



Final Statement of the Plenary Session on The Global Quest for Tranquillitas Ordinis

Pacem in Terris, Fifty Years Later



The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences devoted its XVIII Plenary Session (27 April – 1 May 2012) to the subject: “The Global Quest for Tranquillitas Ordinis: Pacem in Terris, Fifty Years Later”. Papers were given by 19 members of the Academy, and by 18 invited experts. The academicians and invited experts not only represented the several scholarly disciplines of social sciences, but also included former heads and ministers of state as well as churchmen experienced in the policies and practices of both temporal and ecclesiastical government around the world. Special emphasis was given to new agents and authorities in the global commons who shape from below new networks of information and who initiate humanitarian and charitable cooperation. Not least, in view of the New Evangelization, the Academy welcomed the insights of theologians on Christ as the Prince of Peace, and more generally on the role of religion in promoting reconciliation.

Marking the 50th anniversary of Blessed Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, this plenary also provided a capstone for recent meetings that anticipated important themes in that encyclical. The 2009 plenary, on “Catholic Social Doctrine and Human Rights”, observed the 60th anniversary of the U.N.’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was a precedent for the “magna carta” of human rights enunciated in *Pacem in Terris*. Then, in 2010, the Academy considered the urgent subject of the “Crisis in a Global Economy”. Pope John’s firm articulation of the right of religious liberty paved the way for the Second Vatican Council’s declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*. It was fitting that the Academy should turn its attention in 2011 to the international

situation of religious liberty.

The XVIII Plenary set for itself the rather daunting task of evaluating the vast tableaux of social, scientific, economic, political, and technological changes that have ensued over the past half century since *Pacem in Terris*. The PASS council and the coordinator of the plenary chose the title “The Global Quest for *Tranquillitas Ordinis*” in recognition of the fact that Blessed John XXIII was inspired by St. Augustine’s definition of peace as “the tranquility of order”. Indeed, his encyclical highlights six important modes of order, which are conditions or ways of peace: (1) order in the universe, which gives rise to issues of science, technology, and ecology; (2) order in freedom and conscience that flows from an individual’s participation in the eternal law, which points to fundamental anthropological and moral truths; (3) order among individual human persons, which requires truth to complete itself in freedom, justice, and love; (4) order between members of a political community and its authorities, pointing to the complex relationships and responsibilities of rulers and citizens for the sake of the common good; (5) order between political communities, reminding us of the need for states to be guided by something more than a *realpolitik*; (6) order that ought to obtain between all peoples and individuals to a worldwide community, raising in our own time the urgent and perplexing problem of how to achieve institutions of authority adequate to the global commons.

The first session of the Plenary framed three important themes, to which the Academy’s discussions continually returned over the next three sessions. First, the human person is the center and summit of social institutions. It was pointed out that the specifically human participation in the different aspects of order outlined in *Pacem in Terris* depends upon and expresses laws that are chiefly moral in nature. These orders are not material things but rather relationships that presuppose the human capacity to act intelligently. To be sure, orders can be studied empirically, just as they can be assisted by new technologies, but not so as to replace or obscure the unique order in the human person. An adequate anthropology is fundamental to serious study of social institutions and changes, for these changes are not the result of material forces or of historical inevitabilities.

A noteworthy passage in the encyclical underscores a second important theme in the discussions, namely that of truth: “Now the order which prevails in human society is wholly incorporeal in nature. Its foundation is truth, and it must be brought into effect by justice. It needs to be animated and perfected by men’s love for one another, and, while preserving freedom intact, it must make for an equilibrium in society which is increasingly more human in character” (PT §37). Human freedom to create orders of justice and to perfect them with love depends on truth. Pope Benedict XVI’s recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* was often referenced as a restatement in our time of the main principle in Catholic Social Doctrine.

The Academy is well aware of the urgent need for dialogue between the different disciplines of inquiry – both scientific and practical – to cooperate in a non-reductive understanding the human

person and human social institutions. Throughout the plenary, several academicians and invited experts emphasized the importance of the dialogue of faith and reason, which are differently, but mutually, ways of truth seeking and of perfecting human solidarity. The multiplicity of disciplined inquiries and ways of knowledge should not be construed as a division of the unity of the human person.

A third major theme that was sounded at the outset and that echoed throughout the Plenary is that Blessed John XXIII's vision of peace as tranquility of order is a work-in-progress. The perennial task of discerning the signs of the times is always situated in the thickness of history. Sometimes the crises are of such magnitude and importance that they are evident to everyone. In the early 1960s it was the threat of a global nuclear war; in the first decade of the 21st century, it is the fear of a globalized economy in disequilibrium. More likely, however, the dead-ends as well as the new opportunities for social progress and harmony are more subtle. These are discerned by the patient attention of a scientist, or by the imaginative experiments of an innovator of human practices, or even by the prophet who sees a thread in the history of salvation running through human history. The social scientist, too, needs to ask herself what to look at, and just as importantly how to look.

Much discussion was devoted to issues of government over the four sessions. Such attention was not unexpected, because four of the six modes of order in the encyclical pertain to institutional harmonies which, in some broad sense, can be called government. Discussions frequently circled back to the situation of European Union as well as to the global economic challenges that cross jurisdictional and political borders. There was general agreement about basic principles: (1) That it is a mistake to think of the challenges to European Union as merely monetary problems, just as it is wrong to think more globally of the economic crisis as a merely managerial problem; (2) That in a multi-polar world, the re-emergence of Realpolitik is a real danger, for it moves us back toward a Westphalian order than away from it; (3) That while political, economic, and environmental issues make more urgent the need for adequate regional and global institutions of authority, it is rather nebulous how to achieve this goal, especially in light of two qualifying conditions recognized by the Church – namely, that they be achieved freely, mutually by consent, and that they adhere to the principle of subsidiarity. Although the problem was raised whether already-existing international institutions needed to be gradually revised, or whether entirely new institutions need to be devised, there was some intimation of consensus among discussants about new financial institutions, but not about broader international-political ones. Many academicians believe more work is needed on subsidiarity in order to provide practical guidance to the shaping of new institutions.

There was general agreement, as well, that globalization without the right institutions of order is not necessarily a good thing. Globalization, for example, demands that borders vanish, without however realizing freedom for those who lack resources to take advantage of being “globalized”, or who need domestic institutions of justice to protect the weak from exploitation. From different perspectives and with different emphases, academicians and invited experts noted that the

weakening solidarity of the nation-state does not necessarily lead to a firmer order of justice or a universal order of human prosperity.

These fascinating and recurrent discussions about the big picture were complimented by very useful case studies pertaining to certain countries or global regions in which political, economic, and ecological issues can be assessed in a smaller frame. Reports and discussions ranged from Peru and other regions of Latin America, to Africa, to the Arab Spring, to emigration and demographic patterns in different parts of the world, and to ecological reform in India.

Academicians were reminded that creating, and sometimes losing, one or another aspect of tranquility of order depends considerably on getting smaller things right, or wrong: in elections, relinquishing authority to the victor; in political parties, honestly and intelligently changing policies which do not work; in environmental issues, introducing cost-effective changes that can be appropriated by ordinary people.

One of the most intriguing developments, from below, so to speak, is the “new communications”. Here, we considered not so much the new devices and material platforms of communication as the “open source” commons. This global commons facilitates the knowledge and communication for scientific, civic and economic purposes, by private individuals and associations. It promises to expand human communication beyond certain monopolies on education and expression and networking imposed by governments, political parties, religions, or corporations.

Similar points were made with regard to religion, particularly, but not exclusively, to Christianity. Studies have suggested that religious agents are most successful in building peace when they are independent of the state. Hence, the skills of solidarity acquired over generations by a religious tradition can be deployed for education, care of the indigent, fostering reconciliation. Several eminent theologians gave papers on the “kingdom” as Christians should understand it. That is to say, Christ did not preach or command his disciples to realize a kingdom that culminates in a particular polity. Hence, Christians can be agents of peace at local, regional, and global levels without being a rival to the other institutions of order. Its message is not power but conversion, which is not without social consequences. It is not only important for Christians to continually understand how the Kingdom differs from other institutions, but also to discern the differences between kinds of “secularism” and “secularity”, and to open serious dialogue with those who fear that religion is a rival to scientific and moral truth, and to the spectrum of human institutions of order and progress. Thus, the discussion of the Academy returned to the opening theme of truth, and the memorable words of Blessed Pope John XXIII: “Now the order which prevails in human society is wholly incorporeal in nature. Its foundation is truth ...”.

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