul II puts it in his encyclical on human work, "At the beginning of man's work is the mystery of creation. This affirmation, already indicated as my starting point, is the guiding thread of this document" (*Laborem exercens*, 12). Man stands in the very midst of this mystery of creation as "God's project" with a twofold mission: self-realization, and the further development of the creation. Taken together, these tasks speak to us as a personal mission to work and to collaborate in God's design.

This mission constitutes the dignity of man, "because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and, indeed in a sense, becomes 'more a human being'" (*Laborem exercens*, 9). It follows that man at work must never be treated as a mere object or merchandise, but as a person. Consequently, the worker must be accorded precedence over all material factors of the economy. That is why *Rerum novarum* already condemned the then-existing conditions as a fate little better than slavery for the industrial worker (2). Similarly, the Second Vatican Council stated: "Human labor which is expended in the production and exchange of goods, or in the performance of economic services is superior to the other elements of economic life. For the latter have only the nature of tools" (*Gaudium et spes*, 67). *Laborem exercens* underscores this statement as follows: "The only chance there seems to be for radically overcoming this error ... is the conviction of the primacy of the person over things, and of human labor over capital as a whole collection of means of production" (13).

This personal dimension of work, "which is part of the abiding heritage of the Church's teaching, must always be emphasized with reference to the

question of the labor system and with regard to the whole socio-economic system" (*Laborem exercens,* 12). One must therefore take a critical view of a labor system "when it is organized so as to ensure maximum returns and profits with no concern whether the worker, through his own labor, grows or diminishes as a person" (*Centesimus annus*, 41).

What Catholic social teaching has to say about the personal dimension of labor and the primacy of labor over capital has been followed by polemical discussions which continue up to the present. In large part, these polemics stem from the mistaken idea that Catholic social teaching fails to recognize the importance of capital, and therefore represents some kind of utopian viewpoint. That this is not the case will be made clear by the discussion of the next dimension of labor. The ultimate concern of Catholic social teaching, particularly as it has been explicated by John Paul II, is to place the ethico-religious value of personal labor at the very center of the economic order and the problem of work. On this level, human labor belongs to a higher order and takes precedence over the purely material factors of the economy. This personal dimension must therefore enter as a constitutive element into every concrete labor system and economic order. "The social order and its development must unceasingly work to the benefit of the human person ... and not contrariwise" (*Gaudium et spes*, 26). This principle "must constitute the adequate and fundamental criterion for shaping the whole economy" (*Laborem exercens,* 17).

2. *The economic dimension of work*

Although the personal dimension of labor stands at the very center of all Catholic social teaching, it always has been seen in connection with the other factors, especially the economic ones. Thus arises the need for "reproposing in new ways the question of human work" (*Laborem exercens*, 5).

This brings us face to face with the basic question of the economic system in which the labor is being done. *Quadragesimo anno* already points out that the Church has no competence in "technical matters" (41). Vatican II tells us that the Church, by virtue of her mission, is bound "to no particular form of human culture, nor to any political, economic or social system" (*Gaudium et spes*, 42). But, Catholic social teaching does confront each and every economic system with the critical question of whether it corresponds to the image of man that the Church represents, and a social order that is consistent with this image of personhood. This critical question was posed again and again in the different historical periods, and it can be summarized in the following way.

The collectivistic, centrally dominated economic system is condemned

from *Rerum novarum* right through to *Centesimus annus,* because it is contrary both to the dignity of the human person and to the nature of a free society. An economic system in which one side contributes the capital and the other the labor as such is "not to be condemned" (*Quadragesimo anno*, 101). But the decisive question is how these two factors are related to each other, and how the economy as a whole fulfills its tasks in regard to the common good.

Centesimus annus marks a certain conclusion in this long discussion by proposing and explicating the criteria essential to an ethically justifiable economic system: firstly, private property which the encyclical stresses, "has a social function ... based on the law of common purpose of goods" (30); secondly, free labor, which should enjoy co-responsibility and participation (32, 35); thirdly, the importance of economic initiative and entrepreneurship is noted (32); fourthly, the encyclical acknowledges the legitimacy of profit, which it recognizes "is a regulator of the life of a business", but cautions "is not the only one" (35); fifthly, "to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole society are satisfied" the encyclical insists that the market and the economic process must be "appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the state" (35). *Laborem exercens* as well as *Centesimus annus* add the responsibility for continental and global common good.

This short summary does not reproduce the development of Catholic social teaching in this field in all its details, but merely seeks to demonstrate that in its statements on human labor, the social teachings do not overlook the economic dimension.

Even though these statements about the economic system are of a general nature, they are of decisive importance for labor. Basing itself on the personal and economic dimension of labor, Catholic social teaching formulates a number of specific problems and tasks connected with labor:

Firstly, *the right to work.* When the Church's social teaching speaks of a right to work (*Pacem in terris*, 18; *Gaudium et spes*, 67; *Laborem exercens*, 67, etc.), it always relies on two insights as its starting point. In an economy based on the division of labor, work always forms part of a particular economic system and a particular economic process. Therefore, it is dependent on the factual laws of this system and codetermined by them (*Centesimus annus*, 32). For this reason there cannot be a patent and universally valid solution for the realization of the right to work. Secondly, precisely because work contains an essentially personal dimension, which means that it represents a mission and an obligation for self-realization, the social forces and the State are duty-bound to create the conditions in which the individual can realize his right as well as his duty to work. It is for this

reason that *Laborem exercens* appeals so insistently to the "indirect employer" to take every kind of initiative to make it possible for the right and duty to work to be implemented (18).

That is also the reason why the documents of Catholic social teaching describe unemployment as a "dreadful scourge" (*Quadragesimo anno*, 74), as a "nightmare" (*Centesimus annus*, 15), especially when young people are involved (*Laborem exercens*, 18). As far as John Paul II is concerned, the disconcerting fact that "there are huge numbers of people who are unemployed or underemployed" while conspicuous natural resources remain unused, and while countless multitudes of people suffer from hunger, demonstrates "without any doubt ... that both within the individual political communities and in their relationships on the continental and world level there is something wrong with the organization of work and employment, precisely at the most critical and socially most important points" (*Laborem exercens*, 18). In *Centesimus annus,* John Paul II further observes that "a society in which this right is systematically denied, in which economic policies do not allow workers to reach satisfactory levels of employment, cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can that society attain social peace" (43). It is quite obvious that this statement leaves open a whole series of questions, especially the question as to the ways and means by which the right to work can be realized in a complex economy and in a democratic manner. But this is the very point where the gauntlet, as it were, is thrown down to the social sciences.

Secondly, *a just wage.* The problem of the just wage constitutes a central theme of the economic dimension of labor in the Catholic social teaching. John Paul II describes the question of just remuneration as the "key problem of social ethics", and as the "concrete means of verifying the justice of the whole socioeconomic system" (*Laborem exercens,* 19). Once again, the treatment of this matter in the social teachings hardly has been static. Thus, *Rerum novarum* speaks quite generally of a wage that would enable a worker "to maintain his wife and children in reasonable comfort" (35). Similarly, *Quadragesimo anno* stresses that the wages received by a workman should be sufficient "for the support of himself and his family" (71). But the same encyclical adds that wherever this is not possible under the given circumstances, "special provisions" should be provided in order to do justice to the families. *Quadragesimo anno* further mentions the state of business and its capacity of survival as factors to be considered in arriving at a just wage. The relation of wage rates to the common good also makes an appearance in *Quadragesimo anno*'s discussion. Thus, the encyclical contains

the noteworthy phrase: "All are aware that a scale of wages too low, no less than a scale excessively high causes unemployment" (74).

Mater et magistra repeats the essential propositions of *Quadragesimo anno,* but adds two new aspects: For determining the just remuneration, account should be taken of "first of all the contribution of individuals to the economic effort" (71). Moreover, one should think not just of the common good of a nation, but rather of the common good of the entire world economy (71). *Laborem exercens* further specifies the previous statements of the Church's teachings: a just wage must be sufficient "for establishing and properly maintaining a family and for providing security for its future" (19). Such remuneration can be given either through what is called a family wage, that is, an income sufficient for the needs of the family, or through other social measures (19). In this connection, *Laborem exercens* stresses that "it will redound to the credit of society" to make it possible for a mother not to work outside the home on account of economic need, though it later notes that "in many societies women work in nearly every sector of life" and warns that they should not be discriminated against. *Laborem exercens* also expressly mentions that "various social benefits intended to ensure the life and health of workers and their families play a part besides wages" (19).

Thirdly, *access to private property.* Although the Church in her social teaching holds that an economic system in which the economic process receives capital from one side and labor from the other is "not in itself to be condemned", and therefore describes the wage contract as basically permissible from an ethical point of view, she has always been convinced that the participation of labor in property and capital was highly desirable. *Rerum novarum* already mentions this possibility and necessity (4, 17, 35). Likewise, *Quadragesimo anno* expresses the conviction that "at least in future, only a fair share of the fruits of production be permitted to accumulate in the hands of the wealthy and that an ample sufficiency be supplied to the workingmen" (61), and this not by any means solely in the form of a just wage for consumption, but also in the form of economic property.

Although *Mater et magistra* notes that income due to professional qualification has come to be of increasing importance, it nevertheless stresses that labor should achieve property, precisely in view of the relationship that property ownership bears to personal freedom (112): "Today, more than heretofore, widespread private ownership should prevail" (115). *Laborem exercens* repeatedly stresses the primacy of labor over capital, and John Paul II is convinced that this primacy must express

itself in a reform of the property system, specifically mentioning "proposals for joint ownership of the means of work, sharing by the workers in the management and/or profit of businesses, so called shareholding by labor, etc." (*Laborem exercens*, 14).

3. *The social dimension of work*

According to Catholic social teaching, a "culture of labor" comprises not only the undoubtedly important personal and economic dimensions of labor, but also its essential social dimension. *Mater et magistra* stresses that "with the growth of the economy, there occurs a corresponding social development" (73). John Paul II speaks of a characteristic element that distinguishes work in a special manner: the fact "that it first and foremost unites people" (*Laborem exercens*, 20). In other words, work both can and is called upon to serve as the basis for unity and community amongst people.

This statement is one of the most difficult in the corpus of Catholic social teaching, and it must not be understood in a romantic or utopian sense, particularly when one considers the history of the social question. Undoubtedly, there were also labor problems in the society of peasants and artisans: poverty, exploitation, lack of rights, etc. As the Church's teaching understands the matter, however, the social question in the proper sense started with the separation of capital and labor, and the class society that resulted therefrom. How this social question presented itself in the first phase of Catholic social teaching, and the kinds of solutions that were proposed, have been described in the first part of this paper. What now particularly concerns us are the elements for the social culture of labor in the second period.

In this second phase, we have to bear in mind that, at least in the industrialized countries of the West, the ideology of the class struggle is no longer held even by the working population. *Pacem in terris* describes the economic and social ascent of the working class as the most important progress (40). Efforts now are being made to solve the problems of labor in a democratic manner. The Church's social teaching cannot but take this state of affairs as its starting point, and it is on this basis that the Church formulates the elements for a social culture of labor.

Social partnership. Even though the primacy of labor over the material factor of capital is strongly stressed on the personal and ethical level, it is just as clear that within the production process, capital constitutes the necessary condition to enable people to find work. "In general the latter

process demonstrates that labor and what we are accustomed to call capital are intermingled; it shows that they are inseparably linked" (*Laborem exercens*, 13). Nevertheless, it is not at all difficult to foresee that there will be tensions and conflict between the two interest groups: though these may no longer be characterized in terms of a class struggle, they could yet represent very real conflicts of interest. In this second phase, Catholic social teaching no longer relies on the corporative order that *Quadragesimo anno* put forward as a model or means of resolving this conflict, but rather bases itself on the previously mentioned conviction that labor unites people, that it "builds a community" (*Laborem exercens*, 20), that it leads to social partnership (*Mater et magistra*, 97).

Therefore, in their second phase, the social teachings formulate the postulate that "a labor system can be right, in the sense of being in conformity with the very essence of the issue, and in the sense of being intrinsically true and morally legitimate if in its very basis it overcomes the opposition between labor and capital" (*Laborem exercens,* 13). But, Catholic social teaching cannot determine what this labor system should be like in concrete terms. In this connection, *Laborem exercens* refers to the many "proposals" made by experts and by the Magisterium of the Church: they concern "joint ownership of the means of work, sharing by the workers in the management and/or profits of businesses, so called shareholding by labor, etc." (14). But even the further statements made by *Laborem exercens* about this matter remain porous. "A way towards that goal could be found by associating labor with the ownership of capital, as far as possible, and by producing a wide range of intermediate bodies with economic, social and cultural purposes; they would be bodies enjoying real autonomy with regard to the public powers, pursuing their specific aims in honest collaboration with each other and in subordination to the demands of the common good" (14).

The Organization of labor. That social partnership is not a utopian goal follows from the statements that Catholic social teaching makes about the organization of labor. Even though the class struggle situation in the Western industrialized countries has undergone very substantial changes since the days of *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno,* we must not overlook the fact that "defense of the existential interests of workers" (*Laborem exercens*, 20) still represents an essential task of a "culture of labor". That is why the Second Vatican Council speaks of the fundamental human right that workers have of freely setting up unions which can genuinely represent them (*Gaudium et spes*, 68). They are "a mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice" (*Laborem exercens*, 20) and "even if in controversial questions the

struggle takes on a character of opposition towards others", this is not done "in order to eliminate the opponent but for the good of 'social justice'" (*ibid.*). In such cases there may well be difficult negotiations and at times even conflicts, but in the end, people always will try to come to an agreement. In this respect the unions are "a positive factor of the social order" and "an essential element of social life" (*ibid.*).

The social ecology of labor. Catholic social teaching is convinced that, in a world of high-speed technological progress and globalization of markets, human work cannot but be subject to far-reaching changes the full effects of which are not yet clear. Consequently, the Church has no patent solutions to offer, even though it is fully convinced that what really matters in this far-reaching process of change is to arrive at a "culture of labor worthy of man by taking due account of the personal, economic and social dimension of labor".

In this connection, John Paul II makes use of the term "social ecology of work" (*Centesimus annus,* 38). This term imports the following: modern society is strongly determined by a tendency towards individualization and privatization. This is quite understandable and in some respects, it represents a positive trend. Nevertheless, the challenges of modern society, both at the national and international level, call for strong solidarity. This solidarity will have to be rooted in human relationships that exist within and across various social levels. According to the Church's social teaching, the humanization of labor presents an important basis for building solidarity because "labor unites people" and "builds community" (*Laborem exercens*, 20).

For this reason "a business cannot be considered only as a 'society of capital goods'; it is also a 'society of persons'" (*Centesimus annus*, 43). One must therefore assume a critical attitude vis-à-vis a society in which the forms of social organization, be it in production or consumption, make it difficult to bring about authentic interhuman solidarity.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that Catholic social teaching expressly speaks of the relationship between the organization of labor and the family. It is convinced that the overcoming of the individualistic mentality calls for "a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity" and that this begins in the family (*Centesimus annus*, 49). Thus, for example, a culture of labor should express itself by arranging working hours in such a way as not to hinder the family from fulfilling its task (*Laborem exercens*, 19). "The true advancement of women requires that labor should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family" (*Laborem exercens*, 19).

Centesimus annus pointedly observes that the Marxist solution failed because it perverted the rights of labor and thus destroyed the solidarity founded on work (*Centesimus annus*, 23). It is an urgent task to renew this solidarity, because it is badly needed by society as a whole. There is need for "specific networks of solidarity" to prevent "society from becoming an anonymous and impersonal mass". A possible and necessary component of these networks of solidarity is the "culture of labor". It is more than just state and market, and is ultimately based upon the "subjective character of society" (*Centesimus annus*, 49). Here we have the decisive challenge of the present-day world, a challenge that calls for a great deal of creativity.

4. *The intellectual and spiritual dimension of the "culture of labor"*

It is impressive to note the extent to which Catholic social teaching associates the culture of labor with intellectual and spiritual meaning. Indeed, in the first phase, this association was so strong that it served as the source both for ethical motivation as well as the corporative social order.

In its second phase, however, Catholic social teaching tended to concentrate on the effort to elaborate a "Gospel of labor"' (*Laborem exercens*, 6). This undertaking proceeds from the insight that the order of the creation destines man to collaborate in a responsible manner in his self-realization and in the completion of creation itself (*Laborem exercens*, 9). That is why the real dignity of work is based not so much on what it effectively has achieved, but rather on "its subjective dimension" (*Laborem exercens*, 9). From this dignity of work there follow the rights of labor, but also the obligation of labor (*Laborem exercens,* 16).

This "Gospel of labor" opens work to a spiritual interpretation, which leads to the formation of a "spirituality of labor" (*Laborem exercens,* 24). This spirituality is based on three truths. Firstly, the "awareness of human work as a sharing in the activity of the Creator" (*Populorum progressio,* 27 f.; *Laborem exercens,* 26), which implies both creativity and responsibility. Secondly, it draws from the example of Christ, who was not only the "carpenter's son", but in his message compared the activities of men with the characteristics of the Kingdom of God. Thirdly, through the interpretation of work as suffering, this spirituality sees labor as an opportunity to share in the Cross of Christ (*Laborem exercens,* 27) in its salvific and redeeming fertility right through to the realization of "the new heaven and the new earth" (*Laborem exercens,* 27).

The decisive feature of these statements of Catholic social teaching is the positive view they present of human work. This "gospel of labor" rests on the hope that work will develop from a fate "little better than slavery" (*Rerum*

novarum, 2) to a "culture of labor" worthy of man (*Centesimus annus*, 15). Like every other culture, however, this "culture of labor" is not an automatic, natural event. The realization of its personal, economic, social and spiritual dimensions calls for the conscious and responsible efforts of man.

III. Work and Development

No review of the statements of the Church's social teachings on labor would be complete without a special section dedicated to the situation of the developing countries. Although many of the statements made in Section II (Elements of a "Culture of Labor") also apply to the developing countries, the existing economic social, political and cultural conditions are such as to give rise to special problems and tasks. The following summary will show that this part of Catholic social teaching will have to be supplemented and enlarged in several respects.

It can be understood readily that Catholic social teaching did not offer a special treatment of the developing countries in its first phase, because its message primarily was addressed to the industrialized countries of the West. But with *Mater et magistra* and the Second Vatican Council, a second phase begins in which the developing countries assume a growing importance in Catholic social teaching. The following summary purposely is limited to statements concerning the order of human labor. They can be summarized in two key concepts: namely, the misery of underdevelopment, and the challenges and tasks.

1. *The misery of underdevelopment*

The encyclical *Laborem exercens* realistically notes that there exist grave injustices in the "living and working conditions" at the world level, and that these are "much more extensive than those which in the last century stimulated unity between workers for particular solidarity in the working world" (8). This injustice expresses itself first of all in the fact that unemployment and underemployment have assumed alarming proportions in the developing countries (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 18). This situation also exists in countries "whose economies are still purely agrarian" (*Populorum progressio*, 9). It has to be added that "great masses of workers, in not a few nations, and even in whole continents, receive too small a return from their labor. Hence, they and their families must live in conditions completely out of accord with human dignity" (*Mater et magistra*, 68).

The causes of this misery are extremely complex, and are at least partly to be found in the developing countries themselves. Funds given for the

creation of employment possibilities were misused for personal enrichment, invested abroad, or employed for irrational rearmament. The social encyclicals also speak of a lack of freedom, of cruel rivalries between tribes, and very substantial backwardness in the field of education.

But the greatest responsibility and guilt for the misery of underdevelopment and its effects on labor rests with the industrialized countries. This is not primarily due to the lack of good will on the part of individual people, but is rather the result of economic and political mechanisms of the industrial countries. They tend to perpetuate the situation that "the wealth of the rich would increase and the poverty of the poor would remain" (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 16). This shows itself, for example, in the disastrous indebtedness of the developing countries, which has assumed dramatic proportions in connection with the mechanisms of the financial markets (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 19), as well as in the protectionism and discrimination practiced by the international trade system (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 43).

Catholic social teaching does not limit itself to this undoubtedly incomplete economic and political analysis, but speaks about "structures of sin" (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 36). Admittedly, these structures are always associated with the concrete deeds of individual people, but they become the source of further sin because they tend to be consolidated into social and economic orders, and thus exert a negative influence on the moral behavior of man (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 36). The economic domain behind these structures is dominated by "the all-consuming desire for profit" (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 37), which leads to hegemony and imperialism (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 39).

Whereas in the industrialized countries of the West, the state and the social partners set a clear limit to this domination, this is as yet far from being done in the developing countries. It is a fact that large enterprises do not lack in social sensitivity in their own country; "why then do they return to the inhuman principles of individualism when they operate in less developed countries?" (*Populorum progressio*, 70).

It has been said already that the Church's social documents do not provide an all-embracing analysis of the problematics of the developing countries. It also has been pointed out that in this very area, Catholic social teaching still needs intensive research. But for the immediate purpose of this summary, it is important to note that according to Catholic social teaching, labor in the developing countries today finds itself face-to-face with an injustice of "far greater proportions" than that encountered by the European working class at the beginning of the industrial revolution.

2. *Challenges and tasks*

There is a fundamental principle that underlies the whole of Catholic social teaching: "Peace and prosperity, in fact, are goods that belong to the whole human race: it is not possible to enjoy them in a proper and lasting way if they are achieved and maintained at the cost of other peoples and nations, by violating their rights or excluding them from the sources of well-being" (*Centesimus annus*, 27). Therefore, everything has to be done so that "the living standard of the workers in the different societies will less and less show those disturbing differences which are unjust and are apt to provoke even violent reactions" (*Laborem exercens*, 18).

In this connection the Church's social documents speak of a multistage solidarity as a means of gaining control of the difficult problem of work in the developing countries. The first form of solidarity must be called for by the world of labor itself. "In order to achieve social justice in the various parts of the world, in the various countries, and in the relationships between them, there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers" (*Laborem exercens*, 8). Nobody has any illusions how difficult it will be to realize this appeal. The social teachings tell us, among other things, that for reasons of solidarity we shall have to accept a redistribution of both work and income not only at the national, but also at the continental and global level. But there is something else said with the utmost clarity in this statement: this solidarity cannot be forced upon the world of labor; it can be realized and implemented only in coresponsibility "with them".

Another decisive form of solidarity is closely related to the one we have just mentioned. Seen in a long-term perspective, the problem of labor in the developing countries can be solved only if the developing countries and the industrialized countries will jointly undertake "bold transformations, innovations that go deep" (*Populorum progressio*, 32). This is one of the basic themes of *Mater et Magistra* and continues, via *Populorum progressio* and *Sollicitudo rei socialis* right through to *Centesimus annus*. Some proposals are made in this connection, but no patent solutions can be provided. There is a final appeal that *Centesimus annus* formulates in the following words: "The poor ask for the right to share in enjoying material goods and to make good use of their capacity for work, thus creating a world that is more just and prosperous for all" (28).

IV. Reflections and Questions

Catholic social teaching describes labor as a key, and even as the essential key for the solution of the social question (*Laborem exercens*, 3).

The underlying concept here is that the order of labor constitutes a decisive access to the order of society as a whole. In saying this Catholic social teaching finds itself in complete harmony not only with the conviction of experts of the social sciences, but also the lessons of sociopolitical practice.

The previous parts of this presentation tried to give a summary of the efforts made by Catholic social teaching in connection with the order of labor. Two separate periods clearly could be distinguished. The first period was strongly marked by the confidence in the ordering capacity of religion and the Church, be it as an all-embracing renewal of mentalities and institutions in the Christian spirit, or as the offer of the model of a corporative order derived from the Christian social tradition. The social encyclicals of this first period, *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno,* undoubtedly made a contribution to the improvement of the "fate little better than slavery" of workers and to the formulation of basic principles for the solution of the labor question. Both encyclicals came up against clear and obvious limits. These limits were set not only by the limited possibilities of reforms in mentality and outlook, but even more importantly by the fact that the concept of a corporative order simply was unrealizable in a growing market economy. These limits were exacerbated by the economic and social dynamics in the second half of the twentieth century. In the industrialized countries of the West, the class society was steadily displaced by a complex and pluralistic welfare society. These welfare-states enjoyed a democratic political structure, but brought with them new forms of marginalisation that had significant repercussions for labor. In addition, the social teachings were confronted with the ever more menacing claims of real socialism in the East, and the challenges posed by the developing countries in the South.

Catholic social teaching thus had to come to terms with a completely new situation. Its dialogue partner was no longer a uniform Christian West, but rather a global world, pluralistic in religion and "Weltanschauung". Ever since *Pacem in terris,* the Church's social documents have been addressed to "all men of good will". The new context could not but bring in its wake an equally pronounced shift in the content of Catholic social thought. In his encyclical *Centesimus annus,* John Paul II speaks of "being underway with mankind". This phrase carries with it the conviction that Catholic social teaching, given its view of man and the concept of society based upon this view, can contribute "principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action" (*Octogesima adveniens,* 4) to the worldwide search for a more human economic and social order and, more particularly, to the problem of the order of labor. The image of a shared journey also means that the Church's contributions will not come in the

form of a monologue, but as the result of an ongoing dialogue with the modern social sciences, and with all the social forces.

In other words, Catholic social teaching is ready to learn from this dialogue. It cannot abandon its "principles of reflection, norms of action and criteria of judgment", but it may well be ready to reformulate them in view of the new circumstances and to give to its "directives of action" a new and more concrete orientation. It has to be stressed once more that this new phase calls for an intensive dialogue with the social sciences, since this represents the special task of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

All these statements have a direct bearing on the basic theme of this paper: namely, Catholic social teaching and labor. The documents of Catholic social teaching show that labor has a threefold meaning and task: it contributes essentially to the realization of man as a person; it creates social relations and community; it contains and communicates sense and meaning. Let me say it once again: these statements are of a fundamental nature and are derived from the Christian view of man and society. But the Church's social documents do not limit themselves to mere abstract formulation; rather they also attempt to indicate — for various situations — ways and means through which these functions of labor can be realized. This is true from *Rerum novarum* right through to *Centesimus annus*. It has been said already that some of these attempts came up against clear limits and have been the cause for critical reflections within the Church itself.

But this does not exhaust the challenges and tasks. The Church is fully aware that the "future of labor and labor of the future" is facing rapid and deep-going transformations. Therefore, it becomes a duty for Catholic social teaching "being underway with mankind" to observe this transformation with great attention and in collaboration with the social sciences, to reflect about it and to reformulate its contribution to the "culture of labor" of tomorrow. The following, almost telegraphic remarks and questions are not to be understood as resolving this task. They are solely intended to give some idea of the direction in which this search could take place.

1. *"To become more man in and through labor"* — the person-founding function of labor

Given its anthropological premises, Catholic social teaching speaks of a "fundamental right of all men to work" (*Laborem exercens*, 18), a right which at the same time represents an obligation. Although the social encyclicals express full awareness of unpaid labor, they refer primarily to the right to work as means of livelihood, and the denial of this right is described as a "terrible scourge". In this connection the social Magisterium

further stresses that work understood in this manner bears an important — though not exclusive — relationship to the personal realization of the design of God, which is founded on man. It also makes it clear that work forms an essential part of the personal fulfillment of the social obligation anchored in man.

These very short and rather general statements raise a whole series of questions that call for further reflections and answers. A first question: If man's right to (income-producing) work has such a personal importance, what are the instruments at the disposal of the economy and of the society and of the State to give this right a concrete chance of being realized? Are pure market laws sufficient for this purpose or are other and subsidiary forces required? Or can we legitimately accept that economic necessities will cause a considerable percentage of people, though perfectly willing to work, to remain not just temporarily, but permanently excluded from this person-founding function of work? Can there be an ethical justification for this?

A second question follows almost immediately from the first: If technological progress and the interdependence of the markets of the society of tomorrow should substantially reduce the available income-producing work, what conditions would have to be created to make it possible to offer other types of work and activities that will satisfy the requirement of self-realization without exclusively forming part of traditional, income-producing work? How can the material existence of these people be assured, and how can they gain social acceptance?

A third issue: It is generally accepted that an economic growth is by no means necessarily connected with a decrease of unemployment. Similarly, a general conviction exists that unlimited economic growth can no longer be accepted because of ecological reasons, which include our responsibility to the coming generations. These concerns re-raise the question about the role of income-producing labor and about a future society which should not again be divided into classes: the privileged one which has the opportunity to work and the other, relegated to unemployment.

One can ask whether these questions are justified. Certainly they are not exhaustive. They simply follow from the basic requirement of Catholic social teaching: man's right to (income-producing) labor with the aim of personal self-realization and of personal fulfillment of his social obligation. It is not enough for Catholic social teaching to simply repeat this principle. It must try to show which interpretation has to be given to its moral principle in particular economic and social situations. Only on this basis can it make a realistic contribution to a "culture of labor".

2. *Labor unites and founds community* — the society-founding function of labor

There are two reasons why Catholic social teaching places special emphasis on the society-founding function of labor. The first is of a theoretical and theological nature. According to the plan of God's creation, man is a social being. This means that humans not only have the capacity for, but are in need of, social relations with others. These relations are not restricted to the fulfillment of such primary instincts as marriage and family, but also serve other social purposes: economy, state, culture, and religion. Catholic social teaching is well aware that this social dimension has widespread emotional shadings ranging from spontaneous self-sacrifice right through to purely imposed solidarity. Nevertheless, the very multiplicity of these forms and shadings of solidarity is an expression of the social dimension founded in the nature of man. Within this fundamental vision human labor also has a society-founding function.

The second reason is of a historical nature. Leo XIII, and even more strongly Pius XI, were faced with the fact that liberal capitalism had *de facto* divided society into two classes, and that Marxism had elevated this class division and the class struggle into a principle. Right from the beginning, Catholic social teaching opposed both of these social practices and social theories. It insisted on a reform in which capital and labor would not be united in an unrealistic harmony, but collaborate in a responsible partnership. The fact that in its first period, the social teachings relied primarily on the force of a moral and religious renewal and that *Quadragesimo anno* envisaged the solution of a corporative order was conditioned by concrete circumstances. The subsequent social documents opted in favor of dialogue aimed at the realization of a "culture of labor" worthy of man. But even with this partially new approach, Catholic social teaching has by no means exhausted its obligation. It still must formulate a whole series of new questions and challenges, all in close collaboration with the modern social sciences. Some of them can be formulated the following way.

Firstly, that work can unite and should found community is by no means an idiosyncratic bit of social romanticism peculiar to Catholic social teaching. Rather, it is a generally accepted element of modern business management. Earlier entrepreneurial structures with a markedly authoritarian approach are being replaced by delegation of responsibility to teams with a high degree of competence, self-leadership and self-control. That this is often done for reasons of economic efficiency does not in any manner contradict the ethical principle that work unites and should found community.

Secondly, there is a problem that should not be overlooked in this connection. Despite their potential contribution to the formation of community and meaning in the workplace, autonomous teams quite often bring with them the danger of group egoism, and sometimes even ruinous competition. This form of work-organization can lead to conflicts between workers with fulltime employment and workers with marginal employment. This is particularly true in cases of short-time projects which do not guarantee long-term employment. These and other types of modern employment arrangements represent a specific set of problems for the social dimension of labor which pose new challenges for Catholic social teaching.

Closely connected with this set of issues is yet another problem. According to Catholic social teaching, trade unions represent a constitutive element of the modern economy and society. They came into being at a time when the rights of workers had not been secured, and they continue to declare themselves as representatives of the interests and rights of working people.

In the days of the industrial proletariat, union members constituted a clearly recognizable group. In a society in which more than 80 per cent of the active population are dependent workers and employees, the reference to a trade union cohort becomes very complex. There are groups of employees who enjoy special rights and privileges and therefore no longer need the trade unions, and there are marginal groups which hardly can be organized, or whose interests scarcely can be represented. In this connection, one has to mention both the unemployed and immigrant workers. This new context creates significant problems for the formation and maintenance of solidarity at different levels, and represents a new set of challenges.

When Catholic social teaching says that work unites and founds community, it is clearly aware that this social dimension of work cannot be limited to a single enterprise, a single trade union, or a single country. Within the European Union, the world of labor is being faced with tasks that do not have just the social advancement of Europe as their goal, but also constitute a massive challenge for the internal solidarity of European labor. As we approach the third millennium, the solidarity of European labor is required not only for the achievement of continental tasks, but for the realization of global goals.

According to Catholic social teaching, the future of a society worthy of man will depend to a great extent upon the realization of the "culture of labor". In the past, society was divided and fractured by the problems of labor. If according to Catholic social teaching, labor is called to unite and to consolidate society, Catholic social teaching cannot limit itself to a generic statement. Together with the social sciences, it must reflect upon

the new challenges, re-examine its own positions and enter a creative and fruitful dialogue.

3. *"The Gospel of labor"* — the function of labor as grounding purpose and meaning

One can quite easily understand that the modern social sciences are rather hesitant in speaking about the meaning and value of labor. This aspect of work is part of one's personal experience and is open only to a very limited extent to empirical research. In this context, one has to remember the ideology of labor formulated by Marxism, and recall that the ideologization of work by real socialism led to legitimating totalitarianism.

From the start, Catholic social teaching speaks about the meaning and value of labor, which culminates in the "spirituality of labor" explicated in *Laborem exercens*. The social teachings root the spiritual value of labor in God's creative will. In this perspective, labor accepts a threefold mission: the mission of authentic self-realization, the mission to contribute to the order of the society, and the mission to protect the "Garden of God". For many centuries, this theology and spirituality of labor both elucidated and gave forceful meaning to the labor of peasants and artisans. Even though "ora et labora", the ideal of monachism, never became an exclusive value of the Christian people, it nevertheless constituted an important motivation of pre-industrial labor. It is not difficult to understand that in Christian social thinking, this value orientation retained its fundamental importance for industrial labor as well. But this does not exclude fresh thinking on the subject. On the contrary, it is necessary that Catholic social teaching enters a critical reflection about the new challenges which derive from the economic, social, and cultural transformations in regard to the meaning and value attributed to labor. Some thoughts in this regard.

One insight presents itself quite spontaneously. It is said many times that industrial and post-industrial society is characterized by the fact of secularization. This is to say, that the profane domains have lost their link with and legitimation by religion, and have become autonomous substructures. According to the sociologists of religion, this fact applies to a substantial extent also for the world of labor. This does not exclude, of course, that social minorities continue to fully accept this link and connection, but there is no hope for a general resacralization.

It has to be added that labor also is subject to the general, present-day value change. For the industrial countries, this change can be briefly characterized as follows: the average person considers himself to be post-authoritarian, post-solidaristic, post-transcendental and post-materialistic. Put more simply: he is in love with freedom, with himself, with his

terrestrial life, and with the predominant culture. These statements do not represent immutable laws, but rather general trends which make their repercussions felt also in the world of labor, especially in regard to its meaning and value.

This does not mean that labor is now being regarded as nothing more than a necessary evil and a means for finding meaning outside the income-producing work. This may well be the case for some of the people. But, as empirical research has shown, this attitude is very far from being general. For example, modern business management characteristically tends towards organizing work in such a way that it involves both "heart and brain", though hardly for humanitarian reasons, but rather with the aim of achieving economic efficiency.

It is increasingly accepted that the meaning attributed to labor is highly determined by the situation of one's personal life as a whole. Even work with little visible meaning attains value and importance when it makes part of a life history that is characterized by a personal value experience and interpersonal satisfaction. This was equally true in pre-industrial society, but in a society where the traditional labor values gradually are disappearing, this experience is becoming of ever greater importance. In a society in which human dignity is respected, where people are engaged in movements and activities for justice and look for ever new forms of solidarity, there is also a chance that they will find new sense and meaning in labor.

When Catholic social teaching speaks of the sense and meaning of labor, it does not do so as part of an utopian or wishful thinking, or in contrast to social reality. It does so on the basis of its religious and ethical premises, but also out of its responsibility for the humanization of labor. A "culture of labor" in the true sense consists not only in safeguarding material and social rights, but also and to a very substantial extent in the experience of values and meanings. Catholic social teaching feels particularly obliged to mediate and communicate this value experience and finding of meaning.

Concluding remarks

This paper has tried to summarize Catholic social teaching on labor in its historical dimension as well as in its essential content. The final part formulated briefly a number of questions and tasks. A concluding word has to be added. All those who have their finger even very lightly on the pulse of the present-day discussion about labor are becoming more and more convinced that the labor of the future and the future of labor will prove to

be "the key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question" (*Laborem exercens*, 3). Catholic social teaching has faced this challenge right from its beginning. It did not limit itself to ethical imperatives, but initiated movements and actions that made considerable contributions to a culture of labor. But, Catholic social teaching today finds itself on the eve of deep-going economic, social, political and cultural transformations which will have a decisive influence on the future of labor. Therefore, the social teachings must engage themselves with the future of labor in a new and much more decisive way. There is no doubt that the Church's standard of research and its knowledge of problems of labor are full of gaps. The Church's contribution to a culture of labor, however, is both necessary and requested. But such a contribution calls for a great deal of factual knowledge, further development of the Church's own social teaching, and a new commitment of the Church as a whole. The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences is challenged by all of these tasks.