



Meeting with the Presidents and the General Secretaries
Of European Justice and Peace Commissions
Villa Aurelia, Rome, 4 March 2011

***Today's Challenges of Justice and Peace:
Bases for Collaboration***

Excellences, dear Presidents, dear Secretaries, dear friends,

With his *Presentation of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace* – its history, organization, sectors, staff and priorities – H.E. Bishop Toso has brought us right into the reality of the Council. On this basis, I now invite you to join me in adding to this reality the challenges of justice and peace today, first *ad extra* and then *ad intra*, in order finally to consider the collaboration between the Pontifical Council and the National Commissions. Our meeting today has an important character of “stock-taking” or “taking-the-pulse” so that, together, we might face challenges and be better able to serve the Church and all God’s people.

I. Today’s *Ad Extra* Challenges: The two words, “justice” and “peace”, stand first of all for the vast programmatic areas which we work on globally and which you address within your national and continental contexts. Or as Pope Paul VI happily summarizes it, “The name of this commission, Justice and Peace, aptly describes its program and its goal.”¹

And so the programmatic or thematic areas of our concern are, simply, limitless. A beautiful expression for them all may be found in the well-known phrase which opens *Gaudium et Spes* and gives the pastoral constitution of the Church in the modern world its name: “*The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted...*”²

Discovering, researching, interpreting and explaining these challenges – based on “reading the signs of the times” and much hard work besides – is a most important task, ongoing and never-finished. As long as there is human history, old issues will be evolving and new issues emerging – few of them are ever permanently retired, I suppose. Bishop Toso provided an impressive list of some 25

¹ Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, § 5.

² Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, § 1.

concerns and topics. Let us look at four representative issues which are typical of our Justice and Peace agenda.

(1) Poverty and the poor

Poverty itself is not new, obviously, but it constantly requires our attention; last year, the European Union dedicated 2010 to poverty. Over 30 years ago, the Reagan-Thatcher revolution gave market competition an exaggerated free rein without political and social control, and globalisation seems to have accentuated and indeed exacerbated this trend.³ While enhancing the production of ever newer products and services, the market fails to encourage redistribution. It tends to remunerate two particular economic inputs generously: knowledge and technology, while undervaluing natural resources, human labour, the social contribution, environmental impact today and in future.

At first glance, I feel awkward talking about poverty in Europe – the phenomenon (denoted by the word “poverty”) hardly has the same face as it does in Africa. Yet everywhere it manifests the injustice of “a world in which there live side by side the immensely rich and the miserably poor, the have-nots deprived even of essentials and people who thoughtlessly waste what others so desperately need.”⁴ Long-term inequality seems to persist “across the life cycle and into the next generation” (*Choosing the Common Good*).

So, despite the European Union’s privileged situation, we do recognize that the inequalities are scandalously great and unfortunately growing, both within member-States and between them. The statistics show the extent of poverty, defined as one disposing of less than 60% of the average national income. In 2008, 79 million, that is 16% of the European population, were below the poverty-line,⁵ and in 2009, 85 million or 17%.⁶ The disparities are also striking in an otherwise ‘democratic’ Europe: in 2005, the 20% richest enjoyed 5 times more income than the remaining 80% of the population. And likewise the contrast between countries: a poor person in Luxembourg would have €1500 per month, one in Bulgaria would have €132 per month, without taking the difference into account between social services offered in each country. This pattern of inequality deprives especially those who cannot compete, that is, those most vulnerable: children,⁷ the

³ Martin Feldstein, « Is the Reagan-Thatcher Revolution Over ? » www.nber.org/feldstein/projectsyndicatejan2010.pdf
Regan’s chief economic advisor writes, “The dramatic policy changes in the US and Britain under Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher brought about such profound improvements that there is no going back.”

⁴ Jean Paul II, *Message*, World Day of Peace 1998, § 4.

⁵ Parlement Européen, *Résolution du 9 octobre 2008 sur la promotion de l’inclusion sociale et la lutte contre la pauvreté*.

⁶ Eurostat, *Statistiques en bref*, 46/2009.

⁷ 19 M d’enfants sont à risque pauvreté, Parlement Européen, *cit.*

handicapped, the aged especially women above 65 years of age, and those born into poverty and unable to break out of it.

Last September, as head of the Holy See's Delegation to the U.N. Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in New York, I recalled many encounters with "really poor and destitute people in my life and ministry as a religious leader," and I asked "the International Community, especially the developed countries, not to underestimate the resourcefulness of the poor, and not to find them burdensome. Ensure to poor countries the effective mainframe of Goal 8 – which is to *develop a global partnership for development* – and they will assume the shared responsibility and national ownership of achieving the other goals. MDGs should be used to fight poverty and not to eliminate the poor!"

(2) No human economy prescind from ethics

The economic and financial crisis, which broke out in 2008 and remains far from resolved even in Europe, was technically provoked by an uncontrolled globalisation of certain speculative markets. But on reflection, we discover how structural the crisis is, manifesting a breakdown in essential human qualities and relationships (I do not call them 'values' because that is a market term as well!).⁸ When I say qualities and relationships, I do not mean the merely minimal contractual trust required for participants in the market to make deals; I mean the much deeper spiritual trust required to face the future, to face it together, to embrace one's own life and welcome that of others – be they migrants from without or offspring from within. In what ways, indeed, are members, I mean citizens, of the European Union saying "no" to life and "no" to the future, in the name of economic efficiency or prosperity narrowly understood?.

For life to be life, ethics must play its essential role, and in the economy this translates into moral regulations formulated intelligently and applied fairly; just laws which not only order the present but assure necessary conditions for the future; just laws of redistribution too, which assure, as much as possible, a chance for everyone to both produce and consume, to give and receive and share. Running through it all is what Pope Benedict XVI calls «the logic of gift» in his *Caritas in veritate*, on which we held a very rich seminar last week with Catholic businessmen and professors of business ethics. It is a radical re-dimensioning of the economy that the Holy Father calls for – when my car's motor breaks down and the transmission fails, should I be satisfied if the mechanic fixes the window-washer, as important as this might be?

⁸ Cfr. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Note du Saint-Siège sur finance et développement*, 2008

(3) Unemployment, especially youth non-employment

In our busy lives, we do well to pause, from time to time, and try to visualize what young people face, their talents well-developed by education, but with miserable prospects of putting them to good use. In his New Year's message, the President of Italy Giorgio Napolitano spoke of "the youngest among us, for whom the moment draws near to make choices and who seek an occupation, who seek their way."⁹ Their future includes few professional possibilities, with no work at all or a succession of precarious jobs, poorly remunerated and often lacking social security, surely less than what is minimally required to marry and begin a family. Non-employment is the primary cause of social exclusion, which is reaching intolerable proportions. « Intolerable » not only because the number of unemployed continues to grow (in May 2010, they were 23,127,000), as well as « poor workers » (15,000,000 in the European Union, that is 8%) who do not earn enough to afford a proper life for themselves and their families.

Income, that is, lack of income seems to be the big problem; but on closer look, even more serious problems include identity, meaning, social location, elements of the common good. For this reason, on the occasion of the Jubilee of Workers (1 May 2000), Pope John Paul II issued an appeal for "a global coalition in favour of 'decent work'".¹⁰ In this way, he gave a strong moral impetus to this objective, seeing it as an aspiration of families in every country of the world."¹¹ Pope Benedict spells out what decent work means. "It means work that expresses the essential dignity of every man and woman in the context of their particular society: work that is freely chosen, effectively associating workers, both men and women, with the development of their community; work that enables the worker to be respected and free from any form of discrimination; work that makes it possible for families to meet their needs and provide schooling for their children, without the children themselves being forced into labour; work that permits the workers to organize themselves freely, and to make their voices heard; work that leaves enough room for rediscovering one's roots at a personal, familial and spiritual level; work that guarantees those who have retired a decent standard of living."¹²

The economic crisis is shocking, no doubt, but I get an even greater shock when I hear that the economy in the U.S.A. or in Europe is "recovering" but without new jobs, indeed with fewer jobs

⁹ <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Discorso&key=2052>

¹⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, § 8; Id., Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, § 5. Supporting the strategy of the International Labour Organization.

¹¹ *Caritas in veritate*, § 63.

¹² *Caritas in veritate*, § 63.

than before. If “recovery” means more transactions and greater profits without work for ordinary people, this leaves me puzzled, indeed deeply troubled. So we see how far Europe needs to go or, rather, how deeply the economy – indeed social life as a whole – needs to be reformed and restructured in the light of the Gospel, exactly what Justice and Peace is all about.

(4) The fourth issue to face is **Welcoming Migrations**, made even more acute for the European Union by the current crises in northern Africa. Today, the movement of peoples takes different forms – “internal or international, permanent or seasonal, economic or political, voluntary or forced” by the « push » of insecurity and violence or the “pull” of necessary opportunities for work and education. Migrants suffer very problematic contradictions in the receiving countries. While workers are absolutely needed for production as well as countless domestic services, they are not welcomed, integrated or justly remunerated. Moreover, with them come growing cultural and religious pluralism, including marginal sub-cultures, which people increasingly run into in sometimes upsetting ways.

Let us echo the II Synod for Africa which denounced the intolerance, xenophobia and racism of those who “consider immigrants a burden, view them with suspicion and indeed consider them a danger and a threat... Among some recent worrisome developments are: legislation which penalizes all clandestine entries into foreign countries and consulates and the border police discriminating against travellers from [outside Europe] in airports freedom of movement and the rights of migrant workers are increasingly violated by the world’s restrictive migration policies and laws against Africans.” The Synod Fathers asked the governments of the countries of destination to apply “international migratory law evenly and fairly without discriminating against [those urgently seeking to reach safety in Europe]” and to promote the pastoral care of migrants and refugees.¹³

The European Union does have a general programme, "*Solidarity and management of migratory flows* » which provides financing for refugees, for border controls, for integration, for repatriation. All this is positive. But in the face of different kinds of dramas – for example, in Ivory Coast, compared with the upheavals in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia – the European countries are quite unprepared or even, worse, rendered complicit because of age-old financial arrangements which have proven very profitable. The European Union seems handicapped in developing foreign and

¹³ II Synod of Bishops for Africa, 2009, *Propositio* 28. The European Justice and Peace Commissions have always paid special attention to the complex phenomenon of migration, and some of you have recently made a special study : *The Immigration in the States member of the Mediterranean Area : the contribution of the Justice and Peace Commissions*, 2006

asylum policy just when clarity, coordination and firmness are most needed. With enormous movements of peoples underway and likely to increase, our Commissions should be resourceful to their respective governments to “combine the welcome due to every human being, especially when in need, with a reckoning of what is necessary for both the local inhabitants and the new arrivals to live a dignified and peaceful life.”¹⁴

II. Our Challenges *ad intra*: Having looked at these four representative ‘outer’ issues or areas of focus, we now re-consider today’s challenges from an internal and so fundamental viewpoint. For the two key words, *Justice* and *Peace*, also stand for our respective organizations or structures, with their mission, vision, purpose and goals. Please join me in listening to excerpts from our founding statements, the earliest going back nearly 50 years, and notice both the foundational solidity and the freshness of the vision they depict:

“The promotion of justice and peace, and the penetration of all spheres of human society with the light and the leaven of the Gospel, have never ceased to be the object of the Church’s effort in fulfilment of her Lord’s command.”¹⁵ The first source of our mission is our Lord Jesus Christ, His Gospel, His Church.

The II Vatican Council, “considering the immensity of the hardships which still afflict the greater part of mankind today, regards it as most opportune that an organism of the universal Church be set up in order that both the justice and love of Christ toward the poor [of our world] might be developed everywhere,”¹⁶ in order that people “will more readily lend their hearts and hands to the work of the Church,”¹⁷ [and to] urge all men to pool their ideas and their activities for man’s complete development and the development of all mankind.¹⁸ To carry out the mission is to develop the justice and the love of Christ, with the fuller involvement of the faithful and everyone of good will. And the object encompasses the immense hardships afflicting the majority of humankind. And the goals are justice, love and development.

The Pontifical Commission “Iustitia et Pax” is the Holy See’s organization for examining and studying – from the point of view of doctrine, pastoral practice and the apostolate – problems

¹⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, Message for the 97th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2011). Cfr. World Day of Peace 2001, § 13.

¹⁵ Motu Proprio *Iustitiam et Pacem* (1976)

¹⁶ Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* § 90.

¹⁷ Motu Proprio *Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam* (1967)

¹⁸ Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967) § 5

connected with justice and peace, with the aim of awakening God's people to full understanding of these questions and awareness of the part they play and of the duties that fall to them in the fields of justice, the development of peoples, human advancement, peace, and human rights.¹⁹ [It will pay] attention to some of the major hopes and aspirations of men today – for example, the problems of national development, the efforts to promote international justice, and the quest for world peace.²⁰

The role of such an organism will be to stimulate the Catholic community to promote progress in needy regions and international social justice. ... for the encouragement of cooperation among nations.²¹

The goal of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace is to promote justice and peace in the world in accordance with the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church.²² Its purpose or aim is “to awaken in the People of God full awareness of their mission today. In this way they can further the progress of poorer nations and international social justice, as well as help less developed nations to contribute to their own development.”²³

The verbs used in expressing the Mission:

To stimulate ... progress and social justice

To promote ... justice and peace

To deepen social doctrine

To promulgate (= to make social doctrine widely known and applied)

To inform and to research

To raise awareness ... re peace

When considered together, these elements add up to a very rich (multi-dimensional) mission. For us to “take stock” in the Council and in each Commission, we must ask: are we meeting the challenges? Given what we are called to do, then, Catholic Social Doctrine has an absolute priority in our existence as “Justice and Peace” Council and Commissions: it is primary, before and beneath and above and beyond any and every area of focus or particular issue. For us, Catholic Social Doctrine needs to be continually worked on, it is never finished. In the great book which Pope Leo XIII began in 1891, every new Encyclical and significant action of Justice and Peace contribute to the ongoing writing of it.

¹⁹ Motu Proprio *Iustitiam et Pacem* (1976), I.

²⁰ Motu Proprio *Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam* (1967)

²¹ Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* § 90.

²² Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (1988) Art. 142.

²³ Motu Proprio *Catholicam Christi Ecclesiam* (1967)

We, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and you the Conferences and Commissions, need to be promoters of Catholic Social Doctrine, using it as our privileged tool of evangelization and as the primary resource to animate the local Church, Christian communities, movements, including our non-Catholic allies and collaborators. Just as our thinking is Catholic and social, so our action should be Catholic, social, pastoral, correlative to Catholic Social Doctrine. Our mission is the evangelization of the social order in all its inter-related dimensions (economic, political, social, labour, human rights, environment, disarmament, natural resources and human resources, etc., etc.), and for us the privileged instrument or means or “tool-kit” of evangelization is Catholic Social Doctrine.

Here is one example of how the Holy Father articulates our mission in relationship to evangelization: “Testimony to Christ's charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of evangelization, because Jesus Christ, who loves us, is concerned with the whole person. These important teachings form the basis for the missionary aspect²⁴ of the Church's social doctrine, which is an essential element of evangelization.²⁵ The Church's social doctrine proclaims and bears witness to faith. It is an instrument and an indispensable setting for formation in faith.” (Civ 15)

III. Collaboration and Support of the Council and the Commissions

We the Pontifical Council and the European Commissions have done many similar things but, as history shows, they have been rather done in parallel. How have we been collaborating for the sake of the mission? There is probably a long list, on each side, of things which each is grateful to have received from the other. But to tell the truth, until now, we really have not collaborated much, and that is what we need to do.

Recent opportunities not yet actualized include the presentation of the *Compendium* (with the happy exception at the University Centre St. Ignatius, Antwerp, in January 2008); the presentation of *Caritas in veritate*; and the use of each year's Message for the World Day of Peace.

The Motu Proprio *Iustitiam et Pacem* spells out the expectation that the Pontifical Council will “make the results of its studies, documentation research, and reflection known to all the Church bodies involved and gather from these latter all useful information; for this purpose, the

²⁴ Cfr. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, § 41.

²⁵ Cfr. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, §§ 5, 54.

Commission shall in particular have regular organic contacts with the Bishops' Conferences and through them or in agreement with them provide information and every other possible aid to the bodies set up for the study of these problems (national Justice and Peace Commissions and other bodies) and working in accordance with the statutes decided or approved by the Bishops' Conferences.²⁶

You, the Commissions at the national level, are our eyes and ears, our hands and feet. The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace needs the National Commissions; without you, our feet do not reach the ground. And so we need the "blood" of communication to flow far more freely within our "body" – *regular organic contacts* from you to Rome, from Rome to you, and within Europe among sister Commissions and related bodies in the Church. What might be blocking the free flow of this lifeblood? I hope and pray that today's meeting marks a real new beginning.

Conclusion

Excellences, dear Presidents, dear Secretaries, dear brothers and sisters in the faith: I am conscious of many challenges you face in your important work, and I commend your efforts to find imaginative and innovative ways of dealing with them. I encourage you to maintain your sense of unity and the spirit of collaboration that has always characterised the European Commissions of Justice and Peace. In the Eucharist which we will celebrate at the end of today's labours, the first reading from the Book of Ecclesiasticus invokes the memory of "our illustrious ancestors".²⁷ This something which we regularly do in Africa, and I am happy to conclude in this way. To remember "their good works" and "the rich inheritance born of them" is to give thanks for what the Lord has been doing from generation to generation. For Social Doctrine goes back to the very origins of our faith; at the same time, we mark its modern beginnings just over a century ago. In both senses, we are grateful for the solid Scriptural and Magisterial foundations which our Church provides for the great tasks of "Justice and Peace". May all of our ancestors, from Pope Leo XIII to Cardinal Van Thuan, accompany us as we seek to penetrate "all spheres of human society with the light and the leaven of the Gospel."²⁸

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson

President, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

²⁶ Motu Proprio *Iustitiam et Pacem* (1976), I, 3.

²⁷ Ecclesiasticus 44: 1, 9-13.

²⁸ Motu Proprio *Iustitiam et Pacem* (1976)