

The Justice Legacy of *Populorum Progressio*: a Jesuit Case Study

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OVER THE PAST FIVE DECADES since the 1967 publication of *Populorum Progressio*, Roman Catholic organizations have taken leadership roles in some of the most important efforts for social change around the world. From the work of the “Nuns on the Bus” for economic justice reform in the United States to the efforts of Catholic organizations against authoritarian regimes during the “third wave of democracy” in Brazil, Poland, and the Philippines, many Catholic groups, inspired by the Gospel and Catholic social teaching, have become active agents in transforming social and political structures.¹

For many religious congregations and lay movements, this public commitment to justice, development, and social transformation owes much to the integral framework proposed by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*. As the first social encyclical written after the Second Vatican Council, the 1967 document offers an application of conciliar doctrine to a global context marked increasingly by the power of transnational structures and systems. In the text, the pope outlines the church’s “global vision” of what it means to be human by drawing attention to the complex nature of each person and society. Authentic development, he famously insisted, “cannot be limited to mere economic growth...it must be complete: integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man” (no. 14).

Populorum Progressio’s impact, however, goes beyond its teachings on development. It also widens an understanding of the church’s mission and its relationship to the world to include direct action for social transformation. This integral framework, which was developed further in *Octogesima Adveniens*, *Justice in the World*, and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, profoundly impacted the way church communities perceived their role in the world. Inspired by this integral model, many Catholic organizations, including lay movements and religious con-

¹ See Kevin Ahern, *Structures of Grace: Catholic Organizations Serving the Global Common Good* (New York: Orbis Books, 2015).

gregations, including the Society of Jesus, redefined their own missions to include action for integral human development and social justice.

The missiological turn to social justice emerging from *Populorum Progressio*, however, was not welcome by all in the church. Other models of mission, for example, downplay the church's direct role in social transformation, leading to contentious debates of how best to address a context marked by social and structural sin. What, then, is the proper role of the church and church organizations in regards to social justice?

This paper examines this question in light of the social justice legacy of *Populorum Progressio* in three steps. Part I will consider the work of the Jesuit Refugee Service, a major Catholic organization that embodies Paul VI's integral model in its work with forcibly displaced people around the world. Part II will then consider this experience considering the two major post-conciliar models of mission, starting with the integral framework presented in *Populorum Progressio*. Finally, this paper concludes by briefly examining the legacy of Paul's integral model in the papacy of Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope, who both develops and expands the model offered by *Populorum Progressio*.

ACTION FOR JUSTICE AT THE MARGINS: JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has witnessed to God's merciful love to some of the most marginalized of human beings since its foundation in 1980 by Pedro Arrupe, SJ. As a modest switchboard of coordination, JRS has grown to be one of the most innovative humanitarian agencies in the world. Presently, over 900,000 people in more than 50 countries are directly served by an international staff of 1,400, including 78 Jesuits and 66 members of other religious congregations.² JRS additionally employs thousands of others in the local communities in which they work.

The work of JRS goes beyond charitable efforts in refugee communities. At the international level, JRS acts as a voice for social and political change through its status as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with the United Nations system. Through this official accreditation, it lobbies governments and seeks to raise public awareness to the plight of the millions of forcibly displaced women, men, and children around the world.

Rooted in the Jesuit tradition and Ignatian spirituality, JRS's mission at both the centers of political power and at the margins of society is threefold: to "accompany, serve and defend the rights of refugees

² Jesuit Refugee Service, "Who We Are: About Us," en.jrs.net/about.

and forcibly displaced people.”³ This mission, as the next section shows, developed out of the integral framework embodied in *Populorum Progressio* and the renewed articulation of the Jesuit mission in the 1970s. A discussion of the work of JRS requires that we first examine what this threefold mission looks like in practice and also consider where action for justice enters the equation.

Accompaniment

More than anything perhaps, JRS is defined by the Ignatian principle of accompaniment, which according to its Charter is the task of affirming to refugees “that God is present in human history, even in most tragic episodes.”⁴ In many respects, this is the organization’s hallmark. In a world where many humanitarian actors maintain a professional distance from the people they serve, JRS’s “style of presence” makes it unique.⁵ In this way, the apostolic work of JRS goes deeper than simply providing urgently needed material relief and advocacy. True to its etymological roots, the Jesuit practice of accompaniment can literally involve “breaking bread” with those in need. Reflecting *Populorum Progressio*’s commitment to the development of the whole person, JRS seeks to be attentive to the multifaceted nature of the women and men that it serves, including their social, physical, spiritual, and physiological needs.⁶ For those facing a desperate reality far from home, the presence of a compassionate companion can engender hope and contribute to healing following a trauma.⁷ In many places, JRS is the only agency to offer spiritual and psychological support through counseling, prayer, the sacraments, and community building.⁸ For example, JRS USA’s Detention Chaplaincy Program offers pastoral care for detained migrants of all faiths in government detention centers. Chaplains and volunteers celebrate Mass, lead ecu-

³ Jesuit Refugee Service, “The Charter of Jesuit Refugee Service,” no. 9, en.jrs.net/assets/Sections/Downloads/char-en2.pdf.

⁴ Jesuit Refugee Service, “The Charter of Jesuit Refugee Service,” no. 15.

⁵ See Daniel Villanueva, “The Jesuit Way of Going Global: Outlines for a Public Presence of the Society of Jesus in a Globalized World in the Light of Lessons Learned from the Jesuit Refugee Service,” (STL Thesis, Weston Jesuit School of Theology, 2008), 79; Pablo Alonso et al., eds., *God in Exile: Towards a Shared Spirituality with Refugees* (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2005), chap. 2.

⁶ Mark Raper, “Pastoral Accompaniment Among Refugees: The Jesuit Refugee Service Experience,” in *Everybody’s Challenge: Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service, 1980-2000*, ed. Danielle Vella (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2000), 84.

⁷ Michael J. Schultheis, “Rebuilding the Bridges and Clearing the Footpaths: A Parable of JRS,” in *The Wound of the Border: 25 Years With the Refugees*, ed. Amaya Valcárcel (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2005), 146.

⁸ Raper, “Pastoral Accompaniment Among Refugees,” 87–88.

menical prayer services, facilitate fellowship, and offer spiritual counseling. In 2005 alone, JRS coordinated over 2,000 religious services at detention centers throughout the United States.⁹

Service

As with other humanitarian aid organizations, JRS offers essential humanitarian services to people who have been forcibly displaced, including legal assistance, medical care and nutrition. As such, it lives out the corporal works of mercy in a profound way through its service to refugee populations by responding to the needs of those who are hungry, thirsty, ill, impoverished, dead, diseased, imprisoned, and without homes. The two primary areas of service for JRS are education and psychosocial/pastoral care. Both are a natural fit for a work of the Society of Jesus. Indeed, it is one of the few organizations to offer educational projects to refugees in camps and urban centers, including an innovative effort to provide access to higher education through online distance learning.¹⁰

Advocacy and Justice

For JRS, accompaniment and direct service give rise to a commitment to advocate on behalf of and defend the forcibly displaced. At its core, this task seeks to go beyond providing temporary relief of suffering to address the root causes of forced displacement. Locally, advocacy could mean addressing specific concerns with refugee camp officials or advocating on behalf of a person with governments or other humanitarian agencies. At the national and international level, JRS's commitment to defend the rights of forcibly displaced persons leads it to address both the root causes of forced displacement and the political and humanitarian responses to the movements of people across borders. These efforts do not aspire to be a temporary solution for humanitarian conflicts; "rather they aim at healing the wounds of exile. Above all, they seek to prevent fresh wounds."¹¹ Whenever possible, JRS seeks to empower refugees to speak on their own behalf, accompanying them as they bring their experiences to those in power.

Consider, for instance, the role of JRS in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.¹² Disturbed by the horrific wounds of many

⁹ Jesuit Refugee Service USA, "Detention Chaplaincy Program," jrsusa.org/campaigns_focus?TN=PROMO-20100907030248.

¹⁰ See "Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins," 2016, www.jc-hem.org.

¹¹ Christophe Renders, "Speak Out, Judge Righteously, Defend the Rights of the Poor and Needy (Pr 31: 9)," in *God in Exile: Towards a Shared Spirituality with Refugees*, Pablo Alonso et al., eds., (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2005), 107

¹² Mark Raper, "Mercy and the National Interest," in *Everybody's Challenge: Essential Documents of Jesuit Refugee Service, 1980-2000*, ed. Danielle Vella (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2000), 65; Amaya Valcárcel and Danielle Vella, eds., *Advocacy in Jesuit Refugee Service* (Rome: Jesuit Refugee Service, 2011), 23.

refugees from landmines, JRS staff in Cambodia and other countries mobilized the global Jesuit network to analyze the root causes and propose lasting alternatives. JRS's role in the international campaign has greatly reduced the use of landmines, a significant change for those forced to cross borders.¹³ In other words, JRS's work is not limited only to charity or the humanitarian manifestations of the corporal works of mercy. Rather, its service and accompaniment with refugees leads it to work to transform some of the social structures that are at the root of their suffering. For JRS and other Jesuit endeavors involved in advocacy work today, efforts aimed at transforming social structures are grounded in a specific reading of Ignatian spirituality and Christian discipleship.¹⁴ Peter Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, the former Father General of the Jesuits, summarizes the importance of justice this way:

The Church discovered only very slowly that charity is not sufficient if there is no justice. What has to be done by JRS is not just charity but also justice. If you really love, you will do justice. You will not do justice out of justice, but out of love... it is very clear all these people have their rights, which need to be attended to. They have the right to go back to their country. They have the right to join in a just society. JRS is called to help do this, not out of legal or juridical motivations but out of Christian love.¹⁵

In this commitment to both charity and justice, JRS is not unique among Catholic organizations. In the wake of the Second Vatican Council and *Populorum Progressio*, many ecclesial communities came to see action for social justice and transformation to be core elements of their own specific missions. For example, well over a hundred Catholic NGOs, including religious congregations, church agencies, and lay movements, have formal nongovernmental consultative status with the United Nations or specific UN agencies. These include several Jesuit-related organizations such as Fe y Alegria, Center of Concern, the International Jesuit Network for Development, Jesuit European Office-OCIFE, the Indian Social Institute, the World Christian Life Community and several congregations of women religious with an Ignatian charism. Like JRS, these organizations make use of their accreditation to actively lobby governments and intergovernmental or-

¹³ David Hollenbach, "The Jesuits and the 'More Universal Good': At Vatican II and Today," in *The Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. José Casanova and Thomas Banchoff (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 181.

¹⁴ In "A Model of Ignatian Advocacy," *Promotio Justitiae* 101, no. 1 (2009): 40, Frank Turner of the Jesuit European Office defines Ignatian advocacy as being "spiritual, attentive to deep feeling, intellectual, [and] oriented to action."

¹⁵ Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, "Address," Presented at the Jesuit Refugee Service International Meeting, Santa Severa, Italy, 2006.

ganizations on issues of social concern. It is not uncommon, for example, to see sisters, priests, and lay leaders presenting statements calling for changes in international policy and law at major meetings of the United Nations.¹⁶

ACTION FOR JUSTICE AND THE CHURCH'S MISSION IN THE WORLD

Not everyone appreciates the direct public action for social justice by Catholic organizations and their convictions that transforming society is part of their religious mission. For the so-called “new atheists” and the champions of *laïcité* style secularism, there is simply no room for any religious agent in the public sphere. Religion, as some argue, “poisons everything.”¹⁷ For others, advocacy and the promotion of justice by any refugee-serving NGO is perceived as violating the traditional humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence first articulated by Jean Pictet, the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross.¹⁸ Proponents of this approach believe these values are the most effective ways to create a protective “space” to serve the immediate needs of refugees. Advocacy, long-term strategies for development, and attention to human rights are seen as too political and thus in violation of humanitarianism’s sacred principles.¹⁹

The resistance to the work of JRS and other Catholic organizations for justice also comes from within the church. Some theologians, church leaders, and Jesuits themselves have argued that it is simply not the role of church institutions, particularly those of priests and religious, to be directly involved in struggles for political, social and economic change. In order to fully appreciate the impact of *Populorum Progressio* on Catholic organizational life, it is helpful to examine how corporate action for justice relates to three different models of mission that took shape in the twentieth century.

¹⁶ See Kevin Ahern, “Mediating the Global Common Good: Catholic NGOs and the Future of Global Governance,” in *Public Theology and the Global Common Good: Essays in Honor of David Hollenbach*, ed. Kristin E. Heyer et al. (New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 14-25; Emeka Obiezu, Joan F. Burke, and Cecile Meijer, eds., *It Is Good for Us to Be Here: Catholic Religious Institutes as NGOs at the United Nations* (Indiana: Xlibris LCC, 2015).

¹⁷ Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007).

¹⁸ Legitimate questions can be raised as to the feasibility of maintaining a neutral stance in conflict situations. See, for example, the critique of the ICRC in the face of the Holocaust in Jean-Claude Favez, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁹ See David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002); Michael N. Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, eds., *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2008).

Educators, not Actors, for Justice: The Distinction of Planes

In the lead-up to the Second Vatican Council, French Catholic thinkers, particularly Jacques Maritain and Yves Congar, OP, outlined a new approach to the church/world relationship. Responding to the limits of the Christendom model, which sought to place society under the control of clerical church leaders, these thinkers proposed the “distinction of planes” framework. Here, clear delineations are made between the church and the temporal plane, between the responsibilities of the church and those of the laity, and between the actions of a Christian and the actions of a Christian as such.²⁰

The laity, inspired by church teachings, are called to act as Christians in the temporal plane as they seek to transform society. But this is done in a personal capacity. By contrast, the actions of Christians as such, in which the believer participates in the church’s mission, takes place only within the ecclesial-liturgical plane of action and, when necessary, to defend the church’s interests in the world.²¹

Such a framework leaves little room for the work of JRS and other ecclesial efforts for social transformation. Church organizations, especially those of priests and vowed religious, are limited to a spiritual and pedagogical sphere. For example, it is not the role of Catholic lay movements or congregations, as organizations, Congar wrote, to take up “the task of the direct ‘technical transformation of the political or economic structures.’”²² Rather, their role is limited to “prepare laymen to act as Christians” in the worldly plane.²³

Populorum Progressio: Integrating Justice and Mission

With the Second Vatican Council, a new model of mission begins to emerge that erodes the rigid distinctions between the church and the world and between the laity and the church. In *Lumen Gentium*, for example, the council speaks of the responsibility of the whole church, “the people of God,” to be a “sign and instrument” of God’s salvific love in history (nos. 1 and 9). In a similar vein, *Ad Gentes* reframes mission by affirming the call of all the baptized to participate in mission (no. 35). Both *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (nos. 19-23) and *Gaudium et Spes* (no. 90) specifically affirm the social action of Catholic organizations at the international level. At the same time, however, other conciliar passages support the distinction of planes model by suggesting that it is the “special vocation” of the laity, and not the

²⁰ See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 36–38.

²¹ Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1968), 294 and 269.

²² Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity*, trans. Donald Attwater (Maryland: Newman, 1956), 269.

²³ Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 298.

church as a whole, to engage the temporal sphere (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, nos. 2 and 4). In many ways, it is these ambiguities in the conciliar texts that have allowed for the development of two different post-conciliar models of mission.

One of these approaches begins to take shape with *Populorum Progressio*. Here, Paul VI's global vision of the person and society offers a redefinition of both development and mission. According to this model, which Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder describe as "liberating service of the reign of God," there are clear links between the church's mission, human development, liberation, and the transformation of social structures.²⁴ Applying the council's "renewed consciousness" to the topic of development, the encyclical offers three important insights that help to frame this new understanding of how the church and church organizations should relate to the world.

First, drawing on the council's renewed attention to scripture and the Christological grounding employed by *Gaudium et Spes*, *Populorum Progressio* links concern for human development and the plight of those in poverty directly with the mission entrusted to the church by Christ. While it recognizes the different roles played by the church and the state, the encyclical points to Jesus Christ to affirm the church's role and responsibility in the world (no. 13). Indeed, the "teaching and example" of Christ, "who cited the preaching of the Gospel to the poor as a sign of His mission" inspires the church to "foster the human progress of the nations to which she brings faith in Christ" (no. 12).

Toward the end of the document, we see that Paul is aware that such a mission with such a strong social concern is not easy, as it "certainly calls for hard work and imposes difficult sacrifices" (no. 79). This is something that many JRS staff know well as they make the choice to accompany those in dangerous and desperate places. For Paul, the difficulties experienced in bringing about a more fully human development unite oneself to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

Second, *Populorum Progressio* offers an important "integral" vision of what it means to flourish as a person and as a society. Building upon the work of the French Dominican theologian Louis-Joseph Lebreton, two key aspects of "integral human development" are identified. On the one hand, it encourages concern for the development of all persons in a world divided by nationalism, racism, and individualism. The reality of human solidarity and our shared membership in the one human family calls us to "build a human community where [all people] can live truly human lives" (no. 47).

²⁴ See Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), chapter 10.

At the same time, Paul VI's framework seeks to promote the development of the whole person, including their spiritual, social, physical, and economic dimensions (no. 14). Human development, therefore, cannot be seen in merely technical or economic terms, nor can it be separated from questions of justice and peace. Such a framework has much to say to Christians about their relationship to the world. A holistic anthropology makes it difficult to sharply separate the "spiritual" and "temporal" planes of existence.²⁵ Authentic work for development, which includes attention to social justice, and spiritual development are, thus, deeply connected to one another (no. 76).

Finally, with this integral approach to development and its corresponding integral vision of mission, there is an awareness that charitable efforts alone are insufficient for the church to assist in the promotion of development. The second section of *Populorum Progressio* highlights the ways in which missionaries, inspired by the example of Jesus, have contributed to social development throughout history. Here, one can think of the many schools, hospitals, and apostolic works built by missionary congregations, including the Jesuits. Though, as he points out, they might not always have been perfect in their projects, the pope commends the work of these pioneers in responding to the social and cultural needs of people (no. 12). Given the growing global interdependence and complexities of the problems facing the human family, such local and individual efforts, he writes, are "no longer enough." The problems facing people today demand more than charitable works. Paul VI points to the need for "concerted effort of everyone," and "a thorough examination of every facet of the problem—social, economic, cultural and spiritual" (no. 13). Near the end of the document, the pope calls upon all Catholics in "developed nations to offer their skills and earnest assistance to public and private organizations, both civil and religious" to work for change, including the establishment of "just and fair laws, based on moral precepts, established among all nations" (no. 81).

The holistic vision of *Populorum Progressio* and its attention to the systematic and structural dimensions of poverty go a long way to help frame the justice work of organizations such as the Jesuit Refugee Service.²⁶ This integral vision of human development and mission is developed in substantial ways over the following decade in Pope Paul's subsequent teachings as well as by groups of bishops, theologians, and Catholic lay movements and religious congregations. A few

²⁵ See Dean Brackley, *Divine Revolution: Salvation and Liberation in Catholic Thought* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996).

²⁶ See "The Statutes of JRS as a Foundation of Canonical Rite" (Jesuit Refugee Service, 2003), Art. 7, for JRS' articulation of its mission: "The mission of JRS is to take care of the pastoral needs of the refugees and their religious and spiritual formation. JRS also attend to their human, spiritual, material and cultural needs and defends their human rights."

months after the release of the text, for example, eighteen bishops from ten countries, under the leadership of Archbishop Hélder Câmara of Brazil, responded positively to the encyclical in their "Letter to the Peoples of the Third World."²⁷

The encyclical features prominently, for example, in Gustavo Gutiérrez's seminal presentation, "Toward a Theology of Liberation" of 1968. In that text, Gutiérrez praises the "theological progress" made by *Populorum Progressio* as he links integral development, liberation, and salvation.²⁸ That same year, a group of Jesuit provincials issued a statement on "the Jesuits in Latin America," in which they call upon Jesuits in the region to "work for the liberation of humankind from every sort of servitude that oppresses it."²⁹ This reading of *Populorum Progressio* within the context of Latin America can also be seen in the documents issued by the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín, which cite the encyclical repeatedly.

Building on the reception of *Populorum Progressio* around the world, several important documents issued in 1971 highlight the church's growing social justice consciousness. Pope Paul's apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* offers one of the most sustained calls for the church to take "effective action" against injustices in the world (no. 48). Here, Catholic organizations are mentioned explicitly as playing an important role in this regard (no. 51). This same point is repeated in two separate documents issued soon after *Octogesima Adveniens*. The Vatican's *Guidelines for the Definition of Catholic International Organizations* clearly identifies the public engagement of international Catholic lay organizations at United Nations as participating "in the mission of the Church."³⁰ At the same time, *Evangelica Testificatio*, the apostolic exhortation on the renewal of religious life, affirms the role of religious "in the sphere of works of mercy, assistance and social justice" (no. 16).

The most influential statement on this matter appears later in 1971, from the World Synod of Bishops. In their final statement, *Justice in the World*, the bishops root the church's vocation to act for justice in God's Reign and the Gospel demands to love one's neighbor. The

²⁷ Third World Bishops, "A Letter to the Peoples of the Third World (August 15, 1967)," in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 48–57.

²⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation (July, 1968)," in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 69–71.

²⁹ Provincial of the Society of Jesus, "The Jesuits in Latin America (May 1968)," in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 78.

³⁰ Pontifical Council for the Laity, "Respicimus Normas Quibus Instituta Internationalia Catholica Definiuntur," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 63, no. 1 (1971): 952.

Synod's most influential and controversial sentence appears in its introductory section with the claim that "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world is a constitutive dimension" of the "Church's mission."³¹

This paragraph was a point of contention at the subsequent 1974 Synod, meeting on the theme of evangelization.³² In particular, questions were raised concerning the most appropriate way to interpret "constitutive." Is action for justice so essential, some asked, that there could be no evangelization without it? Responding to these debates, Paul VI's post-apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, issued a year after the Synod, points to evangelization—not action for justice—as the "constitutive" element of the church's mission (no. 160). This does not mean, however, that justice is foreign to mission. Indeed, expanding on *Populorum Progressio*'s integral framework, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* envisions mission as a "complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative" (no. 24).

Mindful of the dangers of reducing "mission to the dimensions of a simply temporal project"—what has been called "horizontalism"—Paul prioritizes Christ's message of liberation from sin. However, Christ's great gift of salvation is not just spiritual, as it involves a "liberation from everything that oppresses" people (no. 9). Indeed, evangelization and the spreading of the Good News would be "incomplete," he argues, if it fails to consider "the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of [a person's] concrete life, both personal and social" (no. 29).

Populorum Progressio and the Jesuit Mission

The shift toward a more holistic model of mission, which differed from the preconiliar distinction of planes model, had a significant impact on the Jesuit understanding of mission. Like many religious orders, the Society of Jesus redefined its mission in this period following the council's call for the renewal of religious life. The key figure in the Jesuit renewal was Pedro Arrupe, who participated in both the 1971 and 1974 synods in his capacity as the father general of the Society of Jesus. Through his leadership, the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1974-1975) reflects this framework as it profoundly rearticulated the Jesuit mission in its famous "Decree Four:

³¹ Synod of Bishops, "Justitia in Mundo, Justice in the World (1971)," in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (New York: Orbis Books, 2010).

³² Charles M. Murphy, "Action for Justice as Constitutive of the Preaching of the Gospel: What Did the 1971 Synod Mean?," in *Readings in Moral Theology, No. 5: Official Catholic Social Teaching*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 160.

Our Mission Today.” Echoing the integral model used by *Populorum Progressio*, the 1968 meeting of Jesuit provincials in Latin America, and the debates at the 1971 and 1974 Synods, the document states “the mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another.”³³ The wording of this decree – embedding justice in the Society’s mission – as Thomas Greene, SJ reflects, “has become part and parcel of our Jesuit response when we are asked to define the contemporary mission of the Society.”³⁴ It is also, not surprisingly, at the heart of the organization founded by Arrupe, the Jesuit Refugee Service, which cites this section from “Decree Four” in its Charter.

The turn to justice by the Jesuits and other Catholic organizations was not always easy. For many Catholic organizations, the turn to this holistic model of mission resulted in sacrifices and difficulties, like the ones that Paul VI warns about at the end of *Populorum Progressio* (no. 79). Among Jesuits, for example, more than 50 priests and brothers have been killed since the 32nd General Congregation because of their work among the poor. Many of these, like the Martyrs of the University of Central America in San Salvador (El Salvador), were specifically targeted for assassination because their embodiments of mission were seen as a threat to the political or economic order.

Admittedly, sometimes this was not always done in a balanced and thoughtful way. In some areas, efforts to implement the new orientations were done hastily and resulted in confusion and conflict.³⁵ In other cases, the spiritual and religious dimensions of this integral model were lost as some lay and religious organizations focused all of their energy on the social or horizontal dimensions of evangelization.

The New Evangelization: A Return to the Distinction of Planes?

Partly as a response to these excesses in the church’s turn to social justice, a different missiological framework took shape during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Here, concerns are raised about the dangers of reducing mission only to its horizontal and social dimensions. According to this “new evangelization” approach,

³³ General Congregation 32, “Decree 4: Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice,” in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees of the 31st-35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, Jesuit Primary Sources in English Translation 25 (Missouri: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), 2.

³⁴ Tom Greene, “Observations of the Social Apostolate, Justice and the Decrees of General Congregations 31 to 35,” *Promotio Iustitiae*, 108, no. 1 (2012): 6.

³⁵ Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer, “The Jesuits and Social Justice in Latin America,” in *The Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. José Casanova and Thomas Banchoff (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016), 188–205.

the fundamental task of the church is not to transform social structures but to proclaim Jesus Christ to an increasingly secularized culture and to witness to God's love through acts of charity.

The change of tone is evident in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II's encyclical commemorating the anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*. While it offers a valuable reading of Paul's teaching on global development and strongly highlights the responsibility of Christians to work for solidarity, the text downplays the role of the church and Catholic organizations. Rather than describing the church as an agent for justice, John Paul II speaks of its role in terms of "guiding people's behavior" and giving rise to personal "commitments to justice" (no. 41). This indirect approach, as Mary Elsbrand points out, amounts to a "reinterpretation" of Paul VI's teaching for collective social action, particularly in *Octogesima Adveniens*. Much like the distinction of planes model, the church's role, according to John Paul II, ought to be limited to educating and inspiring personal action.

Redemptoris Missio develops this line of thought as it laments the reduction of salvation to its "horizontal dimension" among certain missionary groups in the church (nos. 2 and 59). The priority of mission should be the proclamation of Jesus Christ and the salvation from sin. This, he argues, cannot be put aside by those involved in social action or dialogue. A decade later, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under the leadership of Joseph Ratzinger, argued this point in *Dominus Iesus*.

Not surprisingly, Benedict XVI largely follows the line of his predecessor. In *Deus Caritas Est*, he speaks of charity, and not justice, as the constitutive element in the church's mission (nos. 20-25).³⁶ Here, he highlights the distinct roles of the church and the state, charity and justice, the laity and the church. It is the role of the state, not the church, he writes, to safeguard and promote justice. The church does not seek a direct engagement in political questions, but instead aims to "purify reason" through its social doctrine (no. 28). Much like the distinction of planes model, Benedict stresses that the lay faithful "are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity" (no. 29). In his 2007 address to the leadership of more than eighty Catholic nongovernmental organizations working with the United Nations, Benedict cites this section of *Deus Caritas Est* when describing the role played by what the Vatican describes as Catholic inspired NGOs, rather than

³⁶ See also Charles M. Murphy, "Charity, Not Justice, as Constitutive of the Church's Mission," *Theological Studies* 68, no. 2 (2007): 274-286.

the long established language of international Catholic organizations.³⁷

“The unavoidable connotation” with this line of thought, as Lisa Sowle Cahill points out, is that “the ‘real’ church consists in the hierarchy, with the laity serving an auxiliary role.”³⁸ For many ecclesial movements, this distinction between direct and indirect social action is problematic because it opposes their collective actions for justice with their ecclesial identity. The final sections of *Deus Caritas Est*, in fact, warns the church’s charitable and humanitarian organizations, like JRS, not to be “inspired by ideologies aimed at improving the world” (no. 33).

Concern over “horizontalism” among ecclesial movements is strongly developed a few months later. Citing *Redemptoris Missio* and *Deus Caritas Est*, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith’s *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization* raises concerns with what it perceives as relativistic or reductionist forms of evangelization, especially in the areas of social action and dialogue (no. 3). Nowhere in the *Note* do we see the teaching of Paul VI that action for social justice in the world is an integral part of evangelization.

With *Caritas in Veritate*, however, there are signs of what Cahill describes as a “political reorientation” in Benedict’s understanding of this question as he looks to the teachings of *Populorum Progressio*.³⁹ While he still prioritizes the role of social doctrine in the formation of conscience, he acknowledges in *Caritas in Veritate* that “testimony to Christ’s charity, through works of justice, peace, and development, is part and parcel of evangelization” (no. 15). This is an important movement in Benedict’s thought that clearly supports the public engagement of church organizations. But this is largely lost in the subsequent post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Africae Munus* and the preparation documents leading up to the Synod on the New Evangelization in 2012. Collective action for justice and the role of Christian organizations, in fact, factors very little in the official texts of the 2012 synod, a fact noted by a few of the participants, including one bishop who critiqued the synod’s document for being “rather weak” in its treatment of justice.⁴⁰

³⁷ Benedict XVI, “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Representatives of the Holy See, to International Organizations and to Participants in the Forum of Catholic-Inspired Non-Governmental Organizations,” w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2007/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20071201_ong.html.

³⁸ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “*Caritas in Veritate*: Benedict’s Global Reorientation,” *Theological Studies* 71, no. 2 (2010): 297.

³⁹ Cahill, “*Caritas in Veritate*,” 304.

⁴⁰ “Intervention of H. Exc. Rev. Mons. François Lapierre, P. M. E., Bishop of Saint-Hyacinthe (Canada),” *Synodus Episcoporum Bollettino*, no. 12 (October 13, 2012), www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_25_xiii-ordinaria-2012/02_inglese/b14_02.html.

The New Evangelization and the Jesuit Mission

Similar debates over which model of mission is appropriate can also be seen within the Society of Jesus. In a dialogue between David Hollenbach, SJ, and Avery Dulles, SJ, for example, Dulles expressed concerns that the justice focus of “Decree Four” would overshadow and diminish the mission of the Society and the role of Jesuits both as scholars and as priests.⁴¹ In his 1994 book, *Faith Beyond Justice: Widening the Perspective*, Martin Tripole, SJ, offers one of the most extensive critiques of 32nd General Congregation’s formulation of the Jesuit mission. Reflecting many of the concerns of the new evangelization model, Tripole argues that the promotion of justice had been “raised by GC 32 to an inappropriate level of foundational mission principle.”⁴² While the promotion of justice, he admits, may be a legitimate response to the charism of St. Ignatius today, it ought not define the Jesuit mission and must not overshadow, what he sees as, the more fundamental task of serving faith. For him, GC 32’s turn toward justice is problematic for several reasons. First, it “too narrowly focused on human justice” and fails to take account of evangelization in its full sense.⁴³ Second, it risks displacing traditional ministries that may not have a clear social focus, such as teaching math and pastoral work.⁴⁴ Finally, and more profoundly, the concern for the promotion of justice may entail a “confusion” of the Jesuit priestly identity.⁴⁵

These same concerns have been expressed by Vatican officials specifically in relation to the Jesuits. For example, in his 1982 address to Jesuit provincials, John Paul II critiqued the Jesuit turn to justice by stressing that the role of priests is different from that of the laity. Priests are not social workers, he insisted. The primary function of the priest and their ministries is not the promotion of justice but spirituality and the care of souls.⁴⁶ The new evangelization model of mission, thus raises concerns about the appropriateness for JRS and other Catholic organizations, particularly those of priests and religious, to be directly involved in the promotion of justice.

⁴¹ Avery Dulles, “Faith, Justice, and the Jesuit Mission,” in *Assembly 1989: Jesuit Ministry in Higher Education* (Washington, DC: Jesuit Conference, 1990), 19–25; David Hollenbach, “Faith, Justice, and the Jesuit Mission: A Response to Avery Dulles,” in *Assembly 1989: Jesuit Ministry in Higher Education* (Washington, DC: Jesuit Conference, 1990), 26–29.

⁴² Martin R. Tripole, *Faith Beyond Justice: Widening the Perspective* (Missouri: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994).

⁴³ Dulles, “Faith, Justice, and the Jesuit Mission,” 31–32.

⁴⁴ Dulles, “Faith, Justice, and the Jesuit Mission,” 25.

⁴⁵ Dulles, “Faith, Justice, and the Jesuit Mission,” 76.

⁴⁶ See John Paul II, “Allocution to the Jesuit Provincials” (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982). Here he drew from his address to an ordination ceremony, John Paul II, “Who Is the Priest? Remarks of Pope John Paul II During Ordination Ceremonies in Rio de Janeiro,” *Origins* 10, no. 9 (July 31, 1980).

**GOING FORTH TO THE MARGINS:
EXPANDING THE LEGACY OF *POPULORUM PROGRESSIO***

The question of how church organizations should relate to the world has taken on new dimensions with the teachings of Pope Francis. With *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'*, he both reclaims and expands upon the integral model of *Populorum Progressio* and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In some ways, this is surprising. As a Jesuit provincial and participant at the 32nd General Congregation, Jorge Mario Bergoglio expressed reservations with the justice language employed by “Decree Four” and was cautious of Jesuits who were too involved in social and political transformation.⁴⁷ He also witnessed firsthand the strengths and weaknesses of this integral model as it took shape in Latin America. Perhaps because of this experience, Francis constructs a vision of mission that seeks to navigate between two extremes.

On the one hand, like his immediate predecessors, he cautions against a narrow view that reduces mission to social transformation, a tendency that has been described as horizontalism. Frequently, for example, Francis warns against seeing the church only as another NGO. Shortly before the release of *Evangelii Gaudium*, for example, the pope stated that “the Church is not a shop, she is not a humanitarian agency, the Church is not an NGO. The Church is sent to bring Christ and his Gospel to all.”⁴⁸ This is something that all church social justice organizations should take seriously.

On the other hand, like Paul VI and the 1971 Synod, Francis’ model strongly warns against reducing mission only to its spiritual dimensions, what might be described as verticalism. Departing from the texts of the 2012 Synod, *Evangelii Gaudium* squarely situates the justice work of Christian social movements in the church’s mission. Both as individuals and as communities, he insists, Christians are “called to be... instrument[s] of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society” (no. 187). The Christian mission, he writes, must include awareness and action to “resolve the structural causes of poverty” (no. 202). Furthermore, all Christians, even those in “ecclesial circles,” have an obligation to work for justice. Later, he seems to address the distinction of planes model directly. “While it is quite true,” he admits, “that the essential vocation and mission of the lay faithful is to strive that earthly realities and all human activity may be transformed by the Gospel, none of us

⁴⁷ Jimmy Burns, *Francis, Pope of Good Promise* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 133–135.

⁴⁸ Pope Francis, “General Audience [Rome, October 23, 2013],” w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20131023_udienza-generale.html. See also Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 80.

can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice” (no. 201).

In *Laudato Si'*, Francis widens the integral model of mission to include concern for all creation with what he describes as an “integral ecology.” Here, he calls upon the church to take action in the protection of creation and to inspire its members to take on “an ecological conversion” (no. 217). Later, in his 2015 address to Popular Movements in Bolivia, Francis is very clear in his call for people to organize themselves into communities for “change, real change, structural change.”⁴⁹

At the heart of Francis’ prophetic model is a vision of the church that “goes forth,” an apostolic community actively engaged in the world, moving out of its comfort zones and traditional ways of functioning and to the peripheries with the aim of reinstating all those who have been marginalized, socially, economically, physically, and spiritually.⁵⁰ It is a vibrant community that witnesses to God’s mercy by addressing both the symptoms and root causes of human suffering.

CONCLUSION: RECLAIMING THE LEGACY FOR TODAY

With *Populorum Progressio*, a new model of mission begins to take root in the church. Paul VI’s integral vision of the human development necessitates a corresponding integral model of mission. In other words, if the human person is multidimensional then the proclamation of God’s salvation must also be multidimensional. If people and societies are interdependent then the church’s engagement in the world must go beyond borders. According to this model, which was developed further with liberation theology, *Iustitia in Mundo*, and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the church’s mission includes collective action for social transformation. This integrated framework, which has been reclaimed and developed by Francis, situates well the work of JRS and other Catholic organizations for justice.

Ultimately, what difference does it make for JRS or any other Catholic organization to link the work for social justice with the church’s mission? To affirm that Catholic social justice organizations participate in the church’s mission is not to claim that everything they do is perfect or that the justice positions they take are infallible. Nor is it to say that all Christians must adopt the same perspectives. On the contrary, to assert that these collectives partake in the church’s mission ought to challenge the church and these organizations in several ways. First, it is necessary to affirm the ecclesial identity of such innovative

⁴⁹ Pope Francis, “Address of the Holy Father,” World Meeting of Popular Movements, Santa Cruz, Bolivia (July 9, 2015), www.radiovaticana.va.

⁵⁰ Pope Francis, “Homily of His Holiness Pope Francis,” February 15, 2015, en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/07/10/pope_franis_speech_at_world_meeting_of_popular_movements/1157291.

apostolic agents and the role they play on behalf of the Christian community. This affirmation can bolster the moral, logistical, and even financial support that these movements receive. This should challenge Catholic organizations to reconsider how they relate to church leadership structures and other organizations with shared identities.

Second, clearly recognizing that Catholic organizations participate in the mission of the church can help to draw attention to social demands of Christian discipleship. Imagine, for instance, if JRS staff were given more spaces to share their stories in local parishes or Catholic schools in the United States. This should raise questions for parishes, schools, and other Catholic communities as to whether or not their evangelization efforts respond to the needs of all people and the whole person.

Finally, the affirmation of the ecclesial identity of Catholic social justice organizations illuminates issues and questions that ought to aid them in better pursuing their mission: including the challenge of balancing the horizontal and vertical demands of evangelization and the task of addressing questions about organizational identity and ethics. This is particularly tricky for organizations, like JRS, who serve and employ non-Catholic staff. A more robust integral missiology can help these organizations better avoid the dangers of either focusing too much on their social dimension or focusing too much on their spiritual dimension.

Given the complex challenges facing the human family today, Catholic organizations, like JRS, need better missiological models to witness to the Gospel in the world. Here, *Populorum Progressio*'s integral vision of mission, and its renewed attention in the teachings of Pope Francis, can be constructive in offering a framework that can enable the church to respond to the needs of all those who desire the good news of the Gospel. **M**