

## Contribution by Lombardia Group

### UN URGENT MESSAGE TO THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD: IS IT POSSIBLE TO SPREAD CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS ALSO AMONG NON CHRISTIANS?

The Milan group addressed the third theme of the International Conference that will be held in Rome shortly: “*Un urgent message to the contemporary world: is it possible to spread catholic social teachings also among non Christians?*” in a series of three meetings, one of which took place at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore with the participation of Prof. Alberto Quadrio Curzio and Prof. Giovanni Marseguerra.

It looked first of all at the ways of spreading SDC, which happens at three levels:

#### 1. *Christian principles that are generally accepted*

At the lowest level the need to find a balance between social and economic requirements prompts also non Christians, secular people, to value the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and quest for the common good.

In many societies today the validity of these principles is acknowledged and even publicly recognized. However if they are put into practice in a purely secular way, are not imbued with transcending spirituality, they remain merely rules of good behavior in business as in society and risk falling into utilitarianism.

This is the first step of SDC diffusion, even among non Christians, and belongs to the sphere of the *possible*.

#### 2. *Behavior that gives testimony*

At the second level the behavior of Christian social players reflects deeper awareness of one’s own human essence. The transmission of SDC values is done through the example of one’s behavior, way of living, social and business choices conducive to a new Christian humanism, integral and sympathetic. Here are some simple examples: working hours that are family friendly, absence or reduction of overtime, refusal of business policies that involve keeping stores open on Sunday.

This higher level of SDC diffusion is reached thanks to the *will* of Christians to introduce social life to the values they cherish.

### 3. *Confessing Jesus Christ*

The third level is the one which leads Christians to fully embrace, and devote themselves to, the authentic diffusion of SDC through public testimony of their faith and of the eternal novelty of the Gospel: "... Consequently, no one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society." *Evangelii Gaudium* (182-183) is illuminating: the social teachings of the Church urge proactive action.

At this point the diffusion of SDC becomes part of the evangelizing mission of the Church, a *duty* for Christians which all of us must take up, though in different roles. We become missionary disciples charged with bringing the Gospel to the world (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 120).

The contribution that Christians give will be effective if they are able to speak about Christ to the economic and social world even when it is not Christian, fulfilling what Pope Francis aptly calls "the three movements of Christians": walking, building, confessing.

Furthermore, the social teachings of the Church include universal principles that inspire the policies of good companies and are at the roots of the success of many international "best practices".

Three major factors have emerged:

#### 1. *Centrality of the human person*

The social doctrine of the Church views human beings not as mere instruments to successfully pursue profit, but as legitimate stakeholders who see in their workplace an environment in which they can fulfill their potential and give praise to God and which gives them the means to provide for themselves and their families. Proper management of human resources, services that render jobs family friendly (reconciling professional and family obligations) and reasonable working hours are fundamental to the social doctrine of the Church but also promote "engagement", i.e. motivation and emotional involvement of the workers, in other words what modern managerial theories advocate. Research, even empirical, has proved that companies whose workers have a high level of engagement achieve better results in terms of growth and profitability and that engagement is largely due to a working environment that puts personal dimension at the center and allows employees to fulfill their potential.

#### 2. *Concept of the common good*

SDC defines “common good” as *“the overall conditions of social life that allow both groups and its individual members to achieve their perfection more fully and speedily”* (Gaudium et Spes). In economic terms *“Any productive entity engaged in the organized production of goods and services necessary to individual and social life ultimately pursues achievement of a common good. There is, for instance, a common good for business (actually a specific common good for each business); a common good for all local institutions (actually a specific common good for each local institution); a common good for no profit organizations (actually for each no profit organization) and so forth”* (Vittorio Coda). A successful company generates value for all its stakeholders in the belief that its ability to generate income will allow it to last long and satisfy the expectations of all its stakeholders (employees, suppliers, shareholders, etc.). *“Management must pose the question: “what is right for the company” not “what is right for the owners, employees, the markets and so forth. In fact if a decision is not right for the company it is not right for its stakeholders either”* (Peter Drucker). Consequently *“The good of a company cannot be identified with the good of one of its members or one of its direct or indirect interlocutors; it is a superior good that takes into account and combines all individual goods in an harmonious balanced synthesis of the multiple interests and objectives that are part of the life and management of the company.”* (Vittorio Coda). A business can reach its targets of growth and profitability only by taking into account the needs and expectations of its legitimate stakeholders, and in particular of its clients and employees, because its success depend on the satisfaction of the first and the motivation of the second ones. **Therefore pursuing common good translates into achievement of sustainable profitability**, and this common good coincides with the good of the company, viewed as *“a superior good that takes into account and combines all individual goods in an harmonious balanced synthesis”* (Vittorio Coda).

It is wrong to affirm that the social doctrine of the Church condemns profit as such. Profit is a fundamental asset provided it is not pursued by management to maximize their bonuses or to make shareholders happy with fat dividends in the short term, but is pursued to guarantee the prosperity and long life of the business. Thus one should not speak of a “Christian” company but of a “responsible” one.

### 3. Ethics of behavior

Knowledge of SDC enables people to *interpret contemporary reality and find proper ways of action*, practicing virtue and receiving help from the gifts of the Holy Spirit. At economic level, a successful business rewards the behavior of managers and employees finalized to the good of the company and its long term prosperity. In practice this means introducing pay systems which reward results obtained through cooperative behaviors conducive to the corporate growth and profitability rather than

individual enrichment. A good manager knows how to create “*a stimulating climate, imbued with constant and widespread efforts to improve and innovate and mutual trust between all its stakeholders*” (Vittorio Coda). This definition is extraordinarily coherent with SDC principles. Managers who act in this way make the whole company a responsible one.

This paper was drafted by the members of the Milan group of FCAPP and their diocesan ecclesiastic assistant Fr. Walter Magnoni, i.e.

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