

## DECREES on the SOCIAL APOSTOLATE

### GC 24 (1892)

### D.20

4. The congregation was asked to see to it that associations of men, and especially groups of workers assembled for their education and development in accord with our institute, should be strongly commended to Ours. With an impressive meeting of minds, the congregation decided and decreed its recommendation that Our Father most vigorously support, through superiors and others of Ours, the spiritual care of men, especially workers and the poor, and bring it about that, through the Spiritual Exercises and our sodalities [today's Christian Life Communities] conducted in accord with the early norms of the Society, they might lead them with full zeal to every work of piety and charity – with the precaution, however, that Ours do not in any way embroil themselves in the administration of temporal affairs or in political negotiations.

### GC 27 (1923)

### D.221

Men especially, ecclesiastics in particular, and also workers and the poor, should be formed in the Exercises.<sup>1</sup>

### D.226

1. Marian sodalities of our students, of young people, and of men should be particularly fostered, and workers and the poor are by no means to be neglected.<sup>2</sup>

2. So that greater profit may be realized from these,

1. Let the most capable men be chosen as moderators, let them be well trained, and let them not be readily changed.

2. Let the sodalists be carefully chosen and skilfully formed; most especially, let them be imbued with the interior spirit of the Christian life, and be strengthened in solid virtue.

3. Let them be trained in works of charity and mercy, and let them be inflamed with zeal for souls and for the sturdy defense of the Catholic religion.

4. Let the unity of sodalities among themselves be fostered either by meetings of their moderators or by other means that are in conformity with the spirit of the sodalities and are duly approved by superiors.<sup>3</sup>

### D.229

1. Social works, as they are called, which are so urgently recommended by the Church, can be promoted by Ours in accord with the institute, provided that those norms are observed that

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<sup>1</sup> GC 24, D.20, n.4.

<sup>2</sup> GC 24, D.20, n.4; GC 25, D.12, n.3.

<sup>3</sup> GC 26, D.20, nn.1-5.

the superior general has prescribed or will prescribe in view of circumstances of time and place.

2. In fostering these, Ours should beware of involving themselves in the temporal management of those works or in matters of politics.<sup>4</sup>

### ***D.239***

1. Ours should refrain from engaging in any political activities;<sup>5</sup> and, to the extent possible, they should also be careful to avoid any complaints arising from unfounded suspicions.<sup>6</sup>

2. Those matters, however, are not prohibited that pertain solely to the conscience or the spiritual direction of princes or others who seek counsel,<sup>7</sup> or that bear on imbuing public life with Christian principles, provided that in these matters the means that are used are in conformity with our institute.

## **GC 28 (1938) D.29, On Ministries**

### ***On restoring Modern Society to Christ***

1. Beginning with the very Formula of the Institute, our Society has been established for this in particular, to direct its efforts to the defense and propagation of the faith.<sup>8</sup> Today vast numbers of humankind appear to be estranged from God and the Catholic Church, and the entire way of thinking and living espoused by a great many and their institutions of public life appear to be withdrawing daily from the Christian faith. Ours should understand that this is their primary most important task in these times, to strive for their own part to bring about the reconciliation of the whole of public and private life with the teaching of the Gospel and the restoration of the lost sheep to the fold of Christ.

2. It is therefore necessary that all of Ours should be thoroughly steeped in this spirit; and while certainly not spurning those ministries that are performed chiefly for those who have remained in the family of the faith, they should have special concern for the multitudes of those who for whatever reason have become estranged from the life of religion and the influence of the Church, whether they belong to the class of more educated men or to the class of workers and farmers. Ours should clearly understand the great and diverse errors of this age, as well as other causes for withdrawing from God and the Church; and, driven by the love of Christ, they should strive with all their strength to set forth correctives to these evils of our times.

3. Let Ours continue, to be sure, with great zeal to cultivate the usual ministries of the Society in the defence and spread of the Christian religion; but at the same time, let each one struggle in his own role to have an efficacious influence on those media that are wont to dominate public opinion to such a degree. Let Ours ever keep in mind that goal which the Church, from

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<sup>4</sup> GC 24, D.20, n.4.

<sup>5</sup> GC 24, D.20, n.4.

<sup>6</sup> GC 5, D.47.

<sup>7</sup> GC 7, D.46.

<sup>8</sup> *Formula of the Institute*, approved by Paul III and Julius III, n.1.

the very beginning of the Christian religion, has ever sought; namely, that the teaching of the Gospel should permeate and profoundly reshape the life of every individual and the whole of human society.

4. To multiply our strength in such an arduous task, Ours should everywhere strive to imbue and foster lay Catholics with a truly apostolic spirit.

### *On the Social Apostolate*

5. Apostolic social works already undertaken with much fruit by Ours, in accord with the encyclical letters of Leo XIII<sup>9</sup> and Pius XI,<sup>10</sup> are strongly commended to all of Ours as being entirely suited to our Society<sup>11</sup> and are everywhere to be strongly supported and reckoned among the more urgent ministries of our time.

6. Therefore Ours, in keeping with the diverse conditions of regions, with which they ought to be thoroughly acquainted, should diligently stress the promotion of the religious, moral, and even temporal welfare of workers.

7. They should take special care (a) to provide spiritual help for workers and their leaders, especially through the Spiritual Exercises and religious associations; (b) to explain the social doctrine of the Church in all sincerity, charity and prudence to everyone – labourers and employers – and to refute erroneous opinions, whether theoretical or practical; (c) to foster unions and social institutes.

8. Ours should exercise special concern for those who, because of a lack of priests or churches in the countryside or the outskirts of large cities, are in greatest need of religious help and have fallen victim to religious indifference; this they should do even by erecting mission stations where the needs of souls call for them, whether or not a bishop has committed a special territory to the Society. But when such an area has been sufficiently developed, Ours should turn it over to the secular clergy to administer.

9. Let the principles of charity and social justice be carefully impressed upon the minds of the students in our schools, on both the higher and the middle levels.

10. Ours ought to be well versed in the principal elements of the social doctrine of the Church. Thus, this doctrine should be properly explained to the scholastics in both philosophy and theology.

### *On Atheistic Communism*

11. Because atheistic Communism today assails nearly the entire world and threatens destruction to the very foundations of Christian society, deeply conscious of this danger Ours should gird themselves to war against it with their united strength, and should exhort and prepare everyone to ward off so great a danger.

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<sup>9</sup> Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, May 15, 1891.

<sup>10</sup> Encyclicals *Quadragesimo anno*, May 15, 1931, and *Divini Redemptoris*, March 19, 1937.

<sup>11</sup> See *Constitutions* VII, c.2, E [623,a].

12. Since atheistic Communism usually draws its strength in part from agitation and anti-religious propaganda and in part from short-comings of justice in the social order, Ours should zealously attempt to clearly expose the internal errors of atheistic Communism and to wisely use the correctives for it indicated by Pius XI,<sup>12</sup> so that they may strengthen divine faith in the minds of men and cooperate towards establishing a just social order.

### *On Errors of Race and State*

13. Adhering closely to the mind of the Church, let all with prudent zeal also refute those errors that, subverting the right order among natural and supernatural goods and between the human person and human society, extol the cult of race or nation or state to such an extent that they deny or completely weaken the most fundamental rights of the human person, the family, other nations, and the very Church of Christ.

### *On the Proper Priorities to Be Observed in Today's Apostolate*

14. So that this apostolic labour may be done with greater order and more abundant fruit, centres of social action and a secretariat for the defense and propagation of things Catholic must be fostered, as is already being done in some places; and care will have to be taken that Ours of one and the same province, of the same nation, and finally of the entire Society give aid to one another through mutual communication and cooperation. So that this may come about, truly suitable fathers should be chosen for this apostolate who can give themselves over to it entirely.

15. If in any province or nation Ours are so overwhelmed by the amount of their work that they scarcely have any strength left to expend upon this apostolate, the provincials should confer among themselves whether Ours are pursuing other ministries less useful or necessary that, after consultation with Our Father if need be, could be given up, so that we may direct our efforts toward the more universal good.

16. As in other ministries, Ours should draw the efficacy of their external actions especially from internal means that conjoin the instrument with God.<sup>13</sup> They should always be ready to render obedience to the Apostolic See, keep reverently in mind the mandates of the sacred hierarchy, faithfully obey the directions of superiors, and continue to cooperate in a friendly manner with both clergies and with Catholic Action. But they should avoid becoming involved in temporal administration or political matters.

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<sup>12</sup> Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, March 19, 1937

<sup>13</sup> See *Constitutions X*, n.2 [813].

## **GC 29 (1946) D.29, On the Social Apostolate**

Among many peoples not only the Christian social structure but even the foundations upon which the social order ought to rest have collapsed before a nearly universal onslaught. All of Ours, therefore, in testimony to their love for Christ the King and his spouse the Church, should be convinced particularly that it is the role of our Society to spare no labour or exertion to help restore the proper order of society according to those principles which our more recent Supreme Pontiffs have so brilliantly expounded.

1. Therefore, in addition to the other principles prescribed in an outstanding manner by GC 28 in its D.29, this present congregation decrees that as soon as possible some "centre" for social research and action is to be established in each province or region, if one does not already exist. It should be staffed by experts and sufficiently subsidized so that it is truly capable of explaining and fostering the social apostolate and providing initiative and direction to the social action of Ours. Moreover, in places where significant numbers of workers dwell, let the provincials designate one or even more fathers to devote all their energy to this social apostolate.

2. As to the methods by which either individual leaders and spokesmen, chosen from among the workers and farmers, can acquire correct social ideas and a cultural formation consonant with their status, or the whole mass of the "proletariat" can be won anew for Christ and the Church, it will be permissible to make use of a variety of ways and means suited to the differing circumstances of people and events, provided everything is done with the permission of the provincial; moreover, in more significant or unusual cases, the prior permission of the superior general should be obtained. The congregation feels that those of Ours who exercise ministries involving greater self-sacrifice among workers are worthy of special praise.

3. Indeed, all our fathers engaged in spiritual ministries — such as giving spiritual conferences and directing the Spiritual Exercises, training young people, moderating Marian sodalities and other groups under our guidance — should understand that they can and ought to exercise the social apostolate by explaining the social teaching of the Church, by guiding the souls of the faithful towards social justice and social charity, and, finally, by establishing social projects by means of the members of our organizations.

4. All scholastics, in accord with the norm of GC 28, D.29, n.10, should be instructed early on in social teaching. And those of them who seem to be more suited to the social apostolate should be chosen early so that, after laying down a solid foundation in our own studies, they can be assigned by superiors to special studies in the theory and practice of social activities.

5. Let all of Ours be mindful that the efficacy of this social apostolate depends in great part on the austerity with which they live this life of ours.

## **GC 30 (1957) D.52, On the Spiritual Care of Workers**

1. The Thirtieth Congregation has high regard for the procedures that many provinces have designed and implemented in order to carry out the decrees of GC 28 and GC 29 and the norms contained in the letter of Our Very Reverend Father on the social apostolate. At the same time, it feels that the mission to workers must now be fostered even more by the Society.
2. The congregation strongly recommends trade schools and night schools for the education of young working-class people wherever this work will be judged to be truly useful.

### ***D.53, On Knowing the Social Teaching of the Church and Putting It into Practice***

1. All of Ours, whether they are priests, scholastics or brothers, as their work and status will require, should as soon as possible be appropriately instructed in and imbued with the social teaching of the Church and learn to employ it in their life's work, so that, endowed with good judgment and moved by love for working people, they will of their own accord recognize the dignity and rights inherent in all men.
2. Superiors should be watchful that all, whether Catholic or not, who help us with the work of their hands or their minds, are treated with Christian charity and polite reverence. They should be paid what is owing to them, complying with the norms of the social teaching of the Church and the civil law.