

LOOKING BACK AT SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS: AN UNFULFILLED VISION STILL TIMELY TODAY

Marie A. Conn
Chestnut Hill College

At the end of 1987, to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, Pope John Paul II issued *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* ("On Social Concern"). In the weeks following its publication, the encyclical stirred immediate and wide-ranging commentary.

While writers like William Safire dismissed John Paul's view of the world as simplistic, and expressed outrage at the pope's evenhanded criticism of both then-superpowers,ⁱ others, such as Peter Henriot, praised the pope, who "writes as apologist for neither East nor West, [and] is free to raise the necessary criticisms."ⁱⁱ

Before turning our attention to the encyclical itself, it might be well to delve a bit into the biblical roots for work on behalf of justice, as well the rich heritage of Catholic social teaching of which *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* is an important part.

It is interesting to note that the theological meaning of the word "economy" refers to God's activity in the world;ⁱⁱⁱ while one of the definitions in a standard dictionary describes economy as the management of the resources of a community.^{iv} By combining these two ideas, we arrive at the biblical vision of humanity's role as stewards of the earth and co-creators with God.

Work for economic and social justice must, therefore, be an integral part of any biblically-based religion. The three religions "of the book," Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are all marked by a strong concern for the right of every person to live a fully human life, a concern which leads naturally to a special care for the poor, the homeless, and the oppressed. The roots of this concern lie in the Genesis creation accounts, where any biblical consideration of the place and purpose of women and men in God's plan for the world must begin. The creation accounts are a statement of our correct relationship with God, with one another, and with

ⁱ New York Times (February 22, 1988).

ⁱⁱ Peter Henriot, "Neither East nor West has panacea," *National Catholic Reporter* (May 27, 1988), 7.

ⁱⁱⁱ Josephy A. Komonchak et al, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Wilmington, DE: 1987) 316.

^{iv} Jess Stein, editor-in-chief, *The Random House College Dictionary Revised Edition* (New York, NY: 1984) 419.

the universe. It is important, then to understand the deeper meaning of the “dominion” which we humans are called to exercise in God’s world. It is not a dominion which is meant “to entitle [us] to have autonomous power and to rape nature in [our] own selfish interests;”^v rather, it is a “responsibility of stewardship over the earth and its creatures. A ruler does not devastate the land but nurtures it, seeks its welfare, and enhances its beauty—even while eating from it and using its resources.”^{vi} Men and women are meant to tend the earth, to care for it, to enrich it, to touch it lovingly.

John Pawlikowski, building on the work of Claus Westermann, in an article entitled, “Participation in Economic Life,”^{vii} adds an interesting consideration to the Genesis commission, one that is of particular interest for a technologically advanced society such as ours. Pawlikowski builds on the compound verb of Genesis 2:15: “The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, *to cultivate* and *to care for* it.” This twofold directive, to cultivate and to care for, enjoins on humanity the co-equal duties of preservation and enhancement. The challenge is to find a way to balance protection of the environment with economic development.

Further, since this God of ours is loving and just, we have been given the ability to fulfill the tasks placed before us. The Genesis narratives do not give us a blueprint for economic decision-making; rather, they assure us that, just as we are responsible for events in the world, so we have the capacity to deal with the issues of life, to cope with natural and historic crises.^{viii} The Yahwist author of Genesis 2-3 makes it clear that, just as God gave us dominion and responsibility for the world, as well as freedom to act on our own, so that same God has given us the possibility of achieving happiness.^{ix}

The human community has not merely been “given” life; it has been mandated by divine blessing to “perpetuate” life to its fullest. This of necessity will involve its active participation in the process of adapting and improving those basic human institutions, including economic ones,

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^v Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1975) 212.

^{vi} Foster R. McCurley, *Proclamation Commentaries: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* (Philadelphia, 1979) 14.

^{vii} John T. Pawlikowski, “Participation in Economic Life,” *The Bible Today* 24 No. 6 (November 1986) 363.

^{viii} Walter Harrelson, “Famine in the Perspective of Biblical Judgments and Promises,” in George R. Lucas, Jr. and Thomas W. Ogletree, eds., *Lifeboat Ethics: The Moral Dilemmas of World Hunger* (New York, NY: 1976) 85.

^{ix} Laurence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament* (New York, NY: 1984) 112.

which are critical for the preservation of this creational dynamism.^x

We cannot return to the garden. As social and economic conditions change and develop, however, we must continually reapply the creational commission of the Genesis narratives. We must never allow our choices to be governed by selfish interests, as do those who exploit and abuse, but by loving care and trusting stewardship, as do those who tend and nurture. This is the biblical rootage of the church's long-standing tradition of social teaching.

The first of the great social encyclicals was *Rerum Novarum* ("On the Condition of Labor"), issued by Leo XIII in 1891. *Rerum Novarum* laid the foundation on which subsequent documents continue to build. "Though the content of Leo's encyclical was important and remains important, what was perhaps even more important was the character of the document as a cry of protest against the exploitation of poor workers."^{xi} The church was taking a stand on the side of the poor.

More specifically, *Rerum Novarum* represented a stance against the prevailing order, Western capitalism, by placing the needs of the workers ahead of the law of supply and demand. With the publication of *Rerum Novarum*, work on behalf of the poor became an integral part of church teaching.

In 1931, on the 40th anniversary of Leo's letter, Pius XI issued the encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* ("The Reconstruction of the Social Order"). *Quadragesimo Anno* "has the same sense of moral outrage at the suffering of the poor as one finds in Leo's encyclical; and the same kind of criticism of the economic liberalism which had caused the suffering."^{xii} And, as did Leo before him, Pius sought to find a middle way between the abuse of capitalism on the one hand, and socialism and communism on the other.

Pius went further than Leo in addressing the need for structural reform, in addition to an improvement in moral conduct. He looked beyond the condition of workers to the whole socio-economic order. Where Leo had seen stability as a prime virtue, Pius pointed more to a spirituality concerned with justice and marked by courage, prudence, and charity.

Quadragesimo Anno demonstrated how in a capitalist society wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of a minority; they in turn exercise

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^x Pawlikowski, 365.

^{xi} Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor: A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching* (Maryknoll 1983) 11.

^{xii} Dorr, 57.

political power and control. This is an inevitable result of the free enterprise/free competition system, which will eventually eliminate all but the most powerful. So, while Pius endorsed free enterprise in the sense that he wanted people to be free to use and own land, and even to establish businesses, still he was opposed to the core belief of capitalism, namely, “that market forces should be the determining factor in the economic order.”^{xiii} “...it could no longer be assumed that the Catholic Church would, in the last analysis, provide support for the status quo rather than take the risk of being an agent of major socio-political change.”^{xiv}

Pius XII, pope during World War II and its aftermath, was more concerned with political matters than economic ones. In an address marking the 50th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, however, he did give precedence to an equitable distribution of goods over the GNP as a criterion of national economic health.

Because John XXIII possessed a basic sense of optimism about the modern world, his social teaching offered no radical challenge to the prevailing capitalist structures of the time. *Mater et Magister* (“Christianity and Social Progress”) was new, however, in its attempt to provide a corrective to the use of church social teaching to justify conservative social positions. The church traditionally favored and supported a system that allowed free enterprise, individual initiative, and private ownership. This was never meant as an endorsement of the more ruthless and unattractive practices of capitalism.

Gradually, however, the distinctions were blurred, and church documents were pressed into service to support the status quo, and to oppose “socialism” in any form. “The effect of all this was that almost by accident the Church came to be allied with certain interests. It seemed to be more concerned with the defense of the rights of private groups than with the needs of the poorer classes of society;”^{xv} John, in his encyclical, took a major step toward preventing such misguided application and recovering the church’s original intent.

On January 25, 1959, John stunned the world by announcing his intention to convoke an ecumenical council. The *aggiornamento* documents of that council stressed our creative capabilities. They focused on a just society and called for the development of all people.^{xvi} Since

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^{xiii} Dorr, 63.

^{xiv} Dorr, 69.

^{xv} Dorr, 110.

^{xvi} Joseph Gremillion, *The Gospel of Peace and Justice: Catholic Social Teaching since Pope John* (Maryknoll 1976) 7.

Vatican II, Catholic social teaching has deepened the church’s awareness of itself and of all people as a single community sharing one global existence.

Paul VI’s encyclical, *Populorum Progressio* (“On the Development of Peoples”), did globally what *Rerum Novarum* had done nationally. Paul asked worldwide social questions, and looked at the relationship between rich nations and poor ones. *Populorum Progressio* made a notable advance in that it sought to discover the basic causes of poverty. It not only noted that grave imbalances existed; it asked why such imbalances could and should continue to exist.

Paul also challenged the Western thesis that developing countries have actually benefitted, in the long run, from their colonial experiences; he also called for a restructuring of international trade relations, so that the rich would not become richer at the expense of the poor. One commentator went so far as to observe that “Many of the ideas of [the United Nations’ New Economic International Order or NEIO] have such firm roots in *Populorum Progressio* that the Encyclical might almost have been its founding document.”^{xvii}

Paul’s economic vision, requiring as it did international cooperation, pointed up the need for a new type of truly effective world authority. Sixteen years later, the United States bishops, in their pastoral letter on peace, noted that “an important element missing from world order today is a properly constituted political authority with the capacity to shape our material interdependence in the direction of moral interdependence.”^{xviii} For Paul, this need for a new world authority flowed from the close connection he saw between economics and politics. The rich are those who have power. Individuals without power lack what is necessary to change their situation. So, to break the cycle of wealth and poverty, there must be a change in the distribution of political power.

In an important paragraph,^{xix} Paul implied the possibility of a justified use of violent means to overcome oppression. In so doing, he contributed to the strong stand on the central place of justice in the Christian commitment which would be enunciated by the Synod of Bishops four years later.

In 1971, to mark the 80th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Paul issued his encyclical, *Octogesima Adveniens* (“A Call to Action”) in which he did something very important by moving away from development as a

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^{xvii} Dorr, 141.

^{xviii} The Challenge of Peace, 31.

^{xix} *Populorum Progressio*, 31.

central theme and distinguishing between development and liberation. Development implies that the poor are those at the bottom of the ladder who have not yet been able to climb up; liberation sees the poor as those who have been prevented from climbing. Development patiently looks for gradual progress in the economic order; liberation shakes off oppression and belongs to the political order.

Octogesima Adveniens did not advocate liberation *per se*, with its overtones of violence and rebellion; it did, however, address issues connected with liberation, and so moved from purely economic to political considerations. “The novelty of *Octogesima Adveniens* lies largely in the extent to which it consciously addresses itself to some of the political problems involved in choosing and implementing an equitable order in society.”^{xx}

In that same year of 1971, the Synod of Bishops issued one of the most important statements on social justice ever to come out of Rome. *Justice in the World* was concrete and realistic; and it addressed specific situations, following Vatican II’s exhortation to read the “signs of the times”.

Justice in the World emphasized structural injustice, as well as the link between colonialism and unjust structures. It viewed liberation in a positive light, although the point was made that some areas of the world might still benefit from development that was more than simply another kind of exploitation.

“According to *Justice in the World*, there is one central issue which lies at the heart of the structural injustices of today’s world: lack of participation by people in determining their own destiny.”^{xxi} The marginalized are not merely economically disadvantaged; they also lack the political clout to change their situation. *Justice in the World* called for a strong option in favor of the poor and the powerless. The document also showed an important connection between our relationship to God and our relationship to our neighbors. It is a theology that seeks to link poverty with justice:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of

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^{xx} Dorr, 165.

^{xxi} Dorr, 182.

the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.^{xxii}

It should be obvious from all this that the concrete working out of the Genesis vision of stewardship requires constant reflection and periodic review of the contemporary situation. The past one hundred years which we have just surveyed most fleetingly, have been marked by a full and rich body of social documents. Nor was *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* John Paul II’s first encyclical dealing with social justice.

In 1979, the year that also saw the Latin American bishops reaffirm at Puebla, Mexico, the commitment to justice spelled out over a decade earlier at the landmark meeting at Medellín, Colombia, John Paul issued *Redemptor Hominis* (“The Redeemer of Mankind [sic]”), in which he denounced the adverse effects of modern development, the squandering of valuable resources on the arms race, and the abuse, not just of the poor who lived in need, but of the middle class who lived in fear and insecurity. John Paul also called for planned economic growth, and demanded respect for the rights of every individual.

John Paul’s 1981 encyclical, *Laborem Exercens* (“On Human Work”), issued to commemorate the 90th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, did more than just hand on traditional teachings; it went to the root of issues: labor’s value does not lie in the work itself, but in the person who does the work. Capital is meant to serve the worker as the result of labor. That labor and capital are opposed is a mistaken development.

Laborem Exercens did not favor any one system over another. John Paul evenly evaluated all systems to show their structural inadequacies. He went on to make clear that, in many instances, the policies of organizations in the developed world are at least partly responsible for economic injustices suffered by people of developing nations. By so doing, he issued a challenge, in a most realistic sense, to citizens of the developed world to work at attaining a truly just international economic order, even at the risk of having to adopt a more modest lifestyle. Poverty is the result of human choices; therefore, an option for the poor involves an option against anything in society that contributes to the continuing impoverishment of the victims of injustice.

Solidarity, which would become a major theme of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, and one that had been used by John Paul even before becoming pope, was used in *Laborem Exercens* to suggest a unity of effort on the part of all in a community to achieve the common good. Solidarity

^{xxii} Justice in the World, 6.

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implies the right to, and even the need for, confrontation and opposition, but always in the spirit of promoting the common good.

This call to solidarity was important because it filled the void in Catholic social teaching regarding the proper response by the oppressed when the call for reform remained unheeded by the oppressors. John Paul advocated neither violent rebellion nor silent submission; instead, he included in his call for economic and social conversion the concept that confrontation may be necessary and even acceptable.

This, then, is the background against which *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* was published. It is indeed a worthy descendant of all that went before.

Peter Hebblethwaite, then *National Catholic Reporter* writer on Vatican affairs, saw much that was new, challenging, and powerful in this social justice encyclical. Unlike previous documents, which cited biblical passages to validate statements, John Paul integrated scripture into the encyclical. “One text, Matthew 25:31-46, is the argument of the encyclical. The foundation for human solidarity, it proclaims, is that when we clothe the naked and feed the hungry, we are never dealing with strangers, but with Christ in disguise.”^{xxiii}

Most commentators pointed to paragraph 31, in which John Paul reminded the church most solemnly of its duty to bring relief to those who suffer, even if it must divest itself to do so:

Faced by cases of need, one cannot ignore them in favor of superfluous church ornaments and costly furnishings for divine worship; on the contrary it could be obligatory to sell these goods in order to provide food, drink, clothing and shelter for those who lack these things.^{xxiv}

In the television movie, “Choices of the Heart,” which deals with the life, work, and martyrdom of Jean Donovan, one scene depicts Jean asking Archbishop Oscar Romero when the construction work on the cathedral of San Salvador would be finished. Romero replies that the work would never be completed, because the poor needed the money more than God did. He described the scaffolding as a symbol, the poor person’s ladder to God.^{xxv} Romero’s words seem to foreshadow those of John Paul. In March of 1980, Romero gave one of his last homilies.

^{xxiii} Peter Hebblethwaite, “On Social Concern lofts a few new concerns,” *National Catholic Reporter* (May 27, 1988) 4.

^{xxiv} *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (henceforth SRS), ¶ 31.

^{xxv} Reported in the biography of Jean Donovan, Ana Carrigan, *Salvador Witness* (New York 1984).

I am simply a pastor, a brother, a friend of the Salvadoran people. One who knows their sufferings, their hunger, their anguish. It is in the name of these voices that I raise my voice to say: Do not idolize your wealth! Do not horde it to let the rest die of hunger! We must learn how to strip ourselves of our rings so that they won't be cut from our fingers.^{xxvi}

While such exhortations may go unheeded in a strict sense, still John Paul is echoing the demand of *Justice in the World* that, to be a credible force for justice, the church must first itself witness justice in its own lifestyle. "The Church ought not, in other words, to have a lower standard of justice in its internal life than it demands from others. 'Selling church treasures' is a reminder that self-reform is always on the agenda."^{xxvii}

In his commentary on the encyclical, Eugene Kennedy noted that the Latin word *sollicitudo* is rooted in the verb *sollicitare*, meaning to "move thoroughly" or "to disturb." Kennedy's commentary deftly juxtaposed the *sollicitudo* of John Paul, so deeply moved by the sufferings of men and women the world over, whether in developed or in developing countries, with the *sollicitudo* of the pope's readers, who were already starting to bristle at his unblinking look at the moral failures of both capitalism and communism.^{xxviii}

U. S. economist, John Kenneth Galbraith, described the encyclical as "a most important and compelling communication ... a powerful case for government action on behalf of the poor both at home and abroad."^{xxix}

In a survey of the contemporary scene, John Paul pointed out with dismay several factors which give a "rather negative impression" of the results of development: widespread and intolerable poverty; the growing gap between the developed North and the developing South; illiteracy and the lack of sufficient education; various forms of exploitation and oppression; increasing homelessness; the phenomena of un- and under-employment; and the question of international debt.^{xxx}

The very terminology then current, First World, Second World, Third World, and even Fourth World, was, according to the pope, significant as a

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^{xxvi} This is widely available. See for example, Carrigan, 145.

^{xxvii} Hebblethwaite, 4.

^{xxviii} Eugene Kennedy, "Pope 'thoroughly moved,' aims to disturb us," *National Catholic Reporter* (May 27, 1988) 11.

^{xxix} John Kenneth Galbraith, "Encyclical a strong swipe at U. S. economic policies," *National Catholic Reporter* (May 27, 1988) 13.

^{xxx} SRS, 13-19

sign of the widespread sense that the *unity of the world*, that is, the *unity of the human race*, is seriously compromised. Such phraseology, beyond its more or less objective value, undoubtedly conceals a *moral content* before which the Church ... cannot remain indifferent.^{xxx1}

It was after this survey of crises and problems that the pope launched his critique of the two opposing blocs, the East and the West, which aroused so much commentary and stirred up so much controversy. In clear and precise language, John Paul spoke of the progression from ideological to political to geo-political to military opposition. And, even though there had been some positive steps taken, “the existence and opposition of the blocs continue to be a real and worrying fact which still colors the world picture.”^{xxxii}

Both liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism are “imperfect and in need of radical correction.”^{xxxiii}

When the West gives the impression of abandoning itself to forms of growing and selfish isolation, and the East in its turn seems to ignore for questionable reasons its duty to cooperate in the task of alleviating human misery, then we are up against not only a betrayal of humanity’s legitimate expectations—a betrayal that is a harbinger of unforeseeable consequences—but also a real desertion of a moral obligation.^{xxxiv}

John Paul’s overview of the results of the state of opposition between the East and the West led to a reiteration of Paul VI’s observation that the arms race diverts money and resources which could be used to alleviate human suffering.^{xxxv} John Paul adds an even more severe judgment of the arms trade which flourishes, “a trade without frontiers...while economic aid and development plans meet with the obstacle of insuperable ideological barriers, and with tariff and trade barriers.”^{xxxvi} “This state of

^{xxx1} SRS, 14.

^{xxxii} SRS, 20.

^{xxxiii} SRS, 31.

^{xxxiv} SRS, 23.

^{xxxv} SRS 23. See also *Populorum Progressio*, 53. This is also a central theme in the two pastoral letters if the United States bishops, *The Challenge of Peace* and *Economic Justice for All*.

^{xxxvi} SRS, 24.

affairs leads in turn to the plight of millions of refugees on the one hand, and to increased terrorism on the other.”^{xxxvii}

John Paul concluded his survey of the contemporary scene with a commentary on some more positive aspects of our world. He cited the ever-increasing number of people actively concerned about human freedom and dignity; the influence of the United Nations’ “Declaration of Human Rights;” a growing conviction of our interdependence and common destiny; a concern for peace for all; and a greater ecological concern.^{xxxviii}

In an important section of the encyclical, John Paul discussed the true nature of development, and the tragic results of a misunderstanding of that nature. “What distinguishes John Paul’s encyclical is an awareness that development, as generally understood in the First World, is a false and ultimately dangerous concept.”^{xxxix}

The pope pointed out that the “haves,” those who reap the benefits of what he called “superdevelopment,” with material goods actually in excessive supply, are no less oppressed than the “have-nots,” who suffer material deprivation. Superdevelopment leads to a wasteful, consumerist mentality which in turn leads to chronic dissatisfaction, because “the more one possesses the more one wants, while deeper aspirations remain unsatisfied and perhaps even stifled.”^{xl}

John Paul underscored the fact that development is not merely an economic concept, but a moral issue as well. The biblical mandate of stewardship is echoed:

One of the great injustices in the contemporary world consists precisely in this: that the ones who possess much are relatively *few* and those who possess almost nothing are *many*. It is the injustice of poor distribution of the goods and services originally intended for all.^{xli}

Seen in this light, development becomes “the *modern expression* of an essential dimension of [our] vocation.”^{xlii}

Flowing from this conviction, John Paul discussed several

^{xxxvii} SRS, 24

^{xxxviii} SRS, 26.

^{xxxix} Penny Lernoux, “Technology not the answer, as Brazil shows,” *National Catholic Reporter* (May 27, 1987) 8.

^{xl} SRS, 28.

^{xli} SRS, 28.

^{xlii} SRS, 30.

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characteristics of an authentic Christian approach to development: the task is difficult but essential; the task makes us collaborators with Christ, who assures ultimate victory; the task, as part of the divine plan for all peoples, is a duty of the church; the task is one which falls to every person, and to all nations and societies; there is an intrinsic connection between true development and respect for human rights.^{xliii}

Having demonstrated the moral dimension of development, John Paul goes on to discuss obstacles to that development, obstacles which can likewise be overcome only by political decisions that are essentially moral decisions. He spoke of “structures of sin,” the result of innumerable human choices based on such attitudes as excessive desire for profit and a thirst for power.^{xliv}

To overcome such attitudes, the pope called on all people, including those without any particular faith, to take up the challenge of removing these obstacles to true development. The growing recognition of our mutual interdependence required a response which the pope referred to as “solidarity,” a concept, as noted earlier, that was not a new stance for him. He defined this solidarity as “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are *all* really responsible for *all*.”^{xlv}

This solidarity was called for nationally, among members of each society and nation, and also internationally, with richer nations realizing their obligation to establish a just international order. Such a condition would enable the poor to begin to help themselves; and would enable poorer nations to maintain their individual cultures. It would also lead to the breakdown of oppression and violence, because the bonds uniting nations would become stronger than the ideological differences dividing them.

While characterizing the pope’s treatment of the political relationship between interdependence and solidarity as “ambiguous,” and “less than it might be,” nevertheless, Henriot stated that “solidarity...is...the new encyclical’s major contribution to the development of the church’s social teaching. His discussion of solidarity poses serious challenges to U. S. government stances and policies, not only toward Third World peoples but also toward our domestic population.”^{xlvi}

After recalling that the church’s social teaching is not itself an

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^{xliii} SRS, 30-33.

^{xliv} SRS, 35-37.

^{xlv} SRS, 38.

^{xlvi} Henriot, 8.

ideological system, but a reflection of the “complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church’s tradition,”^{xlvii} a reflection meant to guide human behavior, John Paul went on to list several results of such a reflection: a commitment to justice; an international outlook; a love of preference for the poor, which translates into concrete reforms on their behalf.

The pope called specifically for the reform of the international trade system; the reform of the world monetary and financial system; an examination of forms of technology and their use; and a review of existing organizations.^{xlviii}

In his conclusion, John Paul went even further than Paul VI, who had called development another name for peace. Development, according to John Paul, *is* liberation.^{xlix} Development and technological progress are intimately connected with liberation, and with religious empowerment. The task is enormous, but there is no room for cowardice. “We are *all* called, indeed *obliged*, to face the tremendous challenges”¹ that lie ahead. Those tremendous challenges are now ours; John Paul’s words are now addressed to us. Let us, in our time, realize the as-yet-unfinished vision of *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.

^{xlvii} SRS, 36.

^{xlviii} SRS, 43.

^{xlix} SRS, 46.

¹ SRS, 47.