



## Governance in a Changing World

Meeting the Challenges of Liberty, Legitimacy, Solidarity, and Subsidiarity



In 2013 the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences will conclude its reflections on the themes of *Pacem in Terris* with a workshop devoted to "Governance in a changing world: meeting the challenges of liberty, legitimacy, solidarity and subsidiarity".

The Workshop follows two annual sessions dedicated to examining the themes of Pope John XXIII's encyclical in the current world environment. As with other themes in that encyclical, the treatment of issues of governance in Catholic Social Thought is ripe for review as the Church confronts the new geopolitical and technological scenarios that are emerging in the 21st Century. The main purpose of the workshop will be to evaluate several new challenges for governance—with particular attention to liberty, legitimacy, solidarity and subsidiarity.

Ever since the days of Augustine and Aquinas, Catholicism has brought a distinctive way of thinking to the study of governance, beginning with the Aristotelian understanding of politics as not merely about the getting and keeping of power but as the art of free persons deliberating about how to order their lives together. This distinctive tradition of reflection on politics is a tradition of moral realism built around three key insights. First, classic Catholic political theory teaches that politics like every other activity that is carried out by human persons with conscience and freedom takes place within the horizon of individual and social moral judgment. Second, Catholic political theory teaches that power is not to be reduced to force but rather is to be understood as the capacity to achieve the common good, thus placing the focus on how governance is to be exercised, to what ends, by what authority, and by what means. Third, the Catholic tradition has a distinctive understanding of peace as not merely the absence of war, but as the tranquility of order.

A major milestone in this tradition was *Pacem in Terris* where John XXIII pointed out that there were certain new problems that could only be addressed on a global basis. While he did not discuss in any detail how that might be accomplished, he stressed that any global authority should operate according to justice and the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. Thus, one major focus of the workshop will be the application of the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, both within nations, and as those principles apply to the evolving relationships among developed countries, developing countries, and countries that have been left behind in the economic progress that has taken place in recent years. In *Pacem in Terris* John XXIII had already brought to the forefront the need to re-examine the application of the principle of subsidiarity, calling for the creation of a global environment “in which the public authorities of each nation, its citizens and intermediate groups, can carry out their tasks, fulfill their duties and claim their rights with greater security” (141). At the same time, he was careful to point out that global authority would have to be exercised not only with due regard for the legitimate prerogatives of lower forms of public authority, but also with respect for the free associations of civil society including the family.

Another major milestone in the development of Catholic political theory was the Second Vatican Council’s proclamation that “only in freedom can man direct himself toward goodness” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 17). Pope John Paul II elaborated on that affirmation of liberty in his 1995 Address to the United Nations where he said that humanity’s “quest for freedom” arises “from a recognition of the inestimable dignity and value of the human person” and the consequent desire “to be given a place in social, political and economic life which is commensurate with their dignity as free human persons.” The quest for freedom, he later pointed out, has important implications for governance: “The free and responsible participation of all citizens in public affairs,” “the rule of law”, and “respect for and promotion of human rights” are essential to “the ‘health’ of a political community” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 44).

More recently, Pope Benedict XVI has emphasized the connections among subsidiarity, solidarity and “responsible freedom” in his encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (where he also makes several references to the concept of legitimacy). Evoking Pope Paul VI’s vision of human development, he described that vision as having economic, social, and political dimensions: “From the economic point of view, this meant [people’s] active participation, on equal terms, in the international economic process; from the social point of view, it meant their evolution into educated societies marked by solidarity; from the political point of view, it meant the consolidation of democratic regimes capable of ensuring freedom and peace (21)”. Applying those principles to the challenges of globalization, he said that “*in order not to produce a dangerous universal power, the governance of globalization must be marked by subsidiarity (57)*”. Describing the subsidiarity principle as “an expression of inalienable human freedom, he pointed out that subsidiarity “*must remain closely linked to the principle of solidarity and vice versa, since the former without the latter gives way to social privatism, while the latter without the former gives way to paternalist social assistance that is demeaning to those in need (57, 58)*” (italics in original).

The workshop will begin its inquiry into how these teachings can be brought to life under current conditions by seeking the best available information on the actual state of affairs. At the same time, the participants will explore deeper questions that by their very nature are scientific, political,

psychological, and religious. In order to establish the common good in the global world, it will be important to establish the relations among natural goods, common to all of humanity, such as energy, water, and so on, the goods produced by human beings, and nonmarket goods such as the dignity of the human person and his or her body. This will serve to clarify the goals that a global authority is called to order. In particular, the workshop will concentrate on evaluating the momentous moral challenges that arise as geopolitical and technological developments transform the world as we have known it.

In sum, it is hoped, first, that the 2013 workshop will produce a clear practical understanding of the new challenges to governance in a changing world, and secondly, that it will generate material helpful to the Church as she continues to develop her distinctive tradition of moral realism in politics.

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