

On Social Justice, the “Regensburg Address,” and *Spe Salvi*

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THE NEED FOR A COHERENT UNDERSTANDING of social justice is pressing. Some insist, for instance, that they know precisely what it means but then include in it such issues as access to abortion, same-sex marriage, and high tariffs, all of which are hotly disputed among ethical authorities. It is nonetheless true that, even in Catholic social thought, the term is imprecise. The following study will offer some light by examining two of Benedict’s works, the “Regensburg Address” and his second encyclical, *Spe salvi*. It will first selectively review recent statements of the magisterium in order better to appreciate Benedict’s contribution. It will conclude by offering speculations about how the Pontiff might further clarify the concept.

Social Justice in the Recent Magisterium

“Social justice” appears regularly in the writings of the popes of the twentieth century, beginning with Pius XI in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) [hereafter, QA]. Although he did not define it, he used it at least eight times, connecting it to the common good.² In another

¹ Guest editor’s note: Entrusting the Jesuit Colloquium with two papers, Robert Araujo died before they could be prepared for publication. I have combined them into a recast essay that, although significantly rewritten, is faithful, I believe, to his penetrating thought, so admired by us who warmly knew him as collaborator, confrere, gentleman, and friend.

² QA, §§57, 58, 71, 74, 88, 101, 110, and 126. Without elaboration, Pope Pius X uses the phrase in *Iucunda Sane* (1904; Encyclical Letter on Pope Gregory the Great) [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 36 (1903–04): 515–29], §3, to describe Gregory as a “defender of social justice.”

encyclical, *Firmissimam Constantiam* (1937), he did give an explication when he addressed the social and religious issues then existing in Mexico, where the faithful were subjected to “de-Christianizing propaganda.” This promised an earthly paradise but at the cost of apostasy.³ As the Pope argues:

If you truly love the laborer, . . . you must assist him materially and religiously. Materially, bringing about in his favor the practice not only of commutative justice but also of *social justice*, that is, *all those provisions which aim at relieving the condition of the proletarian; and then, religiously, giving him again the religious comforts without which he will struggle in a materialism that brutalizes him and degrades him.*⁴

Importantly, Pius here recognizes the inextricable link between social justice and salvation. Whereas the physical improvement of the “proletariat” in the material world remains an important concern, it is not the sole concern, but one among a number of concerns of Catholic social thought. In a word, this thought centers on the person and on the pursuit of the virtuous life essential to our dignity in this world, precisely as we prepare for our ultimate destiny, union with God. Accordingly, as Pius implies, theories of social justice that unduly emphasize economic development are discontinuous with the Church’s meaning of this important concept.

Pius’s *Divini Redemptoris* [“On Atheistic Communism”] (1937) reminds us of the fundamental connection between social justice and Christian love (*caritas*). Social justice deals with forming the person so that we might live harmoniously with our neighbor under the Great Commandment (Mark 12:28–31; Matt 22:35–40; Luke 10:25–28). In denying that social justice involves class warfare, the Pope thus stands in continuity with Leo XIII, who asserts in *Rerum Novarum*⁵ [hereafter, RN] the codependence of and accountability between labor and capital (RN, §19). Moreover, because each class is

³ Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Firmissimam Constantiam* (1937) [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 29 (1937): 189–99], §16.

⁴ Ibid; emphasis added.

⁵ Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* (1891) [*Acta Sanctae Sedis* 23 (1890–91): 641–70], accessed May 5, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

composed of individuals, each component of economic society must be “given what it needs for the exercise of its proper functions”:

It is impossible to care for the social organism and the good of society as a unit unless each single part and each individual member—that is to say, each individual man in the dignity of his human personality—is supplied with all that is necessary for the exercise of his social functions. If social justice be satisfied, the result will be an intense activity in economic life as a whole, pursued in tranquility and order. This activity will be proof of the health of the social body, just as the health of the human body is recognized in the undisturbed regularity and perfect efficiency of the whole organism.⁶

In sum, then, social justice constitutes an exercise of the *suum cuique* (“to each his due”). This due entails giving what is essential to satisfy the dignity inhering in every person made in the image and likeness of God. Social justice assumes that each person, harnessing his free moral agency, should exercise a role to bring about the common good. Because moral agency is disciplined only by virtue, the ethical education of citizens is absolutely paramount. It follows therefore that, unless social justice is integrated into the wider range of virtues, it loses its meaning. At the same time, it must also be emphasized that social justice in Catholic thought views every person as significant to the community, such that the welfare of all is tied to the welfare of each. No one must be left out; otherwise, society will have only the appearance of moral health.

The Second Vatican Council’s *Gaudium et Spes*⁷ [hereafter, GS] addresses social justice in two passages but offers little explication. The first acknowledges that, although rightful differences among people exist, a claim to “equal dignity” also exists by which persons can demand “more human and equal conditions of life.” “Excessive economic and social inequalities among members or peoples of the

⁶ Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris* (1937) [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 29 (1937): 65–106], §51, accessed May 5, 2017, https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19370319_divini-redemptoris.html.

⁷ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J., 2 vols. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990).

one human family,” observes the document, cause “scandal and are at variance with social justice, equity, and the dignity of the human person and, not least, social and international peace” (GS, §29). The second passage mentions the need for the Church to create an organization that would promote progress in poor areas and social justice among nations (GS, §90). Although GS uses the term mainly in an economic context, it also notes that social justice applies to political institutions. It thus implies that a just society depends precisely on the virtue of the people animating these institutions.

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* offers an additional understanding of social justice by acknowledging the contribution of Pius XI:

Ever greater importance has been given to social justice [Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§1928–1942, 2425–2449, 2832; Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris: Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 29 (1937): 92.], which represents a real development in general justice, the justice that regulates social relationships according to the criterion of observance of the law. Social justice, a requirement related to the social question which today is worldwide in scope, concerns the social, political and economic aspects and, above all, the structural dimension of problems and their respective solutions [Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, §2: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 73 (1981): 580–83].⁸

Two important elements of a just society now come into plain view. First, social justice does not address only fiscal issues, because it is tied to the regulation of social relationships. Second, the rule of law is crucial to this regulation. These elements again underscore the vital importance of educating persons in virtue. Only good people are properly suited to making and implementing the laws that regulate the *suum cuique* grounding the common good.

Let us finally consider the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [hereafter, CCC]⁹. It explains social justice as society’s need to provide the

⁸ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004), §201, accessed May 5, 2017, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994).

conditions that allow associations or individuals to obtain what is their due, according to their nature and their vocation. Social justice is linked to the common good and the exercise of authority (CCC, §1928).

Giving a gloss on “nature” and “vocation,” CCC states that social justice can be achieved only when the transcendent dignity of the human person is respected (§1929). Once again, we see the implication that only virtuous persons can discern the *suum cuique*; it follows therefore that only such persons can properly exercise a role in civil society.

Regensburg Address

Let us now examine how Benedict’s thought reflects the tradition just surveyed. In the “Regensburg Address,”¹⁰ the Pontiff locates justice within the broader context of “right reason” illuminated by faith. At its beginning, knowing that he was engaging accomplished thinkers affiliated with a range of academic disciplines, he urged that the desire for the integration of learning, rather than its fragmentation, should properly characterize the *universitas*. “Despite the specializations which at times make it difficult to communicate with each other,” he observes, faculty “make up a whole, working in everything on the basis of a single rationality with its various aspects of sharing responsibility for the use of right reason.” He identifies God as right reason’s source. In the medieval university, whose origins lie in the Church, this source, together with the reasonability of faith, “was accepted without question.”

To illustrate this point, Benedict refers to the dialogue between the Emperor of Constantinople, Manuel II Paleologus (whose capital was under siege by Muslim warriors) and an Islamic scholar. He reconstructs the conversation, emphasizing the emperor’s focus on the passage in the Koran that states: “There is no compulsion in religion” (citing *surah* 2:256 of the Koran). His emphasis underscores the vital relation between faith and reason, which the emperor saw so clearly. While the Pope indicates that Manuel’s mode of discourse may have been unduly brusque, still it did make clear that the expansion of faith

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, “The Regensburg Address,” September 12, 2006 [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 98 (2006): 728–39], accessed May 5, 2017, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html. All quotations in this section of the present essay are from this address unless otherwise noted.

by violence is unwarranted and unreasonable. “Violence,” the Pope unequivocally claims, “is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul,” both of which are rational.

At this stage in the address, Benedict skillfully integrates the connection between God as *logos* and human reason. The correlation between them is epitomized in the theophany to Moses in the burning bush. This shows that:

A profound encounter of faith and reason is taking place, an encounter between genuine enlightenment and religion. From the very heart of Christian faith and, at the same time, the heart of Greek thought now joined to faith, Manuel II was able to say: “Not to act ‘with *logos*’ is contrary to God’s nature.”

Moreover, Benedict confidently asserts that “worship in harmony with the eternal Word and with our reason” becomes the foundation of *caritas*. This nexus between love and reason grounds Western thought, making it clear why human beings must live in just relation with each other.

For the Pope, the inextricable connection between faith and reason culminates in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Benedict acknowledges, however, that this truth is constantly challenged by a view in the academy derascinating reason from God. “The modern concept of reason is based,” he states, “on a synthesis between Platonism (Cartesianism) and empiricism, a synthesis confirmed by the success of technology.” This kind of reason, which undervalues metaphysics (the science of being as such), is insufficient for justifying the normative principles preserved, but not initially discovered, by the Church. Consequently, it would be mistaken to apply a technological straitjacket to the pursuit of theology; doing so would reduce “Christianity to a mere fragment of its former self.” But the error does not stop with theology; it also diminishes humanity itself. Relegating our destiny to the purely empirical constitutes “a dangerous state of affairs” seen, for instance, in “the disturbing pathologies” that “erupt when reason is so reduced that questions of religion and ethics no longer concern it.” The Pope warns that ethical principles become restricted if they are founded solely on evolutionary biology, psychology, and sociology and do not take account of the virtues, which discipline reason’s search for ultimate answers.

Explicitly stating that the Church’s view of reason is no foe of “the positive aspects of modernity,” Benedict boldly argues that he has

no intention "of retrenchment or negative criticism, but of broadening our concept of reason and its application." Implicitly, he offers a prophecy against the consequences of sanitized scientific reason that lacks the capability to understand the true nature of the human person. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* presents an example of these consequences. It states:

At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and the mystery of human life. Beliefs about these matters could not define the attributes of personhood were they formed under compulsion of the State. [505 U.S. 851 (1992)]

As a countervailing influence to the state's agnosticism about value, the Church's has developed its social doctrine to reflect the wisdom of God knowable to human beings through their exercise of right reason.

Spe Salvi

This encyclical underscores the collective view of hope vital to Catholic social teaching. Benedict explains that to restrict Jesus's teachings to a narrow individualism antithetically opposes the promise of God's universal salvific will. The alluring temptation of individualism is derived from the Enlightenment. For those seduced by its charm, Christian faith was substituted with the isolated privacy of the salons of the elite. Here freedom came to mean a detachment from reason that led the self into isolation. As Benedict notes, this detrimental influence draws the person farther away from social engagement. Freedom is no longer the ability to choose *for*; it becomes the desire to be liberated *from*. He points to Kant's claim that the "progress" associated with this view necessitates moving from ecclesiastical faith to rational faith (§19). Hence, the Kingdom of God is not to be associated with the community, the ecclesia, the common good, but with the individual's belief in himself independent of others, including God.

The Pope traces the evolution of this development in the modern revolutions that efficiently tore down the established order without giving much promise of replacing it with something better. But Christian hope has a plan for the future that stands in sharp contrast to the absence of any corresponding plan from post-Enlightenment atheism, agnosticism, or secularism. The Christian has been given a divine design that properly joins reason and freedom into a synthesis oriented to the hopeful progress of both the individual and the

society into which persons are integrated. God's design brings about progress in both the spiritual and the physical realms. It attends to freedom, which regulates how the person hopes and what the person hopes for. Hope that concentrates solely on physical improvement disregards the critical need to take account of the objective values that ground the common good of all humanity, not just of the few. Moreover, if people delude themselves into believing that progress in the physical realm is sufficient, they will miss their increasing dependence on those things that physically improve but enslave them, even as they erode authentic freedom. In short, when freedom is derived in the first instance from authentic spiritual value, the self is carried beyond its closed confinement into the embrace of the holy Other.

Benedict cautions that one generation must not deny succeeding generations their right to exercise authentic freedom. All people must remain at liberty to exercise their own rights and duties for properly ordering human affairs. But, as the Pope notes, the task of securing the common good—a doctrine essential to Catholic social thought—never finally reaches completion. We must not assume that some historical epoch can address the concerns of the human family once and for all. Sin mars all human striving; it is only mollified by a relation with the absolute Person. Not an imaginary fiction, this Person, God with “a human face” who loved us to the end, presents himself wherever he is loved and his love reaches us (§31). This love alone grounds the hope that spurs us daily to live with courage in a world deeply flawed.

Developing his argument, the Pontiff observes that “all serious and upright human conduct is hope in action.” As he comments further, “Our actions engender hope for us and for others” (§35). Hope grounded in love moves us to reduce suffering, soothe pain, and provide assistance to the needy. It follows that persons led by faith, hope, and love will experience an expanded sense of justice that not only acknowledges those who suffer but freely embraces suffering “with the other and for others” (§39).

Furthermore, for Christians, belief in a final judgment individually before God provides a strong motivation for their actions. Conscience is quickened to “look ahead” in order to endow the present with deeper meaning (§41). Accordingly, the Last Judgment should instill in us not terror but hope. It provokes us to take responsibility for ourselves, for our relation with God, and for our dealings with our neighbors. It tells us that “God is justice and creates justice” and that “this is our consolation.” The parable of the rich man and Lazarus

reinforces this message (Luke 16:19–31). By his opulent arrogance, the rich man, forgetful of the other, impassably divided himself from both the poor man and God. His “unquenchable thirst” resulted from his developing a callous “incapacity to love,” the source of injustice (§44).

In sum, for the Christian, the demands of justice cannot be discerned in isolation. Unless rooted in right reason guided by faith, hope, and charity, justice will cease as a virtue. When it does, social tension and isolation will only be exacerbated.

A Benedictine Synthesis

Having seen how Benedict’s message roots itself in the magisterium, let us now develop a speculative synthesis of his approach to social justice. I suggest first that he would be less interested in framing a rigid definition than in formulating a method that could prudently be applied when injustice is encountered. At the same time, I am bearing in mind that the Pontiff does not understand the Church to serve as a particularly effective agent of social reform, which it should be cautious in directly pursuing.¹¹

No doubt his method would begin by reminding us of the end, goal, and purpose of the human person. These are eloquently expressed, for instance, in the Constitutions of the Jesuit order: “to devote [ourselves] with God’s grace not only to [our own] salvation and perfection, but also with that same grace to labor strenuously in giving aid toward the salvation and perfection of the souls of [our] fellowmen.”¹² It follows that whatever the Church and individual Christians do must be consistent with these objectives. Temporal concerns must be decidedly subordinated to them, and so must the social justice that helps to regulate them.

Next, Benedict would return to QA to identify the virtue’s distinguishing characteristics. He would note that Pius was marking the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of Leo *Rerum Novarum*. He would recognize that each Pope was consciously addressing the particular injustices of his own time and therefore searching for

¹¹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 98 (2006): 217–52], §§28a, 29, accessed May 5, 2017, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

¹² Saint Ignatius Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, trans. George E. Ganss, S.J., with introduction and commentary (St Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 77–78. See also CCC, §358.

principles that would provide a just resolution of dissimilar inequities. The two encyclicals, while having some common denominators, were separated by two generations of rapid changes. Benedict's recognition would, in turn, significantly affect his understanding of social justice.

Subsequently, the German Pontiff would acknowledge that the members of the human family are responsible, directly and indirectly, for creating structures that give rise to the forms of social injustice, including the unjust distribution of wealth. By the same token, he would see persons as having the capacity to develop the means to overcome them. As we have seen, essential to this task is the proper moral formation of individuals who design and regulate social structures. Expanding and deepening such formation allows hope to emerge. Thus, grace would be central to Benedict's vision of social justice; it can and will work effectively with human cooperation for the world's betterment.

Moreover, the Pontiff would be concerned not only with diagnosing the causes of injustice but also with developing adequate solutions. Likely, he would strongly discourage massive state programs and government bureaucracies. He would appreciate that whatever problems human persons have generated they can also nullify. This perspective was shared by Pius XI in his recognition that Leo XIII had urged "the whole human family to strike out in the social question on new paths" (QA, §9). Social concerns are best corrected at their root—the sinful human person—rather than by creating new and untested structures. These run the risk of applying harmful cosmetics that, while potentially blotting out subsidiarity, effectively cover over the problem. With human reformation, the transformation of political, social, and economic institutions will follow.

It is likely that Benedict would be nuanced about Hollenbach's understanding of social justice as governing "the basic structures of society." As defined by Hollenbach, these embrace "the major political, economic, and social institutions that determine the division of advantages from social cooperation."¹³ The American Jesuit suggests that social justice is not first and foremost grounded in education but, rather, constitutes a means for incorporating all people into political and economic processes. "Social justice," he says, "requires absten-

¹³ David Hollenbach, S.J., *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 201, citing John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1971), 7.

tion from actions that exclude groups from active participation in the transnational common good." It also requires that "global institutions avoid such exclusion as well."¹⁴ Against this expansive claim, Benedict, relying on Pius XI, would more likely see social justice as mainly applicable to the local level of human community. Here the principle of subsidiarity developed in QA boldly affirms that higher levels of social organization should not prejudice the action of lower levels when they capably regulate their own needs (§80).

Moreover, Benedict would undoubtedly pose probing questions to Hollenbach's claim that:

[Social justice entails] a standard which seeks to guarantee human dignity by specifying forms of governmental intervention which are appropriate for the protection of minimum standards of well-being, access and participation for all individuals. . . . Social justice, therefore, justifies governmental limitation of the accumulation of wealth or the exercise of political influence to the extent this is necessary for the institutionalization of basic economic and political rights of all.¹⁵

Does social justice not primarily entail, the Pope would ask, the flourishing of individual citizens dwelling in community rather than the interventions of the state and its mechanisms? Is it not principally the formation of character that effects human flourishing? If the state must intervene in certain cases, is it not human beings who determine, plan, and execute such interventions? Does it not therefore follow that the reform of morals through the education of virtuous persons will provide the surest path to social justice, as Pius avers? Surely, Benedict would require affirmative answers to these questions; they are demanded by the very concept of subsidiarity so vitally embedded in Catholic social doctrine.

Taking another cue from Pius, Benedict would also remind Hollenbach of the limitations that Catholic social teaching expressly imposes on the state. Hollenbach argues, for instance, that social justice "is a conceptual tool by which moral reasoning takes into account the fact that relationships between persons have an institu-

¹⁴ Hollenbach, *Common Good*, 226.

¹⁵ David Hollenbach, S.J., *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 154–55.

tional or structural dimension.”¹⁶ He also argues that Pius’s use of social justice “indicates the emergence of a new sensitivity in Catholic thought to the possibility of conscious institutional change.”¹⁷ Moreover, he contends:

The extent of the right of private ownership must be determined with reference both to personal freedom and social strategies for fulfilling basic human needs. Social justice demands that the economy be directed and structured in such a way that both of these purposes are attained. The state has the ultimate responsibility for assuring that these demands are met.¹⁸

Although Hollenbach cites QA as his authority, he overlooks an important element in the cited section. Here, although Pius does indeed acknowledge the proper role of the state in determining “what is permitted and what is not permitted to owners in the use of their property,” he also reminds us, referring to RN §12, that the human person “is older than any State.” Based on the natural law, therefore, the Pope declares:

It is grossly unjust for a State to exhaust private wealth through the weight of imposts and taxes. “The right to possess private property is derived from nature, not from man; and the State has the right to control its use in the interests of the public good alone, but by no means to absorb it altogether.”¹⁹

Yet when the State brings private ownership into harmony with the needs of the common good, it does not commit a hostile act against private owners but rather does them a friendly service; for it thereby effectively prevents the private possession of goods, which the Author of nature in His most

¹⁶ Ibid., 54.

¹⁷ Ibid., 55.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The translation of this quotation from RN §47 is here taken from the Vatican website of *Rerum Novarum* itself (http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html), rather than the translation found in Pius’s QA §49 (http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html). It should also be noted that QA’s footnote for the quotation of RN mistakenly directs to RN §67, rather than §47.

wise providence ordained for the support of human life, from causing intolerable evils and thus rushing to its own destruction; it does not destroy private possessions, but safeguards them; and it does not weaken private property rights, but strengthens them. (QA, 49)

In short, then, the role of the state is decidedly limited. Nevertheless, Hollenbach oddly maintains that social justice "is a practical guideline for the use of the instruments of *power*, especially government *power*."²⁰

Thus, Benedict would reiterate that, if social justice is a virtue, it cannot be separated from the three theological (and four cardinal) virtues, which govern our final end, goal, and destiny. In them, social justice lives, and without them it ceases to be Christian and devolves into another form of partisan ideology. On this point, John Ryan, a pioneering commentator on these questions, defines social justice as "the virtue which governs the relations of the members with society, as such, and the relations of society with its members; and which directs social and individual activities to the general good of the whole collective community."²¹ Developing this definition, Brian Benestad sanely observes: "It is not really possible to bring about the reform of institutions and living conditions unless people really know and want to do the right thing." And they know what the right thing is by deciding what things are "favorable to virtue."²² And they know what things are favorable to virtue by education, whether Christian or natural; it guides their intellects and wills toward the transcendent good. It is therefore likely that Benedict would affirm the wisdom of Avery Dulles, who states:

Social teaching is not directed in the first instance to legislation and policy issues but rather to education. It is designed to inculcate a proper perspective on the good society, the role of government, and the pursuit of pleasure, wealth, honor, and power. If a choice is to be made as to where to place the emphasis, I would opt for education because it opens up the possibility of a lasting change for the better.²³

²⁰ Ibid., 153; emphasis added.

²¹ John A. Ryan, "Social Justice and the State," *Commonweal* 30 (1939): 205–06.

²² J. Brian Benestad, *Church, State, and Society: An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 113.

²³ Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., "Religion and the Transformation of Politics" (Fifth Annual Fall McGinley Lecture, Fordham University, October 6, 1992),

In conclusion, I shall offer an illustration of a method for exercising social justice grounded in the virtues with which I believe Benedict would concur. It centers on the family, the basic cell of society, where education begins for virtually everyone. Let us say that the parents who are the heads of the household have two children. One is exemplary in conduct, but the second is not. Most people expect that the parents will be equally concerned about the welfare of both. The manner in which they exercise justice in rearing their offspring, however, will be different. The question quickly emerges: How will both children receive social justice from their parents? How, in other words, within the family community will they receive the *suum cuique*?

The answer centers on the manner in which virtuous persons make and implement norms. The parents know that to achieve the *suum cuique* for each child, the application of the same virtues will and must be different. As virtuously formed persons, the parents know that treating each child justly will have a broader bearing on the common good of the family. When all is said and done, what guides the parents in treating their different children in a just manner will be based on forbearance, justice, courage, prudence, faith, hope, and charity. Of these virtues in this context, prudence and charity emerge as especially important. But the parents also require the courage to proceed with their actions, tempered by forbearance, to ensure that their children will receive justice. In turn, this justice will provide the hope for the family's common good.

In the end, if the parents continue to practice the virtues that constitute their own moral education, social justice will result. With the passage of time, the children will recall their moral formation and pass it on their own children. And the process will be replicated, because achieving social justice is never a transitory but a perennial project. Benedict himself observes that each succeeding generation of human civilization faces the great challenge of winning human freedom over anew to the good. It is in the crib of this endeavor that social justice is ever and always nurtured (*Spe Salvi*, §24b). N-V

in Dulles, *Church and Society: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures 1988–2007* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 123, citing J. Brian Benestad, *The Pursuit of a Just Social Order* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1982), 124.