



BUILDING A JUST SOCIETY: INTEGRATING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING (CST) INTO NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT PUBLIC POLICIES TO COMBAT CORRUPTION

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Abstract

Building a just society is the fundamental responsibility of the government, which is achieved through effective public policies rooted in sound socio-ethical principles. This paper explores the relevance of integrating the Catholic Social Teachings into Nigerian Public Policy to Combat corruption and contribute to building a just society. The basis of this reflection lies on the Church's understanding of herself as 'true friend of humanity', 'mother and teacher of nations' and 'moral agent' for authentic human cum social development. It underscores sound social cum ethical principles, deduced from the Catholic Social Teachings, on the building of just society; namely, Human Dignity, Solidarity, Subsidiarity, Justice, Love, Peace, Common good, Preferential Option for the Poor, Inclusivity, Mental Renewal. It concludes that concerted effort in integrating the principles of Catholic Social Teachings in the formation of the entire Church members, would contribute significantly in the fight against corruption in Nigeria, towards authentic just society rooted in human dignity, common good and fraternity.

Keywords: Society, Justice, Catholic Social Teaching, Government Public Policies

Introduction

The Question: ***“What Is the Good, the Benefit or the Essence of Building a Just Society?”*** denotes, signifies, suggests and demonstrates that the opposite, which is an unjust society, is possible, real and existent. Consequently, if a society is unjust, it means it is corrupt and unfair. Corruption remains a pervasive problem in many societies, Nigeria included, undermining trust in public institutions, eroding the rule of law, and hindering progress towards a just and equitable world.

An attempt to answer the question above leads us to the famous dictum of St. Augustine that "Nothing draws your love but what is good." These words, written in the fifth century by this Christian theologian, intend to draw our mind to the Good itself, the "goodness of every good," which is God. In this light, we see and delight in every good. What is good? Augustine answers:

“Good is earth with its lofty mountains, its gentle hills, its level plains. Good is the beautiful and fertile land, good the well-built house with its symmetry, its spaciousness and light. Good are the bodies of living things, good is the temperate and wholesome air, good is the pleasant and healthful food, good is health itself, free from pain and weariness. Good is the human face with its regular features, its cheerful expression, its lively colouring; good is the heart of a friend whose comradeship is sweet and whose love is loyal; good is a righteous man, good is wealth for the things that it can enable us to do, good is the sky with its sun, moon, and stars,



good are the angels of holy obedience; good is the speech that instructs the hearer winningly and counsels him appropriately, good is the poem of musical rhythm and profound thought.”¹¹²

In the context of the topic of this paper, let us add to Augustine's words: good is the society that has order and stability, the society that ensures that all people within its domain breathe clean air, drink pure water, eat healthy food, live healthy lives, and engage in productive work. A good society is where friendship flourishes, where love forms families in which parents nurture their children, and where citizens participate fully and freely in the decisions that govern their society. Good is one where its leaders are accountable to their citizens and are propelled in their actions and policies to realize the common good for all. Good is the society that respects one another's autonomy, treats each other fairly and cooperatively engages each other in activities that ensure peace, unity, harmony, justice and equity.

Building a just society has been an essential quest of humanity throughout history. It is the basis of the origin of government, whose goal is to safeguard and promote social justice and the common good of the citizens. Thus, Social justice and the common good is achieved through effective public policy for the development of various sectors of society: agriculture, education, health care, housing, transportation, communication, technology, infrastructure, commerce, banking, roads, and water, among others. This is the responsibility of every government, and failure in this regard leads to civil unrest, increased inequality, economic stagnation, poverty, suffering, and even death of the citizens.

However, throughout human history, the fundamental block or hindrance to building a just society is the reality of corruption, a decline in moral conduct. The problem of curbing corruption in society has concerned philosophers, social scientists, and religious institutions. The Church throughout history understood that combating corruption is not just a political affair, but one that requires sound moral principles rooted in the natural law and the divine law. This fact of understanding is the basis of the Catholic Social Teachings, which has made a significant impact in world politics, and is capable of providing guiding moral principles in combating corruption in Nigeria with regard to the public policy process.

Hence, integrating Catholic social teaching into Nigerian government policies offers a moral and ethical framework to combat corruption in our country. Rooted in principles of human dignity, common good, and social justice, Catholic social teaching provides a comprehensive approach to fostering integrity and accountability in governance. Acting given the common good opens a nation, its leaders and citizens to the realization of social justice and respect for human dignity.

Nigerian Public Policy and Corruption

A cursory glance at the Nigerian society since independence reveals one fundamental problem— notably leadership and corruption in its public policy. Ayogu and Atakpa assert that ‘lots of public policies formulated in Nigeria since independence have not benefited Nigerians adequately as they face serious implementation challenges resulting in their failures.’¹¹³ It is estimated that Nigeria has lost over \$400 billion to corruption in public policy since

¹¹² Augustine, *Trinity* 8.4

¹¹³ Ayogu, Atakpa, *Public Policy and Challenges of Implementation in Nigeria*, 1.



its independence.¹¹⁴ The worst part of this experience is the last and present government. Corruption in their public policy implementation led Nigeria to earn the status as the world's second-largest poor population after India.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, in their first plenary assembly of 2024, laments on the corruption in two important sectors of Nigerian public policy program, the economic and security sectors, which have led the masses to abject poverty and untold suffering as never before in our national history.¹¹⁵ A lot of money has been syphoned on the security vote, with little or nothing to show for it. As a result, the social and economic lives of the people, and even the right to live have been downplayed, leading to loss of life, an increase of internally displaced persons and communities, ethnic wars, etc., because a policy that is meant to safeguard the citizens has been diverted to personal pockets.

Understanding the nature of Just Society, Public Policy, Corruption and Catholic Social Teaching

Just Society

What constitutes a Just society has been a debate among scholars. However, the term just Society refers to what a society "ought" to be, and how leaders ought to rule or manage the state of affairs. It generally appeals to notions of fairness, equality, and liberty. It has been the object of political philosophers throughout history, and many have proposed different theories, ranging from utilitarianism, Machiavellianism, communism, capitalism, imperialism, and many more, each preferring principles of political organization. The church as a true friend of humans, is never aloof in this quest. Throughout history, many church fathers have contributed to the question of building a just society.

Understanding of what constitutes just society involves different moral principles of human socialization. However, I would like to lean on the submissions of Pierre Trudeau. He delineates the nature of a Just Society in these 5 key points:

1. The Just Society will be one in which all of our people will have the means and the motivation to participate.
2. The Just Society will be one in which personal and political freedom will be more securely ensured than it has ever been in the past.
3. The Just Society will be one in which the rights of minorities will be safe from the whims of intolerant majorities.
4. The Just Society will be one in which those regions and groups that have not fully shared in the country's affluence will be given a better opportunity. The Just Society will be one where

¹¹⁴ Wikipedia, Corruption in Nigeria, accessed on 26th February 2025, at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption_in_Nigeria#:~:text=On%20Transparency%20International's%202024%20Corruption,the%20most%20honest%20public%20sector.

¹¹⁵ Lucius Ugorji, *Welcome Address of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), at the Opening Session of the 2024 First Plenary Assembly of the CBCN* at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria Resource Centre, Durumi Abuja on 18 February 2024, 2-3.



such urban problems as housing and pollution will be attacked through the application of new knowledge and new techniques.

5. The Just Society will be one in which our Indian and Inuit population will be encouraged to assume the full rights of citizenship through policies which will give them both greater responsibility for their future and more meaningful equality of opportunity.¹¹⁶

The question is, to what extent have the Nigerian public policies promoted these principles of a just society? Indeed, Nigeria's development is not suffering from a lack of public policies or a dearth of visionary leaders or even a dysfunctional constitutional system as canvassed in certain quarters. It is corruption that has frustrated every effort and diluted the best of intentions. Corruption has spread like a cancer across every level of governance and public life. It is the single greatest threat to our national progress.

Corruption

Corruption comes from the original Latin word *corruptio*, which means 'moral decay, wicked behavior, putridity or rottenness'. It entails perversion or destruction of integrity in the discharge of public duties by bribery or favour. Corruption is the use of public office for private gain. Following from this definition, examples of corrupt behaviour would include: (a) bribery, (b) extortion, (c) fraud, (d) embezzlement, (e) nepotism, (f) cronyism, (g) appropriation of public assets and property for private use, and (h) influence peddling. These form the basis of political corruption, which is most expressed in the process of public policy. Corruption in the Public Policy Process in Nigeria is one of the greatest challenges of Nigerian economic and social development.

Public Policy

Every nation desires to provide and ensure the welfare of its citizens through effective public policies. Public policy is an institutionalized proposal or a decided set of elements, like laws, regulations, guidelines, and actions to solve or address relevant social problems, guided by a conception and often implemented by programs. These policies govern and include various aspects of life such as education, health care, employment, finance, economics, transportation, and all aspects of society. The implementation of public policy is known as public administration. Public policy can be considered the sum of a government's direct and indirect activities and has been conceptualized in a variety of ways.

B.G. Peters defines public policy as "the set of activities that governments engage in for the purpose of changing their economy and society."¹¹⁷ Public problems can originate in endless ways and require different policy responses (such as regulations, subsidies, import quotas, and laws) on the local, national, or international level. The public problems that influence public policy making can be of economic, social, or political nature. Thus, it ceases to be a public policy when it does not promote the common good of the masses and individual citizens.

The Nature of the Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

¹¹⁶ Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1998). Ron Graham (ed.). *The Essential Trudeau*. M&S. pp. 16–20.

¹¹⁷ Peters, B. G. (2015). *Advanced Introduction to Public Policy*. Edward Elgar. p. 3. [ISBN 978-1-78195-576-5](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781781955765).



There have been debates among scholars about the nature of Catholic Social Teaching, its meaning, its present relevance and even its existence. For some critics, CST represented nothing more than an ideological option in front of more operational ideologies such as socialism and communism. Others viewed the social teaching of the Church as a compendium of Papal Encyclicals, whose literal quotation appeared to be of little help for understanding the role of the Church in modern societies.¹¹⁸ In response to these critics, Pope John Paul II defines the nature of Catholic Social Teaching thus:

The Church's Social doctrine is not a 'third way' between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another: rather it constitutes a category of its own. Nor is it an ideology, but rather the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to guide Christian behaviour. It therefore, belongs to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology".¹¹⁹

Furthermore, Catholic Social Teachings 'propose to all men and women a humanism that is up to the standards of God's plan of love in history, an integral and solidary humanism capable of creating a new social, economic and political order, founded on the dignity and freedom of every human person, to be brought about in peace, justice and solidarity. This humanism can become a reality if individual men and women and their communities can cultivate moral and social virtues in themselves and spread them in society. Then, under the necessary help of divine grace, there will arise a generation of new men, the moulders of a new humanity.¹²⁰ However, in integrating CST, one must pay attention to the changing reality of our time and social circumstances, which requires constant updating of the reflections. Thus, from this can spring new strategies suited to the demands of our time and in keeping with human need and resources.

The next question is; whose responsibility is it to promote and integrate the Catholic Social Teaching? It is generally the entire Church: the bishop, priests, religious and lay faithful. It forms part of the Bishop's teaching office. It is in response to this that the Catholic Bishops Conference established a program for teaching CST for the promotion and formation of the Christian people in Catholic Social Doctrine. Accordingly, the priests and religious have the responsibility to study and promote the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in their pastoral services. The lay faithful contribute to the promotion and integration of the catholic social teaching by first being able to discover in the catholic social teaching principles for reflection, criteria for judgment, and guidelines for action.¹²¹

Theological Background

¹¹⁸ Ike Obiora, , *Catholic Social Teaching, Historical Overview and Application*, 44.

¹¹⁹ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, 41.

¹²⁰ John Paul II, *Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching*, 19.

¹²¹ John Paul II, *Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching*, 11.



The quest for a just society, by combating corruption, constitute one of the fundamental teachings of the bible, from which the CST deduced its fundamental moral principles. Thus, the basis of CST reflections and principles on building human society is part ooted in the divine plan for the human person and his society as revealed in the scriptures, with special attention to the signs of time. In the Old Testament, we see the plan of God for humanity, and the reality of human corruption, and the ways in which God designed to redeem man through the teachings of the prophets, and in the fullness of time, in the life, teaching and paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. A solid biblical foundation is necessary for the students of CST in order to facilitate the interpretation of the human reality in the light of faith. For it is only in the unchanging word of God can man find the true development he quests.

To combat corruption towards building a just society, God gave the people of Israel, the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments, outside its religious principles, contains rules for combating corruption of the human will, towards building a just human society. The Holy Father puts it succinctly, “The Ten Commandments teach us the true humanity of man. They bring to light the essential duties, and therefore, indirectly, the fundamental rights inherent like the human person”. They describe universal human morality. In the Gospel, Jesus reminds the rich young man that the Ten Commandments (cf. Mt 19:18) “constitute the indispensable rules of all social life”.¹²² Therefore, corruption in every human society is an act of disobedience to the divine law, which contains principles of natural law and natural right of the human person, as being made in the image and likeness of God, with the gift of rationality to order the relationship with the other.

Jesus underscores his mission as rooted in promoting a just society by combating different corruptions of the human person: economic, physical, moral, socio-political etc., “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19; cf. Is 61:1-2). In this Jesus’ mission statement, we find principles of building social justice, namely: preferential option for the poor and the marginalized through empowerment, education, and promoting peace and human development, which indeed is the proclamation of God’s glory: ‘humanity fully alive’ according to St. Irenaeus.

The life and ministry of Jesus are replete with love for humanity and human society. He combats corruption of his time through his teachings and encounters with different structures of the society that alienate the people. He rebukes the Pharisees, Sadducees, representing both the cultural, religious and legal system, likewise the kings that represent the politicians. Furthermore, Jesus gave the disciples the commandment of love. This commandment of love, according to the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, ‘represents the law of life for God’s people, which must inspire, purify and elevate all human relationships in society and in politics.’¹²³ Love is an authentic source of true human solidarity and communion.

Let us now examine some of the key foundations or principles of the Catholic Social Teaching to enable us appreciate their content and what they seek to achieve.

¹²² John Paul II, *Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching*, 26.

¹²³ John Paul II, CST 33.



FOUNDATIONS OF THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar and episcopal documents.¹²⁴ The depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents. In these brief reflections, we highlight some of the key themes that form the foundation or are at the heart of our Catholic social teaching.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.¹²⁵

In the words of Pope Francis, “The world exists for everyone, because all of us were born with the same dignity. Differences of color, religion, talent, place of birth or residence, and so many others, cannot be used to justify the privileges of some over the rights of all. As a community, we have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.”¹²⁶

Again, he stated that “The dignity of others is to be respected in all circumstances, not because that dignity is something we have invented or imagined, but because human beings possess an intrinsic worth superior to that of material objects and contingent situations. This requires that they be treated differently. That every human being possesses an inalienable dignity is a truth that corresponds to human nature apart from all cultural change. For this reason, human beings have the same inviolable dignity in every age of history and no one can consider himself or herself authorized by particular situations to deny this conviction or to act against it.”¹²⁷

The Church Fathers at the Vatican II Council stated in unequivocal terms that “Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury.”¹²⁸

¹²⁴ <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/foundational-documents>, <visited on 24th February, 2025>.

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Pope Francis, *On Fraternity and Social Friendship* [*Fratelli Tutti*], no. 118

¹²⁷ Ibid no. 213

¹²⁸ Vatican II Council, *The Church in the Modern World* [*Gaudium et Spes*], no. 27



Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society - in economics and politics, in law and policy - directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.¹²⁹

“The existence of each individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes; life is a time for interactions.”¹³⁰

“Human beings are so made that they cannot live, develop and find fulfillment except ‘in the sincere gift of self to others.’ Nor can they fully know themselves apart from an encounter with other persons: ‘I communicate effectively with myself only insofar as I communicate with others.’ No one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love. This is part of the mystery of authentic human existence. ‘Life exists where there is bonding, communion, fraternity; and life is stronger than death when it is built on true relationships and bonds of fidelity. On the contrary, there is no life when we claim to be self-sufficient and live as islands: in these attitudes, death prevails.’”¹³¹

“People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens, not as a mob swayed by the powers that be. Let us not forget that ‘responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation.’”¹³²

Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities - to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.¹³³

“It frequently becomes clear that, in practice, human rights are not equal for all. Respect for those rights is the preliminary condition for a country’s social and economic development. When the dignity of the human person is respected, and his other rights recognized and guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the creativity of the human personality is released through actions that further the common good.’ Yet, ‘by closely observing our contemporary societies, we see numerous contradictions that lead us to wonder whether the equal dignity of all human beings, solemnly proclaimed seventy years ago, is truly recognized, respected, protected, and promoted in every situation. In today’s world, many forms of injustice persist, fed by reductive anthropological visions and by a profit-based economic model that

¹²⁹ <https://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/index.cfm>, <visited on 24th February, 2025>.

¹³⁰ Pope Francis, *Brothers and Sisters to Us* [*Fratelli Tutti*], no. 66

¹³¹ Pope Francis, *On Fraternity and Social Friendship* [*Fratelli Tutti*], no. 87)

¹³² Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel* [*Evangelii Gaudium*], no. 220, quoting United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Nov. 2007, no. 13

¹³³ <https://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/index.cfm>, <visited on 24th February, 2025>.



does not hesitate to exploit, discard and even kill human beings. While one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees its dignity denied, scorned or trampled upon, and its fundamental rights discarded or violated.' What does this tell us about the equality of rights grounded in innate human dignity?"¹³⁴

"Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development. It also has to do with the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups, applying the principle of subsidiarity. Outstanding among those groups is the family, the basic cell of society. Finally, the common good calls for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice; whenever this is violated, violence always ensues. Society as a whole, and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good."¹³⁵

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

"'The Church's love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition.' This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. . . 'Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and despite the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation'. "¹³⁶

"Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice."¹³⁷

"The primary purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. The 'option for the poor,' therefore, is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another. Rather, it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor wounds the whole community. The extent of their suffering is a measure of how far we are from being a true community of persons. These wounds will be healed only by greater solidarity with the poor and among the poor themselves."¹³⁸

"Still, when there is a question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and badly off have a claim to special consideration. The richer class has many ways of shielding themselves and stands less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor has no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State."¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Pope Francis, *On Fraternity and Social Friendship* [*Fratelli Tutti*], no. 22

¹³⁵ Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [*Laudato Si'*], no. 157

¹³⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), nos. 2444, 2448, quoting *Centesimus Annus*, no. 57, and *Libertatis Conscientia*, no. 68

¹³⁷ St. John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Year* [*Centesimus Annus*], no. 58

¹³⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 88

¹³⁹ Pope Leo XIII, *On the Condition of Labor* [*Rerum Novarum*], no. 37



The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected - the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.¹⁴⁰

"Work should be the setting for this rich personal growth, where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God. It follows that, in the reality of today's global society, it is essential that 'we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone,' no matter the limited interests of business and dubious economic reasoning. We were created with a vocation to work. The goal should not be that technological progress increasingly replaces human work, for this would be detrimental to humanity. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development, and personal fulfillment. Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work."¹⁴¹

Solidarity

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that if you want peace, work for justice.¹⁴² The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.¹⁴³

"In today's world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia. What reigns instead is a cool, comfortable, and globalized indifference, born of deep disillusionment concealed behind a deceptive illusion: thinking that we are all-powerful, while failing to realize that we are all in the same boat."¹⁴⁴

"Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all are prior to the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means combating the structural causes of poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land, and housing, and the denial of social and labor rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money... Solidarity, understood in its most profound meaning, is a way of making history, and this is what popular movements are doing."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/index.cfm>, <visited on 24th February, 2025>.

¹⁴¹ Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [*Laudato Si'*], nos. 127-28

¹⁴² Pope Paul VI/messages/peace/documents/hf_p-vi_mes_19711208_v-world-day-for-peace_en.html)

¹⁴³ <https://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/index.cfm>, <visited on 24th February, 2025>.

¹⁴⁴ Pope Francis, *On Fraternity and Social Friendship* [*Fratelli Tutti*], no. 30

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, no. 116



"In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. This option entails recognizing the implications of the universal destination of the world's goods, but, as mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, it demands, before all else an appreciation of the immense dignity of the poor in the light of our deepest convictions as believers. We need only look around us to see that, today, this option is an ethical imperative essential for effectively attaining the common good."¹⁴⁶

"[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all responsible for all."¹⁴⁷

Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity advocates for decisions to be made at the most local level possible, empowering communities to take ownership of their governance. This principle can be leveraged to create more transparent and accountable systems.

"The primary norm for determining the scope and limits of governmental intervention is the 'principle of subsidiarity' cited above. This principle states that, to protect basic justice, the government should undertake only those initiatives that exceed the capacities of individuals or private groups acting independently. The government should not replace or destroy smaller communities and individual initiative. Rather, it should help them contribute more effectively to social well-being and supplement their activity when the demands of justice exceed their capacities. This does not mean, however, that the government that governs least, governs best. Rather, it defines good government intervention as that which truly 'helps' other social groups contribute to the common good by directing, urging, restraining, and regulating economic activity as 'the occasion requires, and necessity demands.'"¹⁴⁸

Common Good: According to Pope John XXIII stated that "the common good is the total of all those conditions of social living- economic, political, cultural which will make it possible for women and men to readily and fully achieve the perfection of their humanity. Individual rights are always experienced within the context of promotion of the common good"¹⁴⁹ The implication of this teaching was further stressed by John Paul II in the famous Encyclical Letter "Laborem Exercens" where he writes: "The economy is for the people and the resources of the earth to be equally shared by all.

Stewardship of Creation: The Earth is sacred. Creation has its intrinsic value. We have a responsibility to protect and to cherish the Earth's ecological diversity, beauty, and life-sustaining properties. Together, we must hold it in trust for future generations. The family

¹⁴⁶ Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* [*Laudato Si'*], no. 158

¹⁴⁷ St. John Paul II, *On Social Concern* [*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*], no. 38

¹⁴⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 124

¹⁴⁹ Pope John Paul II, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 65



needs a home, a fit environment in which to develop its proper relationships. For the human family, this home is the earth, the environment that God the Creator has given us to inhabit with creativity and responsibility. We need to care for the environment: it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion.¹⁵⁰

Participation: Human beings are social, and how we live together affects the dignity of the individual and the progress of society. All persons are entitled to participate in the community, and in decisions that affect their lives and cannot be excluded for any reason. The characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation, which is expressed essentially in a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of a civil community to which he belongs. Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and a view to the common good.¹⁵¹

Economic Justice: The economy must serve people, and not the other way around. All persons have a right to dignified work and to fair wages and working conditions. Work is more than a way to make a living: it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. Global interconnectedness has led to the emergence of a new political power, that of consumers and their associations. This is a phenomenon that needs to be further explored, as it contains positive elements to be encouraged as well as excesses to be avoided. It is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral—and not simply economic—act. Hence, the consumer has a specific social responsibility, which goes hand-in-hand with the social responsibility of the enterprise... A more incisive role for consumers, as long as they are not manipulated by associations that do not truly represent them, is a desirable element for building economic democracy.¹⁵²

Peace: To be in right relationship with God and with each other. Peace is the fruit of Charity and the consequence of Justice. It is the sign of *caritas* in action. Peace is not merely an absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice.¹⁵³

Integrating Catholic Social Teaching into Nigerian Public Policy

The integration of Catholic social teaching into Nigerian government public policies involves translating these principles into actionable strategies. Here are several ways this can be achieved:

Promoting Transparency and Accountability

Policies should be designed to ensure transparency in government operations and decision-making processes. This includes open access to information, public reporting of government

¹⁵⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace 2008, 7

¹⁵¹ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 189

¹⁵² Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 66

¹⁵³ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* 78



activities, and mechanisms for citizens to hold public officials accountable. By fostering an environment of openness, the risk of corrupt practices can be significantly reduced.

Accountability is closely interwoven with the practice of democracy. Democracy thrives on and is sustained by accountability. The essence of public accountability is to uphold core democratic principles, of which public trust, public interest, the rule of law, and good governance are preponderant. The idea of popular sovereignty, on which democracy is anchored, is premised on the notion that it is the people themselves who entrust power to those they elect to serve them. Therefore, elected office bearers are not just to be at least theoretically accountable but, in all intents and purposes, to be practically and realistically accountable to the voters or electorate. As Sodaro¹⁵⁴ points out “democracy places the people above the government”. This is so because in a democracy, the authority of the government derives solely from the consent of the governed expressed through the ballot box (voting). Since the abuse or misuse of public power by government officials is tantamount to a betrayal of public trust, accountability is a necessary adjunct to the power that officials exercise on behalf of the citizenry. Accountability ensures the responsible and transparent exercise of public power. Accountability is the basis for enforcing responsibility. The fact that public officials know that they can face possible sanctions for abuse or misuse of power helps bring sanity to governance. However, accountability is intended to facilitate rather than impede the exercise of power in conformity with the public interest. In a society that embraces accountability, public officials are conscious of the fact that they are to always serve and pursue the common interest of the people.

Greater Transparency and Accountability in the Public Sector

The public sector is an essential part of every economy¹⁵⁵. As governments contend with competing priorities, they need to make important decisions with the aim that short-term measures are taken with appropriate regard to long-term financial sustainability and resilience. Decisions made by governments today will impact generations to come¹⁵⁶ and will have implications for future policy, tax, and spending decisions. The basic social contract between governments and citizens is continually changing, and therefore, there is a heightened need for **transparency and accountability** to help citizens understand how public funds are being managed and spent,¹⁵⁷ how decisions are made and why, and the evidence and information to support decisions.

To ensure governments and public sector entities around the world make informed decisions for people, the planet, and the economy, they need strong governance and public financial management (PFM). To manage public resources effectively and efficiently, governments need strong governance and a robust PFM system so that the use of resources is tracked and that resources are appropriately allocated against public policy objectives. Governments must endeavor to achieve the most with the resources they have, maximizing efficiencies in public service delivery while minimizing loss through waste, fraud, or corruption. Governments face

¹⁵⁴ Sodaro, M. *Comparative Politics: A Global Introduction*. New York: McGraw Hill, (2001) pg. 28.

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.ifac.org/what-we-do/speak-out-global-voice/points-view/greater-transparency-and-accountability-public-sector#tab1-1>

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.ifac.org/what-we-do/speak-out-global-voice/points-view/greater-transparency-and-accountability-public-sector#tab1-5>

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.ifac.org/what-we-do/speak-out-global-voice/points-view/greater-transparency-and-accountability-public-sector#tab1-6>



numerous competing priorities and require reliable financial and non-financial information to make informed, data-driven decisions on priority areas of spending and investment. To enhance governments' accountability for decision-making, high levels of transparency are required.

Strengthening Legal Frameworks

The institutional and legal mechanisms for combating corruption vary from society to society. Countries usually would adopt measures that best suit their local circumstances in setting up anti-corruption laws and mechanisms. In the introduction to the work "Combating Corruption"¹⁵⁸ it was stated;

"From a domestic point of view, there are two separate but complementary, aspects of the fight against corruption. The first consists of upstream rules and norms of good behaviour (codes of conduct, manifestos, declarations) conducive to a corruption free society (preventive approach). The second aspect consists of anticorruption laws proper (general or specific legislative enactments), whose purpose is to provide appropriate remedies, including criminal sanctions and penalties, procedural rules, and institutional mechanisms as needed, to combat acts of corruption that have already occurred (curative approach). The first aspect deals with corruption *ex ante*; the second aspect deals with corruption *ex post*."

Some experts suggest that there are three forms of corruption: collusive (involving willing and planned cooperation of the giver and taker), extortionary (implying forced extraction of bribes or other favours from vulnerable victims by the authority), and anticipatory (involving payment of a bribe or presentation of a gift in anticipation of favourable actions)¹⁵⁹.

Usually, legal mechanisms are directed at containing whatever aspect of corruption the society considers to be most problematic to it. The question of legal mechanisms is important because corruption invariably exists within a legal framework, and it is either that such a framework is effective in containing corruption or the corruption will invariably lead to the destruction of such a legal system. It is therefore incontestable that the law is crucial in the fight against corruption. The law provides the framework for dealing with acts that are considered illegal or wrong by the particular society.¹⁶⁰

Most Nigerian legislations on corruption have always generally focused on corruption in the public sector with little or no attention being focused on the private sector corruption. The reason for this had long-held assumption that corruption in the public sector is more damaging to the interest of the country and should therefore be tackled more vigorously than corruption in the private sector. The instructive provisions of section 8 (1) of the Corrupt Practices Act¹⁶¹ opens with the phrase "**any person,**" therefore implying that it applies to both public officers and persons employed in the private sector.

¹⁵⁸ Combating Corruption: a comparative review of selected legal aspects of state and major international initiatives W.Paatii Ofosu-Amaah, Raj Soopramanien, Kishor Uprety.

¹⁵⁹ Paul Samuel "Corruption: Who Will Bell the Cat?" Economic and Political Weekly (June 7) 1997

¹⁶⁰ Chudi N. Okonkwo, "Legal and Institutional Mechanism Against Corruption in Nigeria" P.1, (Paper delivered at a Conference on Combating corruption in Nigeria 2001.)

¹⁶¹ Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000



A strong legal framework based on the rule of law and principles of human rights provides a mechanism by which a state frames its laws in response to the people's will. This is the foundation of an effective rule-of-law environment. Legal frameworks that discriminate against certain segments of a population, and/or fail to pass laws that promote the rights of all citizens, can also contribute to conflict. Legal frameworks should be internally consistent while adapted to cultural norms and ensure the equitable participation of all citizens.

Respect for the rule of law and due process is enhanced in a society where accountability is taken seriously. The rule of law simply means governance in accordance with the dictates of the law. A government of the rule of law cannot act unconstitutionally. Dicey¹⁶² maintains that the rule of law preserves fundamental human rights and safeguards against arbitrary governance. The rule of law, according to Falana,¹⁶³ requires avoidance of arbitrariness; and procedural and legal transparency. Public officials will not act capriciously or arbitrarily in a nation under the rule of law. Accountability invariably advances human rights, the observance of the rule of law, and due process within the confines of the law. Accountability promotes good governance by making the government and its officials more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. Accountability helps to focus public officials on the common good and commits them towards caring for the welfare of the masses.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of any framework for combating corruption depends largely on political will rather than the legal framework. It has been suggested that over-reliance on legal remedies is not an effective corruption combating strategy. It has been stated that “too much reliance on enforcement leads to repression, abuse of enforcement power, and the emergence of further corruption”¹⁶⁴

Encouraging Ethical Leadership

Leaders play a crucial role in setting the tone for ethical behavior within government. Policies should promote the selection and training of leaders who embody the values of human dignity, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Ethical leadership fosters a culture of integrity and inspires confidence in public institutions.

Recently, academicians and researchers have paid greater attention to studying the relationship between leaders and followers. This endeavor has resulted in formulations of leadership theories but the major leadership theories that are noted for their ethical orientation are transformational leadership and servant-leadership¹⁶⁵

Ethics is very critical in leadership in any organizational setting. Ethics, as used here, refers to values and principles that guide right and wrong behavior.¹⁶⁶ Leadership demands ethics

¹⁶² Dicey, A., *An Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*. London: Spring Books (1959).

¹⁶³ Falana, F., “The Rule of Law or the Rule of the Law.” A Paper Presented at the 2008 Annual General Conference of The Nigerian Bar Association, Abuja.

¹⁶⁴ Chudi N. Okonkwo, “Legal and Institutional Mechanism Against Corruption In Nigeria” P.1, (Paper delivered at a Conference on Combating corruption in Nigeria 2001.)pg.11

¹⁶⁵ Northouse, P. G. *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (4th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2007.

¹⁶⁶ Menzel, D. C. *Ethics Management for Public Administrators: Building Organizations of Integrity*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007.



because of the responsibilities it shoulders. According to Bowman,¹⁶⁷ ethics is the key to the flourishing of democracy and its administration. Those in leadership positions in a democratic government and, in fact, in all forms of government, need to be ethical as they pilot the affairs of their organizations or societies. The moral quality of individuals living in a society determines the survival of and the flourishing of life in that society. Those in a leadership role, to a greater extent, play a part in determining the moral quality of their followers. Their behavioral influence can positively or negatively impact the moral fiber of society, and leaders do more than physical harm any time their actions and behavior fail to be in congruence with the shared moral values. Such neglect or compromise can cause moral cynicism, which “like a cancer, corrodes the moral health of society.” Ethical leadership plays a pivotal and critical role in any group, organization, and society at large.¹⁶⁸

On transformational leadership, Burns¹⁶⁹ formulated a leadership model that makes the case for ethics in leadership. He posited that transforming leadership involved the leader’s ability to elevate both themselves and followers “to higher levels of motivation and morality,” which is done when leaders motivate followers by appealing to higher ideals and moral values for the achievement of common goals. A genuine transformational leader is not selfish but one who is motivated by altruism; deeply engaged with followers via effective communication channels; and addresses the “wants, needs, and other motivations, of the followers and of the leaders.” True leadership takes place when leaders utilize their power to mobilize all the available resources “to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of the followers... done in order to realize goals mutually held by both leaders and followers.” And for Denhardt, “this mutuality of goals, which is the essence of true leadership entails, “the values, motivations, wants, needs, interests, and expectations of both leaders and followers must be represented.”¹⁷⁰

Fostering Civic Engagement

Active participation of citizens in governance is vital for combating corruption. Policies should facilitate civic engagement by providing platforms for dialogue, encouraging community involvement in decision-making, and supporting civil society organizations. Engaged citizens are more likely to demand accountability and reject corrupt practices.

In virtually all nations of the world, a larger chunk of their citizens and residents (millions and billions of people) are denied the privilege of actively participating in the polity, be it politics, economics, and sociocultural systems, that determine their existence.¹⁷¹ Whilst these deprived population are denied access to relate with their political leaders and state actors, thereby having no stake in formulation cum implementation of policies that have a bearing on them, the government has often failed in service delivery, working for some selected insignificant

¹⁶⁷ Bowman, J. “Introduction: Ethical Theory and Practice in Public Management.” In Bowman, J. (Ed). *Ethical Frontiers in Public Management* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1991, pp. 185-204.

¹⁶⁸ Kanungo, R. N., & Mendonca, M. *Ethical dimensions of leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996, pg. 6.

¹⁶⁹ Burns, J. M. *Leadership*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978, pp.18-20.

¹⁷⁰ Denhardt, R., Denhardt, J., & Aristigueta, M. (2002). *Managing Human Behavior in Public & Nonprofit Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002, pg. 200

¹⁷¹ Erude, S. U., Igere, W. & Okereka, O. P. “Bureaucratic Features and Job Performance in Nigeria: A Study of Delta State Civil Service.” *International Journal of Social Sciences & Management Research*, 9(5): 2023, pp.87-99. <https://www.doi.org/10.56201/ijssmr.v9.no5.2023.87-99>



few having both political and economic power, with the attendant widening of the inequality gap.¹⁷²

Coming from a broad perspective, the role of citizens engagement cannot be overemphasized, as it enables the society stand on the principles of equity cum fairness, as well as allowing persons to have a say in the governance of their societies and states. It upholds the tenets of communism cum spirit of ubuntu - I live because you live or live and let others live.¹⁷³ Civic engagement supports a democratic ethos as well as upholding social justice. This is because democracy thrives on citizens' involvement in governance. When the public are actively involved in politics, and public officials cum servants are accountable, they join together to determine policies beneficial to all the citizens. Irrespective of the forms, nature, or interventions, civic engagement in every regard is pivotal to maintain a productive societal set-up. By relying on social capital as well as individual and group trust, civic engagement plays an important role in harmonizing the different interests and societal strata. Moreover, it creates a culture that is transparent as well as responsible, by supporting efficiency in all sectors, be it political or social.

Civic engagement as a concept has been viewed from different perspectives vis-a-vis citizenship, such as participating in elections, being involved in activities within an organization, volunteering as a person, as well as actions that are collectively taken. Hence, the concept of civic engagement is said to be deliberate steps cum actions to address concerns of the public, via personal effort, action collectively taken, or engaging democratic institutions¹⁷⁴. There are certain characteristic features associated with civic engagement. It is a voluntary service, void of salary and/or wages, altruistic in nature, and speaks to character cum actions, and it is public oriented.

Civic engagement refers to the consistent participation of citizens in societal matters to make life better for the common good. Most times, we see civic engagement as peculiar to the activities cum actions orchestrated by young people in the community, older members of the community can still be involved in the process.

Making matters worse, is the electoral umpire, The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which has consistently failed to conduct an election that is free and fair and void of electoral malpractices like rigging, killings, monetization of voter cards, voter intimidation, coercion and threat, just to mention a few, since the start of the fourth Republic. The 2023 elections, both at the presidential as well as state elections, attested to this point. We witnessed a high level of manipulation of election results, aided by the officials of INEC. Most of the results coming from states like Rivers, Lagos, etc., did not show the wishes of the electorate.¹⁷⁵ This recent development in the country, has increased the level of distrust and

¹⁷² Ford Foundation, *Civic Engagement and Government*, 2024 Retrieved from <https://www.fordfoundation.org> on 26 February, 2025.

¹⁷³ Ameh, E., Mukoro, A. & Erude, S. U. "Rules and Ethical Conduct Guiding the Performance of the Public Service Sector." *American Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Africa*, 4(1): (2024).1-13. <https://doi.org/10.58314/ATG708>

¹⁷⁴ Paschalis, A. *The Concepts and Determinants of Civic Engagement*. Human Affairs, 27, (2017) pp. 252-272.

¹⁷⁵ Odionye, N. & Odionye, C. J. "Impact of Government Educational Spending on Total Productivity and Economic Growth in Nigeria." *American Journal of Arts and Educational Administration Research*, 2(2):2024, pp.1-13. <https://doi.org/10.58314/23Pkts>



apathy in the government, especially amongst the younger generation, as a lot felt betrayed seeing the outcome of the election, and have concluded that the government lacks the moral justification to deliver on its promises, with the attendant lethargic disposition to political engagement. Worthy of mention too is the fundamental role that the duo of religion and ethnicity play in Nigeria, and as always, ever exploited by the political elites, especially during elections, to bias Nigerian citizens, set them up against one another for their political gains. This has deepened the mistrust, suspicion, inequality gap, social injustice, as well as political exclusion, that have lingered till date in our country. For this sort of narrative to change, those who bear the brunt or are at the receiving end of these biases, inequalities, and electoral malpractices have a stake and must brace up to act and get involved.

Ensuring Equitable Distribution of Resources

Corruption often exacerbates inequality by diverting resources away from those who need them most. Policies should prioritize the equitable distribution of resources, ensuring that all members of society have access to basic needs such as education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. This aligns with the principle of the common good and helps to build a more just society.

Ensuring equitable distribution of resources concerns the role justice and fairness play in making sure that a nation's distribution of its resources does not occasion marginalization or complaints thereof from some sections or parts of the country. So, justice in this context pertains to the good of the whole, every part of a nation or country. Justice as a norm can be applied variously to the relations between individuals (say, fairness in the market-place), to relations between the government and its citizens regarding the fairness of the government's distribution of the society's goods (distributive justice), and more broadly to the interrelationships that make up the whole (society, the global order, the earth) and to the cooperative effort required on the part of all to realize the good of the whole. Here, the justice that is sought in and through the interrelationships that constitute the whole is the common good of the whole. Acting for the common good, then, defines this third form of justice, termed social justice, to distinguish it from individual justice and distributive justice. The good of social justice - acting for the common good - this is the hallmark of catholic social teaching.

Economic Policy

There can be no just society without good economic policy. It includes fiscal policy (government spending and revenue), monetary policy (interest rates and money supply), structural policy (long-term economic efficiency and competitiveness), regulatory policy (market rules and regulations), distributive policy (income inequality and social welfare), and international trade policy (trade agreements and barriers) - all of which interact and influence various aspects of an economy depending on the specific policy goals. Corruption in this dimension of public policy has been the greatest challenge to Nigerian society. The country has lost billions of naira due to corruption in economic policy. It affects both the industrialists, investors, entrepreneurs, and laborers, who constitute the majority of the population. The effects of economic policy include inequality and, lack of distributive justice in the allocation of resources.



This corruption in the economic policy has been denounced in *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Pius XII in 1894. It proposes that good economic policy should promote the respect for the right of every human person to own property and means of livelihood, without which there will be civil unrest. It proposes the need for an organized and effective labor organization. Most often, corruption in the economic policy in Nigeria lingered due to a lack of formidable labour and industrial organization, which challenges the government while making those policies that stifle development. The rights and duties of the employers, as compared with the rights and duties of the employed, ought to be the subject of careful consideration. Every economic policy must ensure the creation of jobs and funds for the well-being of the workers to effectively solve their needs, not only in cases of accident, but also in sickness, old age, and distress.¹⁷⁶ Thus, authentic economic public policy requires the principles of transparency, accountability, participation, solidarity, subsidiarity, justice, option for the poor, common good, and care of the environment, without which there is no sustainable and integral economic development that enhances human life and dignity.

The Social Development Policy

Social Development Policy is the ultimate objective of public policy. Thus, every public policy that does not facilitate consensus and participation of the masses is nothing but a perversion. To combat corruption in the Nigerian public policy process, consensus and participation are essential to successful reform and to achieving broad agreement on the priorities of policy. Against this background, Pope John Paul II asserts that ‘all persons are entitled to participate in community, and in decisions that affect their lives, and cannot be excluded for any reason. The characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation, which is expressed essentially in a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of a civil community to which he belongs. Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and a view to the common good.’¹⁷⁷

Furthermore, collaboration with international bodies towards social development should be done in the spirit of solidarity. The NGOs should apply the principles of true love, offering holistic support that enhances human life and dignity. In our time of international collaboration in economics and social development, which is replete with both positive and negative impacts. The CST encourages that this collaboration should be done in the spirit of solidarity and promotion of standards that enhance the developing countries, and not milk them. Nigeria and most African countries experience these challenges in international economic policy. To address this, there is a need to empower the rural areas in Agriculture in the spirit of subsidiarity.

8. Challenges and Opportunities

Presence of Religious/Denominational Differences.

One of the fundamental challenges affecting the integration of catholic social doctrines into Nigerian public policy is the fact that Nigeria is a multi-religious cum denominational oriented country. As a nation, she is characterized by a rich tapestry of religious diversity, with two

¹⁷⁶ *Rerum Novarum*, 57

¹⁷⁷ John Paul II, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 189.



main religions – Islam and Christianity - influencing the worldview of adherents with divergent beliefs, doctrines, and orientations. These diverse doctrinal/belief and orientations often create and lead to internal competition and divergence in priorities and perspectives for our leaders and citizens. In this context, therefore, the catholic social teaching becomes limited in scope as it can only make sense to a convinced and committed Catholic Christian who is willing to imbibe and exemplify these principles in his or her life and not otherwise. The ultimate challenge lies in that faithful catholic who is convinced and is willing to live by these principles and foster them in his/her social, economic, and political relationships with others. Moreover, the theological perspectives on socio-economic and political engagements vary among different religious segments in our country, as some theological doctrines emphasize a separation between the sacred and the secular, leading to varying degrees of reluctance or enthusiasm to work for the realization of the common good for all Nigerians. Therefore, holding out our catholic social teachings in the face of corruption and other theological principles and perspectives influencing adherents of other religions or Christian denominations is imperative in addressing the societal issues on public policy challenges for ensuring a cohesive and effective approach to the Church's role in shaping ethical governance.

Scandal of Glaring Inequalities

The rising disparity between the rich and the poor occurring in our country in recent times, and the political dispensation leaves much to be desired. Besides the vivid injustice of some living in excessive luxury while so many others starve to death, these acute disparities, especially seen between our leaders, those in power, and the rest of us, do seriously undermine the legitimacy of governments and sharply threaten the nation's peace. The urgency in integrating Catholic social teaching in Nigeria's public policy to combat the glaring inequalities will continue and escalate as the sufferings of the poor are exacerbated by the negative forces of corruption and social injustice. The condemnation of the excesses of free-market capitalism should intensify as well as the search for alternative economic and regulatory structures.

In *Caritas in Veritate*¹⁷⁸, Pope Benedict joins his predecessors in decrying the “scandal of glaring inequalities.” The Pope blames the continuing reality of underdevelopment, in the words of Paul VI, on “the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples.”¹⁷⁹ He contrasts some wealthy people within underdeveloped nations with the hunger that “still reaps enormous numbers of victims among those who, like Lazarus, are not permitted to take their place at the rich man's table...”¹⁸⁰

In contrast to the economic and social realities of inequality, Benedict writes that the appearance of being connected globally must be transformed into true communion and that development “*depends, above all, on a recognition that the human race is a single family ... not simply a group of subjects who happen to live side by side.*”¹⁸¹ The glaring inequalities make us neighbors, but do not make us brothers. These observations above lay the groundwork for Pope Benedict's recommendations that all peoples must live within one human community, one family “built in solidarity based on the fundamental values of justice and peace.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 22

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, no. 19

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, no. 27

¹⁸¹ Ibid, no. 53

¹⁸² Ibid, no. 54



Institutionalized Tribalism and Nepotism

Institutionalized tribalism or ethnicity, and nepotism have become a big bane and a massive boulder to the effective eradication of corruption in our country. It fans the embers of incompetence and bigotry that corrode the sense of common good, an undue and unbridled sense of entitlement to positions of power, access to resources, and attachment to rights without responsibilities. It has created massive holes and trenches in the terrain that holds the fabrics of Nigerian society together. It has brought unimaginable disparities in public service and public space with reference to equal access to income, assets, education, health, and what have you to all citizens. It has limited the participation of many in the Commonwealth of Nigeria, but is restricted to the few who are related or connected with those in positions of power and authority.

Consequently, all violations and abuse of procedures that engender nepotism and ethnic considerations in the public sector of the Nigerian economy are acts of corruption. When civil/public servants are recruited based on sentiments along family lines, cronyism and all other considerations that negate merit and competence, it negates productivity, equity, equality, fairness, and national development. Corruption rooted in institutionalized tribalism and nepotism can be very tragic to nations, and its pervasiveness can lead to low economic performance of countries, like our nation, Nigeria.

Case Studies

Several countries have successfully integrated Catholic social teaching into their anti-corruption strategies, providing valuable lessons for others.

In Mexico

In Mexico, the Church has partnered with civil society organizations to combat corruption and promote social justice. Initiatives like the *Centro de Reflexión y Acción Social* (CERAS) work to empower communities and advocate for policies that reflect the principles of Catholic social teaching.

In the Philippines

In the Philippines, the Catholic Church has been a vocal advocate for good governance and anti-corruption. Church-led initiatives, such as the *Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting* (PPCRV), have played a significant role in promoting transparency and accountability in elections.

Conclusion

Building a just society requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the root causes of corruption and promotes ethical governance. Catholic social teaching offers a robust framework for achieving this goal. By integrating its principles into government policies, we can work towards a world where integrity prevails and the dignity of every person is respected. This journey requires commitment, collaboration, and a shared vision of the common good, but the rewards - a just and equitable society - are well worth the effort.

With the realization that Catholic Social Teaching is not just a set of rules for one political party, nation, or group, it behooves us, therefore, to see these principles as a guiding thread



with wisdom and direction to help mankind find solutions to problems it faces daily in social cohesion.

The message of Pope Pius XII to the world at the height of the World War II (Christmas message 1942) retains its validity and even reflects our situation in Nigeria and indeed worldwide today: “it tells us that the purpose of the whole of the State’s activity, political and economic, is the permanent realization of the common good: that is to say, the provision of those external conditions which are needful to citizens as a whole for the development of their qualities and the fulfilment of their duties in every sphere of life, material, intellectual and spiritual”¹⁸³.

It is clear then that those of us who have been and are being rooted in the tradition of Catholic social teaching and social thought have many challenges ahead of us in our country, Nigeria. We have much more work to do, and Catholic Social Teaching have much more to do as well by helping us in the fight against corruption in Nigeria so that justice and peace will reign, the rule of law prevails, progress and respect for one another is the norm and fight for the common good of all prevails.

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