

Magister
A Journal to Discuss Magisterial Documents

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Magister: A Journal to Discuss Magisterial Documents

Magister seeks contributors from all disciplines and practitioners in all fields. It is produced at minimum quarterly and at maximum 12 times per year on or around the 13th of each month and provides a specialized forum for the promotion and better understanding of the documents of the Magisterium, particularly neglected documents. The deadline to submit articles is the 1st of each month to magister.editor@gmail.com for consideration for that same month. The journal's articles are open-access, available at www.marisstellainstitute.org and permission is granted to contributors to republish or adapt articles in other publications provided *Magister* is cited as the first appearance of the article.

There are three major genres desired: (1) research; (2) teaching; (3) and practical application of any and all documents of the Magisterium.

RESEARCH ARTICLES (1,500 words maximum): These are articles that contribute to evaluation of ecclesial documents and/or engage in current discussions. Research articles include development of new insights to assist the Church in theological developments, philosophical issues, and/or catechetical teaching. Research articles should narrow its scope by including and substantially using one magisterial document and/or primary theological source.

TEACHING ARTICLES (1,000 words maximum): These articles focus more on expository writing, insight and synthesis so as to disseminate the main ideas of Magisterium documents to a wider readership and busy audience with perhaps little time for extended reading of lengthy Church documents. Articles may focus on an entire Church document or expound on a section of a document.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION ARTICLES (500 words maximum): These articles creatively apply magisterial documents to concrete settings. These articles reflect more of a grassroots voice that sees in the teachings of Church documents a joyful and dynamic living of the Catholic faith. This genre combines the academic-popular writing style.

OTHER: Other submissions (such as homilies, sermons, outlines, workshop presentations, poetry, literary works, etc.) related to magisterial documents are welcome.

BOOK REVIEWS (maximum 500 words): Reviews of primary and secondary sources pertaining to magisterial documents are welcome.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (maximum 250 words)

For the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart: The “Woman” and the Magisterium

Dennis Purificacion

This journal is hereby consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on May 13, 2013. It is the Mother of the Church, as described in Chapter Eight of the Second Vatican Council’s document *Lumen Gentium*, who will crush the head of the serpent as prefigured in the proto-evangelium of Gen. 3:15. Already at the dawn of creation, the Woman crushes the head of the serpent. “This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ’s virginal conception up to his death...” (LG 57). Vatican II also taught that the Fathers of the Church see Mary “not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating in the work of man’s salvation through faith in obedience” (LG 56). Thus, with filial love and devotion, *Magister* begins its maiden issue towards a modest thesis. That thesis is that the documents of the Magisterium deserve study and attention, and neglected documents particularly deserve even further attention. The articles by two budding scholars, Mallett and Johnson, will demonstrate that magisterial documents can and should receive our care.

Today, the Church is in tribulation. Exactly 96 years ago this month, a beautiful Woman appeared to three simple children. She exhorted the faithful to pray the rosary daily and to do penance. She warned of the “errors of Russia” that would spread if the faithful neglected to live the Gospel call to prayer and penance. And we see how these errors dominated the 20th Century primarily through atheistic Communism and modern-day socialism. Even today, the errors of Russia take on new forms in what Benedict XVI has called the dictatorship of moral relativism. In today’s catechetical crisis, the faithful are not insulated against these. However, the documents of the Magisterium will insulate the faithful against not only the errors of Russia, but it will also aid in the living of the Christian faith. *Magister* presumes that there is an interest in magisterial documents and hopes to see a flood of interest

in these documents. Yes, there is an optimism that those who wish to see the documents of the Magisterium used in theory and practice will support this journal.

Potential contributors may submit in almost every topic, but if one were to list some pressing areas of need, those areas would include the need to focus on religious freedom in the U.S., articles on marriage and family life, and Catholic social documents, especially the right to life which is the first priority of the social justice teachings. Some other areas potential contributors might consider writing for in this journal include engagement with the Enlightenment and postmodernity, particularly through St. Thomas Aquinas' writings, although St. Thomas may not be absolutely necessary for engagement. Many a public intellectual would perhaps credit him with providing solid foundations for intellectual engagement and dialogue with a culture increasingly hostile to the Christian faith. Recent controversial topics include Pius XII and the Jews, colonization and evangelization, and bioethics. Pick any Church document, and write about it! Write about issues in the same spirit that the Woman of the Gospels said to the servers about her Son, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2:5). Bring it to prayer and write whatever he tells you. Read the articles and reply to them, if you want. Do whatever he tells you.

"The Marian dimension of the Church is antecedent to that of the Petrine..." This appeared in the famous Footnote #55 from *Mulieris Dignitatem* (no. 27) where John Paul II builds on Hans von Balthasar's theology of the Marian profile vis-à-vis the apostolic-Petrine profile. Far from being mere sentimental devotionism, then, the Immaculate Heart of Mary is "fundamental and characteristic for the Church" (*ibid.*). May the Immaculate Heart, to whom this journal belongs and is consecrated, bring to completion God's work until the day of Christ Jesus (cf. Phil. 1:6). Like the Woman of Revelation, let us flee to the desert if we must (cf. Rev. 12). May Mary, icon of the Church, cover our scholarship with her protective and motherly mantle. *Marana tha!* Come, Lord Jesus!

Renewing the Call: *Donum Veritatis* and Its Implications for the Laity

Jeremy Mallett

The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF), while still under the leadership of Cardinal Ratzinger, produced a document called *Donum Veritatis*—“The Gift of Truth” in Latin. The primary purpose of the document was to instruct the Church on the difference between theology and magisterial teaching. Both are in service to the word of God but theology is a task open any and all of the faithful which involves the disciplined exploration of that revealed by God whereas the primary task of the magisterium is to share and safeguard the truths of faith, protecting the faithful from error and confusion. These are markedly different tasks. However, these differences are not what I seek to expound for this document.

The CDF document, as a work of the magisterium, goes at length to define limitations on the magisterium, at least as traditionally understood. Following the direction of the Second Vatican Council, *Donum Veritatis* is written in favor of a model of shared searching and exploration for which the entire Church, “from the bishops to the last of the faithful”¹ is responsible. It is the self-defining that is remarkable here and what more is it expresses that the entire Church has magisterial authority. The hierarchy represents different offices or functions in the exercise of that authority. However, the knowledge that most needs to be reinforced among the laity is the reminder that they too have a certain magisterial authority and, therefore, a right and duty to exercise that authority. It is the task of the laity to participate and be ready for consultation in discussions on matters of faith and morals.

This might be alarming to those who still think in the pre-Vatican paradigm governing the relationship between laity and clergy. It was largely believed that the role of the laity was to simply be obedient to the clergy. Theological education was primarily reserved for and sought after only by

1 Both *Donum Veritatis* 4 and *Lumen Gentium* 12 echo St. Augustine. See Note 2 in second chapter of *Lumen Gentium*.

clergymen. It was the thought of Bl. John Henry Cardinal Newman that really spearheaded the movement in the Church to retrieve anew an understanding of magisterial authority which included that the Spirit of God may speak through any one, young and old, of the Christian faithful.² In consensus of all the faithful, the Church is infallible. But what exactly does this look like, for surely it cannot be that everyone is a pope neither can it be that the pope is the sole benchmark of truth? The work of coming to a clear conception of a Church-wide magisterial authority must first unlearn the false belief that clergy always know best.

As a young lay student of theology, I encounter various attitudes in response to what I might mean for them. Of course the number one response to the fact that I studied theology was, “So, are you becoming a priest?” It is still very much in the minds of people that an education in theology is solely for clerics and religious. What more is the same will also tend to think that the clergy are the only ones that can speak authoritatively on theological topics. The only lay speakers that are listened to are given a special nod from the clergy in the direction of potential listeners for their approval. Generally and ideally this is a safe practice, especially for the neophyte; however, even deacons and priests can be lacking in their education in Church doctrine and, unfortunately, some even stray into misguided beliefs about what their role is in regard to the doctrine of the Church. Recent times have seen an ever-greater need for an educated and spirited laity for what has been described as an intellectual crisis in the Church.³ I write this to say that while our clergy are indeed the shepherds of our souls, we are not called to be mindless sheep and that in some cases even lay people can be better educated in the faith than the clergy. Rather than seeing this as a threat, the Church sees this as a potential for a great good—a laity versed in theological study amounts to an intellectually rich Church. That is definitely a part of the message of this document and indeed of the new evangelization and Vatican II.

Donum Veritatis devotes an entire section spelling out what the magisterium is and its function

² See Acts 2:17.

³ J. Peter Nixon, “Read Them and Weep,” *Commonweal*. www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/?p=18724. 5/4/2013.

in the Church. In short, the magisterium is the teaching authority of the Church and it is made up of the entire church. One's place in the hierarchy simply determines what role they exercise in the development of Church doctrine. It is the role of the bishops to ratify various theological formulas as true expressions of faith; however, it is not their exclusive role to create them. While the document is directed at the relationship of theology to the magisterium in particular because theologians bear most of the load in this regard the whole Church, laity included, is called to “contemplating ever more deeply, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the contents of the faith itself and by dutifully presenting the reasonableness of the faith to those who ask for an account of it.”⁴ The only requirement is that what is spoken is indeed in service to the Truth—the Word of God.

Canon law is quite clear on the matter in regard to the rights and duties of the laity:

According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which [the laity] possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons. (Canon 212 §3)

The laity are not to simply abide by the mentality of any given bishop or other pastors placed in their service. In some cases this can be quite good but in others this can be tragic. Rather, the laity is being called to be educated enough to form their own opinions and be participants in interpreting the movements of the Holy Spirit via the sense of the faithful. Not openly disrespecting the office of the clergy but to respectfully enhance understanding. But what exactly does this look like? To answer this question we turn to a saint.

St. Catherine of Siena is special in several regards but the aspects I will focus on here are how she is the only lay doctor of the Church and that her life's example is important for the laity of today's Church. From a young age, she experienced numerous ecstatic visions revealing various messages to

4 *Donum Veritatis* 5

her which she was called to share. The daunting part of her task was that as a young uneducated lay woman, Jesus instructed her to give counsel to the pope! At a time of great ecclesial turmoil amid the Protestant Reformation and a time in which authority was heavily questioned, it is truly miraculous that she was heard much less listened to. Her counsel led to a great ecclesial strengthening and all this was accomplished before her death at the age of 33.

The example of St. Catherine is tantamount to the call of the laity to actively listen to the voice of Christ as found in scripture and sacred tradition, and then sharing the joy of our discoveries with the rest of the Church especially with those in the hierarchy. However, it is also revelatory of what true authority is. The authority of any individual in the Church extends only as far as their voice is united to that who is “The Truth.”⁵ Not even the pope may speak authoritatively apart from the teachings of Christ, but in the voice of Christ even a poor young Italian woman can have great effects on the course of history. Authority from Christ is not reserved for those wishing to creatively assert their own will and teachings. The true belief of the Church which those without faith will have difficulty understanding is that things like women's ordination, homosexual unions and other such attempted changes to doctrine are not really under the power of the pope to pronounce. As Vicar of Christ, the pope serves the eternal and unchanging word of God only as its greatest servant, reinterpreting God's message making it intelligible to the faithful in every age.

The call of *Donum Veritatis* is paradoxically empowering yet humbling also. It is empowering because, taking the same threads of thought from Vatican II, the laity are being called to fulfill its destiny as the people of God by participating in the Church's magisterial work in ways that have not really been seen since before the so-called Enlightenment.⁶ However, the entire Church is

⁵ See John 14:6.

⁶ For further reading, see Vatican II, Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*; Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*; Richard R. Gaillardetz, *By What Authority? A Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the Faithful* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003); John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Conscience, Consensus and the Development of Doctrine* (New York, NY: Image Books, Doubleday, 1992).

reminded of the humility it should bear before the one true Author—the Way, the Truth and the Life.

All magisterial authority is but a service to the Truth, not as its inventor, but as its messenger and proliferator, aided by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The First Principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the Mark of the Beast

John Johnson

"God has not created man for the fragile and transitory things of this world, but for Heaven and eternity, and He has ordained this earth as a place of exile, not as our permanent home. Whether you abound in, or whether you lack, riches, and all the other things which are called good, is of no importance in relation to eternal happiness."

- Leo XII, *Rerum Novarum*

In 1991, Pope John Paul II issued the encyclical that, at the time, would serve as a synthesis of all previous Catholic social teaching. Much like *Rerum Novarum* was a century earlier, *Centesimus Annus* was the Church's explicit response to the signs of the times (e.g., industrialization, globalization, and the conditions of the worker) as well as a host of contemporaneous political and economic issues. But besides further addressing social injustices, John Paul II points out the necessary way in which *Rerum Novarum* or any social encyclical ought to be read: precisely as a Magisterial document, noting that "*Rerum Novarum* can be read as a valid contribution to socio-economic analysis...but its specific value derives from the fact that it is a document of the Magisterium and is fully a part of the Church's evangelizing mission."⁷ Thus, the Holy Father reaffirms the essential key to receiving the Church's social teaching: that insofar as social teaching is Catholic, it is a part of the Church's evangelical mission, and as such, "it proclaims God and His mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being."⁸ For this reason, and only for this reason, Blessed John Paul affirms, does the Church concern herself with any social matter. This is a radical notion, especially to our modern ears. In this essay we shall propose that perhaps the greatest threat to the advancement of true justice and a realization of the

⁷John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* (*Centesimus Annus*) (1 May, 1991). The Holy See. (Accessed online: www.vatican.va), 54.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Church's essentially salvific social mission - which is to "reveal man to himself"⁹ - is not found in any form of economic injustice, political oppression, or even poverty, but in the failure to recognize the transcendent nature of the human person, thereby mistaking the essentially evangelical nature of Christ's social message for something less. We shall also consider the Church's consistent response to this problem, which has become increasingly relevant in modern times, through various papal encyclicals. This, it would seem, is the greatest problem we face as modern Catholics: that insofar as modern cries for justice are absent a fundamental understanding of the transcendent nature of the human person, they are reconciled to the realm of merely temporal human activity - which is precisely not human, but beastly.

That God is revealed to us and, in that, we revealed to ourselves is at the heart of the Church's social teaching. Thus, the Church proposes an authentic humanism whereby the human person is the beginning, the means, and the end of all social development. The aim of Catholic social action must be the "fulfillment of the whole man and of every man."¹⁰ Insofar as social action does not aim at this, it cannot be called "Catholic." And just what does social action without this transcendent dimension look like? God being excluded (deliberately or inadvertently) from social theories leads to what Pope Paul VI calls "a narrow humanism."¹¹ The invariable consequence of such a "narrow humanism," he affirms, is that it becomes directed against man himself and thus "becomes inhuman." Nearly half a century after Paul VI's warning, how relevant is this to us today! Colloquially, "social justice," even in a Catholic context, seems to call to mind images of political reform, soup kitchens, and picket lines. Rhetorically, the notion of "social justice Catholics" is, at first glance, polarized against that of "adoration Catholics" or "traditional Catholics." The reason for this divide would have its place in another essay but here it is enough to say that, to some extent, "Catholic social action" has, at times, strayed from the Church's true mission in exchange for merely temporal aims. This is absolutely not to

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (26 March, 1967). The Holy See. (Accessed online: www.vatican.va), 44.

¹¹ Ibid.

say that the Church has no concern of the temporal realm; on the contrary, it is for the sake of the salvation of flesh, that the Church's social teaching finds its urgency. A recapturing of this transcendent humanism is exactly what is needed today, not only to promote the authentic social mission of the Church, but to effectively resonate with and engage those who seek real social reform. The reader will permit a brief anecdote which illustrates this point: A friend of mine,¹² an expert on Catholic social teaching, was recently invited to speak at a local, all-girls Catholic high school about the subject. Before his talk, he had the chance to ask one of the young students a question, "What do you think I'm going to speak about today?" Knowing that the talk was on "social justice," the young lady responded (quite un-enthusiastically), "You are going to give us a bunch of statistics about how poor people are and how bad working conditions are in certain places." "That is precisely not what I am going to do," he replied to the student's surprise. His talk on Jesus the worker was very well received and awakened his audience to something new and mysterious. He was not just giving a sociological guilt trip; rather, he was actually preaching the Gospel because, firstly, he was able to point his audience to the notion that all social action must be rooted in and directed to the very person of Christ to be most authentically human; and, secondly, he was able to show the true nobility of human labor, in Jesus, as an extension of God's creative action. It is of great urgency today to teach Catholic social doctrine in such a way that it is integral and holistic. Only then will it take shape as living and bear real fruit of justice and peace.

As modern Catholics, we must be ever aware of the Devil's first temptation of Our Lord: to seek to live on "bread alone." In light of the current economic crisis, this message is all the more germane. Poverty is rampant, human rights are being obstructed, and a great deal of physical suffering is the consequence. It is a very hard thing for us today to accept that the primary function of the Church is not to remedy these problems, but to evangelize. The primary aim of the Church is to save

¹² I cite here Ernest Pierucci, Esq. whose work also inspired this essay.

souls-- to achieve an interior change in persons. The primary aim of the Church is not legislation, the elimination of poverty, or the achievement of any socio-economic construct but in the conversion of souls to life in Christ. And we have in Judas Iscariot the biblical model of one who deemed to think otherwise. The giving of God His due, or the virtue of religion, the Church teaches, is the highest form of justice. In John's Gospel, we see the religious act of Mary Magdalene being accomplished as she anoints Christ before his passion.

Then one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, he that was about to betray him, said: "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.¹³

Judas' pretense, we see, is justice. But his concern for the poor is exposed as insincere - not because he did not want the poor to have more things, but because he was concerned merely with the temporal order. He was blind to the supernatural activity of the anointing. He was blind to the out-of-this-world salvific mission of Christ. The poor will always be with us, and to engage in a humanism that is transcendent of every physical need is not to neglect the poor but, on the contrary, it is to offer them in the name of Christ, hope in something that surpasses anything of this world, a hope for something that cannot be accomplished by the shrewdest of social reform or by the most ardent political activism but only by the salvific action of Christ who became poor, oppressed, hungry, homeless for the sake of the lowly.¹⁴ All corporeal works of the Church, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, et al., find their goodness and purpose insofar as they are evangelical works of Christ who died that we might have salvation. Paul VI exclaims the nature of this salvation in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

¹³ John 12: 4-6 from *The New Testament, 2nd Catholic Ed.*, Scott Hahn, ed. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2010).

¹⁴ cf. Luke 1:52

...And not an immanent salvation, meeting material or even spiritual needs, restricted to the framework of temporal existence and completely identified with temporal desires, hopes, affairs and struggles, but a salvation which exceeds all these limits in order to reach fulfillment in a communion with the one and only divine Absolute: a transcendent and eschatological salvation, which indeed has its beginning in this life but which is fulfilled in eternity.¹⁵

Thus, Catholic social teaching does not - and cannot - stray from the salvation offered by Christ.

Moreover, any hope of a just society, that is rightly ordered and authentically human, can only be informed by the Church because the Church alone has the voice which proclaims Christ's salvific message and is alone the vessel of Christ Himself, who offers the ideal and visible image of the human person. This is, quite essentially, the radical ultimatum put forth by Catholic social teaching: that we either bring to the world the truth of the human person which can only be known through the person of Jesus Christ *or* we risk an inhuman world.

The signs of the times are glaringly foreboding in this regard. Though the causes are multifarious, there is a consistent trend in modernity that has deprived the human person of his dignity by neglecting to account for his transcendent nature. All social injustices have in common the denial of another what is his or her due; that denial stems precisely from failing to recognize the full extent of personal human dignity - of failing to recognize the full dimension of the human person as a creation in the image and likeness of God. To the extent that any action or system is unjust, it fails to embrace and be dedicated to this transcendent dimension of the concrete human being. If the human person is stripped of this dignity and not acknowledged as essentially "beyond himself,"¹⁶ we must ask what remains in the vision of the person? Surely, it is not human, or even *personal*, at all; to consider man apart from his spiritual dimension, one is necessarily left with a conception of man that is bestial or mechanistic. This narrow vision of the person opens wide the way for man to be commodified, exploited, and enslaved. As great of an injustice as it is to deny a person what he is owed, it is far

¹⁵ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. 8 December, 1975. The Holy See. (Accessed online: www.vatican.va), 27.

¹⁶ *Populorum Progressio*. 44.

greater an injustice to consider him as among the beasts or machines and as such not actually worthy of justice itself- which is after all, a spiritual reality. Hence the mark of the beast - which is not a name - it cannot be; it is not *personal* - but a number. Insofar as the human is robbed of his transcendent dignity, he is left with the impossible task of seeking fulfillment in merely worldly and temporal things; moreover, he becomes viewed by his fellows, not as a human with a name and spiritual identity but as one among many commodified categories; i.e., “minorities.” As benign (and sometimes even proper) as such a label may be at times, insofar as “justice” is pursued for those among categories of human ideology and not for concrete and actual persons, personal dignity, and so, justice, can never be fully realized. Only in recognizing the “concrete” and “historical” man -- “this man,” which John Paul II teaches is the ultimate aim of the Church’s social mission, can true social justice be realized: “We are dealing with *each individual*, since each one is included in the mystery of Redemption, and through this mystery Christ has united himself with each one forever.”¹⁷ Justice can only be rightly sought with this authentically human vision of the human being in mind. Any attempt at justice apart from this understanding and on merely earthly terms will not only fail to achieve justice, but bring about the degradation and bewilderment of the human person; “If this other life indeed were taken away, the form and true notion of the right would immediately perish; nay, this entire world would become an enigma insoluble to man.”¹⁸

Catholic social teaching, if it is to be rightly called “Catholic” - that is, according to *the whole* of reality - must never be reduced to the demand for *things*. As necessary as material welfare is to the full realization of human dignity, the realm of temporality as such is fleeting and dying; thus, a social doctrine that fails to see beyond this realm is reconciled to death. It cannot achieve justice, much less peace or beatitude, but reduces the human person merely to his temporal needs which he shares only

¹⁷*Centisimus Annus*. 53.

¹⁸ Leo XII, Encyclical Letter on the Condition of the Working Classes (*Rerum Novarum*) (May, 1891). The Holy See. Accessed online at www.newadvent.org.

with the beast and, to his function which he shares with the machine - this is the mark of the beast - a degradation of the human person. A justice sought apart from Charity, Who is God Himself, cannot rightly be called justice.¹⁹ If we are to avoid this mark and be fully realized as persons, we must be ever attune to the Church's consistent teaching that "man does not live on bread alone"²⁰ and that the primary criterion and measure by which the Church proposes all of Her social teaching rests on the truth of man's transcendent nature and eternal destiny in Christ.

¹⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (July 29, 2009). The Holy See. Accessed online at www.vatican.va.

²⁰ Cf. Matthew 4:4