



APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION

TO HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

ON THE FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL TEACHINGS

With Apostolic authority that derives from Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, the Synod of Bishops of the Old Catholic Confederation humbly ask sovereign States and their leaders to always consider the common good and the rights of its individual citizens, and most especially the poor, the weak, the suffering and all of those who are oppressed in our common thirst for peace and justice among all human beings.

We, the Bishops of the Old Catholic Confederation, affirm the natural rights of all human beings, including the right to life, the right to an affordable home, the right to pursue happiness that does no harm to another, the right to pursue a higher education without debt, the right to work, the right of unions and collective bargaining, the right of a decent wage, the right to a paid vacation for all workers, the right to healthcare and the right of mothers to have paid maternity leave.

As such, the tradition of Christian social thought is founded upon the Gospel of Christ and assumes the significance of the family and its role in society and the relationship between the family and the State. In fact, Christian philosophy and theology in the East and in the West has always affirmed the right of the State to exist, but the State must be mindful of the “social contract” that exists between itself and its citizens. To state it simply, since the State provides the necessities of a civilized life for

its citizens, the citizen has a reciprocal responsibility to the State. However, the onus weighs heavier upon the State to provide for its citizens. Therefore, aside from roads and bridges, the State has a profound and grave responsibility to provide healthcare, education (including university), a livable pension, special care necessary for citizens with disabilities.

Needless to say, the State should also be concerned with its citizens who are severely poor and homeless, and relentlessly work to remedy these intolerable scandals of our time. Likewise, the State must keep vigil to guard against racism and the cruel rhetoric of hatred that has been like a plague to the earth spreading lies and discrimination throughout the centuries. Thus, it is the responsibility of the State to provide legislation that protects minorities and their rights in society so that the strength of the many does not prevent the dreams and aspirations of the few. Further, the State should also be concerned with the rights of all immigrants and all of its residents who desire to work and make a contribution to society and especially for those who wish to become citizens.

Concerning the tragedy of war, it is the responsibility of the State to avoid war and to exhaust all rational and diplomatic means before considering a military option, especially since, as St. Augustine of Hippo rightly points out, war is the result of original sin and generally due to the tragic reality of the "*libido dominandi*." In a word, war always represents a failure for humankind, as Pope Francis has stated, along with our venerable brother bishops of the Roman Church.¹ Nevertheless, there are times in which a sovereign State must sadly resort to military action, based upon the prudential judgment of its executive power and with the consent of the representatives of the people. But, such action must always conform to the principles of Christian just war theory to insure that military action avoid civilians and that prisoners of war ought are treated humanely.

Finally, all of the world's nations and their leaders ought to be concerned with an increasing culture of greed in the world nurtured by vanity and an excessive ideology of capitalism, promoting an economic "survival of the fittest," which has caused the exploitation of workers around the world. The global economy, as we know it today, has also put profit before people, and routinely neglects fundamental moral

¹ We owe a great debt to the writings of the popes over the last century for their profound corpus of Catholic social thought without which the entire Christian community would be at a great loss.

responsibilities to society and the environment. Such negligence and callousness by leaders of industry and commerce has laid waste the natural resources of the earth and the dignity of human life all for worldly profit.

Synod of Bishops of the Old Catholic Confederation
January 14, 2014