



Lumsa University Conference on:

Master in Management of Sustainable Development Goals alla Luce della Visione dall' Enciclica Laudato sì e dall' Agenda delle Nazioni Unite 20130.

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“Faith and Development”

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In 2000, the UN held a *Millennium Summit*, where it adopted the *Millennium Declaration*. A part of this Declaration was the adoption of eight (8) international development goals, called the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs), and which it committed itself to achieving by 2015.

As 2015 drew to a close, a post-2015 process and action plan to carry on further the development goals and objectives of the *MDGs* was set in motion.¹ At the Rio+20 meeting (2012),² the meeting's document, "*The Future we want*", called for the identification and formulation of *sustainable development goals*, as a continuation of the MDGs.

¹ Ban Ki-Moon refers to this *post-2015 action plan* as a "successor framework to the MDGs" (<http://www.diplomaticcourier.com/news/opinion/2461-achieving-a-road-to-dignity-by-2030-reflections-on-the-un-secretary-general-s-post-2015-synthesis-report>).

² The origins of the *sustainable Development Goals* are to be placed, perhaps in the 1987 UN meeting on "*Our common future*". There the concept "*sustainable development*" was introduced. In 1992, at the Rio de Janeiro conference on the environment, *Agenda 21* (things to do in the 21st century), *sustainable development* was taken up further, especially in the context of the impact of human presence and activity on the environment. At the Johannesburg Conference in 2002: the *World Summit on Sustainable Development*, economic development, social development and environmental protection were identified as pillars of *sustainable development*; and Rio+20 (2012) called for the formulation of the *sustainable goals*.

▪ *The SDGs as a " Human Dignity" Agenda:*

When, on 4 December 2014, the UN Secretary General presented his *Synthesis Report* to the UN General Assembly, it was considered an advance version of the case that he would make for the SDGs in September 2015. The report called for coordinated action to usher in an era of sustainable development for all; and the SDGs were presented as a global agenda centered on people and on the planet, underpinned by human rights. It was about protecting the human rights of people and the eco system of the planet.

Indeed, *dignity* is the fundamental principle underpinning *Sustainable Development*; but it refers, in the SDGs, to ending poverty, fighting inequality, prosperity, growing a strong, transformative and an inclusive economy, establishing partnerships to activate global solidarity for sustainable development and justice. And so, just as the sense of *development* in the *SDGs* is conceived predominantly in terms of *economic growth* and *social transformation*, so is the scope of *dignity*, as an underlying principle of the *SDGs*, essentially *social and economic*

Certainly, the *SDGs* will require serious and heavy financing; but some of the goals, such as, human dignity and human rights, are not completely reducible to economics and finances, just as the *human person* at the center of the *SDGs* is not reducible to its economic pursuits and social endowments.

Apparently, the *SDGs* recognize this; for noting how the first principle of Agenda 21 (1992) places human beings at the centre of concerns for sustainable development, the *SDGs* mark a shift away from an infatuation with GDP and a single-minded zeal for economic gain (accumulation). They pursue a framework that links economic prosperity with both social inclusion and the protection of the natural world.

All the same the *SDGs* do not quite give people the full means of integral self-fulfillment and development. They are not yet inspired by a complete vision and understanding of man. The *SDGs* are still a human development framework that

ascribes human development to purely human schemes, in correspondence with a deficient vision of human person. "The creation of institutions is not sufficient to guarantee the fulfillment of humanity's right to development", Pope Benedict XVI teaches, because "man does not develop through his own powers, nor can development simply be handed to him". Rather, "integral human development", according to Pope Benedict XVI, "is primarily a vocation".³ In this, Pope Benedict XVI echoes Pope Paul VI's teaching that "*authentic human development concerns the whole of the person in every single dimension. Without the perspective of eternal life, human progress in this world is denied breathing space. Enclosed within history, it runs the risk of being reduced to the mere accumulation of wealth; humanity thus loses the courage to be at the service of higher goods, at the service of the great and disinterested initiatives called forth by universal charity*".⁴ It is to this "breathing space" of development: the understanding of human development as a *vocation* in correspondence with its full anthropological character that we turn our attention now.

- *Towards a New Paradigm for Integral Human Development: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AS A "VOCATION".*

The Premise

When the Church speaks about development, it always starts, like the SDGs, from the premise of *human dignity*, which flows from the fact that every human being is made in the "*image and likeness of God*". If the creation of man in the *image and likeness of God* establishes the dignity of every man, the subsequent story of the *brotherhood of Cain and Abel* makes *brotherhood* the basis of the human family and the vocation of its members. But *brotherhood* expresses the common origin of

³ Cf. *Caritas in veritate* § 11.

⁴ *Populorum Progressio* § 14

brothers. Being from the same womb (*a-delphoi*), brothers share a common nature and dignity. Brothers share the same nature and are equal in dignity. Apart from its being a kinship term, *brotherhood* also designates the common and equal dignity of all persons.

In this sense, the conception of development as the realization of human dignity must apply to all. True development, then, must be universal: developing what every person possesses by nature. Having such a universal scope, development is not real and falls short of its scope when it is predicated only of some persons and not others. There is no 'I' who can live in full human dignity whilst ever there is 'another' on the face of the earth who suffers degradation. The very existence of such 'others', living in hardship and oppression tells us that social conditions are very wrong and development is not integral. Development must be seen as an affirmation of the great dignity and intrinsic worth of every person everywhere and in every generation; and, so, authentic human development is integral human development -- the development of the whole person and every person.

Thus human life is a gift – we are not self-created, we receive our bodies and our first relationships through the same grand course of divinely-given nature. Hence, we readily understand that nature is intended to be shared between all the humans, one generation after the other, and that the whole human family is expected to take care of our common home.

Furthermore, the human person, endowed with dignity by reason of his creation *in the image and likeness of God*, and subsequently called to *brotherhood* in his coexistence with others of his type and kind, is placed in a garden "to till and keep it". The account of the beginnings of the human race, therefore, establishes three levels or types of relationship for man (human person). In his dignity, the human person is set in a relationship with God, the author of his dignity, with other

persons, as *brothers* (and *sisters*) and with the garden, the world/earth in which man has to live, *to till and to keep*.

These coordinates of human existence in the Genesis account of the origins make mention of the experience of *sin* and the *fall*; but they will be restored and renewed in the *Last Adam* (1Cor 15:45), in his "*life-giving spirit*" and in his offer of salvation. Thus man, in his relationship with God, is called to a life of transcendence (salvation) which he/she lives as a *life of grace*.⁵ In response to this vocation to transcendence, man also lives the call to *brotherhood* (*sisterhood*) in the love of God, revealed in his Son (1Jn 4:9), "*the firstborn of many brothers*" (Rom 8:29), for "Only through an encounter with God are we able to see in the other something more than just another creature, to recognize the divine image in the other, thus truly coming to discover him or her and to mature in a love that 'becomes concern and care for the other.'"⁶ Man also lives on the earth-garden "*to till and to keep it*".

This, in a nutshell, is the Christian view of the human person and a sketch of the parameters for any such discourse as his integral human development and his dignity; and it is with this understanding of the nature of the human person that the Social Teaching of the Church⁷ teaches that the development of man is his *vocation*. It is so, because, it is the design of God that every man develops and fulfills himself.⁸ The reference to development, then, as a *vocation* means, "on the one hand, that it derives from a transcendent call, and on the other hand that it is incapable, on its own, of supplying its ultimate meaning;"⁹ and hence, also the motivation. This is the critical contribution of faith and the Social Doctrine of the Church to the

⁵ Thus, Pope Benedict XVI teaches: "..... development requires a transcendent vision of the person, it needs God: without him, development is either denied, or entrusted exclusively to man, who falls into the trap of thinking he can bring about his own salvation, and ends up promoting a dehumanized form of development" (*Caritas in veritate*, §11). On dehumanized development, cf. the danger of "*utopian and ideological visions*" identified by Pope Paul VI in *Octogesima adveniens*, §34.

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, §11.

⁷ Cf. *Populorum Progressio*, §15; *caritas in veritate*, § 16-20.

⁸ *Populorum progressio*, § 15.

⁹ *Caritas in veritate*, §16.

discussion of human development, be it the MDGs or the SDGs. The Christian call to integral human development is both natural and supernatural.

This also means that, while science can explain concrete reality, its substances and causal relationships, and while science can quantify the pollution in deep oceans or around a mining site, foreseeing its negative consequences and proposing remedies, science, however, cannot ordinarily provide the motivation for virtuous action. The same holds beyond the realm of the natural sciences: sociologists, economists and lawyers can analyse and explain the negative effects of unemployment, speculation and corruption; they can warn us about rising inequalities, contradictory policies or geopolitical unrest. But in the end they cannot supply the motivation for virtuous action.

Pope Francis, in the Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, asks: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? [...] What is the goal of our work and all our efforts?" (§160). Observing numerous alarming environmental and social indicators leads us to the daunting question: why should I care? Science and technology will not help here. Any technical solution is powerless "if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well" (§200). Pope Francis shares his conviction "that change is impossible without motivation and a process of education" – and for those purposes he proposes "some inspired guidelines for human development to be found in the treasure of Christian spiritual experience" (§15), since "faith convictions can offer Christians, and some other believers as well, ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters" (§64).

"In other words, development is not just about technological or material progress. It is rather a vocation: a response to the created nature and character of man. "In the

design of God, every man is called upon to develop and to fulfil himself, for every life is a vocation."¹⁰

Thus human development, like human dignity, is not something that happens to a person. It is not something that someone else, be it a Nation and its Government, the United Nations or some world Agency or an NGO brings or does to a person. It belongs to human nature and its created character (*creaturus*) to unfold and to flourish. It has tangible and intangible components; and Nations, Governments and International Agencies only facilitate and assist at its flourishing.

Very many thanks for your kind attention!

(PKAT)

¹⁰ Populorum progressio, § 15.