

Periodic Paper # 1

Spring 2004

THE CHURCH IN IRELAND AND THE WIDER WORLD - A 21ST CENTURY RESPONSE

LINKS BETWEEN MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT AND THE WORK FOR JUSTICE



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin was born in Dublin on 8th April 1945. He entered the service of the Holy See in 1976 in the Pontifical Council for the Family. In 1986 he was appointed Under-Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. On 5th December 1998 he was appointed Titular Bishop of Glendalough. In March 2001 he was elevated to the rank of Archbishop. He was appointed by Pope John Paul II as Coadjutor Archbishop of Dublin on May 3rd 2003.

For the Christian, mission and development are fundamentally about the same thing. Both involve making concrete our witness to the love of God that is manifested in Jesus Christ. Both are about that fundamental reality of God's love and about how we witness it and foster it in the world in which we live.

A TRUE NOTION OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

If I had said that mission and development are both fundamentally about charity, many of you might have begun shaking your heads. The word charity has unfortunately become debased or devalued in our English speaking World. But we believers cannot abandon that which is so fundamental to our identity as followers of Jesus Christ. The disciples of Jesus are to be known by their charity, by their love for one another. What we have to do is to rediscover, for ourselves, the true meaning of charity, of Christian love. That meaning is very different from the debased value of charity as handouts. We must show that true Christian charity brings an irreplaceable contribution to reflection on development, on relationships between people and among peoples.

Self interest, comparative advantage, competition or long term national interest are all too often the motives which today govern relations between peoples. We have to recover the notion of charity and love, considered in the fundamental dimension of gratuity in our relations with others. That is the remarkable thing about love: we love gratuitously; we do not ask anything in return, just as Jesus loved us first.

Paradoxically, fear can be a powerful and very effective motive to inspire programs of development. It is a constant struggle to arouse interest in the good of people in various parts of the world just by appealing to noble sentiments of solidarity and common responsibility. But if we say, "if we do not do something to change the situation of those people we will soon have them on our doorsteps", then politicians, tabloids and the proponents of enlightened self interest will ass click into action.

Fear is not a worthy motive on which to build a model of international cooperation. The other is not our enemy, but our brother or sister. The only true motive is that of love.

Poverty is the inability for people to realize their God-given potential. Fighting poverty means that we invest in human capacity, we enable people – children, women and men – to be the people that God wishes them to be. We rejoice that they can be so, equal in dignity to us. It means that we personally feel hurt when there are others in the world who are unable to have the same opportunity to fully realize themselves as we are. Our relationship is one based on love and respect for the other.

PEOPLE ARE THE SUBJECTS AND NOT THE OBJECTS OF DEVELOPMENT

The fundamental principle of development policy today is that of enhancing human capacity. People should never (be) the objects of our development policies. They are its subjects. Subjectivity is of the essence of being human. Human beings anywhere in the world are subjects with potential. The more individuals are enabled to realize their potential the better it will be for all.

Human beings must be enhanced so they can form subjective, participative human communities, which become the artifacts of their own future. We should even be happy when the people of the developing countries become our economic competitors. Development policy aims at putting people in charge of their own future. Development workers should always be in the business of putting themselves out of business.

This is very different from the old assistential development models which looked primarily at delivering certain services and programs. It is also different from the other more modern methods which look on development as business. So many NGO's turn out effectively to be just the privatized arm of the governments. They are looked on as being better able to deliver certain services and, let's not forget it, they are cheaper. Let me be clear. I am not opposed to cooperation between voluntary Church organizations and governmental and international bodies. Our organizations are indeed entitled to an equitable share of public funds for development and can so often improve and change government policies.

At the same time, it is important to maintain one's sense of qualitative identity. We have to be attentive to the temptation, that through working with other institutions, we water down that concept of gratuity, which should inspire our work, because we become compromised by policies of narrow national interest, simple budgetary constraints in which liberal economics become the dominant motif.

THREE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The most original contribution of the Church organizations to development reflection is the unique anthropological vision which springs from the Gospel and which, I believe, can be readily appreciated and assimilated by development models even in pluralist societies.

Our anthropological vision is not something static or simply an ideological principle. If we look at the social teachings of the Church we can see that this anthropological vision is not a magical formula but a tension, a tension of three different principles. This tension will never be simply resolved but which must be adapted and the results adapted as we progress.

The three principles, which we will look at later and examine, are:

- the dignity of every individual person,
- the unity of the human family, and
- the integrity of creation.

We have to stress human dignity without falling into individualism, stress the human family without falling into conformity of domination, and stress the integrity of creation without falling into a narrow environmentalism. We must ensure that we foster all three in the varied situations in which we work.

THE DIGNITY OF EVERY PERSON

Let us look at the first of these principles. Every individual is created in God's image, male and female. From this principle of human dignity there flows the concept of inalienable rights of each person and recognition of the unique capacities which each person possesses and which development policy must help identify and enhance.

Within such a vision, the person living in poverty will be looked on as a brother or sister, having the same dignity as anyone else, having the fundamental rights and with his or her own unique capacities. The greatest resource of the rocket scientist, or of the leading economist, or of the inventor or the entrepreneur is his or her own creativity and ability for innovation. The greatest resource of the poor person is exactly the same. People living in poverty show immense creativity through surviving. They want to be able to place their human talents at the service of their own future and that of their families. They need to know their rights. They need to know how to protect their rights. They want above all a voice. Handouts or simple assistance do not necessarily enhance that capacity and can even drive people to resignation and disinterest.

Having voice requires working to eliminate structures of dominance and establishing systems of participation. It requires attention to the social infrastructures which enhance participation. This means moving towards functioning democratic political institutions. It means fostering broad economic opportunity. It may not be appropriate for development agencies to get directly involved in the construction of political institutions, but they certainly can contribute to creating a healthy, informed and constructive, critical civil society, as was shown, for example, in the follow-up to many of the debt reduction campaigns. Much work can be done in human rights education and through the establishment of free media, especially on a local level, through worker's organizations and community groups which look at local human rights situations. This can be especially important in protecting workers rights, including children who are at work.

But for all this to happen there must first of all be a great emphasis on education and formation. I used to be very puzzled when members of religious communities would say to me, when I worked in the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, that their congregation "used to be in education but now they had moved over to justice and peace". The first requirement for justice, understood as voice and participation, is education, investment in the capacity of people.

Now I understand that they were really saying that they were opting out of a certain model of education, especially one which served primarily the elite. However, the need for literacy and education, if anything, has taken on a new urgency. There must be universal access to education and quality education. This applies to children, but also to those who have in the past missed out on educational opportunity. Education is the key to participating in the labor market, it is the key to moving up the scale of the labor

market. In any case, education is no longer just for children, it must be seen as a life long task. Education, in a knowledge-based society and economy must not lead to conformism but to creativity.

Use the term quality. Church education programs – as well as health programs – must always be marked by their excellence. Lack of resources never entitles us to offer poor quality services. The poor are entitled to the best, just as we are. Our services must never humiliate people, by the manner in which they are delivered, but should always enhance the dignity and the self-esteem of people. We are never there any way for ourselves; we are there to foster ownership of the future by the people we serve. We must have the courage to change our institutions, to renew them, to make them the best they can be.

This may not be easy as the cost of services, especially in the health sphere, grows and as such services become dominated by the logic of business and competition. We can see that even here at home there is a great challenge to provide health care services for all. I think the question of delays in emergency services and of the care of the long term ill and elderly. The quality of our services reflects the understanding of or lack of respect for the dignity of each person we encounter.

THE UNITY OF THE HUMAN FAMILY

The second principle is that when God created humanity he created it as a family, from which flow the principles of common responsibility, of solidarity and familial relationship of love that should be the true trademark of the relationship between peoples. This gathering is an example of such solidarity and how the Church, a sign of the unity in Christ of humankind, is by its very nature called to solidarity. This gathering is also important in the solidarity it generates between different groups and agencies.

The unity of the human family is the fundamental principle which should guide the process of globalization. Globalization will be worthy of its name if it enhances the unity of the human family. Any form of globalization which breeds exclusion, marginalization and crass inequality does not have the right to call itself global. Globalization has to be made the synonym of inclusive. The Church is neither pro-global nor no-global. It judges globalization by its results rather than by ideology.

The changes that are taking place in our era of economic globalization, inspired by liberal economic vision, make it more and more difficult to identify the patterns of responsibility which should guide the process. The move from the public to the private, the dominance of economic values above all others, the inadequacy of our international structures make the governance of globalization difficult. In international relations, including trade relations, rules are important. But we should remember the basic principle that rules are there to defend the more vulnerable and to restrain any tendency towards arrogance of these who are more powerful. In many international institutions this is not the case, even where theoretically the rules are the same for all. In the free-for-all of bilateral international relations, the imbalance may be even greater.

THE GOODS OF CREATION ARE FOR ALL

The principle of the unity of the human family is linked with another important, that of the universal destination of the goods of creation. It is a very simple principle to which Catholic social teaching has given such a complicated name.

It means that when God created the goods of this world he created them for the benefit of all. Traditionally this principle was applied to land and natural resources. In today's knowledge based economy this principle must be applied also to the fruits of human genius and to intellectual property. The Pope has recalled that intellectual property is subject to that same "social mortgage" as any other form of private property. The Church has always taught respect for private property but it has never elevated it to the rank of an absolute principle.

Intellectual property systems can be an important incentive towards eliciting the creative genius of individuals, but they ought not be invoked to permit the hoarding of knowledge, especially in the area of medicine, which is needed today for the survival of persons, in the hope of making more money tomorrow.

Many pharmaceutical firms were hesitant in their support for the provision of cheap life saving medicines to respond to pandemics such as HIV/ AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. They felt that such measures would weaken the encouragement to creativity that the intellectual property rights system provides. They seemed to overlook the fact that the real purpose of creativity in medical research is the good of the human community.

The universal destination of the goods of creation must also apply to equitable access to the decision making process which concern their own future. So many international norms are lopsided, with the result that the human family is a dysfunctional family. The credibility of the international system will depend on its ability to push through reforms of its own institutions as well as the sense of responsibility which all parties are called to use within those institutions. The United Nations Secretary General made a strong appeal in that direction at the opening of the General Assembly.

FUNDAMENTAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

The fundamental option for the poor is also a derivative of the concepts both of human dignity and the unity of the human family. The fundamental option is a principle which is in its origins directed towards guiding the behavior of the Christian believer. It is a form of special love towards the brother or sister who is marginalized and must be restored to a situation in which he or she can realize fully innate human potential.

There is also a need for a political or economic version of this principle which will ensure that the needs of the poor are addressed directly and with urgency and are not left simply to the possible trickle down of overall wealth. It is true, that today, just as in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the poor would often be happy with just the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. But this is not enough.

So many, even well intentioned campaigns fail because we do not ensure that they are adequately focused on the specific needs and situations of the poorest or because we fail to provide the type of investment which would enable the poor to enter into the virtuous circle where benefit resides. Debt relief or better trade terms can bring enormous benefits to the poorest countries, but will only do so when they are accompanied by a series of pro-poor investments in formation, capacity building and infrastructures. This involves, of course, not just building policies which favor the poor but also eliminating distortion which exclude the poor.

A word on the question of migration. Humankind constitutes one family. In that context, we need to approach the question of migration policy with a clear head. Intelligent migration

policies can benefit both the sending and receiving country, as well as the persons involved and their families. We, here in Ireland, would be hypocritical if we did not realize that we have used emigration as a safety valve in our own economic development. We know yes the suffering that was involved, but also the fact that our emigrants contributed greatly to the nations to which they emigrated and flourished there. Remittances were an important dimension of the Irish economy for decades. Why should others not be permitted to benefit, in a decent manner, from the opportunities which migration offers? Migration will inevitably become one of the typical dimensions of a globalized economy.

Migrants are people and have rights. They are people with families and a nation like Ireland which constitutionally and justly holds the family in such esteem cannot be insensitive to the family dimensions of immigration policy. Migrants are people in whom the sending country may have invested few resources. Is it fair for us to simply draw benefit from that investment in people and create a brain drain? We need to look at this question in terms of equitable sharing of the costs.

INFRASTRUCTURES AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Realizing concretely the principle of the unity of the human family requires that we have structures, that we have an architecture which ensures harmonious relations between different actors. Such an architecture must be based on ensuring the rule of law and good governance.

Many poorer countries look on the term "good governance" as a new and additional form of conditionality which the developed countries wish to impose on them. We should all remember however that wherever the rule of law is not respected, it is almost always the poor who pay the highest price. The poor pay the price of corruption. The poor are the primary victims of violence. The poor pay the price of inefficiency in public services, especially education and health care. The rich will always find the way to create private schools and clinics. In a corrupt system, the poor will never be able to pay for the defense of their rights, while the wealthy will easily be able to exploit their position to attain what is not their right.

War and conflict are among the great causes of poverty and the breakdown of those structures which the poor need in order to be able to charge their own future. So many children's lives are shattered by war or by being forced to be the protagonists of war as child soldiers. When wars and conflicts take place among the poor they very quickly become "forgotten conflicts". The whole heart of Africa lives in a situation of precariousness, which is so often simply ignored. Conflict is not just a political or disarmament issue; it is a human, social, developmental and environmental tragedy. I am sure that if the parents of the countries of central Africa were allowed to do just one thing to help their development they would answer: stop the conflict, stop aiding and abetting the conflict, stop the flow of arms into the conflict.

Violence is not however only foreign-made. Societies can easily be overwhelmed by violence which is home grown. Where Mafia like groups use violence for their own gains, they affect the poor. When such violence is not addressed, the poor may paradoxically turn to those who oppress them to find protection. They will turn to those who protect their interest in the short term – the criminal gangs – rather than those who should be protecting their rights. I am shocked since returning to Dublin by the number of murders that take place,

the result of a shameless gun culture, often managed by powerful criminals whose business is to destroy so many lives in another way, through the sale of drugs. This is something we can ignore only at our risk.

The challenge of HIV/AIDS is one which we cannot ignore. The statistics concerning Africa are such that they constitute a true disaster, which will end in the loss of life of almost an entire generation. HIV/AIDS is not simply a medical question; it affects the entire fabric of society. It will set back investment in education, it will decimate the workforce and destroy any economic progress, and it will create huge numbers of orphans. It will weaken the overall health situation, with the return of other diseases through the weakening of the normal immune resources.

AIDS must be addressed on all fronts. The Church plays a leading role in this area. Over 20% of all care of HIV patients is guaranteed by Church agencies. The Church is involved in programs of education and behavior change; it is involved in programs to overcome ignorance, taboos and stigma; it is calling for intensified medical research and the rapid availability of the fruits of that research, whether to reduce mother-to-child transmission, or to provide effective and accessible treatment or a possible vaccine. The Church is a major provider of care of those infected, those who are dying and those who are orphaned.

The fight against HIV/AIDS is showing us that, as in the case of so many other diseases of our time, it is not just a question of providing medical commodities, but also involves behavioral change, an option for a more healthy and responsible life style. It also involves change on behalf of the entire community which should recognize the person infected with HIV/AIDS as a human being entitled to participate fully in society and realize the God-given capacities he or she possesses. The Church should be in the lead in the fight against stigma.

I was very struck to find in the most recent report of UNAIDS a reference to the fact that the most significant factor in the success of the UN projects in Uganda was raising the age of first sexual relations from 15 to 17. Teaching fidelity and abstinence may not please all: but it works. The Church, because of her mission, must preach fidelity within marriage and responsibility in sexual relations. In doing so it contributes to HIV/AIDS prevention. This does not mean, of course, that the Church will not also bring Christ's mercy to those who find difficulty in living up to that difficult ideal.

THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

It is often felt that the environment is the poor relation among the themes of the social teaching of the Church. There is in fact a wealth of teaching available which we have probably not valued sufficiently. The human family, as we know it, was given the earth and creation as its home. Humankind was entrusted with the mission of maintaining the original harmony which God gave his creation, in

which the various elements were individually created as each seen a good.

Progress is not inevitably linked with environmental degradation. Many of the most successful policies of environmental protection and regeneration have taken place in highly developed countries. It requires vision, sound policies and the willingness to challenge those powerful interests who are slow to change, but who will change when they see that public opinion and consumer pressure are not on their side. But environmentally friendly policies may not necessarily be inexpensive and will require an equitable distribution of the share of such costs, so that all of society can benefit.

Some express that the Church's response to the environmental challenge is too anthropocentric and places the human person in a position of dominance, rather than of true stewardship. The Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (#37) is however also very critical of human behavior and its consequences for the environment. It stresses that at the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies in anthropological error, in which humans believe that they can make arbitrary use of the earth, as though the earth itself did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose. That text of the Pope is worth studying.

Once again here the challenge is to ensure that we cope with that tension which exists between the three fundamental principles I laid out, in such a way that none is subordinated to the other. A vision of the integrity of creation will in fact produce an important corrective to our understanding of the human person, reminding humans that we did not create the world with our own hands and that we should never attempt to set ourselves up in the place of God.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted in these reflections to show that the Christian concept of charity, seen as gratuitous self-giving, can be a powerful instrument for us in helping to design a new architecture of international relations, in the face of the current utilitarian liberal economic models.

Our vision of the human person is such a challenging one that it can and must be applied as a criterion for the validity of a broad vision of development today.

It is also a vision of development which can help us to build a bridge between mission and development, which respects both the legitimate autonomy of created goods, while at the same time recalling that religious language should enjoy the same right of citizen in the public square of our global world, when it asks not for privilege, but offers a deep and authentic vision of the human person, of the human family and of the creation which is our home.

This article was re-printed with permission from the December 2003/February 2004 "IMU (Irish Missionary Union) Report".

Periodic Papers are published by the U.S. Catholic Mission Association (USCMA). They feature short reflections on issues on mission. Additional copies may be requested from:

USCMA
3029 Fourth St., NE, Washington, DC 20017-1102
Phone: 202-832-3112 Fax: 202-832-3688
E-Mail: uscma@uscatholicmission.org