

*The Social Justice Agenda:
A Ketteler Legacy*



*We are the care of God
for the world.*

Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler

Social Justice

Opening Prayer

Option 1

Leader: We exalt your Providence, O God

All: *and we commit ourselves to making Providence more visible in our world.*

Leader: Provident God, thank you for the legacy of justice, for the time to ponder, to question, to struggle, for the new insights, for immersion in the issues, for a greater consciousness and courage rising in us.

All: *Strengthen us to speak your truth and trust that You are with us.*

Leader: Provident God, thank you for the legacy of justice, for our charism, for trust, for openness and receptivity, for a consistent ethic of life, and our searching its deepest meanings, for beliefs, values, Gospel calls, and the commitment rising in us.

All: *Focus us to speak your truth and trust that You are with us.*

Leader: Provident God, thank you for the legacy of justice, for the vision to see a new reality, to hear a new call, for the struggle of wealth, power, and advancement, for the poor, the helpless, and the prophet rising in us.

All: *Enlighten us to speak your truth and trust that You are with us.*

Leader: Provident God, thank you for the legacy of justice, for attention to climate change, stewardship, and sustainability, for the new cosmology, for treading lightly on the earth, and for right relationships rising in us.

All: *Educate us to speak your truth and trust that You are with us.*

Leader: Provident God, thank you for the legacy of justice, for sponsoring safe places for those in danger, compassion for the lost and lonely, for educating children, providing shelter for the homeless, spiritual guidance for the journey, for Sisters, Associates, and co-workers and the hope rising in us.

All: *Stretch us to continue to speak your truth and trust that You are with us.*

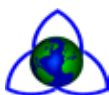
Leader: Provident God, thank you for the legacy of justice, for respect, compassion, integration, and wholeness, for peace vigils, advocacy letters, and lived mission experiences, for Chapter mandates, goals, and the witness rising in us.

All: *Challenge us to speak your truth and trust that You are with us.*

Leader: Provident God, thank you for the legacy of justice, for the grace to see one another in truth and hold one another in reverence, for the gifts of discernment, humor, and harmony, for the forgiveness, healing and oneness, and the Sacred rising in us.

All: *Renew our spirit to speak your truth and trust that You are with us.*

By Barbara McMullen, CDP, for the *Book of Hours, Volume 1, A Celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Our Founders.*



Opening Prayer

Option 2

Leader: We exalt your Providence, O God

All: and we commit ourselves to making Providence more visible in our world.

“I love the age in which we live for its mighty wrestling with the problems of our day, however far away we are from solving them.” *Bishop Ketteler*

Side 1: In this moment, draw us to yourself Provident God. Make us aware not so much of what we're given, but of all we have received and so have to share.

Side 2: Send us forth in power and gladness and with great courage to live out in the world what we pray and profess as women (and men) of Providence.

Side 1: That in sharing, we may do justice...make peace.

Side 2: Grow in love. Enjoy ourselves, other people and your world now and You forever, Amen.

Adapted from Guerrillas of Grace by Ted Loder.



The Social Justice Agenda: A Ketteler Legacy

A. The Ketteler Legacy:

In order to understand the importance of peace and justice in the context and life commitment of a Sister of Divine Providence (CDP's), one must first know something about Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, Bishop of Mainz, Germany (1849-1877) one of the two Co-founders of the CDP's.

Ketteler never perceived justice in a vacuum. He always spoke of justice in the context of charity or compassion. Further, he understood the social teaching of the Church as the primary lens from which to view the political and economic issues of his times.

Finally, he understood the theology of Divine Providence as inclusive, embracing the past, present and future. Thus he was able to say, with great depth of meaning, "I love the age in which we live, with its mighty wrestling with sublime ideas, however far we are from attaining them."

Ketteler knew that there would be another age and another time and that the "wrestling" would be with a new set of ideas for that new era. He knew that this is how the Provident God works.



Ketteler's legacy involves powerful agendas:

1. The concern for the rights of the working class and the poor, and the rise of the labor union to protect and preserve these rights.

Given the rise of the industrial revolution, and the concurrent rise of Marxism, Ketteler feared that unless there was a counter movement which centered on a Christian response, Marxism would possibly prevail. Ketteler countered with an oft quoted sermon at Liebfrauenheide, which stressed the dignity of work, the rights of workers and the poor, the protection of property rights, the evil of child labor, and the need to keep the Sabbath holy. With this speech, a Christian social labor movement was launched in Germany. The principle tenet was that only through the teachings of Jesus Christ could the labor movement move forward with dignity. The institutions founded by Ketteler were and are living proof of his broad social concerns e.g. orphanages, schools, hospitals, home care, etc.

2. The centrality of the Christian family, of Christian education and the enhancement of the position of women in the Church and society.

In a series of sermons delivered in 1848, Ketteler stated: "The mother is the prime educator also, she is the educator of the father of the family... Woman is the hearer of peace, joy and blessing." Throughout his episcopacy, Ketteler acted to provide equal access to education, and to stress the role of women and the family. He also spoke in behalf of benefits for workers and release-time to provide resources for and presence to families. These actions also flowed from his emphasis on human liberty in relation to God's will and divine governance.

3. The position of Ketteler and the German Bishops regarding papal infallibility at Vatican Council I.

In 1869, Pope Pius IX called Vatican Council I. A primary issue at the Council was the draft of a document on the centrality of Papal infallibility. While Ketteler and the other German bishops were not opposed to papal infallibility, they also defended the collegial role of the bishops of the world when a statement was to be made "ex cathedra". Ketteler also desired more time to educate the German people to this reality. When Ketteler realized that the document was not going to include this collegial understanding, he and other bishops left the council, prior to the vote,



rather than cast a “non placet” vote against the will of Rome after submitting a letter indicating that he would concede to whatever the Council determined.

4. The call of Ketteler, particularly with regard to the social agenda, to read the signs of the times, and to address this agenda.

Ketteler’s capability to do this is evident in his response to the *Kulturkampf*, a movement on the part of Bismarck to reign in the influence of the Churches in Germany, especially the Catholic Church. When Bismarck removed the Priests and Sisters from schools, hospitals and social work, a lesser person may have succumbed. Instead, Ketteler used this as an opportunity to reach out to a broader world need by extending apostolic endeavors beyond Germany. Thus, our Sisters set sail for the United States and another group to the Netherlands.

Concurrently, through the early 1870’s Ketteler led the movement to take back the rights of the Church to exercise its ministerial role. There are numerous other examples of Ketteler’s move to address the needs of the times and to act in behalf of the people of God. In many instances he was ahead of the prevailing cultural situation, one of the reasons why he is perceived as a powerful voice in the 21st century.

B. The God of Providence and the Justice Agenda:

The emphasis of contemporary Providence theologians has been on the following:

1. The action of caring extended to the whole of creation and found active in the establishment of right relations and ecological and environmental concern for the earth;
2. A dynamic understanding of Divine/human governance beyond a passive acceptance of the will of God and into co-creative concepts, which carry on the saving acts of Jesus;
3. Reconciliation which goes beyond mere forgiveness and into active reconciling;
4. Emphasis in New Testament understandings beyond the care expressed in the “lilies of the field” and in more active Gospel passages, such as the wedding feast of Cana, the loaves and fishes, and the Good Samaritan as Providence stories;
5. Understandings of compassion and caring which related to standing with those who suffer as an act of solidarity;
6. Liberation as a Providence call to “set free the captives”.

C. Translation into Contemporary Understandings:

Where does this background put the Sisters of Divine Providence and those who identify with their charism and stance in the 21st century?

In order to answer this question it is important to understand several contemporary realities. While the CDP’s understood that peace and justice were part of their charism, until the redefining of religious life and the renewal which followed, this aspect of our heritage was understood in fairly traditional terms.

The redefinition in the 1960’s also took on added momentum as it was stoked by political and cultural events, particularly in the United States, e.g. the era of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights movement, etc. Also the CDP’s had opportunities for justice education from the formation of organizations such as Network, Common Cause, Pax Christi and local movements for peace and justice.

CDP’s also reflected on how some were better at the service aspects of justice, while others felt called to devote efforts to systemic change. Many felt called to re-examine the role of women, particularly in our Church, and to act to insure the integration of inclusive pro-feminism into the ongoing dialogue in the Church and in society. Over time from these initial streams in the 20th century, as we now move into the era of the new millennium, there are some new directions:

1. The desire to read the “signs of the times” in a contemporary context and to



adopt the slogan “to think globally and act locally”. This also involves the obligation to keep abreast of contemporary issues and to take action where we can both individually and corporately. Recently, CDP’s have moved in the direction of realizing that a corporate stance is necessary for the purpose of solidarity, and thus the first move in this direction was to address the issue of trafficking and to take corporate action against it.

2. Just as Ketteler related to Divine Governance and the will of God, so do the CDP’s. We do this in the light of emerging understandings of Providence, which view our role as co-creators, with a great responsibility for the cosmos, for environmental issues, for planetary sustainability and for right relationships with all of God’s creation.

3. In each of the sponsored ministries of the congregation there is a defined justice thrust flowing from the mission statement. In educational and spirituality ministries, justice education is a prime agenda, part of the curriculum and program development as well as in education of lay leadership and governing or advisory boards. The social ministries are active in making justice with compassion a living reality each day.

4. Local communities pray and reflect frequently on this legacy and find ways to support justice causes locally through education, service and direct involvement to support ongoing awareness and change. There are numerous examples but to name a few, fund-raising for causes, the weekly peace protest at our central headquarters, service at or support for local food banks, homeless shelters, our own ministries and our foster care program.

5. The enlargement of the community base of influence has been aided by our Associate Program and involvement with other peace and justice societies and movements. It is also supported by the sisters and associates who have chosen positions or volunteer work in the social ministries and who work to educate others in this regard.

6. As stated in the prayer service opening the 200th Anniversary of Bishop Ketteler:
“Provident God, thank you for the legacy of justice, for the time to ponder, to question, to struggle for the new insights, for immersion in issues, for a greater consciousness rising in us. Strengthen us to speak your truth and trust that You are with us.” (Barbara McMullen, CDP)

Sources: W. E. Ketteler: *Six Sermons Relative to the Social Question*. 1848;
Sr. Liberata Ricker, *Wilhelm Emmanuel Freiherr von Ketteler, der Mainzer Arbeiter bischof, gestern — heute — morgen*. 2007.

Prepared by: M. Joan Coultas, CDP, January 2011



Six Topics Relative To The Social Question

Delivered by Bishop Ketteler two years before his consecration as Bishop of Mainz, November 19, 1848 through December 20, 1848

1. The Christian View of Private Property: The "haves and the have-nots;" the rich growing richer and the poor growing poorer; God is exclusive proprietor of all creation; regardless of how property comes to be exercised, how it is shared or delegated, or who comes into possession of property, the ultimate dominion of God remains inviolate. He sees the lack of faith which deprives the rich of any spirit of active charity to work among the poor. Where there is private ownership, goods will be properly cared for.



2. Christian Charity and the Social Problem: Ketteler reminds the people that the answer to the social ills do not lie with the government, for no matter what "form of government we choose, still there will not be enough bread, enough food, enough shelter, enough clothing for our poor." He said that the poor become involved with political movements out of desperation and the unnaturalness of their poverty.

3. Human Liberty: He stressed the importance of interior and exterior freedom to be truly human and to become all that we, as human beings, are destined to become. This demands a reform also of education. Ketteler believed in Christian education which was persecuted in his time. Ketteler reiterates the Christian concept of human liberty, believing that God has given us something of His own freedom and self-determination in creating us. Human liberty means we are capable of developing according to God's plan.

4. Human Dignity: Here he stressed the importance to strive to heal the division between the rich and poor; he talked about halting the moral decline that victimized large numbers of people who have lost faith and hope and love for God and fellow-human beings. He presents an either/or--our destination is either outside of this world, in GOD, in which case our life is a preparation for our ultimate goal or else our destiny is to enjoy the here and now and to terminate our existence when we die. The human heart longs for peace and justice and this is part of our human destiny.

5. Christian Marriage and the Family: He notes how hard it is to present the ideal to someone who has had no experience of a Christian family. He mentions three essential components of Christian marriage: love, unity and indissolubility. There were elements working against good marriages in his time. His allegiance to the Church is seen in his convincing statements. "Marriage is an exclusive treasure of Christianity." He stressed the importance of the SACRAMENT of marriage with all the grace it brings. And because Christ demands such pure, self-sacrificing love and fidelity in marriage, He will equip souls with grace to measure up. Ketteler speaks of the dignity of women and how much Christianity has enhanced the place of women in the Church. He urged all men and women to develop devotion to Mary. He says that the mother takes the first place as prime educator of her children and adds (How about this?) that a good Christian mother is also the educator of the father in the family.

6. Teaching Authority of the Church: He teaches that we all need a certain amount of authority and that we must seek the higher, infallible authority. As a loyal Catholic of his time, he states emphatically that there is just one institution which offers this divine authority -"the Roman Catholic Church, our holy mother!" He said that our choice is not whether we wish to submit to authority, but rather to which authority we will subject ourselves. He makes a strong plea for adherence to the Catholic Church and to embrace its teachings with fidelity and integrity.

Throughout these six discourses there is a very prevalent and evident feeling that Ketteler sensed the mounting tensions between government factions and the Church; between ecclesiastical and political authority; between Protestants and Catholics--something we can hardly imagine, given our American tradition. Only by reading more can we appreciate his stature in the world and church of his day. -- Genevieve Brandstetter, CDP



The Christian View of Private Property

By Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler

Translated by Rupert J. Ederer, Ph.D., Buffalo, N. Y.

First sermon, November 19, 1848

Today, my Christian Brethren. we reflect over the centuries that have passed since the dedication of the ancient churches in this city as houses of the living God, and we look back over the ranks of your ancestors who with one faith, one hope, and one common love walked through these doors. It was they who passed on to you that greatest legacy of all, the Faith in which they lived and died happily. It may also be useful to look into the future and to ask whether you and your children will preserve with equal loyalty these houses of God in the true Faith, so that future generations will be able to commemorate the consecration of churches as we are doing today.

The most reassuring thought in this regard, however, is that while church buildings depend on human caprice which can be fickle, the Church to which we belong owes its strength and durability not to man, but to God and His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to whom is given all power on heaven and on earth.

The survival of the Catholic Church on earth, therefore, is not jeopardized because the powerful of this earth and entire nations may rise against it, nor is it guaranteed because princes and governments may choose to protect it. The Church goes on existing because of the will of Almighty God who once said, "Let it be," and by His word He created the world out of nothing. It is the same God who then said to a mortal man, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." (Matthew 16: 18) And, that same God later give the Church His promise, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." (Luke 21: 33)

Therefore, whether the servants of the Church, the Apostles of old and their successors go about, unsupported by earthly power, without staff and shoes, without gold and silver, without a constant abode, with only one cloak. or whether respectful nations build palaces for them and surround them with worldly might and splendor, the Rock on which the Church rests is still no more or no less permanent. Men have no more power over the Church than they have over Christ Himself. They can try to make Him king or they can turn around and persecute Him, mock Him, dress Him in the cloak of a fool and nail Him to a cross; but they are unable to prevent Him from rising from the tomb by His own power, nor can they foreclose upon the survival of His Kingship here on earth.

And so it is with the Church of Christ. Men can bestow upon it earthly treasures and a seat alongside the thrones of kings as our ancestors did; or they can rob it of its earthly possessions, mock and humiliate it as is the case today. Still the power of the Almighty which resides in the crucified Christ cannot be taken from the crucified Church. The Church will survive by this power until the end of time.

By virtue of this faith and conviction, the Church calls itself Catholic, i.e., the Church for all mankind. It possesses a heritage of unchangeable truth more lofty than any imaginable cultural accomplishments of the human spirit. It enjoys a vitality more dynamic than any conceivable ebb and flow of human life. If there were a single truth in all creation greater than that truth possessed by the Catholic Church, if there were a single virtue nobler than those which the Catholic Church strives to inculcate, if there were a single vice or corruption which the Church could not overcome, then belief in that Church would be a deception and trust in it would be folly. The Church would not be the work of God but rather of man.

Until now, the Church has stood the test of time true to her Divine origin. All through history, no higher mission and no greater power has appeared that could supplant that of the Church. She has the mandate to spread its message as the universal truth for all mankind. "Go out all over the world, and preach the gospel to the whole of creation." (Mark 16: 15) Without benefit of temporal resources, without the



benefit of human learning and erudition, relying solely on the overpowering with Divine truth of its teaching, the early Church went about fulfilling that mandate. She has conquered time and distance until our own day and proclaimed the Gospel throughout the world. She has sought out all the nations of the earth. She has presented her truth alike to kings and beggars, to the learned and proud as well as to simple children. In the face of the endless diversity and confusion to which the human spirit is subject, 'the Church has always succeeded in discovering and holding fast to herself those qualities and truths which are common to all mankind. Thus, she has always and everywhere been in tune with the saying of Tertullian, "Oh human spirit, you are, by your nature, Christian!" (Tertullian, Apolog. c. 17)

The Catholic Church has been tested in the face of all human resourcefulness. A thousand times her enemies have erred out triumphantly, as they once taunted the crucified Christ, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." (Matthew 27: 40) "If you are the work of God, climb out of the abyss into which we have cast you." But the judgment of history prevailed and the Church, time and again, arose from the dead by her own mysterious power while her enemies disappeared often without leaving a significant trace in history.

Now, once again, we find ourselves at such a point in history, The enemies of the Church, more numerous and powerful than ever, stand around the cross onto which they have nailed the Church. Lies, injustice, mockery, and contempt are the nails and ropes by which these hostile forces wish to make certain that they will never again be confronted by the Church. Even the rank and file and the poor have all too often joined the Church's enemies, and this includes some of her own sons and daughters who are now shamefully numbered among her bitterest antagonists.

Will the Church once again be able to rise from her apparent death; will she be able to counter the disastrous prevailing unbelief with the ancient Faith of our fathers; will she be able to restore her high moral standards to stem the flood of oral decadence which now threatens to drown us; will she know how to dispense good counsel, help and confidence in this atmosphere of moral chaos and desperation? We respond, without a moment's hesitation with our resounding, "Yes!" What more, we are prepared to bear witness to this belief with every last drop of blood in our veins. Millions of loyal Catholics around the earth join with us in our response to the challenge. How else to explain the calm and confidence of all steadfast Catholics in the face of the raging storms? Even as the towering waves threaten to engulf us, the loyal Catholic stands secure on the Rock, bolstered by a confidence that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!

But this serene faith is not enough in our time! We must bear witness to its truth by works. Precisely now' when the Church stands abandoned by all worldly power she must more than ever reveal her inner God-given strength and show the world that she possesses the same power that brought Christ's mission to fulfillment as He hung helpless on the Cross and made Christianity victorious in the first centuries when the overwhelming might of Pagan Rome was arrayed against it. Now the Church must draw on the deposit of her embattled Faith to present a truth to the world which will work like a sun to dispel the fog which the Father of Lies is spreading. And now she must draw on that reservoir to offer a source of strength, of love, and of virtue which will heal all wounds and lift the crushing burden under which our world is staggering.

How the Church will accomplish this twofold task, which now confronts her, to spread the truth and to restore life to a decadent society, is something none of us can answer. The Holy Spirit who guides her will determine her course. All that I am privileged to do at present is to recall the Church's teaching which is relevant to the most vital social problems of our time, namely the Church's teaching regarding the private property right. I would like to point out how superior this teaching is to contemporary opinions regarding the property right and how the Church, fortified with this doctrine, can heal the evil of our time.



Today the haves and have-nots (*Die Besitzenden und die Nichtbesitzenden*) confront each other with animosity, and the poverty of the masses grows daily. The right to ownership is, for all practical purposes, viewed with suspicion by those who are deprived of property; and from time to time there are manifestations which leap up like flames from the earth, now here, now there, threatening a general conflagration. On the one side we witness a stubborn, narrow interpretation of the property right, and on the other a determination to abolish that right completely. We look desperately for moderation between these extremes.

Amid the turmoil we intend to recall the teaching of the Catholic Church on property as it was developed by St. Thomas Aquinas more than six hundred years ago. We may perhaps discover that the human spirit, guided by the Faith, came up with an answer to our problem more than half a millennium ago which mankind having abandoned that Faith, is now trying in vain to rediscover.

To express the fundamental Church teaching on property rights, St. Thomas falls back on the relationship between God and His creation. We shall re-examine the Saint's treatment of this basic relationship.

St. Thomas teaches that all creatures and all earthly goods, by virtue of their original nature, can belong only to God. This thesis follows logically from the article of Faith which tells us that everything created by God Himself was created from nothing. Therefore, God is the true and exclusive ultimate proprietor of all creatures.

This ultimate dominion of God over His creatures is part and parcel of the essence of creation and is, therefore, inalienable. Regardless of how the property right comes to be exercised, how it is shared, or delegated, or what customs may appear, or who may come into possession of property, the ultimate dominion of God over His creatures remains inviolate. In this sense, God has the absolute right and man does not. However, aside from this ultimate absolute dominion of God, St. Thomas speaks of a right to use (*Nutzungsrecht*), and it is here that man's rights over earthly goods become operative. Thus, when we speak of a natural right to private property, where man is concerned one cannot speak of a full and absolute right--that belongs only to God--but only a right to use.

From this it is clear that man's right to property--even his right to possess and use property--is never absolute in the sense that man may use earthly goods as he pleases. Man must use the goods of creation as the Creator has ordained their use. Man must conform to the order which God has determined in the use of the things of creation, and he has no right to use them in any manner which goes counter to God's plan of creation. This plan of the Creator for His earthly goods is expressed in the nature of creation itself and expressed in the words which God spoke after He created the world: "See, I give you all the seed-bearing plants that are upon the whole earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this shall be your food." (Genesis 1: 29)

The conclusion we draw from St. Thomas' teaching is that God had the ultimate dominion over all things. In His providence, however, He destined certain of those things for sustaining man in his corporal needs, and therefore man has a certain natural right to private property, namely, the right to use the things of creation. From this concept of property we draw two important conclusions.

First, the Catholic Church's concept of property has nothing in common with the prevalent view which regards man as the absolute lord of that which he owns. The Church can in no sense support the notion that man has the right to "wheel and deal" (*zu schalten und walten*) as he pleases with the goods of this world. When she speaks of and defends the property rights, she must always preserve the three essential elements of that right:

- 1) that God and God alone is the ultimate and absolute owner of all things;
- 2) that man has only a restricted right, in effect, to use created things;
- 3) that in using created things man must always have regard for the order which God established for the universe.

Second, it is clear that such a notion of the property right of which we are speak-



ing, is possible only when there is living faith in God, which acknowledges that this right is based on His will and on a divinely established order. Only since men who call themselves the friends of humanity, although they work to destroy humanity, along with their spiritual ancestors, have shattered men's faith in God, has it been possible for such an unholy concept of private property to gain currency. We refer to a concept of ownership whereby man in effect arrogates to himself the rights which only God possesses over property. Once he divorced himself from his God, man pictured himself as the exclusive lord and master of all that he possessed. Accordingly, he viewed his goods merely as a means to satisfy his growing greed.

Divorced from his God, man made pleasure-seeking and the satisfaction of his sensual appetites, the purpose of life; and the goods of this earth were, of course, the means to achieve this goal. Then a gap between rich and poor appeared such as the Christian world had never known. At the same time that most of the wealthy indulge themselves in a lavish and wasteful satisfaction of every sensate whim, they are indifferent to the plight of their less fortunate fellow men who must often do without even the bare necessities of life. Thus, the rich man is in fact depriving his brother of the things which the Creator meant for him to have. The judgement of God rests heavily on this serious distortion of the natural and supernatural order of things—this monumental injustice! It is not the Catholic Church which brought on this sorry situation, but unbelief and godlessness. As godlessness has progressively eroded the will to work among the poor it has simultaneously deprived the rich of any spirit of active charity.

The doctrine which we have discussed so far, based on God's ultimate dominion over created things, constitutes only the essential foundation of the true Christian notion of property rights. We must proceed now to build on this foundation a more complete understanding of the property right.

As we noted, man's right to private property is simply a right delegated by God to man authorizing him to use the goods of the earth according to the prescribed order in creation. This means that the goods of creation are destined to serve the needs of all mankind, God's will in this regard could be accomplished in either of two ways. Men can exercise their God-given right to own—or rather to use—property in common, as Communism proposes. Thus, they would administer the goods of the earth in common and distribute the benefits. The other alternative is to distribute the goods of the earth in such a manner that each person has the right to the exclusive use of certain things in order to enjoy the fruits of those things.

St. Thomas comes to grips with the problem as to which of these two approaches is more appropriate for mankind in general, and thus he solves a problem which troubles the world six hundred years later! Let us follow his guidance in this matter.

Regarding man's right to use property, St. Thomas makes a distinction between the right to care for and administer (*Fursorge und Verwaltung*) on the one hand, and the right to enjoy the benefits coming from property, on the other (*Fruchtgenusses*). The distinction is self-explanatory. As they appear in nature, the goods of creation are not, by and large, capable of satisfying human needs. They must first be prepared, that is to say, worked on and processed.

Regarding the care and preparation of the goods of this earth for man's use, St. Thomas states that the right of the individual person to own must be acknowledged. This is so, first, because only by private ownership will goods be properly cared for. Everyone takes better care of things which belong to him than of those things which men hold in common. Over and above this, every man avoids work where possible, and where things are held in common a man would just as soon leave tasks to his fellow man — as is the case, for example, wherever there is a large number of servants assigned to a task. It is not difficult to recognize the truth of this thesis. If all things were owned in common, or assigned only for a specified period of time, or if the inheritance right were abolished, diligent care of property would disappear. Improvement of such property would be virtually out of the question, and even the incentive to discover and try new things would be uprooted from the human spirit.



Every man would rely on everyone else; man's natural laziness would have lost its counterbalance, and this would soon lead to the domination of one by the other as well as the deterioration of available resources of the earth.

Secondly, St. Thomas wrote, only by the private ownership of property will that order be preserved which is necessary for the efficient exploitation of the goods of this earth. If everyone is in charge of everything, there will be general confusion, if not chaos. This truth is self-evident. There is a generous diversity in the division of human labor (*Abstufung der Beschäftigung*), and all must conform to a general order if all of the needs of men are to be provided for in the way God makes this possible by His plan of creation. Disturb this order, and you jeopardize the welfare of mankind. But the ownership of property by individual families is conducive to this order inasmuch as it determines to a large extent the occupation of the family members, and prevents a sudden switch from one kind of work and life style to another by large numbers of people. How chaotic the division of labor would become if it were subjected to a constantly recurring redistribution of the goods of creation among different people!

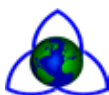
Finally, St. Thomas argued that only by acknowledging the right of private property can peace be preserved among men. Experience teaches how easily common ownership leads to quarrels and disputes. It is a truth which is painful enough that even blood relatives cannot agree on how to use what they hold in common without quarrels arising. What would happen if mankind as a whole had to share every possession and divide up every task? All humanity would disintegrate into chaos and conflict! With these three irrefutable arguments for private ownership, St. Thomas stands foursquare in harmony with the law of God which states: "Thou shalt not steal." The two together with the teaching of the Catholic Church stand irreconcilably opposed to the communism proposed in our time. Communism whereby the goods of this earth must be redistributed periodically-contradicts the law of nature, because it makes impossible the orderly administration of these goods. It thereby frustrates the natural purpose, spreads disorder and enmity among men, and consequently eliminates the necessary condition for decent human existence.

With reference to the second thesis, which derives from the right of man to use the things of the earth, namely the right to enjoy the fruits of those things of which man is in charge, St. Thomas elucidates a corresponding obligation. According to him man should never regard the fruits of his own stewardship of property as his exclusive property but rather as the common property of all. He should be prepared, therefore, to share these fruits with others who are in need. Thus, the Apostle wrote, "... Warn those who are rich in this present world...(to be) always ready to give, and to share the common burden." (1 Timothy 6: 17-18) (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theology* II, IIq. 66a 1 et 2)

Just as Christian teaching is opposed to false communism, it is no less opposed to the false teaching of private property rights which it confronts with a kind of true communism. God created nature to nourish all mankind and that goal must be accomplished. Therefore, every man should be prepared to make the fruits of what he owns common property to whatever degree this may be necessary to fulfill the intention of the Creator.

We have now presented, to the best of our ability, the teaching of St. Thomas regarding the private property right, a teaching which is also, in effect, the teaching of the Catholic Church. It is scarcely necessary to emphasize how superior this teaching is to the two irreconcilable opposing views on private ownership which confront each other in our time.

The false doctrine of the absolute right of private property sins against nature inasmuch as it sees nothing wrong with using what God intended to feed and clothe all mankind for satisfying unbounded greed and the most frivolous sensual cravings. It also undermines the noblest sentiments in the human heart and substitutes instead a harshness and insensitivity toward human misery which are not even worthy



of animals. This crude doctrine, in effect, sanctions the right to steal, since, as one father of the Church put it, stealing means not only to take what belongs to others, but also to hold back what rightfully ought to belong to others. The notorious saying, private property is theft, is not purely and simply false. Aside from enormous falsehood, it contains a grain of uncomfortable truth.

One can no longer wave this saying aside with contempt and ridicule. We must see to it that we eliminate the unpleasant kernel of truth it contains, so that it will once again be totally untrue! So long as there is that spark of truth in it, it is capable of setting the world on fire. As one excess leads to another, so one sin against nature begets another. From the exaggerated concept of property rights-Communism was begotten. But Communism too is a sin against nature. While masquerading as a humanitarian solution it can only bring misery to mankind since it destroys incentive and order as well as peace among men. It begets a war of all against all and thus eradicates the secure foundation that human existence is based upon.

Like a beacon, the truth of the Catholic Church shines through the fog of both these distortions. The Catholic Church recognizes the half-truths in each of the opposing viewpoints and integrates them in her teaching while rejecting the untruths in both. She recognizes no unconditional human right to own the goods of this earth, but only a right to make use of them according to the order ordained by God.

The Church defends the property right inasmuch as private ownership is required for the diligent care and management of property as well as in the interests of order and peace. She blesses a kind of communism inasmuch as the fruits of private ownership must again become the common property of all mankind.

I cannot leave this subject without dwelling on the way that this concept of the ownership right fits into the higher plan of Divine Providence and how everything harmonizes with the Divine plan. Man, while here on earth, must fulfill the will of God. By the power of his intellect he must grasp God's truth, and with His will he must put that truth into action. The intellect and will of man must fulfill that prayer which says, "Thy Will be done." But in accordance with the dignity of the human being, God granted to man a free will. Therefore, man acts in a truly human way and his actions only possess moral worth when he carries out the work of God on earth of his own free will. Even God respects the free will of man and does not act to set it aside even when man uses this will to harm himself, i.e., acts contrary to God's will.

Apply these important truths to the Catholic teaching on private property. God created the earth and all of its resources so that man could draw his sustenance from them. God could have accomplished this end by naturally enforced distribution of the earth's abundance. But that was not in His exalted plan. He preferred rather to afford man the opportunity to exercise self-determination and free will. He wanted to give man the chance to share in the fulfillment of His divine plan for order so that he would become God-like. Therefore, He ordained an unequal distribution of the things of this earth so far as their management and possession are concerned, in order that man might have the opportunity to share God's largesse with his fellow man.

Thus, man is supposed to be drawn into the life of love which God makes possible for us. By virtue of this charity, he ought to dispense the goods of creation which God ordained for all mankind, thereby sharing in God's loving plan. If the distribution of the goods of this earth were all predetermined so that man had no control over it, if everything were, in other words, determined by something like physical laws, or if this matter were determined somehow by government regulations, then the finest wellspring of human nobility would be stifled. That is because, my dear Christian brethren, a life characterized by self-sacrificing acts of mercy and charity is the only life worthy of the children of God. Consider the life of sacrifice for example, lived by a frail sister of Charity. I ask you, does not such a life represent a more noble spectacle of spirit, dignity, beauty, and love than perhaps the life of an entire city? If only we would return to this life of charity! If only we would sublimate all of our needs by this love! If only we would resolve to conquer the world by the strength of that love and



lead it back to the Cross from which it has strayed. Let the ancient See of St. Boniface lead the way back to this life of active Christian love. Then and only then will we preserve our Faith, because the Christian Faith can only survive where it is activated by Christian charity. I repeat, my Christian brethren, let us conquer the world by our works of love and thereby bring it back to the Catholic Faith. Amen.

Christian Charity and Social Problems

By Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler

Translated by Rupert J. Ederer, Ph.D., Buffalo, N. Y.

Second sermon, December 3, 1848

“Meanwhile, make no mistake about the age we live in; already it is high time for us to awake out of our sleep” (Romans 13: 11)

Ever since the Apostle Paul spoke these words to the Romans, the Church recalls them to the faithful each year at this time, the beginning of Advent. Down through the ages many have been obedient to this call. They awoke from their sleep, put off the things of darkness, and armed themselves with the weapons of light and of Our Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, many others have closed their ears and their hearts to the call of the Church. They persist in the ways of darkness. of the flesh and of lust. And now, we too are numbered among the generations which are predestined by God to hear this call of the Church, some of us for the last time. Let us cherish this call for the well-being of our immortal souls.

The times are becoming steadily more portentous and critical. The storm clouds that gather over our heads become ever more ominous; and as they do. the call of our Church becomes more and more urgent like the plea of a mother who sees her children threatened by great danger. In fact, on this very day, the Church has delivered a sobering warning through the voice of the bishops of all of Germany. Now I am privileged to add my unworthy voice to recall to you the words of the Apostle: “We recognize from the signs of the times that now is the hour to awaken from our sleep.”

In these words, it seems to me, there are two significant thoughts. First of all, we ought to recognize the problems of the times in which we live; and secondly, this-awareness ought to inspire us to abandon our attempt to live without Christ and to begin a new life in Christ. We will concern ourselves today with these thoughts and consider first where the attempt to live without Christ has brought humanity in our day and then what means Christ has given us to overcome the evil of the times.

My dear friends, it is impossible to speak of and recognize the conditions which confront us without time and again coming back to our social problems. I refer of course, to the division between the haves and the have nots -- the plight of our poor brothers, and the means to remedy these problems.

As much weight as we may be tempted to place on the political question and the structure of our government, still the focus of the problem does not lie there. Whatever the form of government that we may choose to establish, still there will not be enough food, enough work, enough bread, enough clothing, enough shelter for our poor. On the contrary, the more men work out solutions to our political problems, the more apparent it becomes and many don't want to accept that these only scratch the surface of the matter -- that our social problems only become still more critical and their solution becomes ever more urgent.

The main reason why the poorer sector of our population becomes involved in political movements is because of desperation and the unnaturalness of their poverty. While political leaders and demagogues alike are mainly interested in arrogating political power to themselves, the poor are concerned mainly with improving their material welfare. Until now, the latter still accord some trust to the proclamations of their leaders. They expect that relief will come from making changes in the form of government. But once they come to realize that neither the freedom of the press, the right of association, the right to vote, to assemble, nor nice speeches, nor popu-



lar sovereignty are able to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to comfort the afflicted, to heal the sick, then the poor will arise in wrath against those who deceived them. In desperation, they will seek a way out of their need and oppression by reaching out for another kind of solution.

This particular time in world history may, in fact, be destined as a proof to all mankind that it is not for one form of government or another to assure the welfare of nations; but that this calls for a different and for higher power. If our times will only make this abundantly clear, then despite all of the grief which they have brought, they will have been worthwhile! If we wish to understand our times, then we have to understand the social problems of our times. He who grasps these, understands our era; and he who does not, for him both the present and the future remain an enigma.

As an aid for understanding our social conditions, I presented, several weeks ago, the teaching of the Church on private property. I stated that this teaching is confronted at present by two opposite viewpoints; I explained how the denial of the Church's teaching would inevitably lead to the precarious condition in which we now find ourselves. Permit me to recall this teaching briefly and to proceed from it to a deeper understanding of our present problem.

According to the Church's teaching as developed by St. Thomas Aquinas, God, who created all things out of nothing, has absolute dominion over all of His creatures, human beings as well as the goods of the earth. This absolute dominion of God, being an essential derivative of the nature of creation, cannot be infringed by possession, custom, or any human prerogative. Man has only such rights as God means for him to have. In His wisdom, and providence, God has destined certain goods of the earth for man's use; and it is His will that these goods should first and foremost be available to satisfy the material needs of all mankind.

Therefore, the so-called property right is in essence nothing more than a right to use! With it comes the natural obligation imposed by God to use the fruits of our property according to His will. We pointed out also that this right to use implies two further rights: the right to manage (*Recht der Verwaltung*) whereby the goods of this earth are to be prepared for immediate use, and secondly, the right to enjoy the fruits of our property. We reached the conclusion that if God's intention is for all mankind to have access to the goods of the earth to satisfy its material needs, the right to manage property implies the right of the individual to own such property. If this were not the case, then all prudent management would cease, discord and disorder would result, and the conditions whereby man could satisfy his material wants would disappear. However, we also concluded that insofar as the yield from his property is concerned, every man must be prepared to regard his property as common. In other words, he must be prepared to cooperate with the will of the Creator in seeing to it that everyman may satisfy his urgent needs from the goods of creation!

Before I go further, my dear Christian brethren, I would like to remind you that God has favored us with a twofold revelation so that we could arrive at the truth. There is a natural and a supernatural revelation. We arrive at natural truths through the natural faculties of our soul, i.e., intelligence and reason; we reach supernatural truths with the aid of these same faculties applied to what God's messengers have revealed to us and the grace which Christ has earned for us. Since both kinds of revelation are from God and since God is the Truth, they cannot contradict each other, but they rather serve to fulfill and support each other. If we apply this to the doctrine of private property which I have called Christian, then we can, with equal right, refer to it as the natural right of private property. For even if I use certain quotations from supernatural revelation, I have nevertheless relied entirely on natural human reason to develop that doctrine. Whoever accepts that God is the Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth, and whoever agrees further that nature is destined for the support of all mankind, he would have to agree with the teaching which I have put forth here whether he is Christian or just simply a reasonable person. These two teachings are products of natural revelation, i.e., ascertainable by human reason -- since only the fool says in his heart, there is no God!



From this standpoint, the two concepts of private property which we encounter in the world represent sins not only against Christianity, but also against the natural law. It is not only unchristian, but also unnatural to regard man as the absolute owner of his possessions so that he is justified in using the fruits of his property to satisfy his most frivolous wants when he ought to be using them to alleviate his fellowman's misery. Likewise it is not only unchristian, but also unnatural to teach that goods ought to be held in common even for purposes of management -- an arrangement which leads to the elimination of all good management as well as to disorder and discord -- so that the natural function of the goods of the earth is frustrated. It is easy to understand how the unhealthy social conditions and tensions in which we now unhappily find ourselves would originate from such nonsensical doctrines, such distortions of natural truths, Thus, we are painfully aware, my Christian brethren, of the sorry social conditions which we now face. They are the inevitable consequence of this unnatural interpretation of the private property right, and that in turn is the result of the rejection of our relationship to God, and the deterioration of our living faith in God.

But one more question needs to be answered if we are to truly understand our times. How is it possible for such teachings to arise and spread far and wide when they are so contrary to nature? How is it possible that we see wealthy people who, in flagrant disregard of the most elementary natural laws and with undisturbed consciences, squander their superabundance at the same time that they permit poor people to starve and poor children to be overcome by neglect? How is it possible for us to still enjoy our affluence while our fellowman is in desperate need? How can we still find enjoyment in drink and recreation, and how is it that the human heart does not break when we think of the indigent sick who reach out from their sick-beds for consolation and find no one to console them? How can we travel blissfully about the streets of our great cities seeing there, as we do everywhere, poor waifs who are, like us, made in the image of God, but whose lot is physical degradation and moral corruption? In birth, in youth, and in old age, they are victims of the most degrading kinds of misery. How is it possible for natural human beings to become so unnaturally inhuman? And on the other hand, how is it possible for the poor and their godless seducers, to be taken in by the false and nonsensical doctrine of Communism which contravene, all natural rights and common sense, and to expect salvation from something which will obviously corrupt all humanity?

For these questions we have only one answer. It is contained in that teaching of Christianity about which Pascal wrote (*Pensees* III, 8) that it is at the same time so inaccessible to human reason but also such an inescapable truth, that without it man would remain a total mystery to himself. It is the doctrine of original sin and its transmission to all mankind. Certainly, Pascal continues, nothing is harder for us to swallow than this teaching; and yet, without this mystery -- among the most incomprehensible of Christian doctrines -- we would all be at a loss to explain ourselves and our plight.

Actually, from a purely human standpoint, original sin is folly. No need to harp on the inability of man to come to grips with this doctrine. We concede that. But this folly contains more wisdom than is contained in all human wisdom. Divine folly has more wisdom than all mankind. (I Corinthians 1:25) How else can we explain mankind? Its entire condition testifies to this mystery. And, we too just now are confronted with the same dilemma as we face our own particular problem. What Pascal says applies to the individual human being, I maintain, applies equally to the human condition in each epoch including our own. He who rejects the doctrine of original sin because he cannot understand it, for him human history will remain a puzzle. By wanting to understand everything, he will end up understanding nothing. Under the delusion of wanting to be reasonable in all things, he becomes totally unreasonable. He, however, who accepts the teaching on original sin in faith and in humility, to him all becomes clear. He understands himself and also all of human history. The matter we are dealing with proves this truth once again. Only the doctrine of original sin sheds real light on the miserable condition of our time. According to that doctrine,



man revolted against God and, as a consequence, his natural powers were diminished. His intellect was darkened and his will was inclined to evil. The three-pronged lust and Satan gained certain power over man, and only by the grace which Christ the Redeemer won for him can man regain his original dignity and destiny.

This basic teaching of Christianity alone can explain to us how even the natural truths become obscured and man's noblest inclinations can become warped. As long as Christianity prevailed, it enlightened man's understanding and strengthened his good will. So long as a Christian sense permeated man's entire being, such perversions of the private property doctrine as we witness today and such consequent division between rich and poor were inconceivable. What becomes of man without Christ and without the grace which the Apostle says is destined to renew all that is in heaven and on earth (Ephesians 1: 10), world history in general and our own sorry social condition at present provide the best testimony, for reason does not prevail now in regulating man's social relations; rather, passion prevails.

Present day concepts of private property emanate not from reason, but from man's basest passions. They ridicule the doctrine of original sin and its cure the generation with true fraternal charity which consequences. They deny the source and the power of these base passions and maintain that they are simply the products of ignorance and indiscretion. What we need, they tell us, is reform of education, better schools. By this they have in mind a separation of schools from the Church, and a spread of some kind of general human culture.

Like a flower that develops out of itself, so human nature must be guided to its full development. Then passions, hardships and crime will disappear from the earth and true brotherhood will be restored. That is the teaching that is currently preached from the rooftops and passed off as supreme wisdom. I, however, question this wisdom. It is hard to conceive of a more flagrant, obvious falsehood than this. If it were true, then there would have to be two kinds of people on earth, those who are cultured and therefore free of passion, hardship and crime, i.e., those who act always in a pre-eminently reasonable manner; secondly there would be those lacking in cultural formation who are therefore slaves to passion and travail. I must ask, does this condition obtain now or can one imagine a greater untruth? How can one maintain such nonsense in the face of all available statistics in France and Germany which clearly show that neither the level of education nor of general prosperity has any bearing on the crime rate of a nation?

Statistics notwithstanding, daily human experience provides even more eloquent testimony against such preposterous claims. What of the miser who piles up wealth or the young traveller who goes about the world learning languages and acquiring knowledge of many lands, spending thousands to satisfy his whims without a thought given to his brother in need? And, what of the young lady who flits about as a social butterfly turning her body into a golden calf adorned with gold and diamonds without the least for her poor sister? Are all of these Christians who are lacking only in cultural upbringing? How does culture and refinement makes misers generous or fill bon vivants and vain young ladies with concern for their fellowman? What kind of education and what kind of textbook can implant the spirit of Christian resignation and self-denial in human hearts? Show me the generation with true fraternal charity which you can produce by worldly wisdom and without Christianity, and I will join you in throwing true Christianity overboard. So long as I remain convinced that all earthly wisdom, all science, all worldly culture together are unable to ignite a single spark of Christian charity on earth so as to make the miser generous, I will persist in my belief that mankind has fallen from grace and can only be healed by Christianity. The world has turned from Christ, has spurned His redemption, and has fallen pray to its own passions. That is the ultimate real cause of our social disorder.

The rich man disregards the command of God that he must share his superabundance with the poor, not because he is lacking in education or cultural formation, but rather because he is enslaved by greed and avarice. And the poor man covets what



belongs to others not because he did not study his lessons in school, but because he is slave to sloth and condemns the law of God, "Thou Shalt Not Steal." Guided by instinct and passions, men can no longer recognize simple natural truths when these stand opposed to their passions.

The abandonment of Christianity is the source of our troubles, and so long as we fail to recognize this there is no solution to our problem. The individual person can only achieve his full dignity after he realizes within himself that it cannot reach his high destiny by his own unaided strength. In the same manner, the world cannot come to grips with its present serious problems until it comes to realize that something besides mere human resources are required for the task. Failing in this, we will sink into barbarism and decay.

Inasmuch as we are aware of our plight, once we recognize that our social conditions are the necessary consequence of the unnatural and false concept of the private property right, and that this fallacy is a consequence of the abandonment of Christ so that passions and animal instincts have come to dominate our reason – it is time now to awaken from our sleep. We have only to seek out the means which can elevate us from our social misery. In general, I have already indicated what the remedy is by pointing out that the abandonment of Christianity causes us to fall into the pit. Therefore, only a return to Christ can lead us back. I would still like to point out how powerless the world is with all of its learning and experience, and how potent Christianity is in doctrine, in experience and in its means of grace for healing our social ills.

First, let us consider the impotence of the world and the power of Christian teaching for dealing with social conditions. For some time now I have read about all manner of remedies proposed by men of the world for alleviating poverty among the masses of people. I must confess I have found nothing which promises a real solution. So long as their proponents stick with the generalities in which they clothe their proposals, one is easily deceived that they are great benefactors who have learned the secret of how to multiply bread; but when you examine closely their practical measures, one cannot help but pity them. One wants to help matters by a more equitable distribution of tax burdens; another proposes a system of savings banks; another wants, to organize labor; still another proposes emigration; and still another sees a remedy in protective tariffs; while others prefer free trade. Some argue for free enterprise or land reform, and others propose the exact opposite. Some see salvation in a republican form of government.

These proposals generally have some merit, some more, some less; but for solving our social problems, they are woefully inadequate. There are those who realize this and propose the ultimate solution – common ownership of all things. Whether it will come to that, only time will tell, but this much is certain, that by this means we will not assure that the poor will become rich, but rather that all will become poor! Anyone who can still make an impartial judgment can appreciate that all worldly wisdom is woefully incapable of coming to our rescue. The more powerless the wisdom of the world is for providing a remedy, the more vital the Christian teaching becomes. It is precisely for our social problems that the Christian message is now especially relevant. Nothing is more appropriate for demonstrating to us the variety of means which Christianity affords us than the episode from the life of Christ described by Luke, the Evangelist. "One of the multitude said to him. Master, bid my brother give me a share of our Inheritance. And he answered, "Why, man, who has appointed me a judge to make warm between you?" (Luke 12: 13-14)

This occasion gave Christ the opportunity to warn against greed and to point out that good living had nothing to do with seeking an abundance of material goods. He then related the parable of the man, who after a rich harvest, filled his barns and reflected in self-satisfaction, "Come, soul, thou hast goods in plenty laid up for many years to come; take thy rest now, eat, drink, and make merry." And, God said "Thou fool, this night thou must render up thy soul and who will be master now of all thou has laid by?" Thus it is with the man who lays up treasure for himself. and has no credit with God." (Luke 12: 19-21).



Take heed, my Christian brethren. That is Christ's answer to those who expect to become prosperous by dividing up possessions or who hope to solve social problems by some superficial remedies. God wants a more just distribution of property, but not by external force, rather through a basic reform of man's attitudes. That is the essential difference between Christian teaching and the remedies the world proposes. The world has only superficial remedies which cannot come to grips with the source of our troubles -- man's basic philosophy.

Surface poverty is not our real problem, rather the poverty of our attitudes. Correct the latter and you eliminate the former. The two great evils which have rent our social fabric are an insatiable greed and a pleasure cult along with great selfishness. These have virtually annihilated Christian charity. It is a sickness which has afflicted rich and poor alike. What good are tax reforms and savings institutions so long as men remain basically self-centered? This moral affliction, the world and all its wisdom is powerless to remedy, whereas the full force of the Christian message is directed precisely toward straightening out man's basic attitude. I would like to try to present various teachings of Jesus to demonstrate how He proceeds step by step and by every avenue to cure the soul of its greed and selfishness.

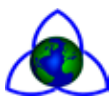
In the passage cited earlier, Our Lord reminds us of the fleeting value of earthly goods, the foolishness of men who pile up material goods only to be called before God before they have a chance to enjoy them. At another point Christ tells us, "Do not lay up treasure for yourselves on earth, where there is moth and rust to consume it, where there are thieves to break in and steal: lay up treasure for yourselves in heaven, where there is no moth or rust to consume it, no thieves to break in and steal. Where your treasure-house is, there your heart is too." (Matthew 6: 19-22) Here again He offers to eradicate greed and selfishness from the human heart. He demonstrates the folly of seeking refuge in worldly goods, but at the same time He cleared the way for revealing the reward for its proper use of material goods.

Our Lord goes further. He knows that noble ideas can captivate the human soul even more than material satisfaction, so he holds out to the soul, stifled by selfish pursuit, the goal of perfection: Jesus said to him, "If any of you has a mind to be perfect, go home, sell all that belongs to thee; give it to the poor, and to the treasure thou hast shall be in heaven; then come back and follow me." "...And every man that has forsaken home or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive his reward a hundredfold, and obtain everlasting life." (Matthew 19: 21, 29)

That is a teaching designed to heal the sickness which afflicts men's souls. To man, suffocated spiritually by greed, Christ proposes the total poverty which emancipates the soul completely. The Catholic Church has witnessed time and again the consequences of such total dedication in the lives of countless Saints.

Again we find Christ addressing himself to eradicating greed from our hearts when He says: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul and thy whole mind. This is the greatest of commandments, and the first. And the second, its like, is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matthew 22: 37-39) When we ask who our neighbor is, He leads us to the man lying battered and bleeding by the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and teaches us that every beggar, every sick man in need is our neighbor. My Christian brethren, if we would all obey these teachings for one single day, all of our social "problems would disappear as if by magic. Let us, rich and poor alike, love our neighbor as ourselves for one day and the face of the earth will be renewed. Would that the teaching of Christ could capture our hearts! !

Let us add to all of this the stirring message, "And the King will answer them, Believe me, when you did it to one of the least of my brethren here, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40) "He who gives you welcome, gives me welcome too; and he who gives me welcome gives welcome to Him that sent me." "And if a man gives so much as a draught of cold water to one of the least of these here, because he is a disciple of mine, I promise you, he shall not miss his reward." (Matthew 10: 40, 42)



Who can fail to appreciate the power of this message to wipe out our greed? Who can count the tears dried by these words? With these words Our Blessed Savior has, in a manner of speaking, chained thousands of holy virgins to the beds of the poor side, in whom they see the image of Christ. All of the love which men owe to God, He has placed at the service of the poor and the sick.

Still, our Blessed Savior knows the human heart and how deeply greed and selfishness are rooted in it. He knows full well what drastic means are needed to eradicate these evils. Therefore, He reminds those, for whom higher motives do not suffice, of judgment and eternal punishment. He gives them a glimpse of that awful day when He will come in great majesty and power, when the sheep and the goats will be separated and when He will say to those on the left side: "Go far from me, you that are accursed, into that eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you never gave me food, I was thirsty, and you never gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you did not bring me home, I was naked, and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison, and you did not care for me. Whereupon they, in their turn will answer, Lord, when was it that we saw thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee? And He will answer them, Believe me, when you refused it to one of the least of my brethren here, you refused it to Me. And these shall pass on to eternal punishment, and the just to eternal life." (Matthew 25: 41-46)

Finally, for him who remains deaf even to this warning, Our Savior resorts to the ultimate threat. He gives him a glimpse of the place of eternal punishment. He tells about the rich spendthrift, dressed in fine garments and enjoying sumptuous meals at the same time that poor Lazarus begs for a crust of bread in vain, and the dogs lick his sores. We see these two in eternity, Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and the rich wastrel buried in hell. We hear the latter call out, "...Father Abraham, take pity on me; send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; I am tormented in this flame, But Abraham said, My son, remember that thou didst receive thy good fortune in thy lifetime, and Lazarus, no less his ill fortune; now he is in comfort, thou in torment. And besides all this, there is a great gulf fixed between us and you so that there is no crossing from our side of it to you, no crossing over to us from yours." (Luke 16: 24- 27)

That, my Christian brethren, is a brief synopsis of the teachings by which Christ wishes to uproot the sources of all of our social problems, greed and selfishness, from our souls. He leads the greedy and selfish person to the very gates of hell and shows him the plight of the rich wastrel who pleads for a drop of water from his place of torment. He takes him before the seat of judgment and recites the terrible words, "Depart from me, you that are accursed, into the eternal fire." He introduces him to the rich man who has amassed worldly goods and who before he has a chance to enjoy them hears the awful words, "Thou fool, this night thou must render up they soul." He shows him the treasures of earth consumed by rust and moths and stolen by thieves. He holds up before him the way of perfection and teaches him to love his brother as himself, and that every man is his brother. He represents himself as the poor man and demands that the love which men owe to God be extended to the poor. How powerful Christian teaching is and how powerless the teaching of the world is in counteracting social ills. But, Christianity is still more potent and the world all the more impotent in practical everyday life when it comes to curing these ills.

To cure social evils, it is not enough to provide more food and clothing for a few poor or to send a few dollars more to our favorite charity. That is the smallest part of our task. What is urgent is that we heal the enormous division that exists in our society, a deep-seated resentment between rich and poor. We must halt the tragic moral decline that has victimized large numbers of our poor fellowmen who have lost all faith, all hope, and all love for God and their fellow man. We have to elevate from spiritual poverty those who suffer material poverty.

In rich and poor alike, the source of social evil is in their attitudes. Just as greed,



selfishness, and pleasure-seeking alienates the rich from the poor, these same motives coupled with great want engender great hate among the poor toward the rich. Instead of looking for the cause of the trouble where it really lies, and that includes in part their own failings, the poor see in the rich man the sole root of their problem. They are victims of the temptation which afflicts all of us. They see the splinter in the rich man's eye without being aware of the beam in their own. Thus, we see among so many of our poor fellowmen a frightful degree of moral degradation, where hatred toward one's fellow man, greed, covetousness, and sloth operate side by side with great poverty. Sound teachings and counsel are of no more avail here than are occasional hand-outs. They take such hand-outs and use them with the thought that they have this and much more coming to them.

A new force is needed to heal these decadent attitudes -- the force of example and of love. The poor must once again come to realize that there is real love in action before they extend any credulity to the doctrine of charity. For this reason, we must seek out the poorest of the poor in their hovels, study the causes and conditions of their poverty, share their sufferings and their tears. No depravity, no misery must repel us. We must be prepared to counter resentment, rebuff, ingratitude with even greater love until we finally thaw out the icy crust which has frozen the hearts of so many of the poor, and conquer hatred with love. Just as God deals with sinners -- and that includes all of us -- according to the overflowing of his merciful love rather than as a stern judge, so as to overcome our lack of charity and ingratitude, that is how we must overcome the coldness of our fellow man with an outpouring of our love. That, I am convinced, is the only way that we will once again restore a sound disposition among the great numbers of our poor.

I could still speak to you about the graces which Christ has made available to us through His Church to lift man up again after sin has robbed him of his spiritual health. I could speak of the Sacraments which are the living channels 'through which the vitality of Christ flows into our souls. I could speak especially of the Holy Eucharist (*Altarsakrament*) whereby Christ so directly brings His own heart aflame with love in contact with our own hearts so as to unite us all in true charity and harmony in order to heal all divisions among men. But my time and my strength are both exhausted. My Christian brethren, I do not fear the social evils of our time. I know that the world is powerless to abolish them, whereas, the teaching, the life example, the grace of Christ is strong enough to help the world out of its straits and to dry all of its tears. I fear only godlessness, the lack of Faith and the unchristian spirit of our time.

Now that we recognize our times for what they are, let us listen to the call of our Church this day. Let us awaken from our sleep and put on the armor of light and the life of Jesus Christ!

Pray God that today I may have won over even just one soul, one heart to the love of Christ and for the comfort of His poor. A men!

What can the world do to solve this great problem? We already know that the welfare state (*Polizeistaat*) has not succeeded in doing so by its poor laws. And what have the humanitarians (*Volksfreunde*) of our time succeeded in doing in the practical order? I must pass over this in silence, since it stirs me to indignation as do so many of those who regard themselves as humanitarians and friends of the poor at the same time as they are enemies of Christ and His Church and as they demonstrate by their bankrupt life-style! What do these humanists have to offer in the way of a solution of social evils, for poverty, for reconciling people to each other? By their fruits you shall know them. What are the fruits of their love for their fellow man? Do we find them in the hovels of the poor, at the bedsides of the sick and the deprived? Do we see them depriving themselves of anything to aid the poor? Do they live like the poor? Not a chance! They give expression to their humanitarianism by sowing the seeds of hate among people. They live comfortably, even in grand style. They are themselves guilty of the excesses of the wealthy and still they have the nerve to incite the poor against the rich, who are guilty of the same sins as they themselves.



Empty phrases about their love for the people, illusions about an earth bliss which is simply unattainable in this world, stern denunciations of all and everyone -- other than themselves -- these are the fruits of their supposed love for the people! That is their prescription for solving social problems, for reconciling man to his fellowman. for elevating the poor from their sorry state!

Such is the bankruptcy of the world's power to reconcile people one to another, to cure moral and physical misery. Neither the welfare state nor our humanitarians are able to pass beyond speech-making into action.

Contrast this with the life of Christ. He put his words into action. What a friend of the poor was the Son of God! Of poor parents, born in poverty, raised in modest circumstances, poor in His flight into Egypt, poor during His life at Nazareth. And during His public life? The foxes have their dens, birds have their nest, but He was poorer than they. He had not a place to rest His head. Those whom He chose as His apostles were poor men. Daily He moved among the poor, the sick, the suffering. They followed Him into the desert places. He sought them out in their homes. He shared with them the contempt of the Pharisees. He wept with them. He comforted them. At the end He hung poor and naked on His cross. It is from the life of the God-man, Jesus Christ, lived in poverty, that the power of love in action has poured forth abundantly into Christ's Church -- as we have witnessed time and again with wonderment and admiration among the members of the Church. One cannot love Christ without being inflamed by a love of His own poverty and therefore of His poor.

That is a truth which comes home to us down to our own time. What are the miracles of love towards neighbor and the poor which we encounter in the lives of the Saints, if not the result of that fire of love which Christ brought from Heaven down to earth and by which He wished to set the world on fire? He whose heart is not set on fire by this flame will never be able to love poverty or the poor. It was the poverty of Jesus that suddenly possessed Elizabeth, the daughter of a king, as she once caught sight of a picture of Christ crucified while entering a church .and fell to her knees in total disregard of the amazement of those round about her.

It was this fountain of love which so intoxicated St. Francis of Assisi that he elected poverty as his bride. Once while enroute to Rome he was passing by a church and saw a group of his fellowmen lying before the church door steeped in poverty and begging for alms. He was so touched by pity and overwhelmed by the desire to share their poverty that he traded clothes with the poorest beggar among them and spent several days as one of them. This fountain of love is the source from which the mendicant orders of the Catholic Church sprang. The world can no longer understand them; it ridicules them. Yet, they represent the noblest and greatest heights to which the world could reach or has ever aspired! They have served to make the rich men poor in order to make poor men rich! It is from the same source that the Sisters of Charity came forth, these priceless flowers, these hearts in which the love of Christ has taken refuge. These Sisters have left parents, brothers, sisters, all the pleasures of this world in order to spend their lives at the bedsides of the poor, the sick, the dying, administering to their needs. Such a life represents more true Christian charity and love of neighbor in one single hour than the entire lifetimes of a whole host of our modern "friends of the people" combined. In other words, it is from this source that the human race will eventually regain its strength, its capacity for love, its health, once it recognizes that no other cure is available except that which is in Jesus Christ and in the holy Catholic Church which He established.



On Human Liberty

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“John answered them, 'I am baptizing you with water; but there is one standing in your midst of whom you know nothing.’” (John 1: 26)

In considering our present social conditions, we have reached the conclusion that the real reason for our plight -- where men are alienated from one another and a gulf separates rich from poor -- does not actually lie in how wealth is distributed or in the poverty of some as contrasted with the riches of others. It is to be found rather in the inner disposition of people which manifests itself outwardly in these symptoms.

The inequality of wealth, the super-abundance enjoyed by some at the same time that other men are in extreme need, taken by itself, does not necessarily lead to alienation among people. Given a solid Christian disposition, such inequality can, in fact, furnish the most solid and finest bond among men in that it can activate Christian charity and provide the opportunity for true fraternal concern.

He who surveys the present situation without having prejudged it cannot deny this fact. He must admit that our sickness is an inner one, not an external one, that we suffer from a spiritual disease. Specifically, our condition stems from unbounded greed and pleasure-seeking which expresses itself as crass self-seeking among rich and poor. From this naked truth we reached the simple conclusion that all external remedies, no matter how praiseworthy and useful in themselves, cannot offer genuine assistance. Just as the sick man who suffers a serious internal illness is in need of internal medicine, whereas mere superficial treatment could even occasion his death, we too are in need of spiritual aid which will improve our inner disposition; whereas superficial remedies will only prolong our agony. Since the source of our problem is internal; our remedy must come from within.

Speeches about equality will avail naught. What we need is an inner strength which will surmount inequality and rise above selfishness, and which is above and beyond all surface equalization. Speeches about brotherhood are like sounding brass. What we need is a genuine brotherly disposition. More talk about love we don't need. We need a flaming, living charity which alone can thaw out our icy selfish hearts. We don't need those friends of the people who offer no proof of their love of their fellow man other than hatred of the rich. We need men who understand how to share what they have with the poor and deprived as Christ and those who were filled with His spirit have shown us the way.

However, my Christian brethren, as John the Apostle of love cried out: “He, through whom the world was made, was in the world and the world did not recognize him.” (John 1: 10-11) And as John the Baptist before him had proclaimed: “... but there is one standing in your midst of whom you know nothing,” (John 1: 26) we too can now call out in our time. We stand as before that pool which the Angel stirred up from time to time (John 5: 4). We have only to step into it to be cured of our spiritual disease, but we refuse. We have at our bed: and call the fountain of living water, but we refuse to drink of it.

The tree of life, planted by God on earth has burst forth, and we refuse to eat of its fruit. The Redeemer has come into the world to renew the face of the earth, but His own disdain His redeeming work. Because of falling away from Christ and from the Church which He founded, another great evil has arisen. I refer to the wasting away of a true, living faith in God. If we may sum up the work of Redemption in a few words, it was meant to teach men to acknowledge God and to give them the strength to live according to this Faith. The words of Jesus Christ, “... none knows the Son truly except the Father, and none knows the Father truly except the Son, and those to whom it is the Son's good pleasure to reveal Him,” (Matthew 11 :27) seem to have come to fulfillment in our time where men have turned their backs on Christ



and His Church. The most gruesome distortion of the true teaching of God is the distinguishing characteristic of our age and the inevitable consequence of our falling away from Christ and His Church.

In our discussion of the right of property, we saw what a grave distortion the loss of the true Faith has caused in that area. Without a lively, practiced Faith in God, two extreme positions resulted: the wholesale abuse of the properly right on the one hand, and its outright annihilation on the other. Both are equally destructive of true human society. But this is only a small part of the sad story of how man's weakened faith in God has disrupted society. As a building rests on a foundation, so society rests on certain basic truths without which it cannot exist.

Numbered among these truths, aside from the right of private property, are the all important teachings on human liberty, on the destiny of man, and on marriage and the family. When these foundation stones are in order, when they are based on truth, only then can we expect a healthy and vigorous society. If they are otherwise, then society is threatened by collapse like a house whose foundation is destroyed. Having examined our social conditions and recognized to what extent our loss of the true Faith has undermined one foundation stone, the property right, I think it might be worthwhile to direct our attention now to how this disbelief has affected the other bases of our society. Thus we will gain a better perspective of our times, and the imminent collapse of our social structure can be a more compelling goal than any mere words to lead us to return to Christ and His Church.

I shall begin with the teaching on human liberty and its relation to God's law. First, I would like to make it clear that I have no intention of discussing political liberty or of defending or opposing one or the other form of government. Since I became a priest, I have made it a solemn rule never again to belong to a political party. I feel I owe this to every person and to every political party, since I must put my strength and my services at the disposal of all of them as a servant of God and preacher of His word for the good of their souls. I have remained true to this principle until now and I intend to remain so.

The teaching regarding the freedom of the human person is essentially connected with the teaching about God. Belief and unbelief reach completely opposite conclusions. Therefore, I must first speak about God so that I may then correctly teach about human freedom.

If we reflect for a moment on human history, we will recognize with reference to man's belief in God three closely related thoughts: First, we see that the belief in a person's God is so deeply imbedded by nature in man's spiritual life that it is to be found wherever there are people. Man cannot deny the existence of the sun because he lives from its warmth. In the same way, mankind, by and large, cannot deny the existence of God since it derives existence and life from God, and in its own peculiar fashion, it is bound by the will of God.

Secondly, we see the human spirit inclined toward evil and the intellect so weakened and darkened that even this most basic of all truths did not always survive intact but has been subjected to a continual distortion.

Thirdly, we recognize that man's passions and rebellion against God's law are the basic sources of this distortion of the true teachings about God. Only by considering these three truths in their relationship to each other are we able to reach an intelligent understanding of human history. If there were no personal transcendent God, one could not explain the universal recognition of the existence of a God.

If the proposition: "I think, therefore I am," is true then the proposition: "Mankind thinks that of necessity there is a God, therefore there is a God," is no less true. Man may twist and turn all he wants. By doing so he can no more negate his own existence than he can destroy the idea of God which is essentially related to his own existence. It is no less necessary, however, that we recognize and accept as true the weakening and darkening of man's intellect, which is only made intelligible to us by the doctrine of original sin. Without that weakening one could not explain the per-



version of this and so many other basic truths. And, without the doctrine of original sin, one could not really grasp the prevalence of error. Having grasped these truths, on the other hand, one can understand the fate which belief in the true God has suffered among men. Among the pagans – least touched by the influence of supernatural revelation – we see the knowledge of God most severely distorted.

But as unnatural and unreasonable as their notion of God was, still they held fast to it, since they were thereby able to satisfy an innate belief in some supreme being: They preferred even the nonsense of man-made gods to the vastly greater nonsense of no god at all. Insofar as the pagans fashioned their gods according to their own passions, they demonstrated to us that the ultimate source of ‘their errors and of the distortion of the belief in one true God is to be found in their passions and in their rebellion against the law which an un-perverted concept of God imposed upon them.

The history of the Jews drives home to us best of all this important teaching, so necessary for grasping the idea of human liberty. It shows us that all distortions of belief in the one true God do not originate in the speculative intellect, but from practice; not by force of reason, but by the rule of passions, and by the revolt in man’s life style against the law of God. The knowledge of the true God and His laws was revealed to the Jews, but they became so lukewarm in their attempts to live up to the laws, that they rebelled against the true God and fell into idolatry to escape from Him.

Only through Christ, who opened new sources of grace to strengthen man’s will and enlighten his mind, do we see man reconciled in a correct understanding of God. After men once again began to feel strong in their belief and lived according to the faith which dwelt within them, any idea of rebellion against God disappeared. They recognized the truth of the words, “Only the fool says in his heart there is no God.” (Psalms 52: 1)

Among people who live by God’s law, the denial of God is not possible. But since men had once again turned from Christ and His saving graces, the rebellion against God’s law and eventually against the new notion of God has begun anew in their hearts. Only now, the combat occurs on a new kind of battle ground. The light which Christianity spread through the world prevents such crude errors as marked the pre-Christian era. Error became far more sophisticated and malicious to the point where it transgresses all reasonable limits. It was reserved for our age to repeat here on earth the rebellion of those Angels who, fully aware of their position as God’s creatures, nevertheless dared to revolt against God! We have among us not just individual disbelievers, but an entire generation of them. So old as the stones are of which this Church is built and, so long as the sun shines upon the earth and bears witness to the glory of Him Who created it, so long as the raindrops have fallen from heaven to freshen the flowers of the field, so long as the heavenly dew of God’s grace has seeped into men’s souls to enliven them and quicken them with holy charity, that is how long we have not experienced on this earth such an icy, frigid, diabolical teaching emanating from the mouths of men. After we understand all of this, my Christian brethren, the teaching of human freedom as it is interpreted according to a Christian belief in God and the Catholic Church as contrasted with its interpretation by unbelievers is easy to grasp.

The unbeliever has, for practical purposes, nothing left but man himself. He does not recognize any subordination of one man to another according to a higher order of things beyond what is merely human. Therefore, he must logically proclaim the sovereignty of each individual. Every law imposed by God or by his fellowman, in fact any rule which is not fashioned by himself is no law at all but merely compulsion or an unjust intrusion on his sovereignty. Laws are only restrictions which a man imposes on himself of his own free choice. In such a context, to be free means merely to do as one pleases. Every man is free to contradict everything that anyone else has ever proclaimed as true and good and right until he has proved it to his own satisfaction.

Even this notion of freedom has a kernel of truth in it which we need to isolate in order to make clear the massive, grotesque untruth and folly of such a position.



Christianity wishes to guarantee to man his innermost freedom, and it accords moral value only to those actions which stem from the free choice of each person. However, it recognizes an objective truth, goodness, and beauty existing independent of man to which man must conform if he wishes to fulfill himself. The unbelief of our time does not understand self-determination in this way. It does not accept an objective truth, goodness, and beauty; and every individual may contest what all others may regard as good so long as he himself does not recognize it as such.

It is difficult to see how any kind of social living among people is still possible when such a concept of human liberty prevails. This kind of liberty cannot be limited in any way according to age, sex, or levels of intellectual development. As a matter of fact, how can one still declare anyone insane, given such freedom? Every child, every woman, every mentally depraved person has the same right. Anyone can call into question the entire existing social order whether in the family, the community, or the state. This order does not even exist until he himself acknowledges it and indeed, only so long as he is willing to acknowledge it. Even a contract between two persons would be inconceivable, since such an agreement would constitute external force at any time after one of the contracting parties began to feel unhappy about the provisions of the contract. Thus it would constitute a violation of his basic human rights.

The Christian notion of human liberty as taught by the Church stands completely opposed to this ridiculous notion which would in fact make all social relationships impossible. The Christian concept of human liberty assumes the existence of a personal transcendent God in whom dwells all truth, all goodness, and all beauty. From all eternity, He had the notion of our earth in His mind, and He created the earth according to His own image, and therefore He incorporated in human nature something of His own freedom and self-determination. Yet, the nature of human freedom is such that it implies in man the capacity to either use it to pursue God's goodness, truth, and beauty, or to turn aside from these.

In other words, human freedom means that man is capable of developing according to God's plan, or to rebel against it at the peril of his own self-destruction! Because of original sin, the full liberty of man was dealt a crippling blow inasmuch as he was more disposed to rebel against God. It was by the Redemption that full liberty was restored to man. Christianity accords to man his full right of self-determination and recognizes in this right his fullest dignity and nobility. In fact, Christianity, by its doctrine of eternal damnation recognizes the ultimate consequence of this right, because this teaching implies that God will even permit men to eternally contradict Him rather than violate man's sacred right to self-determination. The ultimate cause for eternal damnation is abuse of free will by setting it in final opposition to God's will. Christianity sees in such a disposition of the will, not an exercise of legitimate freedom, but rather punishable violation of liberty, a transgression against God and His liberty which, of course, is higher than our own.

According to the Christian conception, man is a free agent of God, who is entitled to help God complete His work. As a master builder originates a construction project in his mind and authorizes his employees to bring it to fulfillment, so God has conceived in His mind the design for the human race and trusted us to carry it into fulfillment. Inspired by the goodness, truth, and beauty of this ideal, we ought to adopt it freely as sons of God and carry it into execution. In this way God proposes to make His work our own, and to reward us for our free compliance.

We have set forth briefly the two opposed doctrines of human liberty, and we have shown how they are related to the notion of God and His laws. It remains for us to stress the importance and obvious falsehood of that teaching which holds that to be truly free man cannot accept any law outside of himself.

We are told that man is the only and highest law giver who must follow only his own laws; yet man finds himself limited by nature which is independent of his will -- in fact, he must constantly submit to nature's laws. What power does man have over nature and the perpetual laws and order which govern it? We see the stars in the



heavens follow their unchangeable course, just as does the earth on which we live. We watch the trees and flowers sprout, grow, bloom, and fade according to unchangeable laws. Only an intelligent being can promote such order in the universe. But what intelligent being is it that holds nature on its course? If our intelligence is a part of this higher Intelligence, then why are we so powerless to change the laws of nature?

But we are bound even more firmly by a law outside ourselves, despite the protests of those who would dare to violate any law not of their own making. Man's physical nature is a part of the natural world whose prisoner he is and whose laws he must obey unless he wishes to bring about his physical destruction. How pathetic a spectacle man is, my Christian brethren, when he maintains, in his insane arrogance, that he recognizes no law or lawgiver beyond himself -- at the same time that he is forced day and night to minister to the need of his physical nature. What power does man have over the laws governing his physical nature? He has two alternatives. Either he obeys them and enjoys bodily health or he violates them and suffers sickness and eventual destruction. Indeed, the Supreme Lawgiver could not have made more obvious the lying pretensions of man to be his own lawgiver than to saddle him with a body and make him subject to its basest needs. But a man's soul too is subject to a law and bound by a necessity from which it cannot escape, and which forces man to recognize a Lawgiver outside himself. Thought, the freest of all human actions, must follow the laws of thought. What power do we have over the laws of thought? It is either/or. Either we obey these laws and are reasonable people, or we disregard them and destroy reason and are adjudged as fools.

With each thought, man is forced to acknowledge a law and therefore a lawgiver. This is the same as saying there is a higher personal Will which we must acknowledge, and from which we cannot escape.

Finally, we also recognize that man's will, and the conduct of his life which reflects his will is subject to a law -- the moral law. This law is no less demanding and no less independent of man's own will for determining his conduct than the laws of thought are in governing his thinking. He is no more able to alter it than he is able to alter the laws of nature or of thought. He may act according to it and reach his full dignity as a human being, or he may act counter to it and destroy his human worth. It is in the area of morality that the false notion of liberty comes into play, and where man tries to shake off the yoke of an outside lawgiver so as to cater to his passions according to his own laws. But he is eternally destined to fail in this attempt. The consensus of all mankind will always condemn the attempt to deny the objective moral law as it is expressed in the teaching of Christian virtues. No matter how persistently the advocates of this doctrine of freedom may insist that, as they see it, theft, robbery, unchastity, and sloth are licit, the voice of good moral sense will pass judgment on them and teach them that there is a supreme Lawgiver and an objective moral law according to which every man must order his life if he does not wish to dehumanize himself in the eyes of his fellow man.

Thus, God has instilled a goal in man's very nature by virtue of the law which governs him and by a virtue of the sanctions which are inseparable from the breach of those laws. To make man in His own image, God gave him freedom. Thereby man was enabled to reach his full dignity, but it is also within his capacity to sink to a most degraded level. At the outermost limit of this folly, men came up with the strange teaching that there is no lawgiver other than man himself, and that man needs only to follow his own impulses. To curb this madness, God erected a barrier which proclaims, in effect, "This far and no further!" He has permitted man to proclaim nonsense, but He will not permit him to carry it through with impunity.

God forces man, first, to give the lie to his own proclamation in that man must constantly and of necessity subject himself to a law of nature, a law of thought, and a law of conduct over which he has no control, in the face of which is impotent -- as impotent as the lowest worm which creeps along the ground.

In the second instance, God has stigmatized rebellion against His laws in nature,



thought, and conduct with the mark of death. Man may insist that he follows his own inner impulses, but if he dares to act against the law of physical nature, thought, and conduct which God wills, then he will begin to live in a manner which leads to the destruction of his body, the annihilation of reason, moral degeneration, and chaos in society. Ironclad necessity in the law of God will weigh heavily on him and lead to his inevitable destruction.

In the battle against the law of nature, the fool occasions the death of the body. In fighting against the laws of thought, he brings sickness and eventually death to the intellect; in battling against the moral law, he makes life unbearable; and in attacking social order, he makes normal social relations among people an impossibility.

Finally, and thirdly, God has linked to the exercise of this erroneous notion of freedom its exact opposite, a most complete and degrading kind of slavery. The man who will not serve God and live by His eternal law – which safeguards true human freedom – such a man will achieve not freedom, but its opposite, abject slavery. He will be subject to a domination which does not preserve freedom, but annihilates it. Every man is subject to the conflict of which the Apostle Paul spoke: “inwardly, I applaud God’s disposition, but I observe another disposition in my lower self, which raises war against the disposition of my conscience, and so I am handed over as a captive to that disposition towards sin which my lower self contains.” (Romans 7: 22-23)

Those who follow the law of God take pleasure in His law and achieve true freedom since truth makes a man free. And as the Apostle said further: “... and natural wisdom brings only death, whereas the wisdom of the spirit brings life and peace. That is because natural wisdom is at enmity with God, not submitting itself to His law; it is impossible that it should.” (Romans 8: 6-7) Therefore, he who will not be made free by God’s law will become a slave to his own flesh and lust according to the law of the flesh!

The fate of Nebuchadnezzar is a prototype of man’s destiny. Man is too proud to be free under God’s law, but not too proud to be a slave to his own basest passions. Therefore, what befell Nebuchadnezzar according to scripture, will also befall man in the deepest spiritual sense. “...driven from the haunts of men, with beasts dwell thou, grass like the cattle eat thou, till seven seasons have passed thee by, and learned thou has that the most High is overlord of all human kingship, to grant it where he will.” (Daniel 5: 29)

My Christian brethren, let us come to realize without having to undergo such a bitter experience, that the all High God rules also among men, and that our freedom is to be found in freely subjecting ourselves to His laws.

It is impossible to conceal the fact, however, that this guidepost for social living is already badly obscured and that the quest for a freedom which recognizes no external law and order is already widespread. On the basis of such a misconception, the survival of any kind of sane social relationships among men, whether in the family circle, or in the community, or beyond, is becoming impossible. If this viewpoint becomes prevalent, mankind will suffer the fate of Nebuchadnezzar. We shall live like animals, subject to our basest passions; and the seven ages of this degradation, destruction, wilderness and barbarism will last until mankind in its abject misery will come to realize that the all high God is dominant also in the kingdom of men. Amen.

On Human Destiny

By Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler

Translated by Rupert J. Ederer, Ph.D., Buffalo, N. Y.

Fourth sermon, December 18, 1848

“...And, indeed, Lord, thou knowest all things, new and old; it is thou that hast fashioned me, thy hand that has been laid upon me.” Psalm 138:5

My Christian Brethren, yesterday we examined the doctrine of human liberty and its relationship to God’s law, and we recognized in it an essential basis for social living. The enormous influence of these doctrines on social conditions is apparent in our times. If we mean by liberty, along with the author of "Social Policy" and his followers,



as well as all of those who deny the existence of a personal, transcendent God, the right of each individual to recognize as binding only such laws as he himself finds to his liking and to disregard all others, then social human relations become impossible. If the stars were to free themselves of the course to which each is bound, they would collide and destroy each other. That is what would happen to humanity under similar conditions. The evidence of this theory of freedom is already widespread.

It remains to be seen whether we may have to live through the horrible drama of a situation where mankind succeeds in emancipating itself completely from all bonds of order. It is certain, however, that if that time actually does come, it will be more frightful than anything men have ever had to experience. It is just as certain that this is exactly what will- come to pass unless we change our ways and acknowledge the dominion of God, If we come to recognize, instead, that freedom is the right of a person to develop and conform himself of his own free will to the Divine plan, then we shall participate in the grand design of God, who is concerned with all of reality, including the life of each and every person, and we will enjoy the order in which each man finds his proper role and shares in the unfolding of God's plan.

Today we will move on to that other principle of social living, the understanding that men have of their destiny here on earth. We shall shortly realize what great influence this vital teaching has on social conditions of our time. It is amazing, in fact, how anyone can go through life without ever seriously asking himself the question why he is on earth! That ought to be the first question that we ask ourselves once we acquire the use of reason, since the direction toward which we expend the resources of our bodies and our souls, as well as our gifts and talents depends entirely upon how we answer this question for ourselves. St. Bernard often asked himself in his cubicle, "Bernard, why are you here?" We ought to do likewise, time and time again. Otherwise it is entirely possible that we could make the entire journey through life and discover suddenly on our death bed that we have completely missed the point of our pilgrimage on this earth.

Here again, there are just two conceivable reasons for living which relate back to whether a man believes in a personal, transcendent God or not. Our destination is either outside of this world, in God, in which case our life on earth is merely a preparation for that ultimate goal-or else our destiny is to enjoy what we are able to enjoy here on earth and to terminate our existence afterwards like the animals do. The believer prefers the former view, the unbeliever holds the latter. Let us consider both these viewpoints along with the great impact they have on human social relationships. We begin with the viewpoint of the unbeliever. Whoever has scuttled his belief in a transcendent, personal God such a person must, to be consistent, also abandon his belief in the immortality of the individual soul along with any hope for eternal personal existence after the death of the body. In fact, he must not entertain any notion that man has a destiny beyond the grave. Indeed, men have abandoned these beliefs in our time with the same brashness as they have denied the existence of God. One cannot, therefore, question whether all such unbelievers have really asked themselves why they are on earth. One of the spokesmen for these atheists has stated clearly that the belief in the immortality of man is just as nonsensical as the belief in God. Man's destiny must be his life on this earth, because he knows nothing about what lies beyond. A much larger group than these consistent atheists, however, follow this line of belief only in a practical sense, i.e., by their actions, while they keep up a pretense in a belief in God and human immortality. An uncounted majority of our contemporaries belong to the latter group. They carry on as though they know of no God or of any life after death and as though this life were their final destiny. They render homage to the flesh, which of necessity leads to the death of the spirit. We have to number them, therefore, among the professing atheists, since their practical atheism has the same effect on our social condition.

The consequences of this concept of man's destiny are truly catastrophic for our society. There are, it seems to me, at least four. First, the viewpoint that man is on



earth merely to enjoy worldly pleasures, of necessity has to lead to a general aversion to work. All work is to some degree difficult and tiresome and interferes with the pleasure cult. Perhaps a person who is enslaved to this cult may wish to work in the sense that a rich man wants to exercise, so that he will enjoy a better appetite. But work in the sense of tedious daily labor in the sweat of one's brow, the kind of work which is rarely recreative and enjoyable, in other words, that work which is the common lot of most of mankind and which is the real source of the wealth of nations, the kind of work with which we could not dispense for one day without general chaos and deprivation, that work which is necessary to provide us with our daily bread and which the transcendent, personal God told us about when He said, "You will earn your bread by the sweat of your brow..." that manner of work will be shunned by people who are given over to the hedonistic viewpoint. There are already ominous portents of such a development. If this sick attitude captivates the masses of people, the horrible consequences of such an aversion to honest labor will be indescribable.

Just as such an attitude must promote disdain for labor as juxtaposed to the life of pleasure, it must also, on the other hand, cause an unbounded increase in the craving for worldly sense pleasures and for the means to satisfy them. If it becomes, in fact, our sole objective to enjoy sense pleasures, then given the uncertainty of a man's life span, a general competition must ensue where each person strives to get for himself the greatest possible share of the goods of this world and the means to acquire them. Thirdly, this hedonism will necessarily cause those who own a quantity of worldly goods to strive, by whatever means, to increase them and to hold on to them for their own exclusive enjoyment. Avarice, hardheartedness and selfishness of the worst sort will spread more and more among the wealthy. No philosophy of life is more calculated to harden the hearts of the wealthy towards the poor. True charity and benevolence do now flow from natural sympathy. Human experience bears constant witness to that fact. These virtues stem from a firm belief in a higher destiny for man after death. He who believes in eternal life will invest his capital so as to earn interest in paradise. The other viewpoint can only generate greed and hardness of heart.

Finally, what must this worldly philosophy do to the poor who lack all means of achieving the goal of worldly pleasures? The immediate consequences will be hatred, envy, and ill will toward the rich who have what they lack, and one can scarcely be surprised at these logical consequences given the lack of belief in God. The ultimate consequences will be that the poor man will resort to any means other than honest labor to achieve his worldly goal. Cheating, robbery, theft and even murder are the logical consequences of this false philosophy -- as we are already beginning to learn to our great sorrow.

That, my Christian Brethren, is the inevitable outcome of the loss of belief in a life after death, so far as human social relations are concerned. Disdain for honest labor along with insatiable greed and pleasure-seeking will be the lot of every person. Among the rich there will be, in addition, stinginess and hard-heartedness toward the poor; among the poor, theft and robbery, hatred and envy toward the rich will come to prevail. Eventually, of course, this corrupt teaching, which makes the enjoyment of earthly pleasure the ultimate destiny of mankind would have to come full circle as every lie must. It would destroy all civilized social relationships as well as any genuine pleasure in life.

We must add that this denial of human immortality is not only godless and destructive of all social order; it is also unreasonable. It flows not from reason, but from unreason. It is rooted not in the spirit; it stems from the flesh which, with all of its sensuous drives, is at war with the spirit. When we look into the recesses of our souls, a thousand voices cry out to us that we are immortal, that we are destined for eternal life.

If the belief in immortality and in a life after death is a delusion how could such a belief have arisen and come to prevail? How come we do not graze contentedly like cattle here on earth, and how come one always finds a craving in the human heart, like the craving for a beloved homeland? How could it happen that precisely the



greatest and deepest thinkers of all ages, as well as the noblest and purest spirits have clung to this belief? What does it signify to us when we observe huge flights of birds overhead each Spring and Fall, drawn to their destinies in the same way we are drawn to another abode? At night, as we lift our eyes heavenward and observe the stars in the vast canopy of the heavens, our hearts also wonder and yearn as if to separate themselves from our bodies in the universal quest for some home across the seas, that is without sorrows. It is the proof found in man's soul that we are in exile here, that we are destined for a better world.

If man's belief in immortality and in a life beyond this one is nonsense, if it is man's nature to die and to remain dead -- as it is the flower's nature to wilt, the tree's destiny to be cut down, the animal's destiny to decay, then how do we explain the deep, universal dread of death in human hearts? This abhorrence can never be overcome except by a belief in immortality. Man clings to nothing so desperately as to the slender thread of life. From the babe at its mother's breast, to the venerable old man who sees his powers fading, there is universal recognition that death is not natural to them, that they are destined for eternal life. If belief in a hereafter is nonsense, why are the children of the world so disturbed in their hearts as they see worldly goods come, go and disappear each day of their lives? Why does the transitory nature of their pleasures frighten them so, and why does the realization that their joys are fleeting make them bitter? Why does the rich man suffer virtual torture, who while he greedily contemplates his houses, goods and money, seems to hear the words, "Thou fool, this night you will be called to account. What good will your possessions be to you then?" Why does the man of the world suffer agony when he begins to sense that the passion with which he seeks his pleasure is growing cold? Why does the vain woman go through torture when she recognizes that all the cosmetics and adornments can no longer preserve that by which she seduced others? Why should the transitory nature of all material things of this earth, since it is of their nature to be transitory, cast their shadow over all of the joys of this world? That is the ultimate proof written deep in man's heart; that he is destined for a life of everlasting joy and that passing pleasure cannot be his final destiny.

If the belief in man's immortality and in eternal life is madness, if the enjoyment of the pleasures of this world is our final destiny, how is it possible then that the vast majority of mankind is unable to achieve this destiny? What is the destiny of the poor on this earth who suffer untold agonies so as scarcely ever to know a joyous moment? Indeed, one hears the reply that poverty is about to be abolished, and everyone will be in a position to enjoy the good things of this world. I will disregard for the moment whether it is indeed possible to abolish poverty. Assuming that it were, is poverty the only obstacle to enjoyment of earthly bliss? What of the countless numbers of those who are sick in body and soul, some of whom suffer for years and some of whom are even confined to their sickbeds an entire lifetime? What is their destiny and what consolation can we offer them? Our self-anointed humanitarians of the public forum never quite make it to the bedsides of the indigent sick. That is our task. With what message of consolation do they equip us?

I have witnessed time and time again with amazement the strength which Christian teaching affords to those who suffer from horrible and lengthy illnesses. There is no more convincing evidence of the truth and Divine power of Christianity than the joy which it is able to bring to the hearts of the suffering. I have often marvelled and admired as I witnessed the calm and patience of those who suffered poverty and misery and unspeakable pain, sometimes over a period of years, without a murmur of complaint. There I witnessed an inner joy such as I have never been able to detect amongst the children of the world surrounded by all of their pleasures. How many of such patient sufferers besieged by great external tribulation, yet displaying an indescribable inner peace, I have already known and loved in my own life time.

Everything that I have heard in the world about courage, strength, and resolution appear to me to be mere shadows of the courage, strength and determination of



Christian souls bearing their sufferings with their glance turned toward eternal life! Is a Faith which can produce such enormous, spiritual strength to be written off as nonsense? Should we approach these robust spirits and inform them that they have no goal other than to enjoy the passing pleasures of this world? And since they are unable to attain these pleasures, are we to leave them with no other companion in their suffering but the disconsolate thought that they have no further destiny on earth, that they are no longer in a position to achieve the normal goal of humankind?

In keeping with such a philosophy, there is nothing left for a considerable part of the human race but suicide! Put an end to mortal life which has as its only purpose the enjoyment of worldly pleasures and which is no longer in a position to do so! Such a teaching is supposed to represent the ultimate truth? No, never! Nature cannot be so unnatural as to give a man his life with a goal that he cannot reach. So long as there is a sick man or a suffering person on earth who feels in his heart that he is destined for happiness, our innermost souls must accept that we are destined for a better life.

Now let us envision ourselves at the deathbed of someone near and dear to us. While it is true that we live in an age which is not marked by great love among persons; even then scarcely any man is so alone that he does not have a son, a brother, a friend to whom he is not bound by some bond of affection. Now place yourself at the bedside of the one who is dearest to you as this one lies dying. Consider the position of such a person at the moment when he draws his last breath, at the moment the light of life leaves the eyes into which you so often saw your own joy mirrored. Now he can no longer respond to your farewell greeting and his hand becomes limp in your grasp. Could you bear the thought of never again enjoying a reunion with this soul? Can you find any consolation in the belief that this person has reached his final destiny, to become a feast for worms, or to be like a tree that has been felled and is thrown into the fire? Does it ease your grief to believe that this soul has died with the body, or that it has become an indistinguishable part of some vague world spirit? How can we explain the strong, determined, insuperable craving to see again, love and possess this particular personality in its full integrity? Whence the consolation which the true Christian finds at the moment of someone's death because of the belief that he will see the deceased again? That is proof enough that there is an immortal soul in the person whom you love, with which your soul is destined to be reunited for all eternity.

If the belief in a hereafter and in personal survival after death is nonsense, then what are the prospects for human yearning that justice be done to all men and that everyone ought to get his just deserts? The instinct for eventual justice cannot be eradicated from the human spirit. Even the inmates of prisons who are paying for their crimes and who are often hardened beyond the reach of all human sentiments demand justice and want to be dealt with justly. It is this universal instinct for justice which gives rise to the concern for justice in human society. The just society is an ideal that people dream of. In such a society each will get his just deserts according to his good and bad deeds, either reward or punishment, honor or dishonor, love or contempt. Can this ideal be fulfilled on earth? Who passes judgment on men's thoughts? Yet it is thoughts that determine what a man will do, and it is man's intentions that determine the real worth of our actions. This whole important area of human action remains exempt from human courts of law. But even the actual deeds and transactions of men cannot all be made to conform to the ideal of full justice here on earth. Here we have an appropriate saying, "One hangs the petty thieves while the big ones remain at large. I am not suggesting that one does this kind of thing on purpose, but the fact remains.

The more clever and crafty people are, the more adept they are at escaping justice on earth. Whereas the shrewd scoundrel can turn a fat profit dishonestly, defrauding widows and orphans, all the while enjoying esteem and a good life, it is entirely possible that a widow defrauded by him may end up in jail for having taken a piece of bread for her hungry children. Who will see to it that justice is done between the evil rich man and the virtuous poor man, between the person who goes through life in perfect



health and the poor man whose entire lot in life is ill health, between the one fellow who by lying, swindling, and intrigue achieves fame and enjoys the esteem of his fellow man and the other person who suffers unjust persecution, contempt and dishonor?

My Christian brethren, if there is no all-knowing Judge who sees the secrets in men's hearts, if there is no general judgment where all thoughts, words, and deeds, all sorrows and joys are judged and balanced off for all mankind to see, if there is no hereafter where every man will get his just deserts, we may as well throw over our poor, imperfect earthly justice too. Then injustice reigns supreme and all thought of equity is madness. But that is not the case. Just as certainly as there is in man a hankering for justice, there is also a Lord of heaven and earth who holds the scales of justice in His hands; and there is a final Court where sentence will be pronounced and an eternity where every man will reap what he personally has sown -- reward for the just, and punishment for the unjust.

Finally, my Christian brethren, if life on earth and its enjoyment were our final and only destiny, why is it that all good things which this earth has to offer cannot satisfy fully the heart of any single person? There must exist something which can satisfy the universal yearning of the human heart for happiness. If temporal goods are our final end, then there must be joys on earth which are available to every man and which so satisfy the craving for bliss that the human heart is completely fulfilled. As food satisfies the body's hunger, that being the natural destiny of food, so the pleasures of this world ought to satisfy the cravings of the soul, if they were indeed the ultimate objects toward which the soul is directed. But here again we come up against the limit which God sets for our folly. We like to insist that life here on earth is our final end, but we are unable to come up with any temporal good which we can say is able to satisfy man's thirst for happiness. God has implanted a craving in man's soul which cannot in all eternity be satisfied except by the possession of God.

There is conclusive evidence of the high dignity and noble destiny of man in the fact that all the knowledge and all the beauty on this earth has not been able to satisfy man's deepest yearnings. In fact, God has even attached to the enjoyment of worldly pleasures a certain satiety, even revulsion. Who can measure the anguish of a man who has set his sights on fulfilling himself with worldly pleasures and who, after wallowing in them, is left with the inevitable emptiness, disgust and revulsion? What St. Augustine discovered in his own life is what every man learns for himself. He was favored with all the bounty that nature can lavish on a person. He plunged into the world, full of zeal to satisfy his soul's yearning for truth and his heart's hankering for pleasure. After he had exhausted all the knowledge and pleasure which the world had to offer, he delivered his great creed, "Lord, you have created us for Yourself. And our hearts cannot rest until they rest in You." From then on he knew peace and found happiness which he had been pursuing in vain. His only regret was that he had found lasting beauty and come to love it so late. Let us follow Augustine and end the quest after what we cannot find, true happiness without God. Like his, our hearts will chase after inner peace without rest and fail to find it until we come to know and love God.

The teaching of Christianity and of our Faith is in full harmony with the inherent recognition of the soul that it is destined for eternal life. According to the teaching of the Church, God created man to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him and thus to merit a bliss which no ear has yet heard and no eye has yet seen and which no human heart has yet realized. In this world, however, man has no other final destiny, now that he has fallen from grace, but to prepare himself by the ordering of his free will for eternal happiness, that is to say, for the possession of God whom Christ manifested to us here on earth. That is why the Church rightfully regards life on earth as a pilgrimage, a kind of exile. It is true that we are strangers here, and only God and His domain represent our homeland. We are exiles so long as we are not united with God and so long as we cannot see, love, and be in possession of His eternal essence. We know, therefore, my Christian Brethren, whence we came. No one can answer this basic, all-important question for us. We are from God who created us out of nothing.



We know Who preserves us from the abyss of nothingness. It is God with His hand upon us. We know why God created us to love and possess Him. We know the reason for our sojourn here on earth is to prepare ourselves for the Kingdom of God. We know, finally, what this hunger and thirst in our hearts is all about: they represent a craving for that enjoyment of eternal bliss.

From this teaching of reason and our Faith about the destiny of man, we derive some most important conclusions regarding life in society. These stand opposed to the consequences of atheism which are referred to earlier, and they are designed to support and strengthen life in society, just as the opposed principles serve to undermine and destroy it.

First of all, only this view of man's destiny is capable of instilling true diligence and cheerful acceptance of the tedium that goes with work. True, there is a kind of ambition for work to which a man will submit for other motives, for example, the diligence of the great merchant who is restless in his ambition to enlarge his enterprise. We refer rather to that tedious, repetitive work of the day laborer who toils for a meager wage and but seldom achieves the enjoyment of the world's pleasures. No man would tolerate such work if he regarded adequate worldly pleasure as his sole destiny. Still, we can scarcely do without this kind of labor since the wealth of a nation arises largely from it. We must either have a race of men who perform such work dutifully or, as was true in ancient times, we will have to experience again a situation where one part of mankind forcefully subjugates the other part, so that it call consign this unpleasant work to slaves. That is one of the mysteries of Christianity, that it is capable of instilling a spirit in a man which enables him to perform unavoidable and unpleasant tasks cheerfully and without complaint. It is on this spirit that Christianity erected a social order which could be destroyed by man, but can never be rebuilt without the benefit of Christian spirit.

While Christianity, by its teaching of man's final destiny can inspire true industry and thereby guarantee genuine well-being, it nevertheless moderates by virtue of that same teaching, uncontrolled striving for the goods and pleasures of the world. For the unbeliever, they are only a means designed to help him in his quest for eternal salvation. The rich man who is aware of his eternal destiny will therefore not regard his possessions as the means for satisfying his earthly cravings, but rather as means whereby, through careful stewardship, he can attain his eternal salvation. In using his riches, he will observe the will of God, share his bounty with his less fortunate fellowman, and fight to keep all inordinate attachment to worldly goods from taking first place in his heart.

At the same time, the poor man who depends for his existence on a daily wage will not look upon material goods with undisguised greed and view his more fortunate fellowman with hatred and envy. How great and exalted is the spirit of a truly Christian worker who looks with disdain not on the wealthy, but upon earthly riches with their superficial appeal. Convinced that human dignity, not the product of riches, but of virtue, he gladly leaves all superficial finery to the rich and engages rather in the pursuit of virtue. He looks with pity upon those who are all absorbed in this empty pursuit of material goods and rises above this in his quest for the eternal treasures, In the peace and joy of his clear conscience, this man finds in the quiet of his own humble homestead more than adequate compensation for all of his toil and labor. With such an attitude, the simple workingman has attained a level of human dignity that is scarcely attainable in any other state of life. The source of such a disposition is the Christian teaching regarding man's final end. It is on fertile soil like this that one can build a social order which is capable of withstanding the tempests of the ages.

We have discussed the Influence of the teaching of man's final end on social living. This guide post for social order has been shattered to its very foundation. The attitude that the destiny of man lies in the enjoyment of material goods has spread through all classes of society. Those who deny God's existence have been joined by many who, for practical purposes, live as though the pursuit of worldly pleasures



were their only goal. Such practical atheism has long been the fate of the rich. Now it reigns as the dominant life style of all classes. In league with godless teachings regarding private property and liberty, the unrestrained pursuit of material goods will have frightful consequences.

It is true that God can send forth His spirit and renew the face of the earth. But then I think of the words of Peter, the Apostle: "God did not spare the angels who fell into sin; he thrust them down to hell, chained them there in the abyss, to await their sentence in torment. Nor did he spare the world he had first made; he brought a flood on that world of wickedness, preserving only Noah, who had borne witness to holiness, and only seven others with him. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, too, he punished with utter ruin, turning them to ashes, as an example to the godless of a later time." (2 Peter 2: 4-6) And so I fear that we, who in our godlessness have surpassed Sodom and Gomorrah, will not escape God's punishment.

But God does not need to send a flood over the earth or let fire and brimstone rain down from heaven, He only needs to permit the passions, which the godless teachings of our time threaten to set loose, run their course. We will then have to drain to the very dregs the beaker of God's wrath!

Christian Marriage and Family

By Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler

Translated by Rupert J. Ederer, Ph.D., Buffalo, N. Y.

Fifth sermon, December 19, 1848

"You who are husbands must show love to your wives, as Christ showed love to the Church when he gave himself up on it's behalf."

Ephesians 5: 25

We shall now pursue further the task which we have set for ourselves, i.e., to analyze the principles on which the entire social structure rests and the influence which belief and unbelief have in either the destruction or the support of those principles. All told, I proposed four such principles, the idea of human liberty, the final destiny of man, the right of private property, and the family.

We have already examined the first three of these and observed what has happened to them because of the godlessness of our era. They are infected with and undermined by unbelief and they threaten to collapse, bringing society and civilization crashing down with them in ruins.

It remains for us to discuss the last principle of social order, the family. We shall see in what condition this final support of the entire social structure is. The family is of incalculable importance, If we find the basic ingredients for social life still sound and incorrupt in the family, then this single pillar is yet capable of supporting the whole structure. Would that we could find more comfort in the condition of the family, so that we could find there at least a foundation that remains solid. If I had the good fortune to be speaking to an audience all of whose members enjoyed the blessing of having grown up in genuine Christian families and of having themselves experienced the saving grace of Christian family living, then it would be a simple matter for me to inspire you with zeal for Christ and His Church -- which are the fountainheads of such good fortune -- and with horror of the teachings which would rob us of this source of so many blessings. How difficult it is to explain the sun to one who has never experienced the warmth of its rays shining upon his face. And how difficult it is to put the value and beauty of Christian family living across to someone who has not himself experienced this good fortune. More than ever, I now require the assistance of God's grace. Grant me your help, O heavenly Redeemer, through the intercession of your holy Mother Mary!

Christian family life receives its noble character exclusively from marriage as it was instituted and sanctified by Christ. Let us therefore consider marriage and the influence which faith in God on the one hand and disbelief on the other have on it.



In the first man and woman we already witness the intention of God regarding marriage and its purpose here on earth, dearly expressed. When God, the Father, as the Holy Bible relates, introduced Eve to Adam, the father of the entire human race gave expression to God's own design for marriage and its purpose. "That is why a man is destined to leave father and mother, and cling to his wife, so that the two become one flesh." (Genesis 2: 24) In this quotation we find the three essential components of Christian marriage: love, since a man will leave father and mother for the sake of his wife; unity, for the two partners become as one; indissolubility, since they become as one flesh.

This lofty concept of marriage disappeared along with the state of innocence here on earth. Reason darkened by original sin scarcely grasped the true idea of marriage, and the will inclined to evil by that same sin was unable to make such a pure life into a reality. From the time of Adam until the time of Christ, the ideal of marriage disappeared from the earth. What is more, in no area of human life did corruption become more base and more persistent than in this.

The Christian preacher hesitates even to hint at the abominations which paganism brought all in the moral life of the people; we do not find there the faintest recognition of the dignity of Christian marriage and Christian family living. Pagans would have been more ready to believe that one could change the paths of the stars than that one could achieve the ideal of Christian marriage here on earth. The debasement of woman was an inevitable consequence of the degradation of marriage. A woman was no longer a person, but a thing. She had no rights, no independence of her own, and her only destiny was to serve the lusts of men. It is even more noteworthy that revelation among the Jews did not make known God's plan for marriage in its full perfection. Christ told his disciples that Moses allowed a man to leave his wife because of "your hard hearts, but in the beginning it was not so." (Matthew 19:8) Man was rendered so incapable of grasping the authentic idea of marriage after his reason and will were crippled by original sin that God did not even reveal it in its fullness to the Jews.

That is how matters still stand, my Christian brethren. Marriage is an exclusive treasure of Christianity; and so that there may be no misunderstanding, let me say that marriage is the sacred possession of a true, living, full Christianity; I mean Christianity as it is embodied in the Catholic Church. Only Christianity in the form where it can bring the full saving grace of its teachings and sacraments to bear on man's soul is able to effectuate the high ideal of Christian marriage. It is with man as it is with the soil from which he wishes to grow fruit. The better the fruit that one aspires to produce, the more carefully must the soil be prepared. So it is with Christian virtues. The better one would cultivate them, the more they require for their successful cultivation the preparation of the soul by the grace of God, won for us by Christ.

In reverence toward marriage we have the best index of the level of Christian living that a people has achieved. By the same token, to the extent that a people becomes separated from God and His Church, to the same extent Christian marriage will more and more disappear among them. One may observe this among those creeds which have separated themselves from Christianity's true tree of life, the Catholic Church. The twig is first to shrivel up when the branch is cut off from the vine of marriage. Whereas the separated Churches are able for centuries to draw some nourishment from the reservoir of strength that is left to them from the true Church, what happens to marriage provides at once the evidence that the spring from which life flows has been sealed off. Even there, however, where the branch is not yet fully separated from the vine which is the Church and where from outward, appearances there is still a connection, we begin to see marriage deteriorate. Everyday experience supports this claim. We live in a time of pseudo-Christianity (*Scheinchristenthum*). So many people are still externally linked with the Church, who really have separated themselves in their basic beliefs. The consequence is the deterioration of marriage and family life, the destruction of the familial spirit which we so much lament today. We cannot be surprised, therefore, that secularism where it runs its full course even dares to wage war against this Christian institu-



tion which brings so much happiness to mankind. The secularist dares to contest along with Christianity's teaching about God, human liberty, human destiny, and private property, the whole idea of marriage, and to present it as a dispensable institution. With this shameless undertaking the battle against God has returned to its original source, the revolt of the flesh against the law of God.

Let us turn now to a consideration of the essence of Christian marriage so that we may gain an appreciation of its great dignity and its enormous benefits for society.

As I mentioned before, my Christian brethren, the essential elements of matrimony are all contained in the words which the father of the human race spoke and which bespeak God's design; namely, love unity and indissolubility. It was the work of Jesus Christ not to alter the plan which the Creator put into nature, but to purify it from sin and the corruption that flowed from sin, and to restore it to its pristine, original purpose. In Christianity we find, therefore, the same essential elements of marriage that were expressed by our first parents. But we must recognize with the Apostle Paul: "Only the grace which came to us was out of all proportion to the fault." (Romans 5: 15) Christ not only restored love, unity, and indissolubility to marriage, He also elevated it to the level of a sacrament, reflecting His relationship to His church, and He thereby immeasurably strengthened it, sanctified it and clarified it. A sacrament is an outward sign of inner sanctification and every sacrament is specially designed to confer those graces which are appropriate to the nature of the occasion.

Therefore those three properties of marriage also receive, through its elevation to the status of a sacrament, a higher degree of blessing and sanctification. The sacrament first of all sanctifies the love of Christian marriage partners so that the apostle Paul could say to men: "You who are husbands must show love to your wives, as Christ showed love to the Church when he gave himself up on its behalf." And, as he said to women, "Wives must obey their husbands as they would obey the Lord." And, to both he said: "And as you stand in awe of Christ, submit to each other's rights." (Ephesians 5: 21, 22, 25-26)

How far such love in Christian marriage is removed from the lowly condition which goes by the same name, but which has to do more with infatuation, self-seeking, passion and lust! The love that is sanctified by Christ and His sacramental grace does not change with every whim, but like the love of Christ it is stable and self-sacrificing unto death. The sacrament also sanctifies the unity of marriage so that Christ could say of it: "You have heard that it was said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' But I tell you that he who casts his eyes on a woman so as to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5: 27-28) How sublime this statement, how sacred the kind of relationship to which it applies. Christ did not found a religion based on external decency, but one which is interiorly genuine and honest. That is why mere external decency, outward modesty, and respect, are never sufficient for Him. He established a relationship in which he preserves even the intentions and secrets that lie in the innermost caverns of a man's heart from infidelity.

Finally, through the dignity of sacramental status, Christ has once and for all established the indissolubility of marriage without which there could be neither the kind of love nor that fidelity which Christ intended for marriage, and without which the purpose of marriage would be, in any case, unattainable. Regarding this, Christ made it perfectly clear, after he alluded to the words of the Creator, "And so they are no longer two, they are one flesh; what God then has joined, let not man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6)

That is what marriage means according to God's design, as Christ has restored it and brought it to its fullest expression. It is a great sacrament, but only in His Church. (Ephesians 5:32) It is a relationship between a man and a woman joined by a love that is so true, so pure, so spiritual, so self-sacrificing as is the love of Christ for His Church. It is preserved by a fidelity which permeates the whole being of a man and his wife, and it protects them against even the most secret improper desires. It is encompassed by a bond which is as strong as this love and this loyalty and which lasts until death.



Before I proceed further, my Christian brethren, I cannot restrain myself from asking you this question. Do not your own inner souls tell you that only such a bond between a man and a woman as the Church of Christ is proposing bespeaks true human dignity? No man can have sunk, so low in worldliness, sensuousness, and corruption as not to recognize that only that kind of marriage comes up to the ideal which every man cherishes in his heart. Even the crudest ruffian and the bitterest enemy of the Church must desire to be the product of a union which matches the Catholic Church's idea of marriage. But only that divine institution such as the Catholic Church can still attain to such ideals, given the great moral infirmity of our time. Thanks be to God, experience proves that such unions are not merely ideals, but are even now still attained in reality.

However, if Christ demanded pure, binding, self-sacrificing love and fidelity in marriage, He also had to equip souls with sufficient nobility, dignity, and kindness to be able to measure up to this love. In particular, Christianity had to elevate woman from the fallen condition to which paganism reduced her. If man was to fulfill the command of Paul, "You husbands must show love to your wives, as Christ showed love to the Church," then the female sex had to be substantially reconstructed. Love ought to be not deceitful but honest, and it must have truth for its object. Christianity has accomplished this not only in its teaching that every man is made in the image of Christ, but also in the fact that it bestowed on womanhood a spiritual beauty, a dignity, and purity which it never enjoyed in pagan times. The dignity of woman is entirely the by-product of Christianity. The more Christian a woman is, the higher she rises in our esteem; the more un-Christian she becomes, the deeper she sinks. Paganism produced men whose manly qualities we are forced to respect; for there were great statesmen, great scholars, great warriors, but it was never able to produce a woman with the dignity which adorns the Christian woman. Some like to ascribe the treatment of woman in non-Christian cultures to some low point of morality, and they infer that as human civilization progresses, the problem would disappear. Not so, my Christian brethren. The true and natural root of the undignified treatment of women lies in the low state in which womankind finds itself outside of Christianity. That low state among non-Christian societies is the strictly logical consequence of the degeneracy of the woman herself. A man could no longer respect the degenerate woman, and that is how things stood until Christ came.

With the beginning of Christianity we immediately encounter that woman to whom the Church refers in the canticle of praise, "Fair in every part, my true love, no fault in all thy fashioning!" (Song of Songs: 4:7) It is the woman to whom the Angel said, "Hail, thou art full of grace and the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." (Luke 1: 28) The Blessed Virgin Mary possesses all of the beauty and dignity of the female sex, and the luster which radiates from her to all of womankind is so bright that even vice, when it is exposed to just a single ray of her brightness, shrinks back and hides in shame for its baseness.

Down through the Christian centuries, Mary has been the true prototype of all Christian women. Mary, the pure and immaculate virgin, is the fountainhead of that spirit of chastity and purity which adorns the brow of the Christian virgin with greater splendor than gold and precious gems. The Christian woman derives her inspiration for humility from Mary, the humble Virgin. It is that spirit of humility which averts her glance from the blandishments of the outside world toward the inner life of her family. There it affords her the strength to lead a life of wonderful self-sacrifice and self-denial in this great domestic seclusion, where the woman becomes a true hearer of peace, joy and blessing within her family circle.

From the day when women again depart from these two virtues, they are once more on the way toward that low esteem and loss of dignity which was the lot of the pagan woman. The dignity of woman is so closely related to these virtues that I do not think there is a man who can truly hold in high regard any woman who lacks them. Here again, the enemies of the Church and of Christianity must bear witness.



Ask the most immoral man what kind of woman he wants his mother or sister to be, and he will choose a woman with characteristic Christian virtues as his mother and virgin with Christian virtues as his sister. If only all women, all maidens, would recognize this great truth and not be taken in by the false display of esteem and love lavished by the rake! A man can only love and respect the Christian woman of true virtue. In his innermost soul he despises the vain and immoral female.

That, my Christian brethren, is what Christian womanhood and Christian marriage are all about. These are the elements of Christian family living, that sublime school of humanity, that sacred bond which surrounds us through our entire lives and which brings so much blessing, consolation, and joy into men's hearts. How difficult it is to get across the blessedness of the Christian family to him who has not himself experienced it! The Christian family is the prime educator of mankind, and in this sacred trust, the mother once again takes first place. The greatest benefit which God can lavish on a person in the natural order is, without a doubt, the gift of a true Christian mother. I purposely avoided saying simply a tender and loving mother, because if the mother is filled with the spirit of the world, then her love toward the child is not beneficial, but harmful. A Christian mother, on the other hand, is without a doubt the greatest gift which God can give a man.

How my whole inner self revolts when I hear people in the world appraise the good fortune of children on the basis of how much wealth the parents have. That child is immeasurably unhappy, even though bedded down in silk and satin, whose mother is unchristian, without faith, and lacking in virtue. On the other hand, the child who is blessed with a truly Christian mother, even if it is clad in rags from the cradle to the grave, is blessed beyond measure. I concur fully with a great Christian thinker who held that the formation of a person is determined for the most part on the mother's lap during the first six years of its life. What development takes place in later years has already been conditioned to a large degree by what values the mother has implanted in the child's heart during those early years. The influences which the child is subjected to during those earliest, tender impressionable years, when the child's soul is most receptive to every influence, become so much a part of its second nature that they can no longer be erased.

Here we are able to recognize the basic absurdity of that philosophy of education which holds that a man can and must develop fully and exclusively from what is in him. If that were so, we should have to withhold the mother's milk from the child and deprive the child of the warmth and closeness of a mother's heart. We would have to allow the child to grow up alone facing four blank white walls, otherwise such an approach would be ruled out.

Yes, my Christian brethren, men who later became the benefactors or destroying angels for the human race often had the germ for their deeds transplanted from a mother's heart. The word of God -- "And if anyone hurts the conscience of one of these little ones that believe in me, he had better have been drowned in the depths of the sea, with a mill-stone hung about his neck." (Matthew 18 :6) -- applies with special force to the mother. No scandal can equal in its consequences that which the mother gives to her children through bad first impressions. They are like branches of sin and corruption grafted on to the tender trunk, which then determine the direction in which the tree grows.

Whoever has learned about education from experience and not from a textbook will support this view. So long as I have had the duty, while in charge of souls, to supervise children, I have had to work extra hard to counteract the poor example from which children suffered who were brought up by unworthy mothers. Yet I never felt fully confident that such children could wholly overcome such bad influence. Woe to the world because of bad, un-Christian mothers! This is the greatest evil from which we are now suffering. In the most accurate sense of the word, the unworthy mother lays the ax to the root of the tree. She inculcates into the impressionable soul of her children the spirit of the world, of unbelief, of self-seeking, of impurity, because



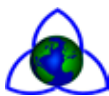
of which these flowers, implanted by God and nurtured by the blood of Christ will suffocate and wilt. But as deleterious as the influence of the un-Christian mother is on her children, even though she may masquerade under the name "Christian," just so beneficial will that seed be which the good mother plants in the hearts of her children. Even long after a mother is in her grave, and her son is tossed to and fro by life's storms so that he is on the verge of throwing over his Faith and surrendering to an immoral way of life at the risk of his eternal salvation, the pious, noble image of his mother comes before him and gently persuades him back onto the way of faith and virtue.

Whoever has come to know firsthand Christianity and its virtues, its inner truth, its purity, its boundless, selfless love in the life of a Christian mother, or in her counterpart, the Christian nun, whoever has enjoyed the peace which Christ called His own in such a family, the recollection of all of this will safeguard him from every snare of corruption which lies in life's path. Whoever has seen virtue in such clear form cannot subsequently regard vice without revulsion and disdain, even though he may himself be caught up in it.

Just as the Christian mother is the educator of her children, she and her daughter are also educators of the father of the family. When the heart of a man is besieged by the spirit of the world, its unbelief and its vices, because of his constant exposure to the world, then happy that man if he can come home to a pious wife and daughter. Eventually there comes a time when the world will part company with the man who was unable to part company with the world. Perhaps years of suffering will precede this forced separation. But if such a man is fortunate enough to have a wife or a daughter standing by him who has the seal of eternal life on her forehead, who in untiring love and sacrifice provides him with the living example of Divine power, such a man will ultimately return to Christ even though he has parted company with Him for a time.

From what we have discussed thus far, it is clear how essentially this concept of marriage is associated with Christ and His Church. It is also clear what a great influence marriage has on the entire fabric of a nation's society. As a family is the prime educator of the individual person, so it is also the just and most vital cell in the entire social human organism. It is in the family that a man learns to use rather than abuse his personal liberty. It is in the family that he learns to conduct himself as a useful member of society first in the family unit and eventually in the other organs of society. The regulation of the national economic household is basically the same as the economic activity of the largest and smallest businessmen; and just as none of these is able to ignore certain common principles, in the same manner, the moral foundations on which family life rests are the same as those on which the state rests. And just as Christianity understands how to inculcate its lofty virtues into family living, it is also the one institution which is able to provide the foundation for the broader social organs.

It remains for us to examine to what extent Secularism has already weakened, and to some extent, destroyed this last and most stable support of social order, which is in a more essential sense the very primary cell of that order. Yet I do not want to undertake this task from a pulpit in the Christian house of God. The reverence which I owe to this holy place forbids me to spell out in detail what havoc unbelief and lukewarmness in belief have wrought in the area of family life. It forbids me also to show how they have begun to destroy the high ideals of Christendom, how the Christian concept of love and fidelity between marriage partners has already begun to founder, how the female sex has already begun to abandon that jewel of Christianity, purity and humility of heart, how family life has become disorganized and Christian joy banished from it. I must turn my glance away from that horrible picture. It is sufficient for me to recall that unbelievers have already dared to call into question the validity of the very institution, marriage; and proceeding from there they have begun to unleash upon society the whole flood of moral corruption which is implicit in Atheism. After the teaching of secularists about liberty and man's final destiny began to undermine the very foundations of our society, these unbelievers then proceeded to invade the innermost living organism of the social structure. If they succeed, we can confidently expect that, the entire structure of society will be demolished and its wreckage will litter the entire earth.



I have now fulfilled my task, my Christian brethren, to the best of my ability. All of the foundations of social order are under siege and threaten to collapse. No external remedy, no formality, no constitution on earth is able to fortify the structure or firm up its foundations. If God does not build the house, they labor in vain who build it. If Christ, the Lord, does not shore up the foundations, all is in vain. Only in Christ is help to be found. Only if we return to the living Faith in Christ and His Church can we still prevent the collapse of society. It was not my intention to paint a horror picture. So far as I am able to see, I have stuck to the truth. The purpose of our investigations was to discover the ultimate causes of the condition in which our society finds itself. Loss of belief in God appears to me to be the sole and ultimate source of our decay and the belief in Christ and the Catholic Church is the only remedy.

Tomorrow, therefore, my last discourse will deal with Christ and His Church. Like all of the foregoing ones it will have just one purpose -- to bind you more firmly and more deeply to Christ and His Church.

Teaching Authority of the Catholic Church

By Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler

Translated by Rupert J. Ederer, Ph.D., Buffalo, N. Y.

Sixth sermon, December 20, 1848

“Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.” Matthew 5:3

The inner strength which invigorates us is not immediately perceptible, It becomes apparent in the works to which it gives rise. Thus, two oak trees may look alike while one may be filled with vitality that will keep the tree alive for centuries, whereas the other may bear a germ which will cause it to die in a short time. In the same manner we may observe two people from all appearances pretty much alike, yet one is enlivened by an inner strength which enables him to change the world, while the other cannot keep his own house in order.

With this idea as my starting point, my Christian brethren, I have pointed out to you the inner constructive force of Christianity and the Church as opposed to the destructive force of Secularism, with regard to the structure of our social order. We find Christianity everywhere to be filled with a living spirit so that it spreads vitality, order, and formative influence, whereas Secularism is filled with a death-dealing spirit so that wherever it makes Its presence felt there is evident death, confusion, and destruction. Therein, in particular, we are able to appreciate the inner truth and Godliness of Christianity as contrasted with the inherent dishonesty of Secularism. The textbooks are full of proofs for the divinity of Jesus Christ, and still the world has refused to believe in Him. Now we are at the point where the proofs are moving from the textbooks into realization before our own eyes. God has now taken matters into His own hands. He is about to demonstrate to man that Christ, who appeared in human form here on earth, was indeed the Son of the living God and that the Church which He founded is a divine institution for the salvation and sanctification of mankind. He is about to write this proof into world history with huge capital letters. It looks as though God is about to permit unbelief to take on its true configuration so that it will at least reveal its destructive power to us. Secularism will be allowed to complete its work of destruction. The noble concept of Christian liberty will be suppressed by its crude caricature of liberty, and those who are liberated from the law of God under the pretext of liberty, having become slaves to the passions, will seethe with hatred and envy of one another. Their unbelief will rob man of the salutary hope for a better life hereafter and fill him instead with a desperate craving for the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. It will first destroy private property and bring on the inevitable impoverishment, confusion, and discord. Finally, it will reduce womankind again to the low estate which was Its lot in pagan cultures. It will deprive us of the consolation and blessing which a Christian mother and sister can bestow and replace these with immoral and worldly women. After it has thus destroyed the sanctity of



the Christian family, then, finally, those who survive in the wreckage of our society will once again reach out desperately for the life giving grace and strength to Christ and His Church which they are now foolishly rejecting.

There are, my Christian brethren, those who do not require this frightful proof in order to cling to Christ and His Church. They have already discovered for themselves the sanctifying and enlivening Divine force of Christianity as well as the death-dealing force of unbelief. Such persons must be aware of an overpowering desire to save one or the other of their wayward fellow men from eternal damnation and to lead them back to God. That is the final purpose which I have for appearing before you once more today. I have the overpowering desire to share with my fellowmen what I myself have discovered in and learned from Christ and His Church.

Up to now, we have considered the effects of faith and Secularism respectively on social order in human society, and we have concluded that examination. Now we want to turn our attention to the inner principle on which faith and disbelief rest, to determine the truthfulness of this principle. The innermost principle of both of these positions and their essential differences, I find in their teaching about the authority which man ought to follow with both his intellect and his will. The teaching on authority constitutes the deepest, most basic divergence between the believer and the unbeliever. Therefore, my Christian brethren, I beg for your attention, and I beseech our Lord, Jesus Christ, out of the love by which He allowed Himself to be nailed on the cross, to assist us through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Divine Grace.

The belief of the Catholic Church rests on the principle that man, to be completely reasonable can reach nowhere else but for the hand of the authority which God established here on earth. Therefore there is no conflict between faith and, reason. Faith does not demand that we use our belief to stamp out reason. On the contrary, through authority, faith wishes man to attain to the full and true use of this reason. As the dew which penetrates the plant does not suppress the plant but helps it to develop and unfold, so authority does not suppress the proper life of the soul, but helps it to true development and fulfillment. Secularism on the other hand, proceeds from the premise that man should be subject to no authority except the dictates of his own reason. It does not come to grips with the questions of whether such a state of affairs is appropriate to the human condition, whether it is natural and sensible for a man to rely only upon himself and no one else for guidance, whether it is not far more natural and sensible for him in fact even necessary for him, to seek guidance on the way to acquiring knowledge.

The unbeliever thoughtlessly and arbitrarily accepts what suits him, namely that it is undignified for a man to recognize any authority beyond himself. As he rejects every law outside himself which would restrict his will, so he overthrows every authority, every truth outside himself which would restrict his reason. Man must submit only to that law which he himself erects for himself and, likewise, he should hold as true only that which he himself has fully grasped.

These propositions sound nice, even sublime. They offer to man such a high destiny and promise the same thing that the first Tempter promised him: "God knows well that as soon as you eat this fruit your eyes will be opened, and you yourselves will be like gods, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5)

Let us have a closer look to see whether there is genuine truth in these promises and especially whether they are in conformity with man's nature, whether, in other words, it is possible for him to determine all things without outside influences, solely from within himself. I am already skeptical about this viewpoint of the unbeliever, because I maintain that among those who claim to follow nothing but their own power of reason, there is often a remarkable diversity of interpretations of the same phenomenon. What is true and reasonable must, after all, remain the same always; and about the same phenomenon there can certainly only be one true and reasonable explanation. Yet we find among the apostles of unbelief, those men who assert that they follow no authority save their own reason, displaying an amazing variety of viewpoints.



If you pose questions to them which are of an essential nature and to which one would expect them to dispense some sensible answers, as for example, about their own soul, its origin, its relation to the body, its destiny after death, we get from one thousand unbelievers one thousand different answers. Now only one of these positions can be valid. Either there is one truth and one reasonable explanation, or else there is no universally valid truth in which case all thought is unreasonable, the vaunted celebration of reason is foolishness, and this would be the most disconsolate of all doctrines.

But let us examine more closely the proposition that there are people who follow only their reason and nothing else; and let us consider this especially with relation to the history and nature of mankind. First we see the child in its earliest years in the home of its parents. Does one seriously expect that the child at that early age should develop without benefit of external authority solely from within itself and by its own reason? To expect this is to expect the impossible and the proposition is therefore preposterous. Even if man were destined to follow only his own authority, he could only accomplish this after he had reached the full maturity of his reasoning capacity.

In his early years, on the other hand, he is the most dependent creature that we can imagine. At that age he is so totally dominated by an authority outside himself, the authority of his parents and especially his mother, that the individuality and personality of the child remains largely latent. The voluntaristic and cognitive faculties of the child in the earliest years are determined not from within the child, but by the will and intellect of the mother. Long before the child has begun to think and decide for itself, external influence has shaped its thinking and determined it. The influence of this direction and power on the cognitive and voluntaristic faculties of the child, determined externally, i.e., by authority, is so great that one is scarcely able to shed it entirely in later years. In particular, there is a certain kind of love, an inclination of the will, which the child assimilates in its tenderest years at the mother's breast, and this is of the most decisive importance in shaping its thinking in later years. At least at this level of human growth, the principle of the unbeliever that man must reject any and all authority represents a monumental falsehood.

Let us accompany the child in its school years. The decisive influence of parental authority has already given a certain orientation to the individuality and personality of the child by the time it enters school. This influence stemming from the home environment and reinforced by the constant daily relationship with parents already make it impossible for the child to develop entirely from within itself. Now we confront a new authority in the person of the teacher. An authority which also acts from outside the child in shaping the processes of the child's intellect and will. True, there are those who now charge the teacher to help the child develop itself without exercising a determining influence on its will or intellect. This postulate of the unbeliever is as impossible as the principle on which it is based is false, and it will never be fulfilled in real life. True, the independence of the child must develop, but always and everywhere under the decisive influence of the teacher. Complementarity and help from without are so much a part and parcel of the child's nature that no teacher can part company with any child without his own caste of mind and will having had some influence on the child's intellectual and voluntaristic processes. Here too, nature is mightier than all theories. Even if the teacher can avoid all external influences, he cannot banish all love from his heart. He either loves the world or he loves God. Just as the sun cannot shine on a plant without the plant absorbing the wholesome warmth, the teacher cannot withhold the warmth of his love from penetrating the heart of the child and thereby influencing the mind and will of the child.

So the child grows continually under the influence of one external authority and then another until the time it takes its place in the adult world. Now, one might say, the time has finally come when a man has reached a stage of independence and enjoys the full power of his reason. Now he can at last disregard all authority and follow his own reason. We will not repeat what we have said about the impressions which the child has brought from home and school into the world with him.



Let us continue our investigation by supposing that it is true that a man by virtue of his dignity and calling as a man can only accept as true what he himself can grasp. It would then be required that every single person should be in a position to acquire the highest possible level of intellectual development. We all know from experience that there were things that we could not grasp at an earlier stage of our intellectual formation which we subsequently understand after fuller development. Now, therefore, how could we ever be fully confident that we have grasped the full truth of any matter so long as we are not certain that we have attained the highest possible level of our intellectual formation?

For a man to have reached that top level, four requisites must be met: first, the highest natural capacity; second, boundless diligence; third and fourth, sufficient leisure and wealth to command the means necessary to achieve this top level of intellectual development. Where one or the other of these requirements is not fulfilled, that goal is not attainable. Even if it were possible to afford the time and expenditure of wealth required for all to develop themselves fully, still only a small percentage of people will have the natural endowment and driving ambition needed for the task. What will become of the preponderant majority of mankind who can only attain to a lower grade of intellectual development? Shall we tell them too, that they should follow only their limited reasoning powers and disregard everything that they cannot grasp fully, given their limitations? No doubt there are those who would still affirm this, but the advice is so unreasonable, so unnatural, that even those who offer it do not follow it.

The great majority of people sense it in their inner beings that they need authority, leadership, external support. If man is deprived of authentic leadership, therefore, he will fall under the influence of bad leadership. Just as the person who pretends to follow only his own rules ends up being a slave of his own passions, so the one who disdains all authority so that he may obey only his own reason ends up being a slave to the whims of the day.

The truth of this is evident from what we see around us. Men are too proud to permit themselves to be guided at the hand of some higher authority, but rather than gain real self-determination from such blindness, they end up becoming subject to the worst authority of all. They claim to be following only their own reason and what do we find? They have traded a single authority for numberless authorities. Instead of the authority of Holy Scripture, they follow the authority of the most pathetic wisdom of miserable newspapers and filthy novels. Instead of the authority of the teaching Church, they follow the authority of Johnny-come-lately, corrupt human beings. The authority which God established was contrary to what they fancied as their human dignity, but to follow docilely every scandal sheet and every seducer who happens by, this they are somehow able to reconcile with their human dignity.

And, so there seem to remain only a precious few who are in a position to operate without authority; namely, those who possess the natural endowment, the ambition, the leisure and the material means to command the heights of all human achievement and from these heights to pass judgment on them. But even here, the pretended self-sufficiency is a sham. The learned person is no more free from all outside influences and authority than the simple child. No one not even the greatest thinker, can declare truthfully that the construction of his intellect and will is solely and entirely of his own making, free of all outside influence. Even the products of his mind and will are colored by the impressions of his youth, the culture of his nation, the spirit of the times in which he lives, the relationships which he shares with others, the beliefs in which he was brought up, and the love or rejection which marked his general environment and which shaped his outlook. Why do not all great thinkers come up with the same conclusions for all of their efforts, even though they claim to be following their reason? Where does the deceptive shift of opinion in scientific thought come from? How come all of these great minds have not yet been able to come to full agreement in any branch of science? Simply because what they claim is not true; because countless extraneous influences, as well as the darkening of the intellect occasioned by original sin, have in fact dulled their perception of things.



When all is said and done, there is really no greater falsehood than that on which the unbeliever bases his unbelief. His assertion that man by setting aside all authority can be his own creature and develop entirely from within himself contradicts nature and all of human history. It is idle bluster which can never be lived up to.

But there is a further question. Where can man find an authority which he can rely upon and follow in shaping his outlook and character? It is immediately obvious that man cannot and ought not to rely upon any mere human authority. Human dignity deserves at least not to have to subject itself to laws and truths which stem from merely human sources. One reasonable person enjoys the same just as another, and it would be undignified and unreasonable to abrogate this parity.

If there were only human authorities on earth, then the teaching of the secularist would be correct, even while expecting the Impossible, Then the lot of mankind is a pathetic one. Man would have to abandon his highest aspiration, the quest for truth. He will never get beyond asking the question, "What is truth?" He finds himself conditioned from his earliest childhood in his intellectual and volitional processes by outside forces. He has absorbed likes and dislikes as well as love and hate, and he cannot know for certain whether one or the other influence is valid, whether his love for something is rooted in good or evil, since these are based on human authority which left its mark on him. Only his own inner promptings remain as the rule and measure; and in them he recognizes fickleness and change as well as tunnel vision, all of which leaves him without certitude and true decisiveness. At this point we are faced with two truths.

Man can by his very nature not operate without authority, and this authority cannot be merely human. It must be a higher infallible authority. He can submit only to such an authority none other; and without it he would have to live in despair of ever finding truth or surrender himself blindly to human opinions. Now when we ask where this higher, infallible authority is to be found, we are confronted with the great and remarkable fact that throughout all of human history, and in all of the world, there is just one institution which offers to satisfy this longing in our souls, which dares to lay claim to the essentially divine prerogative of infallibility. That institution is the Roman Catholic Church, our holy mother! The doctrine of infallibility of the Church constitutes her essential principle -- the characteristic which sets her apart from all other religious systems.

With the doctrine of her infallible teaching authority, the Catholic Church stands or falls. Her whole claim to be the teacher of mankind based on the higher divine origin of her teaching authority. The Church has never succumbed to the madness of her opponents, who posed as the teachers of mankind even while overthrowing a higher authority. Whether the Church addresses herself to the minor child to demand adherence to her teaching or to the accomplished scholar, she always does so on the same supposition that she has received the mandate from the Son of God; that is to say, from a superhuman authority, to teach mankind. As the Church rests on this foundation, so does our own life. Only if we accept this basic teaching of the Church do we ourselves become living members of the Catholic Church.

I would go way beyond my assigned task if I try to treat here of the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church and to adduce all of the proofs whereby the Church can claim that the infallible teaching authority was conferred upon her by God. It is my task here to demonstrate the need man has for authority and thereby to lay bare the inherent falsehood of the entire structure of Secularism (*Unglauben*). There is just one piece of evidence of the higher origin of the Catholic Church's teaching authority to which I would like to call attention. This identifying mark shines brighter than the sun at midday. I refer to the catholicity, the all-embracing quality of its teaching. A purely human institution could scarcely transcend the borders of the country in which it originated. The teachings of the philosophers never became even the common patrimony of all in their native lands. They remained the exclusive property of the learned. And what were the consequences of these proud systems of learning? To them one can with justice say: "Let the dead bury their dead."



The pagan religions were intertwined with given nationalities and were never able to achieve universality. In the same manner, all the sects which broke away from the Catholic Church have either long since gone under, or they find themselves undergoing constant transformation; or else they are in a state of dissolution. Every few years they take a new form, or change the mode of their teaching. What is true today, they scuttle tomorrow. How can the follower of a non-Catholic school of philosophy or of a non-Catholic Christian sect still be enthusiastic about his beliefs when he must be convinced by now from the lessons of history that his viewpoint represents merely an ephemeral opinion which shifts and changes like the weather? How can he seriously hope that his present convictions can escape this general pattern? He might just as well hope to be exempt from the inevitability of the death of the body.

Only the Catholic Church is exempt from this law of limitation and change. She has seen her claim that her teaching represents truth, itself, and that her teaching authority is divine and, immune from human arbitrariness, borne out by an all important fact in the history of mankind. There is no more foolproof, tangible way to distinguish the human from the divine than to observe the universality and constancy of the Church's teaching as contrasted with the impermanence of all other learned opinions. The teaching authority of the Catholic Church is not limited to a period of time, to a decade or to centuries. It is not confined to the peculiarities of a country or a nation. She shows herself in fact, what she claims to be, a daughter of eternity. While her teaching is at the same time that it is divine and truly reasonable, also truly human, it knows no boundaries in time or place beyond mankind itself. So far as humanity reaches in space and time, that is how far the Church reaches with her teaching. It alone remains unchanging. How could it represent error and falsehood given this great unity and catholicity? Her catholicity proves her divinity, and therewith her infallibility. How exalted is the consciousness of a Catholic whose faith is anchored to the infallible teaching authority of the Church?

Every other person may see around him a tiny band of kindred spirits and at the same time feel certain that what he holds to be true today will soon be rejected as false. The Catholic, on the other hand, stands in the company of that large band of martyrs who bore witness to the depth and firmness of their 'I faith by their deaths. He stands in league with that host of holy bishops and confessors who, having abandoned themselves totally to their Faith studied and developed true knowledge in their lands and in their times. He shares the vast company of the holy hermits and monks who, by the austerity and self-denial of their lives, testified as to the strength of their religious beliefs. He is in the company of that , immeasurable band of pious believing men in all ages and in all places, men from all classes and walks of life, who put the one Faith to the test under all conceivable conditions and found it to be true and sound.

And so, my Christian brethren, we have come to the end of our assignment. We have examined the basic assumption, the ultimate principle on which the Catholic Church, on the one hand, and Secularism, on the other, rest. In the effects that we considered earlier, Secularism is the vehicle of death, destruction, and confusion, while our Faith is a life-giving force, a source of order. The principle which we considered today, a Secularism which rejects all authority outside the person himself is an idle boast, a bare-faced lie, a gross exaggeration of human capacity. Our Faith, on the other hand, since it reconciles the independence of man with a higher authority, is a true expression of the nature of man.

I cannot leave this subject, my Christian brethren, without adding a few observations which flow from what has already been said. The attack of Secularism against all law and all truth which comes to a man from outside himself, contains the important truth that is rooted in man's universal nature, in his personality; namely, that he cannot accept any merely human authority. Throughout the course of world history, it has occurred over and over again that one segment of the human race has tried to prescribe laws to regulate the thought and actions of another segment. That is



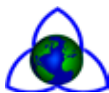
happening today still, even among the apostles of unbelief. In the same breath they condemn all authority and set themselves up as us the authority. This “service to mankind” was and continues to be a degradation of it. Since the great break from higher authority, the so-called Reformation, it has become practically universal. In city life, in particular, it has reached its crest, and ultimately it had to lead to a general rebellion.

At the same time, however, there is implicit in the revolt of Secularism against all law and truth that is outside of man a great godlessness, an untruth to the effect that man does not want to subject himself to any higher law or truth with or without God, that he does not wish to acknowledge a divine authority, and that he, in fact, wants to be like God.

The part of the truth which it contains gives to Secularism its strength, and that part of it which is a lie will defeat it. That is because Christ has already conquered falsehood. What is true with reference to his fellowman is not true with reference to God. *Secularism is entitled to overthrow all authority with the single exception of the teaching authority of the Catholic Church.* Only the Church claims to be endowed with a God-given infallible authority, and only it can demand to have ultimate authority over men. *Secularism must conquer all systems of belief, but it will shatter in pieces against the rock of the Church.*

The Catholic Church embraces within herself whatever truth there is in the basic principle of Secularism; at the same time that she rejects what is untrue about it. She accepts the profound truth that man need not obey any mere man or believe him and therefore overthrows all merely human authority. She further acknowledges that any authority from whatever source it may come must justify itself in man’s conscience, in his soul, before he needs to obey it. She is satisfied, however, of the natural need of man for a higher authority. She regards herself as endowed with authority by God Himself, and it is only for that reason that the Church feels justified in demanding that men subject themselves to her teaching authority. Just as the Church elevates the service of the lowliest servant girl from the low estate of mere service to another human being to the dignity of service of God, so she also frees the soul of man, who by his very nature cannot develop fully without being influenced by his fellowman, from enslavement to changeable human opinions. She elevates the subjection of the human spirit to an authority to the dignified acknowledgement of a truth revealed by God. Thus, my Christian brethren, the principles of Secularism and of the Church confront us and compel us to make a choice. What Secularism promises, it can no more deliver than the first Serpent could keep its promise to make man like to God.

Secularism promises to free us from all external authority. It cannot because it did not design human nature and therefore cannot redesign it. Our choice is not whether we wish to submit to authority or not, but rather to which authority we wish to subject ourselves. The question is whether in the all important question of our eternal salvation we wish to submit to the shifting and ephemeral human opinions, or to the authority of the Catholic Church which manifests to us by its doctrine, which has not changed from its earliest beginnings, the eternal Kingdom. During the time of the Reformation, our ancestors heard a similar cry. They were told to overthrow the teaching authority of the Catholic Church and to burst the bonds which held reason in check. And what did those who yielded to this siren song gain? Instead of the mild yoke and light burden of Jesus Christ, they were loaded down the iron yoke of human authority. Our own ancestors, on the other hand, stood their ground, and we are grateful to them that we too did not fall prey to the dominion of shifting, ephemeral opinions, as the children of the Reformation did. Do not we, my Christian brethren, wish to remain as steadfast as they and refuse to yield to the approaching Tempter by turning godless and rejecting the world of God as embodied in the authority of the Church? Our decision will determine whether later generations, as well as God Himself, will declare us blessed or cursed when sentence is passed on us. Amen



Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler

Mary Ellen Rufft, CDP

Reflection at Mass on Ketteler Day, July 13, 2008

I'm happy to be with you today to celebrate together the 131st anniversary of the death of Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, the cofounder of our community.

Although the readings for our liturgy today were not specifically chosen for this anniversary, they are very appropriate. That is especially true of the Gospel. Bishop Ketteler certainly exemplifies in a myriad of ways the harvest that Jesus describes in the Gospel as the result of the seed, the word of God, falling on rich soil.

Ketteler is widely known around the world as the Social Justice Bishop. He was an intrepid defender of human rights in his actions and in the volumes he wrote about human dignity and freedom.

He is honored still today by the Verein, the workers union in Germany, whose basic rights he so strongly supported. Because of his dedication to the rights of the poor, Ketteler founded vocational schools for the children of workers, built an orphanage, founded a day nursery and dedicated a hospital for them.

He was fearless in speaking the truth on their behalf to Church and government leaders. He lived during the period when Germany was undergoing a forced unification and guided German Catholics through all the transitions which that union involved. He was by far the most renowned Roman Catholic leader in Germany in the 19th century.

Most of us here know this description of Ketteler and much more about his disciplined, simple life-style as well as his courageous stance for those in need of a champion. Most of us know too that Bishop Ketteler also had a temper. His fits of anger caused him as a youth to shatter a drinking glass by biting it, as a university student, to fight a duel and lose the tip of his nose over an issue as minor as whether or not a fellow student had stepped on his toes accidentally or on purpose, and as a Bishop, to sometimes become angry at slight provocations, at someone's lack of manners or punctuality.

Priests confronted him about his quick temper and even the members of the Cathedral Chapter where he was Bishop wrote a long letter telling him that his that his vehement eruptions of temper exceeded what they and his priests could endure.

How can we honor Bishop Ketteler as an example of God's word falling on rich ground, when, despite all his efforts for social justice, he had a major flaw in his personality, this strong tendency toward anger which caused concern to many people?

Perhaps one answer is to recognize that Ketteler might as easily be called the Humble Bishop as the Social Justice Bishop. Although he came from a wealthy family and became the esteemed Bishop of Mainz, he was the essence of humility. Humility is truth and Ketteler was a man of truth. One description of him at his funeral was that "his whole being was truthfulness."

Ketteler was painfully aware of his inclination to impatience and irritability. He continually strove to overcome it. After any occasion at which Ketteler spoke impatiently or harshly, he apologized as soon as possible, attempting to remedy the matter with generosity and self-denial.

When he was attacked personally, he did not speak in his own defense. When the Cathedral Capitulars wrote to him, asking him to consider that his outbursts of vehemence were sinful and caused damage in the diocese, Ketteler resounded in a completely non-defensive, humble way. He answered them with these words: "I acknowledge that the vehemence with which I repeatedly administer reproofs is a fault and a sin and I have always recognized it as such. This letter will be a serious motive for me to struggle against this fault."

It's difficult to imagine many church or government leaders responding in a similar way if confronted with a rebuke as strong as that which Ketteler received. Such humility is unusual even in a person of lower status much less in a Bishop.



What makes Bishop Ketteler worthy of honor, what made Pope Pius IX describe him as a saint, and what makes us view him as the symbol of the rich ground that brought forth a generous harvest, is that he was a man of truth, a famous Prince of the Church, who, despite his many high positions and honors, remained humble.

He spoke and lived the truth. Just as he didn't hesitate to speak out for those in need, to the government and to the Church, so too was he always forthright in acknowledging the truth about himself.

Throughout his life, he continued to strive for the virtues that were most difficult for his temperament. And, the homilist at his funeral suggests that he finally succeeded. He tells us that "Ketteler had heavy crosses to bear, difficult struggles to face, grievous offenses to his honor to endure, but during the last years of his life, he advanced in patience to such a degree, that at the end, he bore even the most difficult things with gentleness and patience."

Bishop Ketteler's legacy to us could be compared to the learning we might gain from an incident in the life of the famous violinist, Itzhak Perlman. Many of you will remember hearing of the occasion when Perlman, who walked with braces on both legs, was on stage ready to begin a concert when one of his violin strings broke. Perlman did not leave the stage. With three strings, he modulated, changed and recomposed the piece in his head; he retuned the strings to get different sounds. He played with power and intensity on only three strings. When asked later how he had accomplished this feat, the violinist answered: "It is my task to make music with what remains."

That was also Ketteler's task and he did it well. Ketteler played his life's music without a perfect instrument, as did Perlman. The music Perlman made with a three-stringed violin was beautiful and more amazing for its creativity than had his violin been whole. The music of Ketteler's life, played out with inimitable truth, was also beautiful and more inspiring for its humility than had he possessed every virtue from his youth. We are also called to make music with our lives with whatever instrument we have been given, on whatever stage we walk.

Today, we remember with gratitude the life and legacy of Bishop Ketteler, the Social Justice Bishop, the Humble Bishop, the man of truth. We pray that we might imitate his passion for social justice and his love of truth, so that our music, played as was his, on less than perfect instruments, might also be beautiful, be marked by genuine humility, and give praise to the God of justice and truth.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- ◆ Does the idea that our founder, Bishop Ketteler, had a temper that often exhibited itself inappropriately cause a concern for you? Does that make him 'more human'? Do you have a character defect that causes a problem for you?
- ◆ Bishop Ketteler was referred to as 'the Social Justice Bishop, the Humble Bishop,' the "man of truth." What nickname would you give yourself? A nickname for the Associates? A nickname for the Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence?
- ◆ Can you identify some of the social justice issues of the 21st century that the Community supports and perhaps some issues that we may need to address in the future?

PRAYER FOR TODAY

To be like Jesus in everything is the great work of our lives. We must be like Him in our thought and judgments, in our affections and intentions. We must be Him in our outward appearance and in our demeanor. We must be like Him in His virtues, in His humility and meekness. This is the greatest obligation of our lives. *Bishop Ketteler*

PSALM FRAGMENT

You have done good to your servant, O God, according to your word. Teach me wisdom and knowledge for I trust in your commands. *Psalms 119:65-66*



Themes Running Through Catholic Social Teaching

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person

- ◆ Human is central/reflection of God
- ◆ Test of every institution: how policies enhance or threaten life/dignity
- ◆ People more important than things

2. Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person

- ◆ Each person has rights:
 - ⊙ to life
 - ⊙ to food, clothing, housing, health care, education, employment
 - ⊙ to freedom of conscience/religious liberty
 - ⊙ to raise a family
 - ⊙ to have a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself/family
 - ⊙ to immigrate
 - ⊙ to live free from discrimination
- ◆ Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities:
 - ⊙ to one another, to our families, to the larger society
 - ⊙ to respect the rights of others
 - ⊙ to work for the common good

3. Call to Family, Community and Participation

- ◆ Humans are social beings
 - ◆ Family is central/must support
 - ◆ Responsibility to contribute to broader community -- participation in government on all levels
- Central test of political, legal and economic institution is:
- ◆ what do they do **to** people
 - ◆ what do they do **for** people
 - ◆ how people **participate** in them

4. Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers

- ◆ Work is more than a way to make a living -- expression of dignity
- ◆ All have the right to decent and productive work with decent and fair wage
- ◆ Right to form or join a union

5. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

- ◆ Test of any society -- how its most vulnerable members are faring
- ◆ We are called to respond to the needs and creative ways to deal with them

6. Solidarity

- ◆ one human family
- ◆ crosses boundaries -- geographic, social, economic
- ◆ concern for world peace, global development, environment



Levels of Participation in Social Justice Ministry

Level 1: Knowledge

Be well informed on the issues and learn what is going on.

e.g.: Learn about the many issues affecting persons who are in need through reading newspapers, magazine articles, encyclicals/pastorals on Catholic Social Teachings, etc.

Level 2: Compassion/Conversion

Meditate/pray/fast over the issues. To attain compassion requires conversion that is based on the Scriptures.

e.g.: Fast not only from food, but from prejudice; also identify Scripture texts on justice and reflect on their meanings; remember to pray at liturgy for those intentions that focus on persons in need or who are oppressed.

Level 3: Evangelization

Be well informed and inform others.

e.g.: Speak with others -- family, friends, social acquaintances -- about what you have learned; engage others in discussion on the issues; listen to other points of view while not backing down on need to address injustices.

Level 4: Indirect Participation

Get involved.

e.g.: Provide material and/or financial help to organizations working for justice; write letters to Congressional representatives and senators; affirm those in Level five by encouragement and trust.

Level 5: Direct Participation

Take part in programs to aid victims treated unjustly or in need of assistance.

e.g.: Volunteer personally or participate in programs, services, activities, rallies, boycotts.

Level 6: Adoption/Advocacy

Make a cause one's own. Let others know that you will go to great lengths to achieve justice.

e.g.: Visit congressional offices to lobby for a cause; demonstrate; speak out publicly when the occasion arises; sign on to ads in National Catholic Reporter, the New York Times, etc. that call for attention to an injustice.

Level 7: Solidarity

Be one with the wounded, the forgotten, persons who are poor.

e.g.: Live with the oppressed or work along with them; sponsor a refugee family; provide a safe home for a victim of domestic violence; care for foster children.



A Peace Practice

In his book, “Peace Is The Way: Bringing War and Violence to an End,” Deepak Chopra proclaims that it is the right time to give peace a chance and to each help end war through small daily practices. This excerpt lays out a seven-day plan.

Seven Practices for Peace

The program for peacemakers asks you to follow a specific practice every day, each one centered on the theme of peace.

Sunday: Being for Peace

Monday: Thinking for Peace

Tuesday: Feeling for Peace

Wednesday: Speaking for Peace

Thursday: Acting for Peace

Friday: Creating for Peace

Saturday: Sharing for Peace

Hopefully this will create peace on every level of your life. Each practice takes only a few minutes. You can be as private or outspoken as you wish. But those around you will know that you are for peace, not just thorough good intentions, but by the way you conduct your life on a daily basis.

Sunday: Being for Peace

“Today, take five minutes to meditate for peace. Sit quietly with your eyes closed. Put your attention on your heart and inwardly repeat these four words: *PEACE, HARMONY, LAUGHTER, LOVE*. Allow these words to radiate from your heart’s stillness out into your body.

As you end your meditation, say to yourself, Today I will relinquish all resentments and grievances. Bring into your mind anyone against whom you have a grievance and let it go. Send that person your forgiveness.

Monday: Thinking for Peace

Thinking has power when it is backed by intention. Today, introduce the intention of peace in your thoughts. Take a few moments of silence, then repeat this ancient prayer.

“Let me be loved, let me be happy, let me be peaceful.

Let my family and friends be happy, loved, and peaceful.

Let my perceived enemies be happy, loved and peaceful.

Let all beings be happy, loved and peaceful.

Let the whole world experience these things.”

If at any time during the day you are overshadowed by fear or anger, repeat these intentions. Use this prayer to get back to center.

Tuesday: Feeling for Peace

This is the day to experience the emotions of peace. The emotions of peace are *COMPASSION, UNDERSTANDING, and LOVE*.

Compassion is the feeling of shared suffering. When you feel someone else’s suffering, there is the birth of understanding.

Understanding is the knowledge that suffering is shared by everyone. When you understand that you aren’t alone in your suffering, there is the birth of love.

When there is *love* there is the opportunity for peace.

As you practice, observe a stranger some time during your day. Silently say to yourself, this person is just like me. Like me, this person has experienced joy and sorrow, despair and hope, fear and love. Like me, this person has people in his or her life who deeply care and love him or her. Like me, this person’s life is impermanent and will one day end. This person’s peace is as important as my peace. I want peace, harmony, laughter, and love in his or her life and the life of all beings.



Wednesday: Speaking for Peace

Today, the purpose of speaking is to create happiness in the listener. Have this intention: *Today every word I utter will be chosen consciously. I will refrain from complaints, condemnation, and criticism.*

Your practice is to do at least one of the following:

1. Tell someone how much you appreciate them.
2. Express genuine gratitude to those who have helped and loved you.
3. Offer healing or nurturing words to someone who needs them.
4. Show respect to someone whose respect you value.
5. If you find that you are reacting negatively to anyone, in a way that isn't peaceful, refrain from speaking and keep silent. Wait to speak until you feel centered and calm, and then speak with respect.

Thursday: Acting for Peace

Today is the day to help someone in need: a child, a sick person, and older or frail person. Help can take many forms. Tell yourself, *Today I will bring a smile to a stranger's face.* If someone acts in a hurtful way to me or someone else, I will respond with a gesture of loving kindness. I will send an anonymous note or gift to someone, however small. I will offer help without asking for gratitude or recognition.

Friday: Creating for Peace

Today, come up with at least one creative idea to resolve a conflict, in your personal life, your family circle or among friends. If you can, try and create an idea that applies to your community, the nation, or the whole world. You may change an old habit that isn't working, look at someone a new way, offer words you never offered before, or think of an activity that brings people together in food feeling and laughter.

Secondly, invite a family member or friend to come up with one creative idea of this kind on his or her own. Creativity feels best when you are the one thinking up the new idea or approach. Make it known that you accept and enjoy creativity. Be loose and easy. Let the ideas flow and try out anything that has appeal. The purpose here is to bond, because only when you bond with others can there be mutual trust. When trust, there is no need for hidden hostility and suspicion – the two great enemies of peace.

Saturday: Sharing for Peace

Today, share your practice of peacemaking with two people. Give them a copy of this and invite them to begin the daily practice. As more of us participate in this sharing, our practice will expand into a critical mass.

Today, joyfully celebrate your own peace consciousness with at least one other peace-conscious person. Connect either through e-mail or telephone. Share your experience of growing peace. Share your gratitude that someone else is as serious about peace as you are. Share your ideas for helping the world move closer to critical mass. "Do whatever you can, in small or large ways, to assist anyone who wants to become a peacemaker."



Closing Prayer

Option 1

Leader: We exalt your Providence, O God

All: and we commit ourselves to making Providence more visible in our world.

Leader: As Providence people, we are called to trust in Divine Providence.

All: ...to strive for “that mind which was in Christ Jesus” as we present to the world through our service and through our mission of witnessing to God’s Providence.
...to build the kingdom of God in the manner of Bishop Ketteler -- reflecting loyalty to the Church, social concern and involvement, fearless defense of what is true and just.
...to imitate the combined gifts of contemplation and action as lived by Mother Marie -- who was humble, gentle and simple in the face of demanding duties; who had a deep faith and total openness to accepting the Will of God.

Visibly do I see in all things the wonderful Providence of God.
May my trust be ever firmer, ever simpler.

Psalm 21

Side 1: O God, your strength gives joy to your people;
How your saving help makes them glad!
You have granted them their heart’s desire;
You have not refused the prayer of their lips.

Side 2: You came to meet them with your blessings,
You have set blessings on their heads.
They asked for life and this you have given,
Days that will last from age to age.

Side 1: Your saving help has given them glory.
You have laid upon them your splendor,
You have granted your blessing to them forever.
You have made them rejoice with the joy of your presence.

Side 2: They have put their trust in you,
Through the mercy of the Most High they shall stand firm.
O God, arise in your strength;
We shall sing and praise your power.

All: Glory to You, Source of all being, Eternal Word and Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen



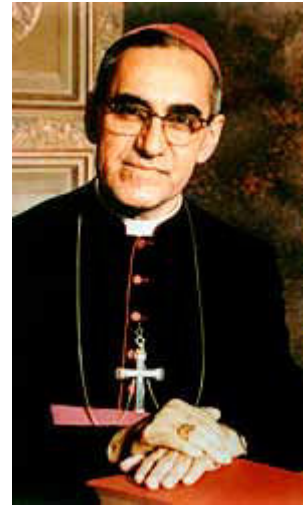
Closing Prayer

Option 2

“Oscar A. Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, in El Salvador, was assassinated on March 24, 1980, while celebrating Mass in a small chapel in a cancer hospital where he lived. He had always been close to his people, preached a prophetic gospel, denouncing the injustice in his country and supporting the development of popular and mass organizations. He became the voice of the Salvadoran people when all other channels of expression had been crushed by the repression.

The following prayer was composed by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, MI, drafted for a homily by Cardinal John Dearden in November 1979 for a celebration of departed priests. As a reflection on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Romero, Bishop Untener included in a reflection book a passage titled "The mystery of the Romero Prayer." The mystery is that the words of the prayer are attributed to Oscar Romero, but they were never spoken by him.”

*From the website of the Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC),
Congregation Of Notre Dame, Visitation Province*



Bishop Romero

Prayer of Archbishop Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God’s work.
Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that should be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the church’s mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.
This is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future that is not our own.
Amen.

