

second instance the collective dominates the individual. As a result, the understanding of the common good is distorted: it is either denied or reduced to group interests.

920 Fulfilling her mission to transfigure society, the Church communicates to society her own experience of communion in the moral principles of Christian life. The principle of the common good, in particular, requires that society create conditions for the free development of the person, who simultaneously works for the good of society.

2. Holiness (and the Development of Civil Society)

921 The Church is a life-giving environment for people's sanctification and individual perfection. In the Church, one can also grow towards perfection in his or her social dimension. A holy person who lives a life of love for God and neighbour in the Holy Spirit is guided by God's law and becomes a model of the law-abiding citizen. It is precisely the yearning for holiness that opens the Christian to serve neighbour and society. This is why the Christian is a creative participant in civil society.

922 Civil society is characterized by the ability of its members—motivated from within—to organize themselves, as well as by their openness and autonomous activity for the sake of the common good. In her social dimension, the Church is a model of civil society in that she educates a Christian who is a citizen capable of sensing the needs of his or her neighbour and responding to them appropriately.

3. Catholicity (and the Principle of Solidarity)

923 The catholicity of the Church reflects her mission to gather together people and entire nations and to cultivate in each person a sense of responsibility not only for self, but also for others and, ultimately, all humanity.⁵⁵⁸ In addition to providing a sense of personal responsibility and participation in the life of one's own Christian community, catholicity opens a person to other individuals and communities for the purpose of creating communion with them, and actually offers the experience of such communion. Catholicity brings a spirit of conciliation, in which various communities outgrow their own group interests and engage in a culture of dialogue and mutual support in order to overcome misunderstandings and conflicts of all kinds.

⁵⁵⁸ See Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 192.

924 The principle of solidarity flows from the experience of ecclesial catholicity. In this principle of solidarity, the communion of persons is expressed as a mutual dependence of individuals, while responsibility for the Church is expressed as a duty to participate in society and cooperate with others—the members of that society.

4. Apostolate and Diakonia (and the Principle of Subsidiarity)

925 The Church, imitating the Saviour, performs her mission (apostolate) in society through service (diakonia): "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many" (Mt 20:28). The Church's highest calling is not to dominate but to serve. The Church does not lord it over others, she helps others. She does not strive for influence or material gain, but serves the poor, the sick, and the destitute.

926 The Church's understanding of social activity as service is expressed in the principle of subsidiarity.⁵⁵⁹ According to this principle, associations of citizens at various levels each act within the limits of their competence. This allows every level of society (municipal, regional, national) to mobilize the greatest initiative and creative energy. Higher levels of state government should not interfere in the jurisdiction of local communities or supplant them. Such interference, which is rooted in a desire to dominate, limits the initiative of citizens and their communities. The principle of subsidiarity is based on the idea that social groups of a higher order ought to help when those of a lower order cannot manage by themselves. Such assistance (subsidium) is the social manifestation of service. It brings truth, fairness, freedom and love—the main "pillars" of social life—to social relations.⁵⁶⁰ Subsidiarity is destroyed by the loss of a spirit of service, which can lead to excessive control on the part of the state or to the community's collapse.

C. The Social Dimensions of the Church

1. The Social Dimension of Christian Freedom

927 Given his or her dignity, the human person stands at the centre of social life. Therefore, the foundation of social morality is respect for every person and the priority of the person over society. This emphasis

⁵⁵⁹ See Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 186.

⁵⁶⁰ See JOHN XXIII, Encyclical *Pacem in terris* [Peace on Earth] (April 11, 1963), V.