

# Development of Societies

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## Introduction

Development is a multi-faceted word that is shared by academics and social scientists, on the one hand, and policy makers and program implementors on the other. To differentiate the various nuances, a wide range of adjectives have been affixed to the word, as in such phrases as economic development, sustainable development, human development, and socio-cultural development.

The purpose of this paper is to present the multiple interpretations given to the word “development,” starting with the connotations contained in the action programs of international agencies and national governments. Then we shall examine these programs in the light of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church. Finally, I shall cite concrete examples of initiatives for attaining authentic human development all over the world that have been inspired by the teachings of St. Josemaría Escrivá, Founder of Opus Dei.

## The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Since Pope Paul VI uttered in 1967 the famous phrase that development has to “foster the development of each man and of the whole man,” (*Populorum Progressio*, 14), much has been done by world leaders to shift attention from mere economic growth (as measured by an increase in the Gross Domestic Product of a nation) to integral human development. A most prominent effort has been that of the United Nations in mobilizing all member countries to achieve the so-called UN Millennium Development Goals. Addressing various dimensions of human development, the MDGs form a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and leading development institutions.

The eight MDGs are (1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (2) achieve universal primary education; (3) promote gender equality and empower women; (4) reduce child mortality; (5) improve maternal health; (6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; (8) develop a global partnership for development.

The recent report card on how the MDGs are being achieved appeared in the Millennium Development Goals Report 2006, published by the United Nations.

Under Goal 1, Asia leads the decline in global poverty. From 1990 to 2002, rates of extreme poverty fell rapidly in much of Asia, where the number of people earning less than US \$1 a day dropped by nearly a quarter of a billion people, most of them in China. Progress was not so rapid in Latin America and the Caribbean, which now has a larger share of people living in poverty than Southeast Asia and Oceania. Poverty rates in Western Asia and Northern Africa remained almost unchanged between 1990 and 2002 and increased in the transition economies of Southeastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In Sub-Saharan Africa, although the poverty rate decreased marginally, the number of people living in extreme poverty increased by 140 million. The good news is that many sub-Saharan countries are now showing potential for long-term growth that could bring up standards of living.

As Jose Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, wrote in the Foreword to the Report: "...we know that disparities in progress, both among and within countries, are vast, and that the poorest among us, mostly those in remote areas, are being left behind. Much more can and must be done, both by developed countries in increasing their support and by developing countries in using foreign assistance and their own resources more effectively."

### **Models of Development**

In the last fifty years, the most successful countries in attaining many of the goals contained in the MDGs, especially those of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education, were the so-called "miracle economies" of East Asia, i.e. South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong. In just one generation, these territories rose from Third World living conditions to the status of newly industrializing countries that practically eradicated mass poverty and unemployment. As the famous U.S. economist, Paul Krugman, argues in a celebrated article entitled *The Myth of Asia's Miracle*, the spectacular growth of East Asian economies in the last thirty years of the twentieth century and the impressive performances of today's giant economies like China and India, can be mainly attributed to the massive and intelligent mobilization of human resources, illustrating the time-tested truth that people are the ultimate resources of any society. Despite the tremendous advances in technology in recent years, human work is still the ultimate explanation for the success of the emerging economies, yesterday and today.

Referring to Singapore's much-vaunted "economic miracle" between 1966 and 1990, Krugman comments that the "miracle turns out to have been based on perspiration rather than inspiration. Singapore grew through a (massive) mobilization of resources... The employed share of the population surged from 27 to 51 percent. The educational standards of that work force were dramatically upgraded: while in

1966 more than half of the workers had no formal education at all, by 1990 two thirds had completed secondary education.”

Such massive mobilization of human resources was made possible, however, by the enlightened decisions of State officials to allow much leeway for individuals to exercise their freedom of economic initiative. In addition to respecting market forces within reasonable limits, the State in each of these East Asian economies also carried out its indispensable role of constructing the physical infrastructures of the country, establishing peace and order and administering justice. The State also managed the fiscal and monetary sectors of the economy, controlling inflation and thus encouraging high rates of domestic savings. Public investments were also judiciously channeled to universal education and to providing social security. Using the terminology of the West, these countries did not embrace the extreme or rugged form of capitalism but blended social policies with market forces. They thus emulated, wittingly or unwittingly, the social market model made famous by the Germans under Konrad Adenauer.

In contrast with these successful East Asian economies, most of Latin America followed a socialist, interventionist model that greatly suppressed the freedom of economic initiative with excessive regulation, as well as protectionist and ultranationalist policies. This model spawned a host of inefficient industries and greatly neglected rural and agricultural development, to the detriment of the masses of the population who were living in the countryside. In the last decade of the last century, however, many of these countries -together with India and China-learned their lessons and started to introduce more market-oriented policies through one degree or another of deregulation, privatization, and liberalization. Today, the largest emerging economies that give the most hope for attaining authentic development in the next twenty years are Brazil, Russia, India, China and the Southeast Asian nations mainly composed of Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Thailand. These regions are being referred to in financial circles today with the initials BRICA (Brazil, Russia, India, China and the ASEAN-Association of Southeast Asian Nations). They all have a common denominator: a greater emphasis on the freedom of economic initiative and a socially responsible State that proactively creates an attractive investment climate through adequate infrastructures, macroeconomic stability, and good governance.

### **The Social Doctrine of the Church**

It is highly likely that these emerging economies will be among the most successful in attaining the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015, as China has already demonstrated in the last twenty years. The Social Doctrine of the Church, however, sets even higher goals for truly authentic human development. As Pope Paul VI defined development in *Populorum Progressio* (21), societies must go beyond meeting the minimum bodily and educational needs of the human

being. There has to be a struggle against “oppressive political structures, which come from the abuse of ownership or the improper exercise of power, from the exploitation of the worker or unjust transactions.” Development becomes more human with an increase in the consideration of the dignity of others, an orientation towards the spirit of poverty, the cooperation towards the common good, the will to promote peace.

“Then man can acknowledge the highest values and God himself, their author and end. Finally and above all, there is faith—God’s gift to men of good will—and our loving unity in Christ, who calls all men to share God’s life as sons of the living God, the Father of all men.”

These words of Pope Paul VI remind us that the common good is not to be defined as the “greatest good for the greatest number” (a dangerous utilitarian principle embraced by a number of so-called democracies). More correctly, it is a juridical or social order which enables every member of society to attain his or her fullest development economically, politically, culturally, socially and spiritually. Development must benefit the entire individual person, body and soul.

Christians should not hesitate to bring up the importance of the religious dimensions of human development. They should propose, without imposing, the truth that God has a plan of love for the human person. As stated in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (34), “In the communion of love that is God, and in which the Three Divine Persons mutually love one another and are the One God, the human person is called to discover the origin and goal of his existence and of history. The Council Fathers, in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (24), teach that ‘the Lord Jesus Christ, when praying to the Father that they may all be one...as we are one (*Jn* 17:21-22), has opened up new horizons closed to human reason by implying that there is a certain parallel between the union existing among the divine Persons and the union of the children of God in truth and love. It follows, then, that if man is the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake, man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere giving of himself’ (cf. *Lk* 17:33).”

In fact, *Gaudium et Spes* 24 and 25 has a blueprint that greatly exceeds the aspirations contained in the Millennium Development Goals. In a systematic manner, it presents the themes of culture, of economic and social life, of marriage and the family, of the political community, of peace and the community of peoples, in the light of a Christian anthropological outlook and of the Church’s mission. The person is always the starting point and the viewpoint from which everything else is considered. The document constantly emphasizes the truth that man is the only creature that God willed for its own sake. For the first time, the Magisterium of the Church, at its highest level, speaks at great length about the different temporal aspects of Christian life. It should not come as a surprise that the attention

given by the Constitution to social, psychological, political, economic, moral and religious changes has stimulated an increase in the Church's pastoral concern for men's problems and its involvement in the world.

In addition to his oft-quoted definition of authentic human development, Pope Paul VI is also famous for another line in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (76): "Development is the new name for peace." He outlines an integral development of man and of a development in solidarity with all humanity (21, 42). These two topics are to be considered the axes around which the Encyclical is structured. In wishing to convince his audience of the urgent need for action in solidarity, the Pope presents development as the "transition from less than human conditions to truly human ones" and indicates its characteristics. This transition is not limited to merely economic or technological dimensions, but implies for each person the acquisition of culture, the respect of the dignity of others, the acknowledgment of the highest good, the recognition of God himself, the author and end of all blessings. Development that benefits everyone, that responds to the demands of justice on a global scale, that guarantees worldwide peace and makes it possible to achieve a "complete humanism" guided by spiritual values.

If development is the new name of peace, then human work is the main road to development, as has been amply demonstrated in the success stories of the East Asian economies described above. In his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (1981), Pope John Paul II referred to work as the fundamental good of the human person, the primary element of economic activity and the key to the entire social question. *Laborem Exercens* (6) outlines a spirituality and ethic of work in the context of a profound theological and philosophical reflection. The Pope pointed out that work must not be understood only in the objective and material sense. One must also keep in mind its subjective dimension, insofar as it is always an expression of the person, however menial or humble the work may be, objectively speaking. Besides being a decisive paradigm for social life, work has all the dignity of being a context in which the person's natural and supernatural vocation must find fulfillment.

Another innovative insight contributed by Pope John Paul II to the means of attaining authentic human development is his addition of the "freedom of economic initiative" to the list of human rights. In his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (1991), the Pope describes economic initiative as an expression of human intelligence and speaks of the necessity of responding to human needs in a creative and cooperative fashion (cf. n. 32). Creativity and cooperation are signs of the authentic concept of business competition: a *competere*, that is, a seeking together of the most appropriate solutions for responding in the best way possible to needs as they emerge. The sense of responsibility that arises from free economic initiative takes not only the form of an individual virtue required for individual human growth, but also of a social virtue that is necessary for the development of a community in solidarity. As the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* states (n. 343), citing *Centesimus*

*Annus*: “Important virtues are involved in this process, such as diligence, industriousness, prudence in undertaking reasonable risks, reliability and fidelity in interpersonal relationships, as well as courage in carrying out decisions which are difficult and painful but necessary, both for the overall working of a business and in meeting possible set-backs.”

### Development Strategies Inspired by St. Josemaría Escrivá

Always united to the teaching authority of the Church, St. Josemaría Escrivá, Founder of Opus Dei, reinforced and in some instances anticipated the social doctrine of the Church in giving concrete solutions to the goals of authentic human development. Fifty three years before *Laborem Exercens*, St. Josemaría Escrivá had already started to preach about the sanctifying value of human work. In an interview published in the Spanish magazine *Palabra* (October 1967), St. Josemaría explained the meaning of “sanctifying work”: “The expression ‘sanctifying work’ involves fundamental concepts of the theology of Creation. What I have always taught over the last forty years, is that a Christian should do all honest human work, be it intellectual or manual, with the greatest perfection possible: with human perfection (professional competence) and with Christian perfection (for love of God’s Will and as a service to mankind). Human work done in this manner, no matter how humble or insignificant it may seem, helps to shape the world in a Christian way. The world’s divine dimension is made more visible and our human labor is thus incorporated into the marvelous work of Creation and Redemption. It is raised to the order of grace. It is sanctified and becomes God’s work, *operatio Dei, opus Dei*.”

Human work is completely indispensable for the personal development of each human being. As St. Josemaría used to repeat, each person must sanctify his work, sanctify himself in his work, and sanctify others through his work. But besides being a personal obligation work is also a communitarian task. It is a requirement of the common good. From the very beginning of his apostolic work in Opus Dei in 1928, St. Josemaría had already preached what would be stated in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (n. 264) almost five decades later: “No Christian, in light of the fact that he belongs to a united and fraternal community, should feel that he has the right not to work and to live at the expense of others (cf. *1Thess* 3:6-12). Rather, all are charged by the Apostle Paul to make it a point of honor to work with their own hands so as ‘to be dependent on nobody’ (*1Thess* 4:12), and to practice a solidarity which is also material by sharing the fruits of their labor with ‘those in need’ (*Eph* 4:28). Saint James defends the trampled rights of workers: ‘Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts’ (*Jas* 5:4). Believers are to undertake their work in the style of Christ and make it an occasion for Christian witness, commanding ‘the respect of outsiders’ (*1Thess* 4:12).”

St. Josemaría did much during his lifetime to teach and encourage numerous individuals all over the world to make use of their ordinary work to contribute to the common good. Some examples of these private initiatives imbued with the spirit of solidarity, which especially characterized the teachings of Pope John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* and *Centesimus Annus*, are found in a series of publications entitled *The Grandeur of Ordinary Life*. This series was published by the University of the Holy Cross in Rome on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of St. Josemaría, in 2002. In an introduction to Volume XI of the series, Dr. Carlos Cavallé, referring to the very graphic phrase “Christian materialism” coined by St. Josemaría, wrote: “Christian humanism gives priority to spiritual well-being, which is reached as the result of one’s effort to achieve union with God. At the same time, however, Christian humanism insists on the inseparable synthesis between spiritual and material well-being, since it is precisely through created things and honest human activities carried out in the world that most ordinary Christians can and should reach union with God. This kind of ‘Christian materialism’ is at the center of St. Josemaría’s message.

“If we focus on the business world, we see that St. Josemaría’s message is clear and sound. Pointing out the desire and the duty of all Christians to ‘reconcile all things with God, placing Christ, by means of their work in the middle of the world, at the summit of all human activities,’ Blessed Josemaría is telling the corporate world and their executives that this desire to contribute from their business, each one according to his or her own possibilities to building a better society, and creating and distributing goods in a just and equitable way, should be combined with professionalism, a spirit of service which involves putting the needs of others first, and the noble aspiration to bring every human being to Christ. These are ideas that Blessed Josemaría not only preached all over the world, but which, as the Church solemnly declared, he also lived heroically.”

St. Josemaría captured perfectly the freedom of initiative highlighted in the writings of Pope John Paul II, especially in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987). But he saw this freedom, not only from the standpoint of the entrepreneur trying to achieve his legitimate profit by the production and sale of goods and services, but also as the right of businessmen to contribute to the common good through not-for-profit initiatives. He motivated people in business to establish business schools in many parts of the world whose mission is to train men and women of business who commit themselves to work for a just and humane society as they operate and expand their respective businesses with the utmost professional competence and social responsibility. The first one of these business schools was IESE (*Instituto de Estudios Superiores de la Empresa*) Business School in Barcelona, Spain, whose establishment in 1958 was personally encouraged by St. Josemaría. Today, IESE Business School, the business faculty of the University of Navarra in Spain, is considered among the top business schools in the world, having been ranked number one among all schools offering the Masters in Business Administration (MBA)

Program by *The Economist* in 2005 and 2006. What distinguishes IESE Business School is the commitment to the common good that it tries to inculcate in all who participate in its manifold programs, as a consequence of St. Josemaría's teachings.

The following words of the present Dean, Dr. Jordi Canals, in the Introduction to the MBA Program brochure, captures well how IESE, inspired by St. Josemaría, has committed itself to the training of business leaders who have integrated the spirit of solidarity into their corporate mission: "IESE Business School has a proven track record of innovation. It was the first in Europe to establish a two-year MBA and the first in the world to offer a bilingual MBA. Today, IESE has secured its position as a top business school globally, with campuses in Barcelona and Madrid, and pioneering activities in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin American and the United States. Our mission is to transform business and society through management education and leadership development, creating a better world by developing better leaders: people with big aspirations and a spirit of service equipped with the skills and capabilities to make a positive difference."

IESE's experiences have been replicated all over the world by business schools such as the IPADE in Mexico, the IAE in Argentina, and the Lagos Business School in Nigeria, among others. In today's fully globalized economy, business leaders can often be more effective in promoting the international common good than governmental organizations.

In the context of a developing country like the Philippines, I have been personally involved in another undertaking directly promoted by St. Josemaría in the late 1960s. I am referring to the Center for Research and Communication (CRC), a private think tank and graduate school in the Philippines that trained professional people in the field of business economics, mass media, politics and education who were completely conscious of their moral obligation to contribute to the common good of Philippine society. As I described in the same volume to which I referred above, in the series of publications on "The Grandeur of Ordinary Life," CRC was instrumental in encouraging professional people, especially those in business, to promote the common good, through the Makati Business Club. This Club "arose from the efforts of a small group of business executives who received an intense formation in the social doctrine of the Catholic Church during the decade of the seventies in a top management course offered by CRC, where the doctrinal training of all program participants is entrusted to Opus Dei."

All the participants in CRC's programs became keenly aware of the principle of solidarity which businesses should exercise in promoting the good of the entire society, a recurring theme in the teachings of St. Josemaría. What they had heard from St. Josemaría was fully reinforced by the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, which clearly states that people should not regard material goods as belonging exclusively to themselves. Goods, while being privately

owned in most cases, must be used for the benefit of all. Private property must always have a social function.

Established in 1981, the Makati Business Club now has over 800 members from the business community. Clearly distinguished from the traditional chamber of industry association that ordinarily works for the vested interests of particular groups, the MBC espouses causes for the common good, such as democratic reforms, eradication of mass poverty, or good governance. For the past twenty years it has played a major role in raising the consciousness of business people in the Philippines regarding their responsibility to use their talents and resources to promote the human development of each and every member of society.

### **The Training of Youth and Workers**

The apple of the eye of St. Josemaría was the young generation. He encouraged a wide range of initiatives that prepared the young—in whatever profession or occupation—for their future work, and that helped them to see this work as a contribution to authentic human development. In full consonance with the doctrine contained in *Laborem Exercens* of Pope John Paul II, these projects in many parts of the world would be oriented toward either university students or young workers acquiring a technical education. Almost at the same time that CRC was being established in the Philippines, St. Josemaría asked an Italian engineer with a vast experience in the formation of university students to establish the Institute for University Cooperation (ICU in Italian). This organization would mobilize the talents and generosity of thousands of university students all over the world to work for the uplifting of the underprivileged, especially in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In a paper that appeared in Volume IX of *The Grandeur of Ordinary Life*, the late Dr. Umberto Farri described the genesis of ICU: “In the spring of 1966, St. Josemaría asked me to be at the forefront of a task of formation which directly dealt with the training of university students at the international level. He believed that the experiences I had obtained during several years in the management of university residences, cultural centers and academies in different parts of the world could serve as a guiding thread that could help to define and resolve different problems faced by universities all over the world and which need above all serene analysis and educational solutions. It was urgent to have a cooperative effort at the international level so that university students would take interest in their own problems, so that they would understand in a manner that is serene and constructive the different ways of seeing things.

“Without much ado, but with a profound exchange of ideas and experiences among the young university students coming from various educational centers in Italy and other European countries, and in order to respond to the suggestions of St. Josemaría, the participants in a Congress that took place in Villa Falconieri drafted the guidelines for action of the ICU, the *Istituto per la Cooperazione Universitaria*. ICU was to be an association of university people meant to facilitate

international cooperation and development through training projects, research and teaching, in order to face the new challenges of the world of the University throughout the globe, with special focus on the needs of the newly independent countries.”

From that moment on, ICU has been a channel for university students working under the supervision of experienced professional people to contribute their talents, material resources and time to social works in such developing countries as Peru, the Philippines, China and Vietnam.

Without trying to be exhaustive, a final example of how St. Josemaría was the source of inspiration for an undertaking that had far-reaching implications for rural life in many developing countries is the so-called Family Farm School. As discussed above in the discussion of development models, there is a consensus among economists that mass poverty is directly correlated with rural poverty, or the inability of farmers and farm workers to eke out a decent living in the countryside. As in all economic sectors, the most crucial factor for addressing poverty in the rural area is human capital, and in particular the education and training of youth in the farming sector.

As recounted in great detail by Felipe González de Canales and Jesús Carnicero in the book entitled *Roturar y Sembrar* (“Plowing and Sowing”), St. Josemaría played a very important role in the spread of family farm schools in many regions of the developing world. “This concern for the people in the countryside, for their dignity, was to be translated into the need to establish some projects that would enable the farmers to take root in the rural areas, avoiding in this way the temptation to seek in the urban areas what they are missing in the countryside. It became clear that the main beneficiaries of these projects, of this training had to be the young people, without neglecting the parents...”

“Choosing the youth as the main targets of the work of the Family Farm Schools that would be created three or four years later had a simple rationale: to prevent them from abandoning the countryside, which would deprive the rural areas of their best resources, and at the same time making available to them the adequate professional and cultural means, so that they would be capable of providing for their future and that of their children.

“The Founder of Opus Dei had all these very clearly in his mind. As far back as 1930, he had already written about the work that could be undertaken by his children in Opus Dei together with many other persons in order to give dignity to the life and work of the families in the farming sector...”

“St. Josemaría was very glad that the students would be formed in an environment of freedom and responsibility and that the monitors would reside with them and would educate them with authority but without authoritarianism. St.

Josemaría saw the Family Farm Schools as an instrument to help the farmers through the training that would be given to them and the dynamism that would be fostered in the rural sector by means of its associative character and social stimulus. 'That work that you are trying to implant must make you undertake a great catechesis in order to reach, through the Associations of Parents, all the corners of the rural environment.' And he stressed the fact that, because of its extension and implication for individual persons and its repercussions on the entire farming community, such an initiative would be a personal undertaking of those involved in the Family Farm School and not a corporate undertaking of Opus Dei."

### Conclusion

The initiatives directly promoted by St. Josemaría and the countless others that have mushroomed all over the world as a result of the spirit he gave to Opus Dei conform completely with the ideal of authentic human development as defined in the social encyclicals: development for all men and for the whole man. He always insisted that among a hundred souls, a Christian must be interested in helping all one hundred. And much before the phrase "sustainable development" became fashionable, St. Josemaría already had in mind the material and spiritual welfare not only of the present generation but of all human beings who will come to occupy the planet earth until the end of the world. As he told journalist Tad Szulc of the New York Times in an interview on October 7, 1966 (*Conversations with Msgr. Escrivá de Balaguer*, n. 56): "Opus Dei is still very young. Thirty-nine years is barely a beginning for an institution. Our aim is to collaborate with all other Christians in the great mission of being witnesses of Christ's Gospel, to recall that it can vivify any human situation. The task that awaits us is immense. It is a sea without shores, for as long as there are men on earth, no matter how much the techniques of production may change, they will have some type of work that can be offered to God and sanctified. With God's grace Opus Dei wants to teach them how to make their work an act of service to all men of every condition, race and religion. Serving men in this way, they will serve God."

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