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UNDERSTANDING DIGNITY (OF WORKERS) ACROSS THE CATHOLIC THOUGHT

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Abstract: Human dignity is the *golden rule* formally expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights welcomed in a unique moment, after a dark period of the world history that was the cause of the document, of universal acclamation. Its multiple nature is, for some, a sign of weakness, although, for others, a true symbol of pluralism and tolerance in which, we can argue, an ethical rule (to say the least) that everyone can relate to.

To analyse the contribute of a teleological reflexion about working conditions and the dignity of the workers, in a Judeo-Christian interpretation, to a broader context of human rights, in the words of the Holy Father John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* Encyclical Letter, is the aim of our work.

Keywords: Human Dignity; Human Rights; Catholic Social Doctrine; Labour; Workers.

Resumo: A dignidade humana é a *regra de ouro* que a Declaração Universal dos Direitos do Homem expressamente acolheu, num momento singular de aclamação e reconhecimento universais, findo um dos mais negros períodos da história mundial. Da sua múltipla natureza, ainda que para alguns seja verdadeiramente um sinal de fraqueza, resulta um autêntico carácter de pluralismo e tolerância, no qual radica, podemos dizer, um mínimo (pelo menos) ético de que todos podemos comungar.

Analisar o contributo da reflexão teológica sobre as condições de trabalho e a dignidade dos trabalhadores, numa interpretação Judaico-Cristã, para o contexto mais amplo dos direitos humanos, nas palavras do Santo Padre João Paulo II na Carta Encíclica *Laborem Exercens*, é o objectivo do nosso trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Dignidade Humana; Direitos Humanos; Doutrina Social da Igreja; Trabalho; Trabalhadores.

Summary: Introduction; 1. The Historical Background; 2. Human Dignity in the Catholic thought; 3. Workers should be treated with dignity; 4. Catholic response to *modernity*; 5. A tradition that goes on: *at the dawn of the Third Millennium*; Conclusions.

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 notably proclaims, in its Article 1, that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”.

The milestone that the UDHR states of recognition of ‘human dignity’, formally and clearly specified in the universal⁴⁶ declaration is, considering the (bad memory) historical moment it was drafted, a far-sighted “[...] design [to] a new world order for the safety of humanity [...]”^{47 48}. Considering this purpose, we can understand that “[...] human dignity is the foundation on which the superstructure of human rights is built”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ It would be interesting to discuss if, despite the mainly homogenous consensus, the UDHR is really *universal*. Questions towards the ‘imposition’ of the interpretation that the Declaration assumed from an, mainly, American and European perspective and matters related to cultural relativism and universalism. Although we are not taking part of it in this work because, clearly, its outside its scope. As a reference, considering cultural and religious identities as a source of conflict, vd. SAMUEL P. HUNTIGHTON, *O Choque das Civilizações e a mudança na Ordem Mundial* [in the original, *The Clash of Civilizations – Remaking of World Order*], Henrique M. Lajes Ribeiro (trad.), Gradiva: Lisboa, 4.ª ed., 2009 [original first published in 1996]. In response to the different perspective (in a philosophical Hegelian approach) of FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, *O fim da História e o Último Homem* [in the original, *The End of History and the Last Man*], Maria Goes (trad.), Gradiva: Lisboa, 4.ª ed., 2011 [original first published in 1992].

⁴⁷ MICHAEL KIRBY, ‘Health Care and Global Justice’, *Singapore Academy of Law Journal* 22: 785-800, 2010, p. 789.

⁴⁸ Justice Michael Kirby associated the quoted affirmation referring also to the UN Charter from 1945.

⁴⁹ ROGER BROWNSWORD, ‘Human dignity from a legal perspective’, in Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword, Dietmar Mieth (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 1-22, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2014, p. 3.

⁵⁰ ⁵¹, and, in fact, assume it as the *golden rule* of the legal order⁵² ⁵³ ⁵⁴. It was then, it is now, and, we can reasonably say, the principle is *the* guiding light to the new challenges ahead in the human rights agenda⁵⁵. It's a *living being*, and, as stated by Jacques Maritain⁵⁶, "[n]o declaration of the rights of man can ever be exhaustive and final. It must always be expressed in terms of the state of the moral conscience and of civilization

⁵⁰ In fact, as stated by MARCUS DÜWELL, in the UDHR human dignity was presented as a "[...] moral reference point for an agreement that could provide normative guidance for the interpretation of the human rights framework [...]". Vd. 'Human dignity: concepts, discussions, philosophical perspectives', in Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword, Dietmar Mieth (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 23-49, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2014, p. 23.

⁵¹ Curiously, the founding fathers of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) did not insert 'Human Dignity' in any of the articles of the Convention (except later, in 2002, in Protocol No. 13 on the death penalty abolition), but it was always an argument used in the Strasbourg Court practice. Cf. PAOLO G. CAROZZA, 'Human Dignity', in Dinah Shelton (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Human Rights Law*, 345-359, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2013; JEAN-PAUL COSTA, 'Human Dignity in the Jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights', *Understanding Human Dignity*, Vol. 192, 393-402, Oxford: The British Academy, 2013; ANTOINE BUYSE, ECHR Blog, The Role of Human Dignity in European Convention Case-Law, 2016, Retrieved February 14, 2019, from <http://echrblog.blogspot.com/2016/10/the-role-of-human-dignity-in-echr-case.html>.

⁵² For a study about the normative concept of human dignity or how the principle stands as a rule of interpretation that, many, claim that it is a mere slogan and hopelessly vague. Vd. RUTH MACKLIN, 'Dignity is a useless concept: It means no more than respect for persons or their autonomy', *BMJ*, 327, 1419-1420, 2003; PAOLO G. CAROZZA, op. cit.; BRITTA VAN BEERS, LUIGI CORRIAS & WOUTER WERNER, 'Introduction: probing the boundaries of humanity' in Britta van Beers, Luigi Corrias, Wouter Werner (eds.), *Humanity across International Law and Biolaw*, 1-21, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2014.

This conceptualization is essential because human dignity does not have a 'pair' principle to be paired and weighted and, as MARCUS DÜWELL states, without that clarification we might stand before a *Trojan horse* because we will not really understand what it means and we will not know how to use it as a principle to which we have no way to weigh. Cf. op. cit., p. 25.

⁵³ Quoting DAVID WALSH, "[i]t is no accident that the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights simultaneously avoids any indication of the source of justification of rights while also invoking the substantive notion of human dignity as their background", 'Dignity as an Eschatological Concept', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 192, 245-258. The British Academy, 2013, p. 249.

⁵⁴ In Europe, the 'human dignity' value gained a new strength when it was recognized in the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU Charter) that came into force with the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009.

⁵⁵ And has, nowadays, new challenges considering, for instance, the biotechnology evolution and the impact of it in the human rights itinerary. For the new challenges posed from scientific evolution vd. MARISA ALMEIDA ARAÚJO, 'Genome Editing: The new eugenics?' *RAIS Conference Proceeding*, 295-302, 2018, retrieved September 2, 2019 from <http://rais.education/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/045MA.pdf>.

⁵⁶ The French Philosopher was referring to the UDHR but we can assume it to any Human Rights document.

at any given moment of history”⁵⁷. His Holiness Paul VI, in the message on the 25th anniversary of the Universal Declaration, emphasizes that human rights “[...] are based upon the recognition of the dignity of all human beings and upon their equality and brotherhood”^{58 59}.

However, human dignity has its roots set way before 1948 and with many understandings “[...] in a more or less liberal position, with a religious or secular connotation, with a concrete philosophical interpretation [...]”⁶⁰. The concept of human dignity is, “[w]ithin the Western tradition, [...] historically related to the idea of human beings as *imago Dei*”⁶¹⁶². The idea of dignity to each human being, as the image of God, was in the fact of being one; “[t]his was the consequence of the human person to be a special creature and distinctly honoured by divine intention to assign his centrality in the world [...]”⁶³.

⁵⁷ JACQUES MARITAIN, *Communication with regard to the Draft World Declaration on the Rights of Man*, 1947. Retrieved February 11, 2019, from Unesco Digital Library: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000124341?posinSet=1&queryId=N-EXPLORE-ba57a5dd-9a38-44f1-aec9-eddb37db67c4>.

⁵⁸ Message of His Holiness Paul VI to the President of the 28th General Assembly of the United Nations, H.E. Leopold Benites, on the 25th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1973), retrieved July 25, 2019 from https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/pont-messages/documents/hf_p-vi_mess_19731210_diritti-uomo.html.

⁵⁹ Pius XII, in His inspiring words in Radio Message of His Holiness to Participants in the National Catechetical Congress of the United States in Boston, Pontifical Palace in Castel Gandolfo, Saturday, 26 October 1946 – although not related to this particular subject – they have a special echo considering the particular timeline “Perhaps the greatest sin in the world today is that men have begun to lose the sense of sin”, retrieved August 13, 2019 from https://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/speeches/1946/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19461026_congresso-catechistico-naz.html.

⁶⁰ MARISA ALMEIDA ARAÚJO & AUGUSTO MEIREIS, ‘Human Genome Editing: Human Dignity in an Era of Genetic Nobility’, *The Asian Conference on Ethics, Religion & Philosophy*, The International Academic Forum, 2019, retrieved September 2, 2019, from http://25qt511nswfi49iayd31ch80-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/papers/acerp2019/ACERP2019_44848.pdf.

⁶¹ SERGIO DELLAVALLE, ‘From Imago Dei to Mutual Recognition: The Evolution of the Concept of Human Dignity in the Light of the Defence of Religious Freedom’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 192, 435-449, The British Academy 2013, p. 435.

⁶² Image of God. “This signifies that every human being is endowed with intelligence, will and power which exist in this full perfection, free of contingency; only in God”. The Church and Human Rights, Pontifical Commission «Iustitia et Pax», Working Paper No. 1, 2nd Edition, Vatican City, 2011, p. 37.

⁶³ JORGE REIS NOVAIS, *A Dignidade da Pessoa Humana*, Vol. I, Dignidade e Direitos Fundamentais, Almedina: Coimbra, 2015, p. 40. Free translation, in the original: “[e]ssa era a consequência de a pessoa humana ser criatura especial e distintamente honrada pela intenção divina de lhe atribuir centralidade no mundo [...]”.

With this background scenario, and for the purpose of our work, we are considering the Judeo-Christian model of *imago Dei* and the modern contributes of the Roman Catholic Church⁶⁴ in the development of the concept, especially in the labour context.

1. The Historical Background

Each industrial revolution is the history from the causes to the consequences of the relations of the human being with work and technique. Our question is to know how, in each of those moments, human dignity was seen, how it was *used*, especially considering the role of the Roman Catholic Church, in an era when the world is confronted with laicization and with dialectical materialism, Marxist interactionism and the dialectic of history.

The Enlightenment, presented in the spirit of the French Revolution, the Declaration of Independence of the United States and the USA Constitution, is profoundly anchored in the idea of equality with demands of rationality that led to a triumphant political liberalism with the, according to the Hegelian perspective, victory of Napoleon in 1806⁶⁵. The *contradictions* of history ended and, as Hegel defended, man can now have a total fulfillment within the State.

This path, again according to the Hegelian vision, is only possible considering a historical assurance, as a result of his dialectic idealism (that guarantees man the mastery and transformation of the natural environment through the use of science and technology), in opposition to Marx's contingency or chance. And, also, unlike later historicists, whose historical relativism degenerated into a *tout court* relativism, Hegel believed that history would culminate in an absolute moment. This is *the* moment when a final and rational form of society and State would become victorious, always as a man-led process⁶⁶.

⁶⁴ The multi-layered origin of the concept can be also identified in a religious vision.

⁶⁵ Cf. FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest*, summer 1989, p 2.

⁶⁶ *Idem*.

Modernity broke with a traditional and founding structures of the *Ancient régime*⁶⁷ and brought a promise of a future of freedom and equality where all had a place in the world and could achieve fully realization regardless of their (social) origin. It was the promise of man's total emancipation. This is *the* phase of the Enlightenment, in which man was enchanted by a political inclusive project, a State, the modern State. For Hannah Arendt⁶⁸ there are three major events that determines the character of Modernity: the discovery of America and the exploration of the earth; the Reformation that potentiated individualism and the accumulation of wealth; the invention of the telescope that allowed the development of science and the (re)position of earth from the point of view of the universe.

Also, an optimistic reading of the political liberalism was accompanied by the enchantment of a materialized economic liberalism within the dazzles of the first industrial revolution. We can discuss whether it was political liberalism that allowed the emergence of economic liberalism or *vice versa*. Whether the triumph of political liberalism rests in the success of the ideals that presided over United States independence in 1787⁶⁹, to the French Revolution in 1789⁷⁰ and the triumph of the eco-

⁶⁷ Vd. Theocracy, absolutism and despotism, sacralization of society, dominant church and absolute state, hierarchical, stratified and dynastic society, living with privileges, the people resigned in an exploitation position.

⁶⁸ Cf. HANNAH ARENDT, *A Condição Humana* [in the original, *The Human Condition*], R. Raposo (Trad.), Lisboa: Relógio d'Água Editores, 2001, p. 311, [first published in 1958].

⁶⁹ As an example, the Declaration of Independence of the United States "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*". The words are from Thomas Jefferson that according to Joseph J. Ellis are "the most powerful and consequent words of the American history" from JOSEPH J. ELLIS, *American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies in the Founding of the Republic*. Random House Inc. New York, 2008, pp.55-56. And, in the words of James M. McPherson, they are the base of the interpretation of the Constitution and the political philosophy of the United States. Cf. JAMES M. McPHERSON, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*, New York & Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 126.

⁷⁰ Vd. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1789. Having the American declaration as an inspiration and the philosophical spirit of the XVII century, the Declaration marks the end of the *Ancient régime* and the beginning of a new era. Mentioned in the 5th Republic Constitution, is today an important document, either as an expression of the enlightenment and the approach to the Declaration of Independence, like its article one: "*Les hommes naissent et demeurent libres et égaux en droits. Les distinctions sociales ne peuvent être fondées que sur l'utilité commune*" (Free translation: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can only be based on the common good"). We emphasize the fact

conomic liberalism in the assumed irreversibility of the first industrial revolution of the second half of the eighteenth century, what we can say is that these two moments took place almost simultaneously or, at least, not sufficiently spaced so we can claim that one caused the other⁷¹. In this scenario, we can say that both were the result of a different but converging route, that has the roots in the demands of freedom and equality, rationalism and enlightenment.

This economic liberalism that is out of the first industrial revolution, or coal revolution, shows the Hegelian man dominating and confronting nature; a manifestation of the exaltation of reason and the unprecedented control of energy and resources, used in industry, and, on the other hand, man being replaced by machinery to carry out the heaviest work⁷². In the production system we move from the craftsman to a wage

that the French Project affirmed the rights of man as well as the rights of the political man or the man in a political context.

⁷¹ As for the Industrial Revolution, its beginning is usually located in the second half of the eighteenth century, but this reading is not peaceful. According to Eric Hobsbawm, the Industrial Revolution broke out in Britain in 1780s, but it was not until the 1830s or 1840s that it was fully understood. Cf. ERIC HOBSBAWM, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789–1848*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1969. In its turn, Thomas Southcliffe Ashton, defends that it occurred between 1760 and 1830. Cf. THOMAS SOUTHLIFFE ASHTON, *The Industrial Revolution, 1760 – 1830*, Oxford University Press, 1948, pp 10-11, and JOSEPH E. INIKORI, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 102. As the French Revolution as a revolution of ideas and a philosophical, political, juridical, economic and social phenomenon has nothing or very little to do with the 14th July 1789 events; it started years before, in and outside France, in the works of, among many others, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), Isaac Newton (1643-1727), Leibnitz (1646-1716), Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, known as Montesquieu, (1689-1755), François-Marie Arouet, known by his *nom de plume* Voltaire, (1694-1778), John Wesley (1703 – 1791), Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), David Hume (1711-1786), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Denis Diderot (1713-1784), Jean le Rond D’Alembert (1717-1783), Samuel Adams (1722-1803), Adam Smith (1723-1790), Richard Price (1724-1791), Immanuel Kant (1724-1824), Edmund Burke (1729-1797), John Adams (1735-1826), Thomas Paine (1737-1809), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), Cesare Bonesana, known as Beccaria or Marquis of Beccaria, (1738-1794). To that fact is not strange the circumstance, according to Gertrude Himmelfarb, that there is not only one but three Enlightenments: the British, the American and the French. Cf. GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB, *Os Caminhos para a Modernidade. Os Iluminismos Britânico, Francês e Americano* [in the original *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments*], M. F. D. Costa (Trad.), Lisboa: Edições 70, 2015, [first published in 2005].

⁷² By the virtue of rationalism, slavery was being banned country after country, namely France, United States and Great Britain. So, the introduction of mechanical force into certain tasks and productive processes was becoming imperative for profitability, and, therefore, a requirement for capitalist economic survival. The emergence of this abolitionist spirit had a contribution of the Church, since the

earner, from a master to an employer. For the first time man ceases to dominate the whole manufacturing process⁷³, and the employer, on the contrary of the former master, can be just a capitalist, an investor, also unaware of the production process. Although, in any case, the employee

Papal Bull *Sicut Dudum* (1435) from the Pope Eugene IV against the enslaving of black natives from the Canary Islands (retrieved August 20, 2019, from <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/eugene04/eugene04sicut.htm>). In 1537, Pope Paul III recalls, by the Bull *Sublimus Dei* (retrieved August 20, 2019, from <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul03/p3subli.htm>) and the Encyclical *Veritas Ipsa*, (cf. the paper from the Archbishop Roland Minnerath, presented at The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences *Human Trafficking: Issues Beyond Criminalization*, 17-21, April, 2015. Pio IV, Vatican City), underlines that Indians are free beings by nature (retrieved August 20, 2019, from http://www.endslavery.va/content/endslavery/en/publications/acta_20/minnerath.html). The Pope Leo XIII, on the abolition of slavery in Brazil, claimed, in the Encyclical *In Plurimis* (1888), to the bishops of Brazil to support for Emperor Pedro II, and his daughter Princess Isabel, in the struggle for the definitive abolition of slavery (retrieved August 20, 2019, from http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_05051888_in-plurimis.html). Also noteworthy is the action of the Father António Vieira (1608-1697), in particular, of his two sermons, the *Sermon for the First Sunday of Lent* (1653), and the *Saint Anthony's Sermon to the Fishes* (1654), both preached in São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil.

⁷³ This growing standardization and specialization reach its peak when the very process of production was taken over by science, giving rise in 1911 to Taylorism. Published by Frederick Winslow Taylor in his work "Principles of Scientific Management". Cf. FREDERICK WINSLOW TAYLOR, *Principles of Scientific Management*, Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola, New York, 1998 [first published in 1911]. Taylor advocates the maximum fragmentation of each task, process, action as a means to minimize the skill requirement and the need for workers' training time; separates execution of work from work-planning; separates direct labour from indirect labour, replaces rule of thumb productivity estimates with precise measurements; introduces time and motion study for optimum job performance, cost accounting, tool and work station design and makes possible payment-by-result method of wage determination (retrieved August 20, 2019 from <https://www.britannica.com/science/Taylorism>). For Taylor, "the principal object of management should be to secure the maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity for each employee. [...] prosperity for each employee means not only higher wages than are usually received by men of this class, but, of more importance still, it also means the development of each man to his state of maximum efficiency, so that he may be able to do [...] the highest grade of work for which his natural abilities fit him" (TAYLOR, op. cit., p. 1.). With Taylorism we have the emergence of the assembly lines. The main criticism directed at Taylorism is the high degree of specialization and the alienation of the worker (on the issue of alienation caused by the standardization of labour. Vd. ROBERT BLAUNER, *Alienation and Freedom*, Oxford, England: Chicago U. Press, 1964, pp. 183-186; MELVIN SEEMAN, On the Personal Consequences of Alienation in Work, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Apr. 1967), pp. 273-285; STEPHEN HILL, Competition & Control at Work, MIT Press, 1981, pp. 101-102. About the effects of alienation in management, namely sociology and criminal sociology vd. CHRIS ARGYRIS, *Personality and Organization: The Conflict Between System and the Individual*, Harper Torchbooks, 1970, pp. 83-84; ROBERT MERTON, "Durkheim's division of labor in society", *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 40, Issue 3 (Nov., 1934), pp 319-328; CHRIS ARGYRIS, *Is capitalism the culprit?* Organizational Dynamics, Spring, 21-37, 1978.

is still the machine operator, the planner⁷⁴.

However, the phase of wonder, with science, technique, and progress passed to disenchantment. The Industrial Revolution unchained man from the heavy and dehumanizing labour and had given him some income and stability overcoming the uncertainty of agriculture, dictating the first rules of labour supply and demand. Progress in general, and a successive replacement of man by machinery, suppresses jobs and this reality is aggravated by the *rural exodus* and the inevitable growth of unemployed men, women and also children. Workers are, now, accepting despicable working conditions in a true *race to the bottom*, aggravated by the lack of labor laws, insurances, social security or unemployed benefits, and also, increasing work accidents due to the pressure from employers and unprepared workers. In this sense work contracts, when they existed, are not concluded on a true and fair contractual freedom because the bargaining power is entirely in the hands of the employer without any legal or negotiating constraint.

In this dark phase of the Revolution the first demonstrations of the workers' rights and guarantees begin to be spoken. One of the most expressive and well-known documents is the *Communist Manifesto* from Marx and Engels from 1848, followed by trade unionism and a whole new vocabulary: the capitalist and the proletariat are in opposite sides of the *battle field*. Trade unionism was the way to unite proletarians and restore the classic liberal dimension of equality and the position of workers in contracts. The second half of the nineteenth century is dominated by the struggle of social classes and the conquest of the workers claims until the very recognition of unions in 1871 in the United Kingdom and in 1884 in France.

The world of work was dominated by Marxism, and, trade union organizations surrendered to this new ideology. Marxism and socialism gave, in fact, in this dark period some hope and meaning to this world of misery. They represented an alternative *opium*, and not as a philosophy of misery, as Proudhon refers to⁷⁵, but a palpable hope for a better life

⁷⁴ Control that, today and in the near future, can be (is) compromised by the (new) challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the new 'labour revolution' that, we can say, already began.

⁷⁵ PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON, '*Système des contradictions économiques, Philosophie de la misère*', Paris, Chez

perspective that would culminate in that *end of history* moment when the proletariat would also be the keeper of the means of production, thus ending the class struggles and the theft of surplus value.

The ideologies that followed proclaimed even more distant models, either through a liberal narrative (idealist and Hegelian matrix) or through a socialist narrative (materialist and Marxist matrix), all emerging from the primordial idea of humanism, rationality and consequent equality, at the same time founding and structuring operational concepts of the new State.

The Catholic Church needed to react and take a position to heal the conflict and promote a better life for all, radiating exploitation, although in a different approach, not encouraging the struggle but reconciling. The Church “[...] sees the causes of the revolutionary socialism in the poor organization of industry, victimizing the workers with the eagerness of speculation, but not breaking the moral bond that was once familiar between employers and wage earners. The modern State had surpassed everything as the sole instance of social determination: no wonder some wanted to take it to do so”⁷⁶. It was to this socialist advance that the Church reacted through Pope Leo XIII and His 1891 *Rerum Novarum*. The Encyclical was, in the first line, a reaction and counter-power to the only, until then, understanding relationship of labour and society⁷⁷. Besides that, and at the same time, a means for the Church to reassert herself in the face of all socialist ideology.

Guillaumin et Cie, 1846. Karl Marx responded the year after with *Misère de la philosophie: réponse à la Philosophie de la misère de M. Proudhon*, Paris, V. Giard & F. Brière, Bruxelles, 1847, and it influenced the future *Manifesto* of 1848.

⁷⁶ MANUEL CLEMENTE, Bishop, A Sociedade Portuguesa à data da publicação da *Rerum Novarum*: O sentimento Católico, 47-60, *LUSITANIA SACRA*, 2.ª série, 6, 1994, pp.49-50, retrieved August 19, 2019, from https://repositorio.ucp.pt/bitstream/10400.14/4917/1/LS_S2_06_ManueClemente_Soc.pdf. [Free translation from the original: “Vê entre as causas do socialismo revolucionário a má organização da indústria, vitimando os operários com a avideza da especulação, mas não menos a quebra dos vínculos morais que outrora familiarizavam patrões e assalariados. A tudo se sobrepusera o Estado moderno como única instância de determinação social: não admirava que alguns o quisessem tomar de assalto para a fazer”].

⁷⁷ It is evident the *distributive* ideas in the thoughts of Edward Manning and Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler. For Bishop Ketteler they are remarkably evident in his 1863 work “A Arbeitfrage und the Christenthum”, that Benedict XVI, in the Encyclical “*Deus caritas est*”, no. 27, 2005, considered him as the pioneer of the social doctrine of the Church (retrieved August 20, 2019, from http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html).

2. Human Dignity in the Catholic thought

Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God^{78 79}, and, through the Bible, human dignity gained (also) a theological foundation and a mission to the Christian faith in the Holy Book⁸⁰.

In fact, we owe the concept of “person” as we understand it to the Church. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger teaches that the concept was developed between the “[...] interplay [of] philosophy and the antecedent given of faith, especially Scripture. More specifically, the concept of person arose from two questions [...] “What is God?” (i.e., the God whom we encounter in Scripture); and, “Who is Christ?”⁸¹”. The Cardinal explains that it was needed, to answer the questions above, to acquire the “[...] philosophically insignificant or entirely unused concept “proso-pon” = “persona”⁸². The Christian thought gave the word *a* meaning⁸³, *the* meaning we relate to.

Although, “[i]t was the Roman lawyer Tertullian who gave the West its formula for expressing the Christian idea of a Trinitarian God: *una substancia, tres personae*”⁸⁴ (one being, three persons). The evolution of the concept gained a new dimension, God is a being in three persons, and, in this context “[...] theologians argued, a person must be under-

⁷⁸ Genesis 1:26. “The book of Genesis speaks of the human person as being given a role of domination analogous to God’s domination over creation” DAVID HOLLENBACH, ‘Human dignity in Catholic thought’, in Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword, Dietmar Mieth (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 250-259, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014, p. 254.

⁷⁹ *Imago Dei* of the Genesis has to be read as *Imago Trinitatis*. Cf. JAMES HANVEY, Dignity, Person, and *Imago Trinitatis*, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 192, 209-229. The British Academy, 2013, explaining Augustine’s insight of the Trinity.

For the purpose of our work we will use both expressions, as if they were really synonyms, although they have different contents.

⁸⁰ Kant’s argument that man is an end in itself comes close to this theological idea.

⁸¹ Concerning the notion of person in theology, *Communio: International Catholic Review* 17, 439-454, 1990, p. 439.

⁸² *Idem*.

⁸³ Vd. MAX HANTEL, What Is It Like to Be a Human? Sylvia Wynter on Autopoiesis, *philoSOPHIA*, Volume 8, Number 1, Winter 2018, pp. 61-79.

⁸⁴ JAMES HANVEY, op cit., p. 217 referring to “Adversus Praxean 2 3-7. Tertullian, edited with an introduction, translation, and commentary by Ernest Evans (London, SPCK, 2948)”, [footnote 23].

stood as *relation*⁸⁵. As Sergio Dellavalle reinforces that human dignity is developed from the vision of *imago Dei*⁸⁶, and “[...] Thomas Aquinas made belief in man as in the image of God a central element of his moral theology”^{87 88}. Aquinas’ position was, as the Professor concludes, generally adopted by the Catholic thought. The commitment to human dignity led the Catholic Church to overcome the historical defensive position to the ‘social question’ “[...] opening the way for the strong support for human rights [...]”⁸⁹.

Since the end of the eighteen century that the social context that society laid upon changed, and, influenced by the socialism and Marxism, capital and labour gained a new dimension, and became a key question mobilizing all social classes, and promoting a conflict among them, especially between employers and employees, ‘the owners of the capital and the working men and women’ (and children), their impoverished working conditions, exploited in a social desi-balanced structure.

In fact, “[t]he urban and industrial outbreak, with no legal armor that framed it to contain capital and safeguard labour, revealed here the same weaknesses as abroad⁹⁰, and urged the same responses in terms of solidarity and organization of the workers”⁹¹. David Hollenbach explains that, since the end of the eighteen century, with the French Revolution until the mid-twentieth century⁹², Catholic Church was linked to the *Ancient régime* mainly because “[...] church leadership had seen freedom of conscience and freedom of religion as linked with a secularizing agenda that sought to marginalize the church from active engagement

⁸⁵ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *in op. cit.*, p. 444.

⁸⁶ Cf. *op. cit.*

⁸⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 438.

⁸⁸ The Professor, in footnote 9, refers to Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa theologica*.

⁸⁹ DAVID HOLLENBACH, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

⁹⁰ In this particular text the author is referring specifically to the Portuguese reality. Although the reality is similar as in other countries.

⁹¹ MANUEL CLEMENTE, Bishop, *op. cit.*, p. 47. [Free translation from the original “O surto urbano e industrial, sem armadura jurídica que o enquadrasse para conter o capital e salvaguardar o trabalho, revelou aqui as mesmas fraquezas que lá fora e urgiu as mesmas respostas em termos de solidariedade e organização dos operários”].

⁹² Developed at the Second Vatican Council.

in public life⁹³ 94. The role of Marx and Lenin, according to the quoted Professor, was also relevant to the position that the Catholic Church had through those days. Both, Marx and Lenin, “[...] saw the Catholic conviction that humanity’s ultimate hope lay beyond history as reducing believers’ commitment to struggle for economic justice (religion as the ‘opium of the people’), and as an impediment to the revolution they sought⁹⁵. They wanted, expressively, to reduce the influence of religion, and, in fact, they were successful until the moment of the surface of the Catholic’s commitment to human dignity⁹⁶, and, necessarily, as a key element of the human rights⁹⁷. As James Hanvey emphasises “Roman Catholicism is not a movement, an idea, or an institution; it is a world⁹⁸, the complexity of the institution and the mission that has to be fulfilled makes her an active multitask structure, and, as Pope Paul VI highlights with great accuracy in His Holiness address to the Secretary General of the United Nations “[t]he Church, concerned above all with the rights of God, can never dissociate herself from the rights of man, created in the image and likeness of his Creator⁹⁹”.

Within that role, considering the complexity of the *institution*, Church ended up responding and to regain an active position in the emerging ‘social question’. Recognizing the need to take a position to-

⁹³ Op. cit., p. 251.

⁹⁴ The Professor also makes a reference to the 1790 Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the Third’s Republic’s 1950 law of separation of church and state “[...] as some forms of French liberalism [...]” and as an example of why the Catholic leaders adopted a defensive position towards liberal and socialist revolutions (*ibidem*).

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁶ Mainly since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960’s.

⁹⁷ Like TINA BEATTIE, we would refer to the “[...] Vatican II document on religious liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae* [Pope Paul VI, ‘*Dignitatis Humanae*: On the Right of the Person and the Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious, December 7, 1965]. This revolutionary document in the Catholic theological tradition because for the first time it not only recognizes but also defends the right to religious freedom, and it does so in the context of human dignity”. The Vanishing Absolute and the Deconsecrated God: A Theological Reflection on Revelation, Law, and Human Dignity, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 192, 259-274, The British Academy, 2013, p. 266.

⁹⁸ JAMES HANVEY, op. cit, p. 210.

⁹⁹ Address of His Holiness Pope Paul VI to the Secretary General of the United Nations, 5 February 1972, retrieved July 25, 2019 from, https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1972/february/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19720205_segretario-generale-onu.html.

wards socialism, Leo XIII, – in a most pertinent and essential way we might say – proposed “[...] an alternative approach to securing justice for the working class and for the poor. In doing so, He launched what has become the modern Catholic approach to arguing that the justice or injustice of economic decisions are to be evaluated in light of their impact on the dignity of persons”¹⁰⁰. The Pope upheld, for instance, the workers’ right to unionism (although he rejected socialism) and defended the rights to private property against collectivization. He also discussed the position of governments with regard to business and work. The social problems were anchored in a lack of ethical principles and moral values in a progressively secular society. Cherish these principles in the pursuit of justice in social, economic and industrial life, with better distribution of wealth, State intervention in favor of the poor and unprotected, and the assistance of the patronage to the working class is a purpose to achieve. The Pope’s Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*, May 15, 1891, was the one capable of rivaling, in ideological importance, with the *Manifesto* to the point of being called the “*Magna Charta*” of the social thought of the Church¹⁰¹.

Leo XIII “[...] recognized that the Catholic resistance to the subordination of Church to State that emerged in French liberalism and Soviet Marxism could be expressed by affirming that the human person transcends control by the institutions of government”¹⁰², “[t]here is no need to bring in the State”, the Pope wrote, “[m]an precedes the State, and possesses, prior to the formation of any State, the right of providing for the substance of his body”¹⁰³, enlightening human dignity^{104 105}.

¹⁰⁰ DAVID HOLLENBACH, op. cit., pp. 251-252.

¹⁰¹ Later, among others, Pius XI in 1937 once again draw attention to atheistic communism through the Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptores*.

¹⁰² DAVID HOLLENBACH, op. cit. p. 251.

¹⁰³ Leo XIII, ‘*Rerum novarum*’, No. 7, 1891, retrieved on January 18, 2019 from http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

¹⁰⁴ And respect for the freedom, including free exercise of religion.

¹⁰⁵ “All Catholic social doctrine is based on the dignity of the human person. Man derives both his dignity and his social nature from the fact that he is made in the image and likeness of God”, BARBARA LANARI, *Rerum Novarum and Seven Principles of Catholic Social Doctrine*, *Ignatius Insight*, 2011, retrieved on June 23, 2019 from http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2011/blanari_rerumnovarum_may2011.asp.

Others followed Leo XIII, although the Pope was the first one that felt the urgent need to take a position about the 'working class' and make the Catholic Church assume an active role about the issue, and, at the end, we might say, *reconcile*¹⁰⁶ the Church to Her mission, promoting human dignity. This discourse arose in the nineteenth century and we can see in it a, as John Millbank states, "[...] fluctuation between the notion of respect for the dignity of the human person as such and respect for various human roles such as, above all, the 'dignity of labour'"¹⁰⁷

The principle of dignity (including worker's dignity), as an *imago Dei* proclamation, was emphasized later¹⁰⁸, in our perspective, by Holy Father John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens*, 1981¹⁰⁹. The Pope, addressing "Man as the subject of Work", states¹¹⁰ that "[m]an has to subdue the earth and dominate it, because as the "image of God" he is a person, that is to say, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself, and with a tendency to self-realization"¹¹¹.

The social and economic context of that time made it clear that more was expected from the Catholic Church. Leo XIII felt it and *Rerum Novarum* is, in fact, until today, the *Magna Charta*, as said, of the Catholic Church about the working class and the true essence of the, later,

¹⁰⁶ We are not saying that the Church was not taking a position but the *forces* of Marxism and socialism and the poor working conditions, inflamed by the promoted class conflict, made it urgent to the Catholic Church take the stand and assume a role.

¹⁰⁷ Dignity rather than Rights, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 192, 189-205, The British Academy, 2013, p. 190.

¹⁰⁸ Among others.

¹⁰⁹ Retrieved March 2, 2019 from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html.

¹¹⁰ Making a clear reference to the Book of Genesis.

¹¹¹ *Laborem Exercens*, No. 6.

Catholic Social Doctrine¹¹². Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino¹¹³ in his letter in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, intensifies that “[t]hroughout the course of her history, and particularly in the last hundred years, the Church has never failed, in the words of Pope Leo XIII, to speak “the words that are hers” with regard to questions concerning life in society”¹¹⁴. In fact, for the occasion of the anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Holy Father John Paul II, in His *Laborem Exercens*¹¹⁵ addresses the “social question” publication and the decisive role that the Pope Leo XIII’s Encyclical Letter had, and still has. In this matter it would be interesting, to say the least, to make a special reference about the meaning of *homo sacer* within this context and authors such as Giorgio Agamben and Costas Douzinas. As Tina Beattie sketches “[...] what it might mean to identify Christ with *homo sacer*”^{116 117} and the consequences of it, in-

¹¹² The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* was presented in 2004 by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and, according to Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino, in the Presentation, “[...] has been drawn up in order to give a concise but complete overview of the Church’s social teaching” which was a particular request, the Council received from John Paul II. Retrieved March 2, 2019, from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html#PRESENTATION.

¹¹³ President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The Council accomplished the task to organize a *Compendium* of all material that should be compiled, systematically presenting the foundations of Catholic social doctrine. Retrieved March 2, 2019, from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html#SECRETARIAT%20OF%20STATE.

¹¹⁴ The Cardinal also makes others references mainly to “[...] Pope John Paul II has for his part published three great Encyclicals — *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus* — that represent fundamental stages of Catholic thought in this area. For their part, numerous Bishops in every part of the world have contributed in recent times to a deeper understanding of the Church’s social doctrine. Numerous scholars on every continent have done the same”. *In Idem*.

¹¹⁵ The Encyclical Letter from 1981 retrieved 2March 2, 2019, from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html.

¹¹⁶ Op. cit., p. 271.

¹¹⁷ “[C]rucified Christ is *homo sacer*, and if he is fully divine as well as fully human, then on the cross God becomes the exception to the sacred”. TINA BEATTIE, op. cit., p. 273.

cluding to 'dignity'^{118 119 120}.

3. Workers should be treated with dignity

The "[e]conomic institutions as well as the power of those who control them are accountable for their impact on the dignity of the most vulnerable members of society"¹²¹ considering the growing disparity of wealth, the Pope Leo XIII, in 1891 "[...] wrote an encyclical letter that addressed the rights and duties of those with capital who employed laborers and the rights and duties of laborers toward those with greater wealth who employed them"¹²², and, in His words, "[...] the first thing of all to secure is to save unfortunate working people from the cruelty of men of greed, who use human beings as mere instruments for money-making"¹²³. The *Rerum Novarum* "[...] laid out fundamental principles for the relationship between "capital" and "labor" [...]"¹²⁴ including human dignity¹²⁵, binding the employer "[...] not to look upon their work people as their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character"¹²⁶. Leo XIII placed particular "[...] emphasis on the social context of human rights, emphasizing the

¹¹⁸ According to the Professor of Catholic Studies John Millbank is one of the few who explores the association. Cf. op. cit. ['Christ the exception', *New Blackfriars* 82:969, 541-56 mentioned on footnote 28].

¹¹⁹ As Tina Beattie suggests "If dignity is absolute, then it is all or nothing, [...] [and] only when it becomes nothing under the law does absolute human dignity, respected by God, become an imperative that transcends every law and every context", op. cit., p. 272.

¹²⁰ Although this particular topic is out of our aim for this work and the profundity and complexity of the theme could never be assumed in a superficial analysis and, for that, we are leaving it behind, but we couldn't move on without referring to it.

¹²¹ DAVID HOLLENBACH, op. cit., p. 252.

¹²² BARBARA LANARI, op. cit., retrieved on June 23, 2019 from http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2011/blanari_rerumnovarum_may2011.asp.

¹²³ Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, No. 42.

¹²⁴ BARBARA LANARI, op. cit., retrieved on June 23, 2019 from http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2011/blanari_rerumnovarum_may2011.asp.

¹²⁵ Other principles are, common good, subsidiarity, participation, solidarity, right to private property, universal destination of goods. Cf. BARBARA LANARI, op. cit., retrieved on June 23, 2019 from http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2011/blanari_rerumnovarum_may2011.asp.

¹²⁶ Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, No. 20.

responsibility of public authority to ensure that justice be observed in all labour relations"¹²⁷.

The role of Leo XIII is essential to respond to Marxism and socialism as the ones having the monopoly of the working class, "[t]he objective of the encyclical, explicitly expressed at the beginning, is to announce that the Church now needs to speak on the condition of the working class. Additionally, it can serve as the only effective intermediary in drawing the rich and the working class together in order to prevent the socialist movement from making use of the differences between capital and labor to stir up the people to revolt"¹²⁸. In *Rerum Novarum*, Leo XIII speaks on the condition of the working classes and assuming that the subject was already addressed, He also accepts it was incidentally, but "[...] the responsibility of the apostolic office urges Us to treat the question of set purpose and in detail, in order that no misapprehension may exist as to the principles which truth and justice dictate for its settlement"¹²⁹. His Holiness targeted to reveal the deprived and underprivileged situation of the workers at the end of the nineteenth century – considering the effects of the industrial revolution in the working class¹³⁰ – and the clergy, in the inspiring Encyclical of Leo XIII, took a clear position about the subject and ended the, at least apparent, monopoly of the Socialism cause for the working class, with a new approach, different principles assuming itself as the first rock of the Catholic Social doctrine, through the lens of the workers' dignity and the reinforcement of *imago Dei*.

The Pope criticizes the conditions to what workers were reduced, paying "[...] great emphasis on workers' rights and claims for workers the right to work, the right to a just wage, the right to a fair amount of rest, the safety of women and children in factories, and the right of association"¹³¹. In fact, Leo XIII took a steady position about the relation between classes, in a clear opposition to the socialism principle. The Pope considered a true mistake to impel people to a conflict and to re-

¹²⁷ The Church and Human Rights, op. cit., p. 18.

¹²⁸ GYUN CHEOL GU, Classical Liberalism of Rerum Novarum (The Vatican's Tactic to Survive the Modern Era), *Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 2012, Article ID 201206.

¹²⁹ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, No. 2.

¹³⁰ Vd. Point 1.

¹³¹ The Church and Human Rights, op. cit., p. 19.

volt considering that it had nothing “natural” in a hostile environment between them. He clearly stated that “[...] the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict. So irrational and so false is this view that the direct contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the human frame is the result of the suitable arrangement of the different parts of the body, so in a State is it ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politic. Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital”¹³². The religious solution aimed to be an alternative answer, either to capitalism and socialism, “[...] (conservative in politics, socializing in economics, and charitable in morals) allows a *status quo* immune from both the egoism of the rich and the revolutionary of the poor [...]”¹³³.

Ninety years later, Holy Father John Paul II addresses this role of Leo XIII and the opposition of the Church to promote a class struggle. John Paul II remembers the philosophy of Marx and Engels and the needed conflict behind the program that “[...] found expression in the *ideological conflict* between liberalism, understood as the ideology of capitalism, and Marxism, understood as the ideology of scientific socialism and communism, which professes to act as the spokesman for the working class and the worldwide proletariat. Thus, the real conflict between labour and capital was transformed into *a systematic class struggle*, conducted not only by ideological means but also and chiefly by political means”¹³⁴. And, within a different context, of harmony, an important position was taken by the Pope; we talk about unions. The Leonine Encyclical takes a point about associations and unions, although in a different perspective from the ones bred by socialism, relating to historical successful lessons brought by the artificers’ guilds of olden times¹³⁵ remembering the advantages to the workmen but also to promote the advances of the

¹³² Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, No. 19.

¹³³ JOSÉ MIGUEL SARDICA, A recepção da doutrina social de Leão XIII em Portugal, 2004, 367-383, *LUSITANIA SACRA*, 2.ª série, 16, p. 383. Free translation from the original “[...] (conservador na política, socializante na economia e caritativo na moral) permite um *status quo* imune tanto ao egoísmo dos ricos como ao revolucionarismo dos pobres [...]”.

¹³⁴ *Laborem Exercens*. No. 11.

¹³⁵ Cf. *Idem*, No. 49.

art “[...] as numerous monuments remain to bear witness”¹³⁶. However, the Pope had a clear mind about the need to adapt such unions to our times¹³⁷, and to the “[...] requirements of this age – times of wider education, of different habits, and of far more numerous requirements in daily life”¹³⁸. The Catholic approach of forms of associations of working men and women¹³⁹ urged “[...] Christian working men must do one of two things: either join associations in which their religion will be exposed to peril, or form associations among themselves and unite their forces so as to shake off courageously the yoke of so unrighteous and intolerable an oppression”¹⁴⁰.

We can recognize the message, with a clear appeal to natural law in Paul VI’s Encyclical Letter¹⁴¹. His Holiness, calling *Rerum Novarum* and the teachings of Leo XIII and the principle of “justice at every level”, states that “[...] when two parties are in very unequal positions, their mutual consent alone does not guarantee a fair contract; the rule of free consent remains subservient to the demands of the natural law”¹⁴².

Also Holy Father John Paul II has recognized that they are, indeed, a “[...] *mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice*, for the just rights of working people in accordance with their individual professions”¹⁴³. Although, he also emphasized that they should be seen as a “[...] characteristic of work that it first and foremost unites people [...]”¹⁴⁴ that aims the good of social justice and not as an elimination process of the “opponent”¹⁴⁵.

On another hand, Pope Benedict XVI comments the difficulties of trade union organizations to perform their task of representing workers

¹³⁶ *Idem*.

¹³⁷ We’re referring, obviously, to 1891.

¹³⁸ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, No. 49.

¹³⁹ Obviously different from the ones born through socialism.

¹⁴⁰ *Idem*, No. 54.

¹⁴¹ *Populorum Progressio*, Encyclical Letter of Holy Father Paul VI on the Development of Peoples, March 26, 1967, retrieved April 20, 2019, from http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.

¹⁴² *Idem*, No. 59.

¹⁴³ *Laborem Exercens*, No. 20.

¹⁴⁴ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *Idem*.

and their interest. The light is upon Governments “[...] for reasons of economic utility, often limit the freedom or the negotiating capacity of labour unions. Hence traditional networks of solidarity have more and more obstacles to overcome”¹⁴⁶.

Leo XIII also spoke about another issue: strike. In fact, the Pope expressed the need to employers and employees make free agreements¹⁴⁷, including fair wages and working hours, and, by doing so, strike, even as a last resort measure, won't be needed. Again proclaiming peace between classes repudiating conflict and social instability. The same idea was proclaimed by Holy Father John Paul II almost a century after. The Holy Father recognized strike as a true workers right and a legitimate method of *ultimatum*, although with conditions and limits, and never for political goals since the abuse of “[...] the strike weapon can lead to the paralysis of the whole of socioeconomic life, and this is contrary to the requirements of the common good of society, which also corresponds to the properly understood nature of work itself”¹⁴⁸.

Rerum Novarum is, in fact, a most effective expression of a universal claim of dignity for workers and their rights. The Church opened horizons and the Supreme Shepherd of the Encyclical is, for always to be remembered, the restorer of those rights.

Afterwards, Leo XIII was followed by Pius XI in His *Quadragesimo Anno*, stating that “[...] with Leo's Encyclical pointing the way and furnishing the light, a true Catholic social science has arisen [...]”¹⁴⁹ stating the Encyclical is the *Magna Charta* of the economic-social reconstruction of the modern era¹⁵⁰. Forty years after “On the condition of workers”, Pius XI recognized the essentiality of the Encyclical “[...] at a time when it was most opportune and actually necessary to do so, it laid down for

¹⁴⁶ Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious the Lay Faithful and all People of Good Will on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth, No. 26. Retrieved May 14, 2019 from, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html.

¹⁴⁷ “[T]he State being appealed to, should circumstances require, for its sanction and protection” (*Rerum Novarum*), No. 45).

¹⁴⁸ *Laborem Exercens*, No. 20.

¹⁴⁹ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, No. 20, 1931, retrieved January 23, 2019, from http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html

¹⁵⁰ The Church and Human Rights, op. cit., p. 19 quoting Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*.

all mankind the surest rules to solve aright that difficult problem of human relations called “the social question”¹⁵¹. The Pope urged, like Leo XIII, that labour should not be seen as a commodity, “[o]n the contrary, the worker’s human dignity in it must be recognized”¹⁵².

4. Catholic response to *modernity*

Pope John XXIII “[...] affirmed that the modern Catholic tradition of social thought is controlled ‘by one basic theme – an unshakable affirmation and defence of the dignity and rights of the human person’¹⁵³”¹⁵⁴.

The American political scientist, Samuel P. Huntington, dissertating about the third wave of democracy¹⁵⁵ identified, as one of the five major factors that have contributed significantly to the occurrence and the timing of the third-wave transitions to democracy was the “[...] striking shift in the doctrine and activities of the Catholic Church, manifested in the Second Vatican Council of 1963-65 and the transformation of national Catholic churches from defenders of the status quo to opponents of authoritarianism”¹⁵⁶, and, ended up concluding that “[...] the post-Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church had become one of the most worldwide forces for human dignity, human rights and democracy”¹⁵⁷¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵¹ Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, No. 2.

¹⁵² Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, No. 83.

¹⁵³ ‘A Preview of Mater et Magistra’, in The Staff of the Pope Speaks Magazine (eds.), *The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII*, Washington DC: TPS Press, 1964, p. 233, apud DAVID HOLLENBACH, op. cit., p. 250.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁵ The, at the time, Eaton Professor, considers the first wave of democratization from the 1820’s “[...] with the widening of the suffrage to a large proportion of the male population in the United States, and continued for almost a century until 1926, bringing into being some 29 democracies” And the second wave initiated after WWII (until 1960-1975). SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON, ‘Democracy’s Third Wave’, *Journal of Democracy* Vol.2. No. 2, 12-34, Spring 1991, p. 12.

¹⁵⁶ *Idem*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ DAVID HOLLENBACH, op. cit., p. 240, referring to Samuel Huntington, ‘Religion and the Third Wave’, *National Interest* 24, 29-42, 1991.

¹⁵⁸ DAVID HOLLENBACH refers to the shifts in the Catholic thought. As an example, the author reminds the position of the Pope Gregory XVI that was against the rights to freedom of conscience. The shift was, as

The International Theological Commission reinforces the “[...] renewed awareness of the ubiquity and importance of the theme of the *imago Dei* [...]”¹⁵⁹ and the impetus to the theology given by the Second Vatican Council and in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*¹⁶⁰.

According to the teachings of David Hollenbach¹⁶¹, the role of Leo XIII, and the support of the labour movement and the rights of the working class, followed by Pius XI, led to the development of ‘social Catholicism’ “[...] a tradition that appeals to human dignity [...]”¹⁶² and it was essential considering the crisis from 1929 onwards. The doctrine became categorical at the Second Vatican Council, and the legacy of Leo XIII¹⁶³ and what “the whole Church owes to this great Pope and His “immortal document”¹⁶⁴” was not forgotten, as stated by His Holiness

the Professor of Theology recalls, occasioned by the gradual recognition of the church, through the twentieth century, of the “[...] promotion of human rights was increasingly a precondition for the protection of the dignity of the person called for the church’s religious mission” (*Idem*, p. 251).

¹⁵⁹ International Theological Commission, Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God, No. 21. Retrieved May 18, 2019 from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040723_communion-stewardship_en.html.

¹⁶⁰ The Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God offers a reflection about the doctrine of the *imago Dei*, or human dignity, in the face of technological advances and the impact in the human being and environment. The document can show us the Catholic Church opened to discuss new themes and in need to accompany the new challenges the world, and every single one of us, individually and as a community, is facing.

¹⁶¹ Cf. DAVID HOLLENBACH, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

¹⁶² *Ibidem*.

¹⁶³ Although, maintaining the principles and the spirit of the Encyclical in our view, with a needed (re)interpretation and (re)orientation – that the Church was aware of – considering the social, economic and political, amongst others, mutations. For instance, Holy Father John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, states that “[t]he key position, as regards the question of world peace, is that of John XXIII’s Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. However, if one studies the development of the question of social justice, one cannot fail to note that, whereas during the period between *Rerum Novarum* and Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno* the Church’s teaching concentrates mainly on the just solution of the “labour question” within individual nations, in the next period the Church’s teaching widens its horizon to take in the whole world. The disproportionate distribution of wealth and poverty and the existence of some countries and continents that are developed and of others that are not call for a levelling out and for a search for ways to ensure just development for all. This is the direction of the teaching in John XXIII’s Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*, in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council, and in Paul VI’s Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*”.

¹⁶⁴ John Paul II Holy «*Centesimus Annus*» Encyclical Letter to His Venerable Brother Bishops in the Episcopate,

John Paul II in His Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*.

Earlier Pius XI, in His Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, “[...] confirmed the right and duty of the Catholic Church to work for an equitable solution of the many pressing problems weighing upon human society and calling for a joint effort by all the people”¹⁶⁵.

In *Mater et Magistra*¹⁶⁶ John XXIII had already reinforced “[...] the magnificent encyclical on the Christianizing of the conditions of the working classes, *Rerum Novarum*”¹⁶⁷. And, in *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII, emphasizes that “the conditions in which a man works form a necessary corollary to these rights”¹⁶⁸, and underlines “Responsibility” as an outcome of man’s dignity since it requires, “[...] besides that he enjoy freedom and be able to make up his own mind when he acts”¹⁶⁹.

Developed by the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dignitatis Humanae*, all influenced the doctrine of the Church maintaining the heritage of that religious inspiration in the development of the concept. In fact, in our view, the Pastoral Constitution¹⁷⁰ is the “[...] clear proof that throughout the universal Church concern with the nature of man, his dignity and his role in the world and in contemporary history has reached a new depth, a new maturity”¹⁷¹. The Second Vatican Council clarified the role of the Church in these new times, reinforcing the dignity of the person considering the challenges posed. In fact the dignity of the individual is, still, the basis of the

The Priests and Deacons Families of Men and Women Religious, all the Christian Faithful and to all Men and Women of Good Will on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, retrieved August 18, 2019, from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

¹⁶⁵ *Mater et Magistra*, No. 28.

¹⁶⁶ John XXIII’s Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress, May 15, 1961 retrieved February 12, 2019 from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html.

¹⁶⁷ No. 7.

¹⁶⁸ *Pacem in Terris*, Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty, April 11, 1963, No. 19, retrieved January 10, 2019, from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html.

¹⁶⁹ *Idem*, No. 34.

¹⁷⁰ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, Retrieved May 18, 2019, from http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

¹⁷¹ The Church and Human Rights, op. cit., p. 22.

Church theology to construct the social teaching, since man, as a labor subject “[...] not only transforms the environment, but above all transforms himself when he has the conscience of what he does”; Man puts dignity in what he does¹⁷². In Section 2 of the Pastoral Constitution “Certain Principles Governing Socio-Economic Life as a Whole”, human labour, and his inherent dignity, is recognized to be superior to the other elements of economic life (including, we might add, to capital). Workers have the right to a dignified livelihood¹⁷³. It is also recognized, among the basic rights of workers, the right to freely found unions and take part in the activity of these unions without risk of reprisal¹⁷⁴. The impact of the Leonine Encyclical seems clear and we can recognize it as an inspiration to the Catholic action that can be seen in the Pastoral Constitution and the role it assumes in the modern world and the new demands. It states that the Church goes hand in hand with humanity and “[...] experiences the same earthly lot which the world does”¹⁷⁵.

Leo XIII initiated a path “[...] re-read, renewed for all of His Successors [...]”¹⁷⁶ and we can identify a dynamic approach to human dignity and a relation nature¹⁷⁷. James Hanvey reinforces the work of two men to this approach, Maritain, to the Council and, Karol Wojtyła in a post-council development. According to the Professor “[...] Maritain seeks to understand the uniqueness of the person in terms of community and the common good, while Wojtyła develops the notion of solidarity [...]”¹⁷⁸ which was (and still is) critical to the development of

¹⁷² HERMENIGILDO MOREIRA DA ENCARNANÇA, *Impacto da Doutrina Social da Igreja no Trabalhador e no Empresário*, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Centro Regional de Braga, [Tese apresentada à Universidade Católica Portuguesa para obtenção do grau de doutor em Estudos da Religião], abril 2015, p. 29. [Free translation from the original “ao trabalhar, não só transforma o ambiente, mas sobretudo transforma-se a si mesmo ao ter consciência do que realiza”]. Retrieved August 16, 2019, from <https://repositorio.ucp.pt/bitstream/10400.14/20508/1/tese%20final.pdf>.

¹⁷³ It states that “in economic enterprises it is persons who are joined together, that is, free and independent human beings created to the image of God”, No. 68.

¹⁷⁴ No. 68.

¹⁷⁵ *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 40.

¹⁷⁶ JOSÉ MIGUEL SARDICA, A Recepção da Doutrina Social de Leão XIII em Portugal, *LUSITANIA SACRA*, 2ª série, 16, 2004, 367-383, p. 382. [Free translation from the original: “relida e renovada por todos os seus sucessores”].

¹⁷⁷ Cf. JAMES HANVEY, op. cit.

¹⁷⁸ JAMES HANVEY, op. cit., p. 222.

the human rights discourse¹⁷⁹.

5. A tradition that goes on: at the dawn of the Third Millennium¹⁸⁰

Although, the twentieth century opens a new tendency towards convergence, with a great attempt at ideological reconciliation, an attempt of historical synthesis (an almost post-ideology) between socialism and democracy – the social democracy. A democracy, which while not completely forgetting Marx and Engels, has tempered it with representative democracy and the idea of freedom, not only individual freedoms but also a non-discrimination and non-subjection to the holders of the means of production. But the early revisionists, Eduard Bernstein (founder of evolutionary socialism and revisionism)¹⁸¹ and Karl J. Kaustsky, failed temporarily, and in particular Kaustsky was reneged by Lenin and accused of misrepresenting Marxism and betrayed proletari-

¹⁷⁹ At the Church and Human Rights, op. cit., is recognized that the concept of human rights could be a reflection of a Western humanist tradition, although, it also emphasizes “[...] its worldwide range and universal character should make it possible, with a reasonable degree of flexibility and a pluralist outlook, to embrace the widely differing thinking and circumstances of all the nations in the world”. Op. cit., p. 79. Vd., also, footnote no. 1.

¹⁸⁰ *The Church moves further into the Third Millennium of the Christian era as a pilgrim people, guided by Christ, the “great Shepherd”* (Heb 13:20), retrieved from the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Retrieved March 2, 2019, from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html#PRESENTATION.

¹⁸¹ Bernstein began by rejecting the entire Hegelian dialect, significant parts of Marxist doctrine grounded in Hegelian metaphysics, and finally the Marxist theory of historical materialism itself. Cf. BERMAN SHERI, *Social Democracy and the Making of Europe’s Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 38-39; MICHAEL HARRINGTON, *Socialism: Past and Future*. Reprint edition of original published in 1989. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011, p. 251). In opposition to Marx, he recognized that socialism could be achieved through peaceful means and legislative reform in democratic societies. Cf. MICHELINE R. ISHAY, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008. P. 148, here getting near the utopic socialism of Saint-Simon and Proudhon.

at¹⁸². History made, in that sense, victorious Lenin, Stalin and Mao, and, as Kaustsky wrote, the czarist dictatorship was replaced by the proletariat dictatorship¹⁸³. The social democracy of the early twentieth century was followed by the post-WWII with Olof Palme and Willy Brandt. Later, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, Tony Blair's Third Way emerges.

Thus the dialectical idealism, tributary to the string state symbolized in the victory of lena, later faced historical materialism. The industrial revolution of a capitalist matrix began to produce what was not expected – hunger, misery and precariousness. The exploitation of man by man dictates the first major disappointment of the Enlightenment and humanist rationality. The Church was aware of this disenchantment and responded to the workers' appeal, and, more than a century after *Rerum Novarum*, we can continue to travel through Leo XIII's path, like His successors have done and continue to do. "Transforming social realities with the power of the Gospel, to which witness is borne by women and men faithful to Jesus Christ, has always been a challenge and it remains so today at the beginning of the third millennium of the Christian era"¹⁸⁴.

The Pope marked an itinerary, placing human dignity as a guiding light, developing the (important) role of the Church in the Human Rights agenda, also, the working-class rights and "[...] the Church's Magisterium has several times noted, especially since the Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*. The *human rights that flow from work* are part of the broader context of those fundamental rights of the person"¹⁸⁵. For instance, Paul VI, in His 1967 Encyclical Letter on the Development of Peoples, *Populorum Progressio*¹⁸⁶ (making reference to the Second Vatican Council and the

¹⁸² Retrieved August 19, 2019, from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1934/bolshevism/index.htm>.

¹⁸³ Kautsky was considered by Lenin as a "renegade", mainly for his support of Germany entering WWI, and his increasingly reformism and anti-revolutionary positions, especially in his 1934 work "Marxism and Bolshevism: Democracy and Dictatorship" in which he accused the Bolsheviks, under Lenin's leadership, to lay the foundations of a new dictatorship in place of the old czar dictatorship, nor called the dictatorship of the proletariat. Retrieved August 19, 2019, from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1934/bolshevism/index.htm>.

¹⁸⁴ *Idem*.

¹⁸⁵ *Laborem Exercens*, No. 16.

¹⁸⁶ *Populorum Progressio*, Encyclical Letter of Paul VI, March 26, 1967, retrieved April 20, 2019, from http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.

clearer consciousness of the demands of Christ's Gospel after the positions assumed on contemporary social questions of Leo XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII and John XXIII) reinforces the "Nobility of Work", "[f]ashioned in the image of his Creator"¹⁸⁷, stating that "[e]very worker is, to some extent, a creator [...]"¹⁸⁸. The Pope emphasizes, in the labour context, brotherhood between men. A brotherly bond that work, done in common, aiming to bring them "[...] together and firmly unites the wills, minds and hearts of men"¹⁸⁹. Stressing the dignity of the workers, the Pope, making a special allusion to Pope John XXIII¹⁹⁰, strengthens the need to ensure a true human community in the work place, accomplishing, the men and women of that community, to find themselves to be brothers¹⁹¹.

This communion of efforts, wills and hearts is seen as an essential task to achieve, considering the challenges that workers are confronted, mainly to reduce the gaps between the ones that make progress and others that don't. The Pope requires a "Balanced Progress", proceeding to a "[...] proper equilibrium [...]"¹⁹² which is a task for everyone to assume, and, "[i]n this way they will be responsive to men's longings and faithful to the Holy Spirit, because the ferment of the Gospel, too, has aroused and continues to arouse in man's heart the irresistible requirements of his dignity"¹⁹³. We can encounter the same idea in *Gaudium et Spes*. The Pastoral Constitution highlights the need for a human interdependence and "[e]very social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family"¹⁹⁴. Either in national trades, and, also, in international trade relations, mainly between rich and poor nations appealing to "[...] one standard should hold true for all"¹⁹⁵, refraining competition to be kept "[...] within limits so that it operates justly and

¹⁸⁷ *Idem*, No. 27.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁰ The Pope is making a reference to the Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961).

¹⁹¹ *Populorum Progressio*, Nos. 27 and 28.

¹⁹² *Idem*, No. 29.

¹⁹³ *Idem*, No. 32.

¹⁹⁴ *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, Chapter II, No. 26.

¹⁹⁵ *Populorum Progressio*, No. 61.

fairly, and thus becomes a truly human endeavour”¹⁹⁶.

Also, in *Laborem Exercens*, the social question and the role of *Rerum Novarum* is exalted. After ninety years of the inspiring Encyclical, John Paul II underlines the special dignity that derives from work and the deep consequences that it has at a social level. On the eve of a new era with recognizable new developments and these “[...] new conditions and demands will require a reordering and adjustment of the structures of the modern economy and the distribution of work”¹⁹⁷. The Holy Father has a clear position about the new problems and quests of the “labour questions”, and, following the directions of the Second Vatican Council (and the teaching of John XXIII and Paul VI) and giving a step forward considering *Rerum Novarum*, the next path that the Church needs to follow is to open the discourse, not only within individual nations, but also wide it up to the world, considering, in His words, “[t]he disproportionate distribution of wealth and poverty and the existence of some countries and continents that are developed and of others that are not call for a levelling out and for a search for ways to ensure just development for all”¹⁹⁸.

The same path was appointed by Benedict XVI “[...] far-sighted response to the urgent need for new forms of cooperation at the international level, as well as the local level”¹⁹⁹. The Supreme Pontiff adds, also, that we have a systemic increase of social inequality “[...] both within a single country and between the populations of different countries (i.e. the massive increase in relative poverty), not only does social cohesion suffer, thereby placing democracy at risk, but so too does the economy, through the progressive erosion of “social capital” ”²⁰⁰.

With this background, the Church moves further into the Third Millennium, based upon an ‘integral and solidary humanism’. The link to *imago Dei* is palpable therefore, “being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just some-

¹⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹⁷ *Laborem Exercens*, No. 1.

¹⁹⁸ *Idem*. No. 2.

¹⁹⁹ *Caritas in Veritate*, No. 26.

²⁰⁰ *Idem*, No. 32.

thing, but someone”²⁰¹, and in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, we can clearly recognize the inspiration from *Gaudium et Spes* and the assumption of the human person, all humans and to all, in his all dimensions: “personal and social, spiritual and corporeal, historical and transcendent”, developed in the Chapter 3, point III, of the *Compendium*²⁰² and the clear commitment to human rights. For the goal of our work we emphasize Chapter 6 of the *Compendium* and the assumption of the “prophetic value of *Rerum Novarum*” and the compromise to the rights of workers based on the human person and on his transcendent dignity. In the chapter dedicated to work dignity assumes a primordial position to every other factor connected to productivity, including capital²⁰³. Again, looking for inspiration in *Rerum Novarum*, strike is assumed as a, last resort, solution and unions are considered a form of solidarity among workers.

But, new forms of solidarity are presented²⁰⁴. The Church is well aware of the challenges posed by globalization and, for that, calls for a renewal of the role of unions to accomplish their aim. For instance to wide the protection not only to the traditional category of workers but also, for instance, to limited-time contracts, immigrants, seasonal workers and dismissed workers who have not had professional updating; and, also, “[...] workers’ associations must focus their efforts on the acceptance of greater responsibilities, not only in relation to the traditional mechanisms for redistribution, but also in relation to the production of wealth and the creation of social, political and cultural conditions which will permit all who are able and willing to work to exercise their right to work in full respect for their dignity as workers”²⁰⁵.

The Social Doctrine is impressive in point VII, of Chapter 6, recognizing the phenomenon of globalization as an epoch-making phase of transition, as it’s called, identifying the “new things” of the world of work. Two primary factors are identified. “[T]he extraordinary speed of com-

²⁰¹ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Chapter 3.

²⁰² *Ob. cit.*, Chapter 1, III, No. 38.

²⁰³ The *Compendium* makes a special reference to women (Chapter 6, IV, *d*), children (Chapter 5, III, *d*), Chapter 6, IV, *e*) and immigrants (Chapter 6, IV, *f*) in this matter assuming a contemporary position.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Chapter 6 of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.

²⁰⁵ *Op. cit.*, Chapter 6, VI, No. 309.

munication no longer limited by space or time [...]. This entails a fundamental consequence for processes of production, as property is ever further removed and often indifferent to the social effects of the decisions made. On the other hand, if it is true that globalization is neither good nor bad in itself, but depends on how it is used, it must be affirmed that *a globalization of safeguards, minimum essential rights and equity is necessary*²⁰⁶. Because of these factors and its consequences the Church takes a position in this new era, enlightening the subjective dimension of work and new forms of solidarity must be envisioned placing human dignity of workers before all the other factors, restoring the hierarchy of values, giving “[...] *expression to a humanism of work on a planetary scale* [...]”²⁰⁷.

His Holiness John Paul II, in a previous visionary expression proposed “[...] a “re-reading” of Pope Leo’s Encyclical by issuing an invitation to “look back” at the text itself in order to discover anew the richness of the fundamental principles which it formulated for dealing with the question of the condition of workers”²⁰⁸. The Pope in His complex and rich Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* already prepared a new reading for the future, never forgetting the past and the teachings of Leo XIII. The Pope makes an invitation to “[...] “look around” at the “new things” which surround us and in which we find ourselves caught up, very different from the “*new things*” which characterized the final decade of the last century. [...] An invitation to “look to the future” at a time when we can already glimpse the third Millennium of the Christian era, so filled with uncertainties but also with promises — uncertainties and promises which appeal to our imagination and creativity, and which reawaken our responsibility [...]”²⁰⁹.

²⁰⁶ Op. cit., Chapter 6, VII, No. 310.

²⁰⁷ Op. cit., Chapter 6, VII, No. 322.

²⁰⁸ John Paul II Holy «*Centesimus Annus*» Encyclical Letter to his Venerable Brother Bishops in the Episcopate, The Priests and Deacons Families of Men and Women Religious, all the Christian Faithful and to all Men and Women of Good Will on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Retrieved August 18, 2019, from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

²⁰⁹ John Paul II Holy «*Centesimus Annus*» Encyclical Letter to His Venerable Brother Bishops in the Episcopate, The Priests and Deacons Families of Men and Women Religious, all the Christian Faithful and to all Men and Women of Good Will on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Retrieved 18 August, 2019

Again, His Holiness John Paul II, in His *Greeting After Mass*, in the Jubilee of Workers, in 1 May 2000, appealed to solidarity, stating that “[g]lobalization is a reality present today in every area of human life, but it is a reality which must be managed wisely. *Solidarity too must become globalized*”²¹⁰.

The *Compendium* is a magnificent document. Inspired by the Pastoral Constitution and respecting the past and the teaching of many Popes (like the ones here described), with a contemporary interpretation of the principles of *Rerum Novarum* and the “social question” that the Encyclical bravely exposed, the Church is not only ready to the new era, presenting new challenges, but also posed herself as a prime actor in the global arena, with assumed flexibility to adapt always with ‘dignity’ as the prime principle to what, believers or not, everyone can rely on with their own interpretation.

Conclusions

The narrative of the human rights agenda is, and it will be, a never ending story, but human dignity may be the generic foundation, and, most of all, is the ground of a pluralistic landscape that every single human being, within diverse understandings of it, can always relate to, including a Catholic approach and the contributes of the Church’s Social Doctrine²¹¹.

Quoting the words of the Portuguese Bishop Manuel Linda (although referring to a concrete situation, we intend to use his words in

from http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html.

²¹⁰ Retrieved August 18, 2019 from https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2000/apr-jun/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20000501_jub-workers.html.

²¹¹ As said previously we can compromise that the Catholic Church has a new development to the way it faces human rights, DAVID HOLLENBACH, in op. cit., referring to John XXIII and especially to the Second Vatican Council, claims that “[...] the support for human rights [...] challenged existing church traditions and what had been seen as the self-interests of the church. Human rights affirmed in this way were able to challenge the existing patterns of the Catholic thought and life precisely because they were seen as expressing true insights into the human good. Because of the deep Catholic claim to be promoting the human good, the tradition was thus compelled to change”, p. 257.

a broader context), a true “catholic conscience cannot accept an economic model that, as the wicked judge of the parable, ‘does not fear God or respect man’²¹²”. In fact, the Church was able to reveal an approach of the Catholics with the fundamental rights and was essential in a critical moment²¹³.

The Social Doctrine presented in all of these documents since the Leonine Encyclical the need to lead a way in the labour theology where man is the main question. The theology “[...] that wants to know the man of today’s life, announce salvation and promote human dignity”²¹⁴.

The divergent understandings are not a sign of weakness but a sign of pluralism, “[a] value where each one, despite our differences, can feel, at some point, related to and, for that, related to the one that have a different understanding about it”²¹⁵.

That’s what history shows us. As Jacques Maritain²¹⁶ commented when the UDHR was drafted “[...] at one of the meetings of a UNESCO National Commission where Human Rights were being discussed, someone expressed astonishment that certain champions of violently opposed ideologies had agreed on a list of those rights. “Yes”, they said, “we agree about the rights but on the condition that no one asks us

²¹² MANUEL LINDA, Bishop, quoted in news of Agencia Ecclesia “Bispo do Porto insurge-se contra processo de despedimento coletivo que envolve corticeira de Santa Maria da Feira”, 2018, retrieved August 20, 2019 from <https://agencia.ecclesia.pt/portal/igreja-trabalho-bispo-do-porto-insurge-se-contra-processo-de-despedimento-coletivo-que-envolve-corticeira-de-santa-maria-da-feira/>, [the original: “Uma consciência católica não pode aceitar este modelo económico que, tal como o juiz iníquo da parábola, ‘nem teme a Deus nem respeita a pessoa’”].

²¹³ Cf. JORGE MIRANDA, *Direitos Fundamentais*, Almedina, Coimbra, 2017, pp. 58-59.

²¹⁴ DIOGO BRONZE DA SILVA, *O trabalho humano no contexto da Doutrina Social da Igreja*, [Mestrado integrado em Teologia (1.º grau canónico)], Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Faculdade de Teologia, Lisboa, 2016, p.77, retrieved August 14, 2019, from https://repositorio.ucp.pt/bitstream/10400.14/20292/1/TESE%20FINAL_ENTREGA_WORD.pdf. [Free translation from the original: “É uma teologia que quer conhecer o homem de hoje, anunciar a salvação e promover a dignidade humana”].

²¹⁵ MARISA ALMEIDA ARAÚJO & AUGUSTO MEIREIS, op. cit., retrieved September 2, 2019, from http://25qt511nswfi49iayd31ch80-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/papers/acerp2019/ACERP2019_44848.pdf.

²¹⁶ For a perspective of Maritain’s conception of ‘human dignity’ see PAUL VALADIER, Jacques Maritain’s personalist conception of human dignity, in Marcus Düwell, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword, Dietmar Mieth, *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 260-268, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2014.

why”²¹⁷. The why, then, and now, is human dignity, as the catalyst for the discussion and “[t]he key to its constructive use, however, is that dignity be used as a facilitator of policy debate [...]”²¹⁸ ²¹⁹ to what every single person can rely on, including a theological approach, to this ongoing story and the new challenges ahead.

In the inspiring words of His Holiness Pope John Paul II “[i]n the world as we find it today what criteria can we use to see that the rights of all persons are protected? What basis can we offer as the soil in which individual and social rights might grow? Unquestionably that basis is the dignity of the human person”²²⁰.

²¹⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (25 July, 1948). Human Rights: Comments and Interpretations. Paris: A Symposium edited by UNESCO with an Introduction by Jacques Maritain.

²¹⁸ TIMOTHY CAULFIELD & AUDREY CHAPMAN, Human Dignity as a Criterion for Science Policy, *PLoS Med* 2(8): e244, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.0020244>, 2005.

²¹⁹ We use the previous quote. However, we need to assume that the context of the authors is not, as we understand it, as broad as the one we intend to compromise on – as the foundation of human rights in general – although, in this extensive interpretation we assume our own understanding. Cf. TIMOTHY CAULFIELD & AUDREY CHAPMAN, op. cit., <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.0020244>.

²²⁰ Message of His Holiness John Paul II to H.E. Dr. Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization, 2 December 1978, retrieved August 12, 2019 from https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1978/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19781202_waldheim.html.