

## The reign of God's love



‘Committed to building a new world, we do so not from a sense of obligation, not as a burdensome duty, but as the result of a personal decision which brings us joy and gives meaning to our lives’(n.269).





There is only one **king** in the Christian Religion: Christ. It is he who brings about the reign of God's love in the world. Now he, the vine, acts through us his branches.

In baptism we were anointed **king**.



‘The Gospel speaks of a seed which, once sown, grows by itself, even as the farmer sleeps (*Mark* 4:26-29). The Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking’(n.22).

‘An evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants her to be fruitful. It cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds’(n. 24).

‘The parish is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach’(n.28).



‘True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness’(n. 88).

‘Today, our challenge is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many people’s thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others. Unless these people find in the Church a spirituality which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness, they will end up by being taken in by solutions which neither make life truly human nor give glory to God’(n. 89).



‘An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters. If indeed “the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics”, the Church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.”

(Benedict XVI). (n. 183).



In Chapter 4 on ‘The Social Dimension of Evangelization,’ Pope Francis selects two critical issues:

I. The Inclusion of the poor in society (nn. 186-237)

II. ‘Peace and Social dialogue’ (nn. 238-258)

I. The Inclusion of the poor in society

‘Life for all must have priority  
over the appropriation of goods by a few’ (n. 188).

Prayer for politicians (n. 205).



‘Today and always, “the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel” (Benedict XVI) (n. 48).

‘God shows the poor his first mercy’ (n. 198)

“The Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a ‘special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness ...’ This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us ... We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them.” (n. 198)



Albert Nolan OP

‘The option for the poor is an uncompromising and unequivocal taking of sides in a situation of structural conflict. It is not a matter of preaching to some people rather than to others, or a matter of being generous to the ‘under-privileged’, or a judgment about the personal guilt of the rich, or even, in the first instance, a matter of life-style. It is the assertion that Christian faith entails, for everyone and as part of its essence, the taking of sides in the structural conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed.’

‘A thoroughgoing option for the poor includes the willingness to question one’s assumptions and to learn from those who are oppressed. It is only after one has learned to have confidence in the ability of the oppressed to promote their own cause and to bring about their own liberation that one can begin to share that struggle with them and to make a contribution in real solidarity with all those who have taken an option against oppression.’



‘One of the characteristic themes and guidelines dealt with by the Magisterium in recent years is the option or love of preference for the poor. This is an option, or a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness ... It cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care, and, above all, those without hope of a better future. It is impossible not to take account of the existence of these realities. To ignore them would mean becoming like the rich man who pretended not to know the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate.’

(Luke 16:19-31)’(JP II Sollicitudo Rei Socialis 1987 n. 42).



‘New movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers must be present whenever it is called for by the social degrading of the subjects of work, by exploitation of the workers, and by growing areas of poverty and even hunger. The Church is firmly committed to the cause of the “poor”, for it considers it to be its mission, its service, a proof of its fidelity to Christ, so that it can truly be the “Church of the poor.” ’

(JPII Laborem Exercens 1981 n. 8)



‘The preferential option for the poor is not limited to material poverty, since it is well known that there are many other forms of poverty, especially in modern society – not only economic but cultural and spiritual poverty as well’(JPII Centesimus Annus 1991 n. 57).

‘Promoting justice is a matter of helping entire peoples which are at present excluded or marginalised to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of lifestyles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power, which today govern societies’(n. 58)



## Jean Vanier

‘Indeed, far from being desirable, success, power and wealth prevent us from being truly ourselves. It is only when we recognise our weakness, our poverty, when we seek help, that we become human. We are not called to be perfect; we are called to be humble. And this is the gift we receive when we live with and work beside people who are fragile ... The poorest lead us into another world ...

‘There are a lot of people clapping Francis. But are they doing what he suggests? Are they going to the peripheries and befriending the poorest, and receiving the wisdom that the poor can give? The church will not change because of Francis. It will change because of all of us. Because of me.’ (See *The Tablet* 26 April 2014, pp. 10-11)



There are many indices of poverty. Some people are “poor” from only one point of view, while others are “poor” from many points of view. However, the greatest poverty is to be deprived of love, and not to recognise this is to run the risk of distorting the gospel and also of undervaluing what people are already doing in the cause of justice, and so of adding to the oppression that saps people’s energy. The implications of this are that a preferential option for the poor can take place in any genuine human interaction anywhere. It is a matter of one’s entry point into that interaction and the dynamic that takes place there, and of the direction which the energy of the interaction takes.



‘I have come to cast fire upon the earth  
and how I wish it were blazing already’ (Luke 12:49)

Teilhard de Chardin 1934

‘Some day,  
after harnessing space,  
the winds,  
the tides  
and gravitation,

We shall harness for God  
the energies of Love.

And then,  
for the second time in the history of the world,  
we shall have discovered fire.’



‘When properly understood, cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, transforms our hearts and enables us to enter into the perfect communion of the blessed Trinity, where all things find their unity. He builds up the communion and harmony of the people of God. The same Spirit is that harmony, just as he is the bond of love between the Father and the Son.<sup>93</sup> It is he who brings forth a rich variety of gifts, while at the same time creating a unity which is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony. Evangelization joyfully acknowledges these varied treasures which the Holy Spirit pours out upon the Church. We would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous’(n. 117).



‘Popular piety enables us to see how the faith, once received, becomes embodied in a culture and is constantly passed on. Once looked down upon, popular piety came to be appreciated once more in the decades following the Council. In the Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI gave a decisive impulse in this area. There he stated that popular piety “manifests a thirst for God which only the poor and the simple can know”<sup>100</sup> and that “it makes people capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism, when it is a question of bearing witness to belief” (n. 123).



The Torah insists on proper administration of justice:

‘You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour’(Leviticus 19:15).

‘I charged your judges at that time: ‘Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God’s’(Deuteronomy 1:16-17).



‘You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.’

(Deuteronomy 16:19).

‘When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, the king shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear YHWH his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes’(Deuteronomy 17:18-19).



On the importance of good government (see n. 205)  
see the following from Proverbs:

‘By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just;  
by me rulers rule, and nobles, all who govern rightly’ (Proverbs 8:15-16).

‘It is an abomination to kings to do evil,  
for the throne is established by justice’ (Proverbs 16:12).

‘A wise king winnows the wicked ...  
Loyalty and faithfulness preserve the king,  
and his throne is upheld by justice’ (Proverbs 20:26,28).



‘Take away the wicked from the presence of the king,  
and his throne will be established in justice’(Proverbs 25:5).

“If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked ...  
If a king judges the poor with equity,  
his throne will be established forever’(Proverbs 29:12, 14).

‘As a judge is, so are his officials;  
as the ruler of a city is, so are all its inhabitants.’  
(Sirach 10:2).



## Governing the Church: the Sacrament of Holy Orders

**Organisational** leadership – leadership in the ‘ordering’ of the community. Of course, with this ministry as with all the other ministries, the one entrusted with it carries it out best when he does so in love.

The ordained minister is to carry out his ministry of leadership of the community with the mind and heart of Jesus, as a service to Christ’s Body the Church.



## John Thornhill SM

- enormous task of implementing Vatican II
- The pre-Vatican Church
  - strongly reactionary in character
  - saw itself as separated from the world
  - excessively institutionalised
  - theologically and pastorally rigid
  - paid little attention to the sources of vitality found in the Scriptures, the Sacramental Mysteries, and the wealth of experience found in Tradition.



I will give you shepherds (John-Paul II), n.15

‘In the Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ the head and shepherd:

- authoritatively proclaiming his word (see later),
- repeating his acts of forgiveness and offer of salvation, particularly in baptism, penance and the Eucharist (see later)
- showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit.’



This role includes the mediation of commanding, discerning, directing and governing - always at the service of others:

‘This is how one should regard us, as personal servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God’(1Corinthians 4:1).



Cardinal Joseph Bernardin

‘We are not dispensable “functionaries” in the church;

we are **bridges to the very mystery of God**

**and healers of the soul.**

When we claim this identity unapologetically, we not only find ourselves; we also provide the church and our culture with the sustenance they require. This is the vocation, the reality, to which we are called. It is not dependent on numbers, or structures, or chancery offices, or any of the things we thought so essential, so important, but are now completely changed or are no more.

Rather, it is dependent on the Lord Jesus, who never changes, and to whom we are irrevocably united through ordination – the Lord Jesus

(who is the mystery of God and the healer of the soul) whom we make present in a tangible and inviting way each day to the countless people whom we serve.’



‘The Lord’s slave must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, able to teach, forbearing, correcting with gentleness those who oppose the truth. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth’(2Timothy 2:24-26).

‘Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but be an example that the whole flock will follow’(1Peter 5:3).



‘The hierarchy make wise laws in docile response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and exercise a supervisory and protective authority’(LG, n. 45).

‘The pastor’s task extends to the formation of a genuine Christian community’(PO, n. 6).

‘It is for the pastors to pass judgment on the authenticity and good use of the gifts of the faithful, not, certainly, with a view to quenching the Spirit, but to testing everything and keeping what is good.’

(AA, n. 3. See also LG, n. 12).



‘The holders of office ... are dedicated to promoting the interest of their brothers and sisters, so that all who belong to the people of God may, through their free and well-ordered efforts towards a common goal, attain to salvation’(LG, n. 18).

‘While testing the spirits if they be of God, they must discover with faith, recognise with joy, and foster with diligence, the many and varied charismatic gifts of the laity ... bringing about agreement among divergent outlooks in such a way that nobody may feel a stranger in the Christian community ... (They are to be) defenders of the common good’(PO, n.9).



John Thornhill SM

‘Our ministry will be fruitful,  
if we sincerely offer the service of which we are capable.

Those pastors who effectively foster the faith, hope and love  
which constitutes the essential covenant-relationship  
between God and the church,

and who help their people find God in the reality of their lives,

are accepted by their people as effective spiritual leaders,  
whatever limitations they may have in their own talents.’



Pope John-Paul II speaks of the 'spiritual life that grows through the exercise of the ministry'(PDV n.25), just as a car battery charges itself up when the car is running.

Our ministry is about communion. We come to others from our communion with God and Jesus draws them into deeper communion through our ministry.



## Holiness through belonging

‘The spiritual life of the priest should be profoundly marked by a missionary zeal and dynamism. In the exercise of their ministry and the witness of their lives, priests have the duty to form the community entrusted to them as a truly missionary community’(J-P II, I will give you shepherds, n.32)

A special strength of the secular priest is precisely that he is in the world. He knows it. His experience informs his insights which in turn contribute to pastoral decisions that are informed by his belonging to people in their everyday lives. This ‘unspectacular matter-of-factness’(Tony Philpot), this ‘street-wise’ quality of his ministry and life is the seed-bed for special redemptive love.



## Building the reign of God's love



‘Committed to building a new world, we do so not from a sense of obligation, not as a burdensome duty, but as the result of a personal decision which brings us joy and gives meaning to our lives’(n.269).





*The day Thou gavest*

sung by Paul Gurr

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*The day Thou gavest,  
Lord, is ended.  
The darkness  
falls at Thy behest.*



*To Thee our morning hymns ascended,  
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.*







*We thank Thee that Thy Church unsleeping  
while earth rolls onward into light*





*Through all the world  
her watch is keeping*

*and rests not now  
by day or night.*





*As o'er the continent and island  
the dawn leads on another day*






*The voice of prayer is never silent,  
nor dies the strain of praise away.*



*The sun that bids us rest is waking  
our friends beneath the western sky*








*And hour by  
hour fresh lips  
are making  
Thy wondrous  
doings heard on  
high.*





*So be it, Lord,  
Thy throne shall  
never  
like earth's  
proud empires  
pass away*





*Thy kingdom  
stands and  
grows forever,  
till all Thy  
creatures own  
Thy sway.*





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Lord, is ended.  
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*To Thee our morning hymns ascended,  
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