10. A fresh reading of *Populorum Progressio*, more than forty years after its publication, invites us to remain faithful to its message of charity and truth, viewed within the overall context of Paul VI's specific magisterium and, more generally, within the tradition of the Church's social doctrine. Moreover, an evaluation is needed of the different terms in which the problem of development is presented today, as compared with forty years ago. The correct viewpoint, then, is that of the *Tradition of the apostolic faith*[13], a patrimony both ancient and new, outside of which *Populorum Progressio* would be a document without roots — and issues concerning development would be reduced to merely sociological data.

11. The publication of *Populorum Progressio* occurred immediately after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, and in its opening paragraphs it clearly indicates its close connection with the Council[14]. Twenty years later, in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II, in his turn, emphasized the earlier Encyclical's fruitful relationship with the Council, and especially with the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*[15]. I too wish to recall here the importance of the Second Vatican Council for Paul VI's Encyclical and for the whole of the subsequent social Magisterium of the Popes. The Council probed more deeply what had always belonged to the truth of the faith, namely that the Church, being at God's service, is at the service of the world in terms of love and truth. Paul VI set out from this vision in order to convey two important truths. The first is that *the whole Church, in all her being and acting — when she proclaims, when she celebrates, when she performs works of charity — is engaged in promoting integral human development*. She has a public role over and above her charitable and educational activities: all the energy she brings to the advancement of humanity and of universal fraternity is manifested when she is able to operate in a climate of freedom. In not a few cases, that freedom is impeded by prohibitions and persecutions, or it is limited when the Church's public presence is reduced to her charitable activities alone. The second truth is that *authentic human development concerns the whole of the person in every single dimension*[16]. 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. Man does not develop through his own powers, nor can development simply be handed to him. In the course of history, it was often maintained that the creation of institutions was sufficient to guarantee the fulfilment of humanity's right to development. Unfortunately, too much
confidence was placed in those institutions, as if they were able to deliver the desired objective automatically. In reality, institutions by themselves are not enough, because integral human development is primarily a vocation, and therefore it involves a free assumption of responsibility in solidarity on the part of everyone. Moreover, such 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. 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.”

12. The link between *Populorum Progressio* and the Second Vatican Council does not mean that Paul VI's social magisterium marked a break with that of previous Popes, because the Council constitutes a deeper exploration of this magisterium within the continuity of the Church's life. In this sense, clarity is not served by certain abstract subdivisions of the Church's social doctrine, which apply categories to Papal social teaching that are extraneous to it. It is not a case of two typologies of social doctrine, one pre-conciliar and one post-conciliar, differing from one another: on the contrary, there is a single teaching, consistent and at the same time ever new. It is one thing to draw attention to the particular characteristics of one Encyclical or another, of the teaching of one Pope or another, but quite another to lose sight of the coherence of the overall doctrinal corpus. Coherence does not mean a closed system: on the contrary, it means dynamic faithfulness to a light received. The Church's social doctrine illuminates with an unchanging light the new problems that are constantly emerging. This safeguards the permanent and historical character of the doctrinal “patrimony” which, with its specific characteristics, is part and parcel of the Church's ever-living Tradition. Social doctrine is built on the foundation handed on by the Apostles to the Fathers of the Church, and then received and further explored by the great Christian doctors. This doctrine points definitively to the New Man, to the “last Adam [who] became a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor 15:45), the principle of the charity that “never ends” (1 Cor 13:8). It is attested by the saints and by those who gave their lives for Christ our Saviour in the field of justice and peace. It is an expression of the prophetic task of the Supreme Pontiffs to give apostolic guidance to the Church of Christ and to discern the new demands of evangelization. For these reasons, *Populorum Progressio*, situated within the great current of Tradition, can still speak to us today.

13. In addition to its important link with the entirety of the Church's social doctrine, *Populorum Progressio* is closely connected to the overall magisterium of Paul VI, especially his social magisterium. His was certainly a social teaching of great importance: he underlined the indispensable importance of the Gospel for building a society according to freedom and justice, in the ideal and historical perspective of a civilization animated by love. Paul VI clearly understood that the social question had become worldwide and he grasped the interconnection between the impetus towards the unification of humanity and the Christian ideal of a single family of peoples in solidarity and fraternity. In the notion of development, understood in human and Christian terms, he identified the heart of the Christian social message, and he proposed Christian charity as the principal force at the service of development. Motivated by the wish to make Christ's love fully visible to contemporary men and women, Paul VI addressed important ethical questions robustly, without yielding to the cultural weaknesses of his time.
14. In his Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* of 1971, Paul VI reflected on the meaning of politics, and the danger constituted by utopian and ideological visions that place its ethical and human dimensions in jeopardy. These are matters closely connected with development. Unfortunately the negative ideologies continue to flourish. Paul VI had already warned against the technocratic ideology so prevalent today[26], fully aware of the great danger of entrusting the entire process of development to technology alone, because in that way it would lack direction. Technology, viewed in itself, is ambivalent. If on the one hand, some today would be inclined to entrust the entire process of development to technology, on the other hand we are witnessing an upsurge of ideologies that deny in toto the very value of development, viewing it as radically anti-human and merely a source of degradation. This leads to a rejection, not only of the distorted and unjust way in which progress is sometimes directed, but also of scientific discoveries themselves, which, if well used, could serve as an opportunity of growth for all. The idea of a world without development indicates a lack of trust in man and in God. It is therefore a serious mistake to undervalue human capacity to exercise control over the deviations of development or to overlook the fact that man is constitutionally oriented towards “being more”. Idealizing technical progress, or contemplating the utopia of a return to humanity's original natural state, are two contrasting ways of detaching progress from its moral evaluation and hence from our responsibility.

15. Two further documents by Paul VI without any direct link to social doctrine — the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (25 July 1968) and the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975) — are highly important for delineating the fully human meaning of the development that the Church proposes. It is therefore helpful to consider these texts too in relation to *Populorum Progressio*.

The Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* emphasizes both the unitive and the procreative meaning of sexuality, thereby locating at the foundation of society the married couple, man and woman, who accept one another mutually, in distinction and in complementarity: a couple, therefore, that is open to life[27]. This is not a question of purely individual morality: *Humanae Vitae* indicates the strong links between life ethics and social ethics, ushering in a new area of magisterial teaching that has gradually been articulated in a series of documents, most recently John Paul II's Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*[28]. The Church forcefully maintains this link between life ethics and social ethics, fully aware that “a society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized.”[29]

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, for its part, is very closely linked with development, given that, in Paul VI's words, “evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social.”[30] “Between evangelization and human advancement — development and liberation — there are in fact profound links”[31]: on the basis of this insight, Paul VI clearly presented the relationship between the proclamation of Christ and the advancement of the individual in society. Testimony to Christ's charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of evangelization, because Jesus Christ, who loves us, is concerned with the whole person. These important teachings form the basis for the missionary aspect[32] of the Church's social doctrine, which is an essential element of evangelization[33]. The Church's social doctrine proclaims and bears witness to faith. It is an instrument and an indispensable setting for formation in faith.
16. In *Populorum Progressio*, Paul VI taught that progress, in its origin and essence, is first and foremost a *vocation*: “in the design of God, every man is called upon to develop and fulfil himself, for every life is a vocation.”[34] This is what gives legitimacy to the Church’s involvement in the whole question of development. If development were concerned with merely technical aspects of human life, and not with the meaning of man’s pilgrimage through history in company with his fellow human beings, nor with identifying the goal of that journey, then the Church would not be entitled to speak on it. Paul VI, like Leo XIII before him in *Rerum Novarum*[35], knew that he was carrying out a duty proper to his office by shedding the light of the Gospel on the social questions of his time[36].

To regard *development as a vocation* is to recognize, 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. Not without reason the word “vocation” is also found in another passage of the Encyclical, where we read: “There is no true humanism but that which is open to the Absolute, and is conscious of a vocation which gives human life its true meaning.”[37] This vision of development is at the heart of *Populorum Progressio*, and it lies behind all Paul VI’s reflections on freedom, on truth and on charity in development. It is also the principal reason why that Encyclical is still timely in our day.

17. A vocation is a call that requires a free and responsible answer. *Integral human development presupposes the responsible freedom* of the individual and of peoples: no structure can guarantee this development over and above human responsibility. The “types of messianism which give promises but create illusions”[38] always build their case on a denial of the transcendent dimension of development, in the conviction that it lies entirely at their disposal. This false security becomes a weakness, because it involves reducing man to subservience, to a mere means for development, while the humility of those who accept a vocation is transformed into true autonomy, because it sets them free. Paul VI was in no doubt that obstacles and forms of conditioning hold up development, but he was also certain that “each one remains, whatever be these influences affecting him, the principal agent of his own success or failure.”[39] This freedom concerns the type of development we are considering, but it also affects situations of underdevelopment which are not due to chance or historical necessity, but are attributable to human responsibility. This is why “the peoples in hunger are making a dramatic appeal to the peoples blessed with abundance”[40]. This too is a vocation, a call addressed by free subjects to other free subjects in favour of an assumption of shared responsibility. Paul VI had a keen sense of the importance of economic structures and institutions, but he had an equally clear sense of their nature as instruments of human freedom. Only when it is free can development be integrally human; only in a climate of responsible freedom can it grow in a satisfactory manner.

18. Besides requiring freedom, *integral human development as a vocation also demands respect for its truth*. The vocation to progress drives us to “do more, know more and have more in order to be more”[41]. But herein lies the problem: what does it mean “to be more”? Paul VI answers the question by indicating the essential quality of “authentic” development: it must be “integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man”[42]. Amid the various competing anthropological visions put forward in today’s society, even more so than in Paul VI’s time, the Christian vision has the particular characteristic of asserting and justifying the unconditional value of the human person and the meaning of his growth. The Christian vocation to development helps to promote the advancement of all men and of the whole man. As Paul VI wrote: “What we hold important is man, each man and each group of men, and we even include the whole of humanity”[43]. In
promoting development, the Christian faith does not rely on privilege or positions of power, nor even on the merits of Christians (even though these existed and continue to exist alongside their natural limitations)[44], but only on Christ, to whom every authentic vocation to integral human development must be directed. The Gospel is fundamental for development, because in the Gospel, Christ, “in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself”[45]. Taught by her Lord, the Church examines the signs of the times and interprets them, offering the world “what she possesses as her characteristic attribute: a global vision of man and of the human race”[46]. Precisely because God gives a resounding “yes” to man[47], man cannot fail to open himself to the divine vocation to pursue his own development. The truth of development consists in its completeness: if it does not involve the whole man and every man, it is not true development. This is the central message of *Populorum Progressio*, valid for today and for all time. Integral human development on the natural plane, as a response to a vocation from God the Creator[48], demands self-fulfilment in a “transcendent humanism which gives [to man] his greatest possible perfection: this is the highest goal of personal development”[49]. The Christian vocation to this development therefore applies to both the natural plane and the supernatural plane; which is why, “when God is eclipsed, our ability to recognize the natural order, purpose and the ‘good’ begins to wane”[50].

19. Finally, the vision of development as a vocation brings with it the central place of charity within that development. Paul VI, in his Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, pointed out that the causes of underdevelopment are not primarily of the material order. He invited us to search for them in other dimensions of the human person: first of all, in the will, which often neglects the duties of solidarity; secondly in thinking, which does not always give proper direction to the will. Hence, in the pursuit of development, there is a need for “the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism which will enable modern man to find himself anew”[51]. But that is not all. Underdevelopment has an even more important cause than lack of deep thought: it is “the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples”[52]. Will it ever be possible to obtain this brotherhood by human effort alone? As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers. Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity. This originates in a transcendent vocation from God the Father, who loved us first, teaching us through the Son what fraternal charity is. Paul VI, presenting the various levels in the process of human development, placed at the summit, after mentioning faith, “unity in the charity of Christ who calls us all to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all”[53].

20. These perspectives, which *Populorum Progressio* opens up, remain fundamental for giving breathing-space and direction to our commitment for the development of peoples. Moreover, *Populorum Progressio* repeatedly underlines the urgent need for reform[54], and in the face of great problems of injustice in the development of peoples, it calls for courageous action to be taken without delay. This urgency is also a consequence of charity in truth. It is Christ's charity that drives us on: “caritas Christi urget nos” (2 Cor 5:14). The urgency is inscribed not only in things, it is not derived solely from the rapid succession of events and problems, but also from the very matter that is at stake: the establishment of authentic fraternity.

The importance of this goal is such as to demand our openness to understand it in depth and to mobilize ourselves at the level of the “heart”, so as to ensure that current economic and
social processes evolve towards fully human outcomes.