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Reviewing the Idea of Work and its Regulatory Framework from an Anthropological Perspective. Building on John XXIII's *Pacem in terris* on its 50th Anniversary

Michele Tiraboschi*

All men must realize that [...] Every day provides a more important, a more fitting enterprise to which they must turn their hands—industry, trade unions, professional organizations, insurance, cultural institutions, the law, politics, medical and recreational facilities, and other such activities. The age in which we live needs all these things. It is an age in which men, having discovered the atom and achieved the breakthrough into outer space, are now exploring other avenues, leading to almost limitless horizons

John XXIII, *Pacem in terris*, §156

1. Work and *Pacem in terris*

Experts and practitioners customarily investigate work-related issues drawing on the copious amount of data on the labour market available at a global, national and local level. Authoritative studies and indicators

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abound which report with sufficient reliability the struggle faced at varying degrees by many people worldwide, as a result of work-related problems. Thus in order to cover them extensively, it might appear sufficient to refer to and analyse these statistics in detail, as is frequently the case in the academic and institutional settings.

The 50th anniversary of *Pacem in terris* gives us the occasion for a deep reflection on the idea of work from an anthropological perspective. This investigation looks at work in terms of personal relationships behind different regulations laid down in national and supranational legislation. Considering the future of work and other issues of a great social impact such as unemployment and low quality jobs does not mean to provide a long list of indicators, or analyses and counter analyses on the current state of the labour market. Rather, the attempt should be at reflecting on the uncertainty of our time taking as a point of departure this encyclical that Pope John XXIII left to the world a few months before passing away as a form of spiritual and pastoral legacy.

This attempt seems even more arduous for another reason. Unquestionably, although regarded as a “social” encyclical, *Pacem in terris* places much emphasis on peaceful coexistence and civil harmony among political institutions. In this perspective, the “labour” component might appear to be a marginal one. First, because this theme was already dealt with analytically by John XXIII in his 1961 encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, to celebrate the seventieth year of *Rerum Novarum*. Second, because on that occasion, the Good Pope’s main preoccupation was with reasserting the teachings of the Church in a time marked by international political instability, with the far from remote possibility of another nuclear war. Yet dialogue, harmony, and the role of political institutions are central questions to cope with work-related issues in a practical and pro-active manner. This implies dealing with current unemployment, new job-creation strategies, and existing job opportunities created without considering one’s dignity and freedom. This should be seen as an indication for international institutions and national governments to ensure the right to decent work and to an inclusive market. In the same spirit, this could also be regarded as a call for social partners, trade unions, and employers’ associations to create, through coordinated action and in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, fairer and more inclusive working conditions which are centered on the human person and not on the conflict arising from the distribution of wealth.

2. Some Main Arguments

The fact that work is not the main theme of the encyclical – which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2013 – does not mean that the document cannot provide some insight into this issue. For instance, paragraph 5 can be seen as a cornerstone of John XXIII's *Pacem in terris*:

Any well-regulated and productive association of men in society demands the acceptance of one fundamental principle: *that each individual man is truly a person. His is a nature that is, endowed with intelligence and free will.* As such he has rights and duties, which together flow as a direct consequence from his nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable¹.

Individuals are either the starting point or the result of any association, also of that particular form of association which takes place at work. Human intelligence, dignity and free will are the bedrocks of human rights and duties.

Tellingly, one might note that in a time when the labour market is still marked by workplace fatalities and occupational hazards, John XXIII emphasised first and foremost:

...the right to live. He [the human person] has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, *he has the right to be looked after in the event of ill health; disability stemming from his work; widowhood; old age; enforced unemployment; or whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood*².

Aside from these rights – which are barely ensured even by those countries which do provide labour laws safeguarding workers, at least in theory – mention is made of the right “to receive a good general education, and a technical or professional training consistent with the degree of educational development in his own country”³.

It is also worth going through the whole Paragraph 18, for it is explicitly devoted to economic rights. *Pacem in terris* maintains that men have “the inherent right not only to be given the opportunity to work, but also to be

¹ *Pacem in terris*, par. 9 (Hereafter P.T. Emphasis added).

² P.T., par. 6 (Emphasis added).

³ P.T., par. 12.

allowed *the exercise of personal initiative in the work he does*⁴. When it comes to work-related issues, this statement should not be taken for granted, for the importance of one's willingness to do business is often overlooked, as are their duties and room to manoeuvre. The provision of safeguards, inclusion, and solidarity is not possible without a free and efficient productive and economic system. Yet the supply of these rights must ensure social benefits and should be centred on the promotion of people's sense of initiative and their capability to risk-taking in business.

The conditions in which a man works form a necessary corollary to these rights. They must not be such as to weaken his physical or moral fibre, or militate against the proper development of adolescents to manhood. Women must be accorded such conditions of work as are consistent with their needs and responsibilities as wives and mothers [...] A further consequence of man's personal dignity is his right to engage in economic activities suited to his degree of responsibility. The worker is likewise entitled to a wage that is determined in accordance with the precepts of justice. This needs stressing. The amount a worker receives must be sufficient, in proportion to available funds, to allow him and his family a standard of living consistent with human dignity⁵ [...] Finally, it is opportune to point out that the right to own private property entails a social obligation as well⁶.

John XXIII's *Pacem in terris* is not limited to providing a long list of rights which revolve around individuals on an exclusive basis. Indeed, the pontiff clearly reasserts the reciprocal nature of rights and duties, liberty and responsibility. Individual full development is obtained only if the preoccupation with one's rights entails a concern about others' duties. *Pacem in terris*'s warning is clear in this connection: "Hence, to claim one's rights and ignore one's duties, or only half fulfil them, is like building a house with one hand and tearing it down with the other"⁷.

The main arguments on which the whole document is based – namely the centrality of the individual and his full development – constitutes the vantage point through which interpreting the present times, their challenges, and the growing state of uncertainty which in the field of work translate into mounting inequalities, precariousness and social injustice.

This thorough and dynamic perspective can be immediately appreciated if one looks at the effects on employment pointed out by John XXIII, who referred to the catholic social teachings and some arguments already made

⁴ P.T., par. 18.

⁵ P.T., par. 18.

⁶ P.T., par. 19, 20, 22.

⁷ P.T. par. 30.

in his *Mater et Magistra*, which can also be found in the first paragraphs of the 1963 encyclical.

In fact, *Pacem in terris* is somehow arranged in concentric circles, an aspect which sets the conditions for a more detailed analysis of this main topic. Within this structure, the human person is placed at the centre of the discussion, and a circle of relations is gradually built around him within each political community, among different political communities, the single members of these communities and the communities at a global level.

3. Individuals, Employment and the Economic Crisis

If the individual is considered, it is undisputed that the financial and economic crisis witnessed in the last few years was a major setback for “the full development of human personality” regarded by John XXIII’s *Pacem in terris* as the basis for and the ultimate purpose of a civilized community. In Europe – especially in “Latin” countries – the negative trend which started in 2008 eroded those hard-fought rights acquired thanks to the teachings of the Catholic Church and *Rerum Novarum* in a century marked by social conflict and struggle.

The most vulnerable groups – especially young people and women – bore the heaviest burden from this erosion. On the one hand, most disadvantaged groups experienced increasing difficulty to enter the labour market. On the other hand, workers in open-ended employment contracts soon realised that their job stability was such only on paper in times of economic crisis. Women are situated somewhere between these two extremes. They are frequently called on to choose between their private and working life, two fundamental aspects of one’s existence, rather than being provided with sufficient levels of work-life balance. Compounding the picture are baby boomers, who suffered from skills obsolescence which made it more and more complicated for them to stay in work.

Yet looking at economic struggle as the sole root of today’s evil would be misleading. The ongoing transformation of the world of work dates from the negative business cycle resulting from the 2008 US subprime mortgage crisis. A straightforward analysis of the past reveals that the social conflict arising from the need for a fairer and more balanced set of ideals underlying the pre-established organization of labour reached its

climax with the demise, or better the transformation, of existing working patterns⁸. It was at the end of the 1970s that changes in production and its main practices came about. This change was at first slow and subtle. Then at the end of the “short” twentieth century it came to fruition, following the opening-up of new markets and the availability of a workforce and human capital that until that moment was beyond imagination.

Only a minority took cognizance of the significance of the changes under way. This was due in part to an ideological blinker – which was yet doomed to vanish with the fall of the Berlin wall– and in part to the fact that some were engaged in announcing the “the end of history and the last man”. The Church with its teachings stood out for being neither nostalgic about the recent past nor thrilled with the possible “magnificent and progressive fate”. In this connection, the analysis provided in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* is of particular interest, especially the section titled “*New Things*” of the *World of Work*, which draws on and further extends the themes broached in *Pacem in terris*. The awareness of the profound change under way and its main features are anticipated in just a few paragraphs. It is pointed out that:

The transition currently underway signals the move from dependent work with no prescribed time limit, understood as a stable job, to a series of jobs characterized by many kinds of work activities, from a world of a unified, definite and recognized concept of work to a universe of jobs where there is great variety, fluidity and a wealth of promises. There are also many questions of concern, especially with regard to the growing uncertainty of work, the persistent presence of structural unemployment and the inadequacy of current systems of social security⁹.

Yet subverting these well-established paradigms is not accompanied by reminiscence of past times. The *Compendium* deals with future developments with a different perspective. In this connection, changing historical forms are used to express human work, leaving unscathed “its permanent requirements, which are summed up in the respect of the

⁸ The change affecting work is dealt with in the volume by the Committee overseeing the cultural projects of the Italian Catholic Church, 2013, *Per il lavoro. Rapporto-proposta sulla situazione italiana*, Laterza.

⁹ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, “*New Things*” of the *World of Work*, par. 134, available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

inalienable human rights of workers”¹⁰. This stance results from placing the individual in his entirety and concreteness at the centre of the social question, irrespective of the emptiness of the hypostasis in an empyrean sky, all-encompassing, rigid social and economic theories, or the delusion of individual selfishness which – if taken to extremes – produces widespread social well-being. The argument put forward by the *Compendius* is that the two-fold nature of human work – objective and subjective – allows for a reflection which moves beyond the limited scope of the present and the near future, thus looking at everyday reality through the lens of the past or to adapt it to certain economic theories which would stop functioning otherwise.

Work should be seen as “*actus personae*”, in other words the person is the starting point of any reasoning concerning work and opens up the possibility to provide an alternative reading of the ongoing economic crisis.¹¹ In this passage the vital and innovative nature of *Pacem in terris* and the catholic social teaching, more generally, emerges clearly.

4. Crisis and Hope: The Impossible Pairing?

One of the most recurrent themes which are repeatedly used to justify the current state of play is that workers, especially younger ones, have been deprived of hope, and thus of their future.

It is true that the current economic crisis has had tremendous consequences on people’s dignity and on those inalienable rights and duties on which *Pacem in terris* is built. This aspect is evidenced by the cases of suicide of entrepreneurs forced to close down their companies because of their inability to pay off their debts, the stories of families struggling to make ends meet, or those of unemployed young people who find it difficult to become financially independent.

Pacem in terris, and the catholic social teachings more generally, affords an alternative perspective enabling one to draw a picture which is different from that traditionally supplied by the media. It is difficult to overlook the

¹⁰ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, par. 319, available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

¹¹ Committee overseeing the cultural projects of the Italian Catholic Church, 2013, *Per il lavoro. Rapporto-proposta sulla situazione italiana*, Laterza.

fact that economic struggle does not provide much scope for “the integral development of the human person”.

In the current situation, the dismantling of the Taylorist and Fordist work paradigms is accelerated, as no longer able to meet the new needs of the market and the productive system. This process makes it possible to free the human person of work-related beliefs and organizational practices which are as alienating as oppressive. The end of the “assembly line” and “standardised products”, the essence of which is brilliantly summarised in Ford’s “any customer can have a car painted any color that he wants so long as it is black”, called for the restoration of the individual and his creativity, intelligence and manual skills. Up until 1800 and 1900, these features were the preserve of a few, with the majority of people subjected only to assigned instructions from their principal, according to the legal principle of “subordination” which is based on the logic of power and control. Escaping what Weber calls “the iron cage” of rationalization which is merely intended to generate more profit and entails a re-evaluation of the individual and his skills.

As pointed out at the onset of *Pacem in terris*, individual intelligence and free will are increasingly questioned in a working world which is rapidly abandoning the principles of modernity. This epoch-making transition, as wisely defined by the *Compendius of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, provides room for different perspectives and renowned hope, yet within a particularly negative business cycle. Reviving people’s value and their central role to find a “good job” could be interpreted as an updated version of those “signs of the times” that John XXIII had prophetically made mention of in his *Pacem in terris*.

5. The Individual: A Lifetime Opportunity

The end of modernity is fraught with risks and contradictions¹². On the one hand, it allows for a re-evaluation of the human person. Yet on the other hand, this exercise is full of imponderables and can be seen as a lifetime opportunity which can never be taken for granted. The “epoch-making transition” from the old to the new economy might produce unpredictable results. Consequently, there is a need to examine the present resisting the facile delusion that the “third industrial revolution”

¹² Committee overseeing the cultural projects of the Italian Catholic Church, 2013, *Per il lavoro. Rapporto-proposta sulla situazione italiana*, Laterza.

will necessarily bring about a new heaven on earth. There is also a need on the part of the lay community to distance itself from certain legacies of modernity. An example in this connection is Messianism, which is a recurrent theme in the discussions over the spread of new generation technology and its redeeming power.

This awareness makes it possible for investigating the present and its potential in a prophetic and revelatory way, considering the biblical sense of the term. The first aspect which emerges from such an investigation is that the end of modernity entails a re-evaluation of the human person, his intelligence, independence and will in all the industries. By way of example, in his *Mater et Magistra*, John XXIII regarded agriculture as being in a “depressed state”, showing affection and concern about this sector. The pontiff was fearful that the fast-growing manufacturing sector could drastically reduce the share of workers employed in agriculture, bringing about social inequalities. On the contrary, today the agricultural sector is being re-evaluated. Many young people decide to devote themselves to this occupation because – although extremely demanding – it allows one to utilize their skills to the full and grow products which are the actual manifestation of *actus personae*.

The same reasoning applies to manual labour and handicraft. The crisis affecting the manufacturing sector prompted many to take enterprise risks so that they are involved in their work as human beings. They make use of their intelligence, willpower, manual skills to manufacture original products rather than standardised ones. This aspect, alongside the support of technology, makes them appealing in national and international markets. Quite often young artisans running small businesses succeed in establishing themselves at an international level, by manufacturing items which are the result of their personal commitment. In this respect, recent experience confirms the arguments put forward in the *Compendius of Social Doctrine*:

Work in small and medium-sized businesses, the work of artisans and independent work can represent an occasion to make the actual work experience more human, both in terms of the possibility of establishing positive personal relationships in smaller-sized communities and in terms of the opportunities for greater initiative and industriousness¹³.

¹³ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, par. 315, available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

The diffusion of the cooperative model, which provided a good response in times of crisis, can be seen as one of the “signs of the times” during the shift towards a social model and a market not based on profit but founded on work which is shared within the social enterprise. Arguably, opting for this model is at times linked to external conditions and not to one’s beliefs. Yet cooperative work stands out as the appropriate working pattern for those occupations which can be negatively affected by the rigidities of “subordination” and pre-established work organizational patterns. Let us just think of young designers or freelance journalists who face difficulty finding employment in large-sized enterprises and come together to set up new firms, at times without physical offices and pre-established working hours, without a real principal but with as many colleagues as they can cooperate with to make the whole project function. Cooperative work also allows operators in the third sector to involve those who are finding it difficult to find employment, e.g. people with a disability. They are thus given another opportunity, thanks to their work, to feel like human beings and to express their personality.

On reflection, the new artisan sector, cooperative work and agriculture are just some of the fields benefitting from the innovative features accompanying this current epoch-making transition. The manufacturing sector is a further example of the ongoing changes, as companies embracing Taylorism are gradually disappearing, either in terms of the number of workers or organizational patterns. The assembly line is in itself no longer sufficient. There is need to share ideas and forward thinking which help moving on from the traditional and outmoded dichotomy between decision-makers and those who are assigned instructions, thus breaking the hierarchical and “command-and-control” models. Gradually, notions such as “collaborative intelligence” and “social organisation” are setting in. A “social organisation” is an organisation based on shared knowledge and skills among all members, so it is no longer simply a firm but a community of people working on a common project. Such a community draws the new boundaries of the workplace, which are not limited to the business premises but extend to the outside world.

The change currently underway is particularly visible in the academic settings, for in the past pursuing a career as a researcher was considered a prestigious one. The so-called ivory towers – so far only accessed by few – are being dismantled and replaced by open-access and shared knowledge. Those inner circles which preserve their knowledge and status are giving way to academic communities who are alive to dialogue and the exchange of ideas set to nurture cultural growth.

6. Freeing the Human Person

It seems that during the current recession, or rather as a result of the crisis, new room for the centrality of the human person to regain momentum has been created. This being the case, one might wonder about the role of public institutions in this connection. To answer this question, it might be fitting to go through *Pacem in terris*, the indications of which are still relevant today after fifty years.

Drawing on the teachings of his predecessors, John XXIII takes a clear stance when he argues that “The attainment of the common good is the sole reason for the existence of civil authorities”¹⁴ and that: “the common good ‘must take account of all those social conditions which favor the full development of *human personality*’”¹⁵. In addition:

Today the common good is best safeguarded when personal rights and duties are guaranteed. The chief concern of civil authorities must therefore be to ensure that these rights are recognized, respected, co-ordinated, defended and promoted, and that each individual is enabled to perform his duties more easily. To safeguard the inviolable rights of the human person, and to facilitate the performance of his duties is the principal duty of every public authority¹⁶.

Pacem in terris is thus unequivocal in asserting that public authorities are under the obligation to set the conditions to ensure the human person’s full development. Likewise unequivocally, the document reasserts that public authority should not act as a substitute of the human person in the fulfilment of his responsibilities, nor should the former overshadow the latter in this role. In this sense, the common good:

further demands that in their efforts to co-ordinate and protect, and their efforts to promote, the rights of citizens, the civil authorities preserve a delicate balance. An excessive concern for the rights of any particular individuals or groups might well result in the principal advantages of the State being in effect monopolized by these citizens. Or again, the absurd situation can arise where the civil authorities, while taking measures to protect the rights of citizens, themselves stand in the way of the full exercise of these rights. “*For this principle must always be retained: that however extensive and far-reaching the influence of the State on the economy may be, it must never be exerted to the extent of depriving the individual citizen of*

¹⁴ P.T., par. 52.

¹⁵ P.T., par. 58 (Emphasis added).

¹⁶ P.T., par. 60.

his freedom of action. It must rather augment his freedom, while effectively guaranteeing the protection of everyone's essential, personal rights"¹⁷.

Adequate public authority should embark on the challenge to free the human person of all the constraints that hamper his expression and development, making sure that this task does not come into conflict with equity and social justice.

Thus one might wonder how public authority can effectively promote the common good in light of the current state of play. The question is a complicated one and involves different disciplines. However, it is possible to determine some preliminary paths of action.

The epoch-making transition which characterizes today's world of work provides some clear indications. First, it suggests that the work pattern established in the aftermath of the second industrial revolution is gradually disappearing, at least in European countries. Second, it hints at the need of highly-qualified jobs. Thus policy-making intended for the common good should become aware of these changes and take coherent steps towards accommodating them. In this sense, initiatives concerning labour legislation and education appear to be a matter of urgency.

Ensuring the "full development of the human person" calls for a set of labour market rules in line with the current state of play. This means venturing into new forms of protection and promotion of the human person within the labour market other than working arrangements in salaried employment. This is especially true if one considers the practices currently in place, which are rapidly becoming outdated and seem to trap individuals rather than provide them with more room to maneuver within the labour market.

Naturally, this does not come along with the de-structuring of labour law – as put forward by some UK liberals – but with its thorough review in line with tradition and founding principles. It is significant that in Italy at the end of the 1990s some catholic fringes particularly sensitive to the social question made some proposals concerning the "Workers' Statute". It is an ambitious project which has not yet been implemented concerning workers' safeguards irrespective of whether they are in temporary or permanent employment. The "Workers' Statute" laid down a set of measures to protect all people in employment, regardless of their contractual arrangements, gradually supplemented with further safeguards and initiatives for social inclusion.

¹⁷ P.T. par. 65 (Emphasis added).

Along with a rethinking of labour law, the pursuit of the common good requires a major investment in individual education and training. In the future, social inclusion and exclusion will increasingly rest upon this aspect, as employment in post-modernism calls for human intelligence and should always be active. Education should be at the top of public policy agenda. Equally in this case, the situation is more serious than it seems. Aside from allocating more resources, there is need of a major overhaul of the education system.

This aspect is straightforward if Italy is taken into account, for education is only provided at school and there seems to be an unawareness of the need of the population to invest in and make use of personal skills to succeed. Some major shortcomings are visible in this connection, as the education system is still based on the patterns in place in 1800 and 1900. A clear distinction still emerges between high schools focusing on theoretical learning to train future management, and vocational bodies to prepare workers to carry out practical tasks.

The mistake lies in the assumption that this distinction will hold today and for the years ahead. Increasingly, there will be a need for one to concurrently fulfill practical tasks and act as a decision-maker, in other words for us to develop an entrepreneurial culture. As it is today, the Italian education system may be unable to generate the long-overdue public good.

A consideration on the need to adequately relate education and world of work is certainly necessary, in order to enable the human person to realize his potential in both areas. The revival of apprenticeships and the alternation of school and work are effective tools to redefine the labour market in order to prioritise the human being and his needs, talent and skills.

7. A Common Path

Enabling the human person to pursue his full development calls for public institutions to move beyond the “modern” approach and its categories also in terms of legislation and education policies. Yet this task cannot be fulfilled only through considering the national dimension, but requires wider levels of coordination. On this point, the European Union and the other international institutions can play a major role. In this sense, following the issuing of the European Employment Strategy in the late 1990s, EU decision-makers made an attempt to place the review of

employment policies at the centre of the EU debate, in line with the 2020 Document.

Due to historical reasons, John XXIII's encyclical does not make reference to European or supranational governance. Yet *Pacem in terris* can provide some useful indications all the same. The underlying principles of the section "*Relations between States*" are more relevant than ever and point to the way in which the European Union should be conceived.

The starting point is the assertion that "even when it regulates the relations between States, authority must be exercised for the promotion of the common good. That is the primary reason for its existence".¹⁸ Four corollaries result from this main principle, for according to *Pacem in terris* the relations between states are governed by truth, justice, liberty and active solidarity.

These words are meaningful and refer to the long-standing tradition of a complex and fascinating theological perspective. In spite of this, some examples made by John XXIII are useful to understand that the cornerstones of *Pacem in terris* can still lead in the making of the EU community.

The principle of truth is to be found in the equality of all individuals so that "there are no differences at all between political communities from the point of view of natural dignity. Each State is like a body, the members of which are human beings"¹⁹. Accordingly, the ongoing globalization process which results in the delocalization to developing countries to exploit a low-paid workforce might become the opportunity to extend to all workers the same rights and safeguards, in line with a new notion of "work" based on individual dignity and freedom.

The second main principle is concerned with justice, which "necessitates both the recognition of their mutual rights, and, at the same time, the fulfilment of their respective duties"²⁰. In other words, this means that "it would be criminal in a State to aim at improving itself by the use of methods which involve other nations in injury and unjust oppression"²¹.

As far as solidarity is concerned, an attempt is made to move beyond the narrow national boundaries and open up to a new dimension, in consideration of the fact that "of its very nature civil authority exists, not to confine men within the frontiers of their own nations, but primarily to

¹⁸ P.T. par. 84.

¹⁹ P.T. par. 36.

²⁰ P.T. par. 91.

²¹ P.T. par. 92.

protect the common good of the State, which certainly cannot be divorced from the common good of the entire human family”²².

The last aspect surveyed is liberty, which is understood as “no country has the right to take any action that would constitute an unjust oppression of other countries, or an unwarranted interference in their affairs. On the contrary, all should help to develop in others an increasing awareness of their duties, an adventurous and enterprising spirit, and the resolution to take the initiative for their own advancement in every field of endeavor”²³. Undoubtedly, the foregoing principles are seen as the lynchpin of coexistence in *Pacem in terris* and are now shared by the European Union and other supranational communities. Yet it is fundamental to rediscover their value and relevance, especially in the current crisis. This is because a significant number of austerity policies enforced at EU level do not appear to comply with truth, justice, solidarity and liberty mentioned above, which on the contrary should be regarded as guiding principles to pursue the common good, especially when facing work-related issues.

8. Sharing Globally

The European dimension, albeit important and crucial, is not sufficient in itself to pursue a far-reaching transition.

As John XXIII made clear in his encyclical some fifty years ago, the centrality of the human person does not allow for any kind of particularism and a universal approach is necessary. In this sense, *Pacem in terris*' relevance is once again apparent: “No State can fittingly pursue its own interests in isolation from the rest, nor, under such circumstances, can it develop itself as it should. The prosperity and progress of any State is in part consequence, and in part cause, of the prosperity and progress of all other States”²⁴.

John XXIII termed this aspect “interdependence”, which corresponds to today's globalisation and necessitates some reflections on work-related issues which look at the world as a whole. The full development of the human person requires tailor-made solutions which vary on the basis of the initial conditions. Therefore, whereas in Europe the time is ripe for a review of certain safeguards which are inadequate to the current

²² P.T. par. 98.

²³ P.T. par. 120.

²⁴ P.T. par. 131.

developments, elsewhere the provision of protection and essential rights granted to workers is still at its preliminary stage.

With a view of taking on this universal challenge, John XXIII pointed out that problems of this kind “cannot be solved except by a public authority with power, organization and means co-extensive with these problems, and with a world-wide sphere of activity”.²⁵ Previously, *Mater ed Magistra* showed its appreciation of the work of the ILO, which “for many years now has been making an effective and valued contribution to the establishment in the world of an economics and social order marked by justice and humanity, an order which recognizes and safeguards the lawful rights of the workingman”²⁶.

One should also be clear when it comes to “the global dimension” of workers’ rights. Over the last fifty years, the employment situation faced tremendous changes, as did the economic geography. Yet the rise of employment opportunities did not come along with the full development of the human person, the recognition of the individual rights and the fulfilment of the duties. Much is still yet to be done on this issue.

9. Fulfilling a Commitment

Far from being exhaustive, the foregoing discussions led to two main conclusions. On the one hand, it points out the relevance of the teachings of *Pacem in terris* with regard to work-related issues, although it is not the main theme of the encyclical. On the other hand, such relevance calls for the promotion of the full development of the human person once and for all, which cannot be taken for granted and requires a sense of responsibility and commitment on the part of all those concerned. Again, the concluding remarks in John XXIII’s encyclical put forward some areas of action and prompt anyone to take the necessary steps towards this. Yet the pontiff points out that²⁷:

it is not enough for our sons to be illumined by the heavenly light of faith and to be fired with enthusiasm for a cause; they must involve themselves in the work of these institutions, and strive to influence them effectively from within. But in a culture and civilization like our own, which is so remarkable for its scientific knowledge and its technical discoveries, clearly no one can insinuate himself into

²⁵ P.T. par. 137.

²⁶ *Mater et Magistra*, par. 103.

²⁷ P.T. par. 148 and 149 (Emphasis added).

public life unless he be *scientifically competent, technically capable, and skilled in the practice of his own profession.*

Thus science and faith must join forces for the promotion of the human person also with regard to employment safeguards. For this reason: “men must conduct themselves in their temporal activity in such a way as to effect a thorough *integration of the principal spiritual values with those of science, technology and the professions*”²⁸.

Performing and fulfilling this integration in everyday challenges does real justice to *Pacem in terris*, which continues to have much to say to the men of “good will”.

²⁸ P.T. par. 150 (Emphasis added).

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