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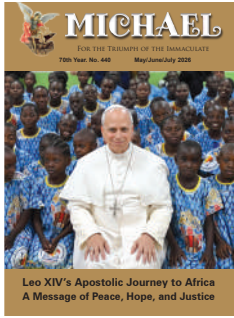
FOR THE TRIUMPH OF THE IMMACULATE

70th Year. No. 440

May/June/July 2026



**Leo XIV's Apostolic Journey to Africa
A Message of Peace, Hope, and Justice**



MICHAEL

A journal of Catholic patriots
for the Kingship of Christ and
Mary in souls, in families
and in nations

For social justice through Economic Democracy
in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic
Church through the vigilant actions of heads of
families, and not through political parties

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Cover photo: Leo XIV in Cameroon



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Letter from the Editor

No Peace Without Justice

All people of good will aspire to peace, yet wars continue to multiply throughout the world, and thousands of innocent people are being killed. The twentieth century witnessed the horrors of two world wars, and what is currently taking place in Iran and the Middle East raises the threat of a third world war that could be even more devastating, since today's weapons are far more powerful and destructive. Can a war be considered "just"? (See page 16.) How can such a catastrophe be prevented?

We read in no. 2304 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Respect for and development of human life require peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, nor can it be reduced solely to maintaining a balance of power between enemies. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among human beings, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the constant practice of fraternity. Peace is the 'tranquility of order' (Saint Augustine). It is the work of justice (cf. Isaiah 32:17) and the effect of charity (cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 78, §§1-2)."

Peace is not simply the absence of war, but rather "the tranquility of order." What kind of order? An order that allows life in society and respects people in their dignity and rights, founded upon truth, inspired by charity, and sustained by justice.

What is justice? In his *Summa Theologica*, Saint Thomas Aquinas defines it as "rendering to each what is due to him." We can divide this definition into two parts: what is due to God and what is due to man, to human beings.

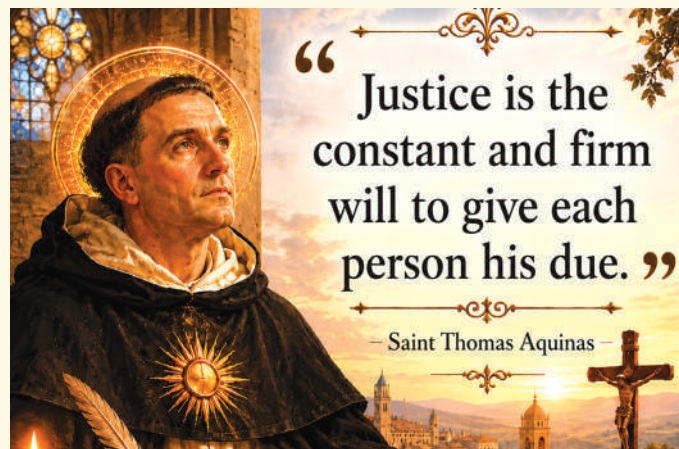
What is due to God is the virtue of religion, which consists in giving God the worship, adoration, and obedience owed to Him as Creator and Lord.

What is due to man: because every human being is created in the image of God, each person must receive respect for his or her dignity, truth, fairness, and protection of fundamental rights. In the Decalogue, Commandments 4 through 10 concretely define what each person owes to his neighbour: honour (parents and legitimate authorities), respect for life, respect for purity, respect for the property of others, respect for truth, and respect for interior integrity (not coveting).

To work for peace, therefore, means working for

the establishment of justice in the world (see page 10). And for us at *Michael Journal*, disciples of the school of Economic Democracy founded by Clifford Hugh Douglas and Louis Even, what is due to every human being is a social dividend — a monthly sum of money representing each person's share in the inheritance of natural resources and of progress, including inventions inherited from previous generations.

For us at *Michael Journal*, justice also requires an honest monetary system that enables people to obtain the goods they need and to "make financially possible what is physically achievable" (see page 4). People should be able simply to make use of available resources, goods, and services without generating impossible debts, making money a representation of realities and permission to obtain them, rather than allowing people to go hungry in the



midst of abundance simply because they have no money.

We have spoken of rendering to God and to man what is due to each. This brings to mind the famous words from the Gospel: "Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and unto God what belongs to God."

Various interpretations have been given to this phrase, particularly the obligation to pay taxes to the government — to "Caesar" — without complaint. Louis Even offered a different interpretation, one that places limits upon Caesar's power and opens new possibilities for liberation from financial problems (see page 6).

Peace is a gift from God that we must ask of Him and can therefore be obtained through prayer. Pope Leo XIV explains this in his plea for peace (see page 11), while also describing during his apostolic journey to Africa (see page 24) the conditions of justice necessary for authentic peace. One particularly effective prayer for obtaining peace is the Rosary of the Virgin Mary (see page 18).

The Virgin Mary desires nothing other than to lead us to her Son Jesus, as she does in all her apparitions. France was especially blessed with Mary's favours during the nineteenth century through several apparitions, including that of Pellevoisin, whose 150th anniversary will be celebrated in 2026 (see page 20).

We must rediscover true values (see page 30) and teach them to our children (see page 17). Enjoy your reading! ❖

Alain Pilote, Editor

Making financially possible what is physically possible

Money can be either an instrument of service or a tool of domination

by Louis Even

The importance of money

A system of barter was the norm in the past when one's neighbour produced what another neighbour needed and vice versa.

But this type of primitive economy is long gone. Today, except for some farmers' products, goods are intended for the general marketplace, and everyone purchases what they require from the same marketplace. Under such a system, money plays a pivotal role.

Modern economies are complex, and production relies on a division of labour. Global productivity means more goods than are produced nationally are available in the marketplace. In order for a complex system to function, the economy must have more than just the capacity for production. There is also a corollary need to access, or purchase, what is produced.

Workers are compensated by their employers. The compensation does not consist of products made by the same workers, however. If Paul makes shoes he will not be paid each week in shoes. Paul and his family need other goods. If Jim works in a paper mill, he will want something other than wood pulp in return for his services.

Paul, Jim and their families will go to the marketplace to meet their other needs. This is why money was invented. Paul's employer pays him using money, and sells the shoes he manufactures for money to others. Likewise, Jim's employer pays him with money, and sells his wood pulp to whoever wants it, for money.

If the companies that hired Paul and Jim had no money, they would be unable to hire workers and produce shoes and wood pulp. Physically, production would be possible but, financially, such production would not proceed for the lack of money.

In the same way, if all the Pauls and Jims were provided with enough money, they would be able to fully participate in the marketplace and purchase the products they needed. Without money, they would not be able to do so, regardless of how many products were for sale. Unsold products would accumulate, producers would reduce their outputs, and workers would be laid off, resulting in unemployment and a further restriction on the access to goods.

Finance decides

Countless manufacturers have closed or tempered their operations due to a lack of financing. How many consumers have suffered and done without necessities, or contracted long-term debts, simply because they did not have the means to pay for the goods they needed?

In these cases, production was physically possible. Distribution was also physically possible, as there were sufficient merchants and no lack of delivery options. Yet, distribution came to a standstill because what was physically possible was not financially possible.

Decisions were made based on financial matters and not as a function of reality.

This is also true of governments at all levels. Public projects could easily be completed if municipalities had the money to pay for them. The proof is that they are undertaken as soon as money is borrowed. Financiers, who produce absolutely nothing of value, benefit.

Finance is the final arbiter, whether in the private or public sphere. Yet society did not invent the financial system to be a burden that penalizes the ordinary person. We consider the financial system flawed. It acts like a tyrant rather than a servant.

Overthrowing tyranny

The Pilgrims of St. Michael denounce the tyranny of the financial system over economic life.

Financial problems ought not exist. Money can be easily made. This is attested by the fact that a world that went without money for ten years during the Great Depression suddenly found the billions necessary to wage an international war that endured for six years.

Douglas Social Crediters argue that "whatever is physically possible and desirable should, by that very fact, be made financially possible."

It is not a matter of promising the moon. It is a matter of committing ourselves to reaching a goal that can readily be attained. We are not the only ones who say that this can be done. A man well versed in the ways of finance, Graham Towers, who was the first governor of the Bank of Canada, held the same position.

In 1939, before the House of Commons' permanent Committee on Banking and Commerce, a question was asked by Norman Jacques, M.P. and answered by Towers. Here is the discussion, recorded on page 771 of the Minutes of the Common's Banking and Commerce Committee:

Jacques : Do you concede that anything physically possible and desirable can be made financially possible?

Towers : Certainly!

This was in 1939. A few months later, war was declared. Subsequent events proved that it was quite easy to render financially possible all that was physically possible. There was no purely financial problem that prevented the Second World War from being waged after the financial limitation was remedied.

President Roosevelt called these purely financial problems "nonsense" — and so they are! When the United States entered the war, he declared publicly that he would not allow the war effort to be handicapped by financial nonsense.

The goal is not to render financially possible all that is required to conduct a war, but instead to render financially possible all that can be executed physically in response to the needs of the population and society.

Is it physically possible to provide enough food, clothing, housing and medical care in order that all people might have their basic needs met? No one would deny that it is physically possible to meet the population's needs. If these needs are not met, it is for one of two reasons. The first is that there is a shortage of financing for production. The second is that the money required by the population to meet their needs is not available.



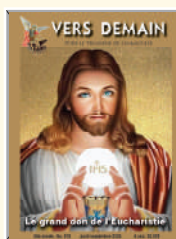
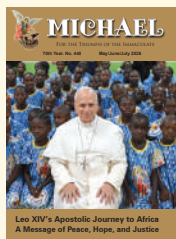
By John McArthur on Unsplash.com

We refuse to accept this divorce between what is physically possible and what is financially possible. The question is no longer "Can it be paid for?" but instead, "Can it be made? Can it be transported? Can the product be delivered?" If the answer is "Yes all this is physically possible" then, in all logic and by human reason, it should be made financially possible.

The same applies to the needs of municipalities, school boards and other public institutions. Insofar as development projects are physically possible, they must be made financially possible. New money must be created whenever new wealth is made, and money must be cancelled out only at the rate at which consumption takes place.

Only then will you have a humane economy; not an economy that is designed by bureaucrats and politicians, but an economy that is regulated by the consumers themselves, private and public. This would be an economy that is not controlled but one which responds to the clearly stated needs of free men who possess the means, money, to demand what they wish. ❖

Louis Even



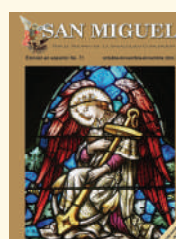
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RENDER TO CAESAR WHAT IS CAESAR'S AND TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S



At this time of the year when income tax returns are due, some will complain that the tax burden has become higher and higher. People will be told "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's...". The biblical passage is used to mollify the public but the far-reaching meaning of the Gospel passage is not presented. They imply that no matter what the State (Caesar) requires in payment for taxes, we must comply without complaint.

In the following article, Louis Even sheds light on the true meaning of this Gospel passage, which actually puts a limit on Caesar's demands, and thus opens up unsuspected possibilities.

by Louis Even

The Pharisees, anxious to entrap Jesus in His words, sent their followers to Him, along with the Herodians who were supporters of Rome, to pose the question: **"Is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, or not?"** (Matthew 22:17)

In those days, the "tribute" was different from the income tax paid by citizens today. The tribute implied subjugation: it was an obligation exacted by the conqueror upon the vanquished, as Rome had conquered Palestine by force.

Our Lord answered by first exposing the trap prepared by the Pharisees: **"Hypocrites, why do you thus put Me to the test?"** He then asked them to show Him the coin of tribute, on which was engraved the image of Caesar. Then he said to them: **"Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."**

A curtailed quote

Usually, those who quote this line of the Gospel do it to stress the duty to pay taxes. And they do so with much eloquence. Most of the time, they quote the first part of the text only — that which concerns

Caesar. The latter part, concerning God, is usually passed over in silence, because these speakers are so preoccupied with the importance of Caesar today.

Even when people quote the first part, they seldom draw attention to the limitative nature of the words "what is Caesar's". We say "limitative", because Caesar does not own everything. But apparently, if one listened to the "tax preachers", one should give to Caesar all that he demands. Caesar usually has a hearty appetite, caring little whether there are things that are due to those he robs via taxation.

You understand that Caesar means the government, or more precisely, governments, since there are as many Caesars as there are levels in the political structure of a nation. In Canada, there are municipal Caesars, provincial Caesars, and a federal Caesar. And before long, to top it all off, perhaps we will also be afflicted with a supranational Caesar with universal jurisdiction.

The result of this hierarchy of Caesars, stretching higher and higher, has been the extraction of larger and larger "tributes". The ears of these Caesars have become more and more distant from the voices of the people, while their sticky fingers reach down into every strata of society, taking much of our incomes and squeezing all they can from every economic transaction.

But does something belong to Caesar simply because he demands it?

Limits to Caesar's power

In a speech delivered in the House of Commons on July 6, 1960, during the debate on the Canadian Bill of Rights, Noel Dorion, the MP for Bellechasse, Quebec (a few months after he became a minister in the Conservative cabinet) quoted the reply of Jesus

to the Herodians. However, Mr. Dorion did not use it in favour of taxes. On the contrary, the topic debated in Ottawa that day was human rights, and not the rights of Caesar. Mr. Dorion rightly remarked:

“It is Christ who really set forth the first charter of human rights, summing it up in these succinct words which, after two thousand years, are still timely: Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Mr. Dorion did not elaborate further on this statement. But considering the subject of the debate, he certainly meant that man, the human person, belongs to God, and not to Caesar; that Caesar does not have the right to encroach upon what belongs to God; that Caesar must respect the dignity, freedom, and the rights of each and every citizen. This includes the right to life and to those conditions which will permit the full development of the person. The rights of Caesar are limited by the fundamental rights of the human person.

The human person before Caesar

Dorion saw in the words of Our Lord a limitation to the power of Caesar, instead of a justification for any kind of tax. This is because he quoted it in full: “Render, therefore, to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

To Caesar what is Caesar’s — no more than that; and, everything does not belong to Caesar.

It is precisely to protect the citizens from the all-powerful state, to make Caesar the guardian of the rights of individuals — at least in principle — that, on August 4, 1960, the Canadian Parliament unanimously voted to adopt a Bill of Rights, however incomplete it was.

In presenting this bill, on July 1, 1960, Prime Minister Diefenbaker himself stressed its purpose: “To keep and safeguard the freedom of the individual from the governments, even the all-powerful ones. Why? Because the individual, the human person, is sovereign before Caesar. Diefenbaker knew it, and he said: **“The sacred right of the individual consecrates him sovereign in his relationship with the state.”**

Pope Pius XI wrote in his encyclical letter, *Divini Redemptoris*: **“The human person ought to be put in the first rank of earthly realities.”** In the first rank, therefore before any other institution, before any Caesar.

Pope Pius XII wrote in his letter to the chairman of France’s social works on July 14, 1946:

“It is the human person that God put at the top of the visible universe, making him, in economics and politics as well, the measure of all things.”

Caesar’s share

Still, one must render to Caesar what is Caesar’s. Render to him not all that he wants or can seize, but only what belongs to him.

So, what belongs to Caesar? We think it can be defined as follows: what is necessary to carry out his functions.

This definition seems to be implicitly accepted by Caesar himself, by the government, since the government says to those who complain about the burden of taxes: “The more services people demand, the more means the government needs to provide these services.”

This is true. But in order to carry out his proper functions, Caesar must not have recourse to means that prevent people and families from carrying out their particular functions.

Besides, in order to increase his importance, Caesar is always tempted to take over functions that normally belong to families, and not to the state. Moreover, the citizens would not need the help of Caesar so much if Caesar first removed the obstacle that only he can remove: the artificial obstacle created by a financial system that is not in keeping with the huge physical possibilities that could satisfy the basic material needs of every individual and family in our country.

Because Caesar does not correct this situation, Caesar goes beyond his proper role and accumulates new functions, using them as a pretext for levying new taxes — sometimes ruinous ones — on citizens and families. Caesar thus becomes the tool of a financial dictatorship that he should destroy, and the oppressor of citizens and families that he should protect.

The life of the individual does not belong to Caesar, but to God. Life is something that belongs only to God, something that not even the individual can suppress or shorten deliberately. But when Caesar puts individuals in conditions that shorten their lives, then Caesar takes what does not belong to him; he takes what belongs to God.

The human person and the family are a creation of God, and Caesar must not destroy nor undermine this fact. He must, on the contrary, protect against whoever wants to encroach upon their integrity and rights.

To deprive a family of its home because it cannot pay the property taxes is to act against the family and against God. Caesar does not have that right.

How many other infringements on the rights and belongings of individuals and families could be mentioned!

Before Caesar's needs

But Caesar has indeed some functions to carry out that cannot be entrusted to individuals. There are some services and goods that can only be obtained from Caesar — for example, an army to defend the country in the event of war; a police force to keep order against those who disturb it; the building of roads, bridges, and a public means of communication between various towns in our country. Caesar must have the means to provide the population with these services.

Certainly, but what does Caesar need to provide these services? The state needs human and material resources. It needs manpower.

Caesar needs one part of the productive capacity of our country. In a democratic system, it is up to the elected representatives of the people to determine what part of the country's capacity to produce should be used for the needs of Caesar.

If one thinks in terms of realities, one must admit that there is no difficulty whatsoever in giving Caesar one part of the country's productive capacity, while leaving at the disposal of private needs a capacity to produce that can easily meet all the normal needs of the citizens.

Let us use the verb "to tax" in the sense of "making rigorous demands on." One can say then that private and public needs tax or make demands upon the productive capacity of a nation. When I demand a pair of shoes, I tax the capacity to produce shoes. When the provincial Caesar has a kilometre of road built, it taxes the capacity to build roads for the length of one kilometre. Yet, with today's ample productive capacity, the construction of roads does not hinder the production of shoes.

It is only when one stops considering the situation in terms of realities, and instead expresses oneself in terms of money, that difficulties arise. Taxes then take on another appearance and "make rigorous demands" on wallets. If Caesar takes \$60 from my income as a contribution to his road, then he deprives me of the equivalent of a pair of shoes, so that he may build his road. Why is that, since our country's productive capacity can supply the road without depriving me of a pair of shoes? Why? Because the

money system falsifies the facts.

— "But Caesar must pay his employees, he must pay for the materials he uses," some will say.

— Certainly. But, when all is said and done, what does Caesar do when he pays an engineer \$400, for example? He allows this engineer to buy \$400 worth of goods or services to make demands on the productive capacity of our country for the value of \$400. So, in order to meet the needs of the engineer, is it necessary to deprive me of the right to buy a pair of shoes? Cannot our country's capacity to produce meet the needs of the engineer without reducing the production of shoes?

That is the whole point: as long as the productive capacity of the country has not been exhausted, there is absolutely no need to tax the private sector in order to finance the public sector.

The productive capacity of our country is far from being exhausted, since today's problem is precisely that of finding jobs for people and machinery.

If the means of payment constitute a problem, it is because they do not correspond to the capacity of production. The 'tickets' (money) that allow us to draw on the productive capacity of our country are smaller in amount than the capacity to produce.

This shortage of 'tickets' is an unjustifiable situation, especially when today's money system is basically a system of figures, a bookkeeping system. If the monetary bookkeeping does not correspond to the production capacity, it is neither the fault of the producers nor of those who need what is produced.

It is the controllers of the money and financial credit who ration money in spite of an unused productive capacity that is waiting to be used.

The citizens alone cannot correct this falsification of realities by the financial system. But Caesar can! Since Caesar is the government, since he is charged with taking care of the common good, he can — and must — order the controllers of the financial system to put their system in tune with reality.

As long as Caesar refuses to make this correction, he makes himself the servant, the tool of the financial dictatorship; he gives up his sovereign



Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (Matthew 22:21)

function and the taxes he demands, because of this financial falsehood, are actually not owed to him. "Modern taxation is legalized robbery," said Clifford Hugh Douglas. Caesar has no right to rob, even if the function is made legal.

Nobody denies Caesar the right to tax the productive capacity of our country for public needs — at least, as long as the part he takes leaves enough to meet the demand of private needs. There again, it is the job of the governments to see that this happens.

Private and public debts are the best proof that the productive capacity of a country is only partially used. The population cannot collectively pay, and consume, all that is produced.

Mammon – financial dictatorship

This debt that represents created goods, plus the sum of the privations caused by no production due to the lack of money, represent the sacrifices required by the financial dictatorship, or in other words, by Mammon.

Mammon is not a legitimate Caesar. We must render nothing to Mammon, because nothing belongs to him. Mammon is an intruder, a usurper, thief and tyrant.

Mammon has become the supreme sovereign above Caesar, above the most powerful Caesars in the world. Caesar has become the instrument of Mammon, a mere tax collector for Mammon.

If Caesar needs one part of the productive capacity of our country to carry out his function, he also must be watched by the population; he must be reprimanded when, instead of being an institution at the service of the common good, he lets himself become the servant and lackey of financial tyranny, Mammon.

Today's great disorder spreads like a cancer in spite of the fantastic progress in production which should have freed men from material worries. Everything is connected with money as though money were a reality. The disorder lies in the fact that a cabal of private individuals have been allowed to regulate the conditions of the issue of money, not as accountants of reality but for their own profits, to strengthen their despotic power over all economic life.

Money created with production

There is another occasion that is quoted less often than the coin of the tribute, where Jesus had to deal with taxes. This time, it was not about a trib-

**Something does not belong to Caesar
simply because he demands it.
The rights of Caesar are limited
by the prior rights of the human person.
The human person belongs to God.**

ute to the conqueror, but the didrachma — a tax established by the Jews themselves for the maintenance of the Temple (Matthew 17:24-26). Those who collected this tax came to Saint Peter and said: "Does your Master (Jesus) not pay the didrachma?" Jesus said to Peter: "Go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. And opening its mouth, you will find a stater. Take that and give it to them for Me and for you."

This time, money was created with production. The government cannot do miracles, but it can easily establish a monetary system in which money is based upon production, that is in keeping with production. In other words, it must put a figure on the productive capacity of a country and align the means of payment with that figure to finance both the public and private sectors. It would be more in keeping with the common good than to leave the control of money and credit to the arbitrary will of the high priests of Mammon.

Pope Pius XI wrote that the controllers of money and credit have become the masters of our lives, and that no one dares breathe against their will.

Caesar has become a mere lackey of Mammon. We will not bow to Mammon's control of Caesar. The State, controlled by greedy financial tyrants, has no moral authority to deprive individuals and families of their due or bend to the greedy dictates of tyrants.

Mammon's dictatorship is the enemy of God, of Caesar, of the human person created by God, and of the entire family established by God.

Social Creditors, the Pilgrims of St. Michael, work to free men from this dictatorship. At the same time, they work to free Caesar from his subjection to Mammon. Social Creditors are in the vanguard of those who want to give to the human person, created in the image of God, what is his, to render to the family, established by God, what belongs to it, and to render to God what is God's. ❖

Louis Even

Acting for Peace in the World

The 2025 Jubilee Year, under the theme *Hope Does Not Disappoint*, was an opportunity to strengthen our Christian hope. It was a year filled with activities and apostolic work, a year of growth for the Louis Even Institute.

The year 2026 must become even more deeply rooted in Hope. Hope always walks hand in hand with its two great sisters: Faith and Charity, and these, in turn, always need Hope.

In light of the troubling situation in the world today, and following Pope Leo XIV's renewed appeals for peace and disarmament, we join the Holy Father in praying to God for peace. Therefore, for the year 2026, we have chosen the theme: **Acting for Peace in the World.**

"Love and Truth meet together; Justice and Peace embrace." (Psalm 84)

Love is God. Truth is God. Therefore, God meets God. What happens when God meets God? Can we imagine the brilliant light, the dazzling radiance that floods heaven and earth? This purity brings forth justice and peace.

God's love for all humanity is undeniable. Every human being should love God, not merely because God cares for each of us, but simply because He loves us. This is the first commandment.

For a long time I meditated, with my eyes closed, on these words: "Love and Truth meet together; Justice and Peace embrace." And I saw Economic Democracy. Let me explain how:

The second commandment asks us to love our neighbour.

Fraternal love means having toward our neighbour, as toward ourselves, an attitude of justice — acting in such a way that we and all our brothers and sisters may have what we need in order to live and flourish in peace. In this definition we find:

Justice – Action – Peace. Therefore: Economic Democracy.

Truth is what is real, what corresponds to reality. The goods of the earth are realities meant to be made available to everyone. This is Economic Democracy through a social dividend.

Justice seeks to increase what is right and good. It recognizes and respects the rights and dignity of others and gives each person what is due to them. This is Economic Democracy through money without debt.

Peace is an act of building harmony within ourselves and within our surroundings. This is Economic Democracy.

How can we act for peace in the world? In the light of Psalm 84: "Love and Truth meet together; Justice and Peace embrace," an answer immediately comes to mind: Economic Democracy.

Acting for peace in the world. Love means

action. True love is revealed through action. And acting to spread around us the beautiful truth of Economic Democracy — is this not the very mission of the Louis Even Institute in the pursuit of Social Justice?

And peace will come to the world. Our program for the year 2026: Acting for Peace in the World! Are we ready to act? ❖

Marcelle Caya
Director, Louis Even Institute



"Justice and Peace Embrace," oil painting by Jacopo Palma il Giovane (1544-1628), Estense Gallery and Museum, Modena, Italy.

Monthly meetings
House of the Immaculate, Rougemont
June 28, July 26
Study session: Sept. 23-24
Annual Congress: Sept. 26-27

Leo XIV's Plea for Peace

by Alain Pilote

There has been the war in Ukraine, now entering its fourth year; the conflicts in Gaza, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have claimed thousands of lives; and now, since late February 2026, the attacks by Israel and the United States against Iran.

This latest conflict has captured the world's attention in a particular way because of its global economic repercussions: 20 percent of the world's oil production passes through the Strait of Hormuz, running along the Iranian coast. Since the beginning of this war, the Strait has been blocked, reducing access to oil for many countries around the world, especially China, Japan, and India, and driving up oil prices worldwide.

In addition, 30 percent of global fertilizer trade — vital for worldwide food production — also passes through the Strait of Hormuz. This blockade therefore effectively threatens famine in several African countries and, combined with rising oil prices (essential for transportation), is driving food costs higher.

A catastrophic global upheaval is now unfolding, one that could easily escalate into a Third World War directly involving the major powers, with many even accusing China and Russia of secretly supporting Iran with weapons and strategic intelligence.

"Your Hands Are Full of Blood"

In the face of such war madness, one voice has risen in the world to proclaim common sense and reason — the message of peace, the message of the Gospel of Jesus: the voice of the Vicar of Christ, Pope Leo XIV. Many still remember his very first words after his election as the successor of Saint Peter on May 8, 2025: "Peace be with you!... The peace of the Risen Christ — a peace that is unarmed and disarming."

Seeing the urgency of the current situation, the Holy Father has multiplied in recent weeks his public appeals of rare intensity in favour of peace, addressing both the parties involved in the conflicts, governments, and arms dealers. For example, in his Palm Sunday homily on March 29, 2026, he said:

"We turn our gaze to Jesus, who reveals himself as King of Peace, even as war looms around him... Brothers and sisters, this is our God: Jesus, King of Peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war. He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them, saying: 'Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood' (Is 1:15)... Christ, King of Peace, cries out again from his cross: God

is love! Have mercy! Lay down your weapons! Remember that you are brothers and sisters!"

"Let those who have weapons lay them down"

One week later, on Easter Sunday, the Pope delivered the traditional *Urbi et Orbi* ("To the City and to the World") Easter message from the central balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica. Before extending Easter greetings to the crowd in ten languages, he spoke these words of peace:



*Leo XIV blesses the crowd on Easter Sunday
Photo: © Vatican Media*

"The power with which Christ rose is entirely non-violent. It is like that of a grain of wheat which, having rotted in the earth, grows, breaks through the clods, sprouts, and becomes a golden ear of wheat. It is even more like that of a human heart which, wounded by an offense, rejects the instinct for revenge and, filled with compassion, prays for the one who has committed the offense.

"Brothers and sisters, this is the true strength that brings peace to humanity, because it fosters respectful relationships at every level: among individuals, families, social groups, and nations. It does not seek private interests, but the common good; it does not seek to impose its own plan, but to help design and carry out a plan together with others...

"In the light of Easter, let us allow ourselves to be amazed by Christ! Let us allow our hearts to be

► **transformed by his immense love for us! Let those who have weapons lay them down! Let those who have the power to unleash wars choose peace! Not a peace imposed by force, but through dialogue! Not with the desire to dominate others, but to encounter them!**"

"We are growing accustomed to violence, resigning ourselves to it, and becoming indifferent. Indifferent to the deaths of thousands of people. Indifferent to the repercussions of hatred and division that conflicts sow. Indifferent to the economic and social consequences they produce, which we all feel. There is an ever-increasing 'globalization of indifference,' to borrow an expression dear to Pope Francis, who one year ago from this loggia addressed his final words to the world, reminding us: 'What a great thirst for death, for killing, we witness each day in the many conflicts raging in different parts of the world!'"

Trump Enters the Debate

That same Easter Sunday, U.S. President Donald Trump posted the following message on his *Truth Social* platform, in unusually harsh language:

"Tuesday (April 7) will be Power Plant Day and Bridge Day all rolled into one in Iran. There will be nothing like it!!! There will be nothing like it!!! Open the damn Strait, you crazy lunatics, or you will live in hell — YOU WILL SEE! Praise be to Allah."

In other words, Trump was threatening to destroy all of Iran's power plants and bridges. To make his intentions even clearer, he added: **"We are blowing up the entire country"** if Iran failed to reach an agreement within forty-eight hours.

On the morning of Tuesday, April 7, Donald Trump continued to maintain suspense by publishing another message on *Truth Social*: **"A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again,"** if Iran did not yield before 8:00 p.m. He had previously threatened to "blast Iran into oblivion" and send it "back to the Stone Age." Such statements even raised fears of the possible use of a nuclear weapon.

That same day, following the American president's remarks, Pope Leo XIV, leaving his residence at Castel Gandolfo late in the afternoon, addressed journalists in English and Italian: "Today, as we all know, there is also this threat hanging over the people of Iran, and **this is truly unacceptable.**" He recalled that attacks against civilian infrastructure violate international law and are "a sign of the hatred, division and destruction of which human beings are capable."

The Holy Father described this conflict as an **unjust war** (see page 16), "which continues to intensify and solves nothing," while worsening the global economic crisis and increasing instability throughout the Middle East. He even directly called upon Amer-

ican citizens to contact their elected representatives in Congress and demand peace — a rare departure from the Vatican's traditional protocol of neutrality, but one he considered necessary in light of the danger of escalation that could lead to a world war. Leo XIV concluded: "Let us return to the table, let us speak, let us seek peaceful solutions, and above all let us remember the innocent — the children, the elderly, and the sick."

Shortly before the expiry of his 8:00 p.m. ultimatum, however, Trump eventually stepped back and announced a two-week ceasefire following mediation efforts by Pakistan. The entire world, which had been holding its breath, could breathe somewhat more easily.

Prayer Vigil for Peace

Since the threat of a total war had not disappeared, on Saturday, April 11, the Holy Father invited pilgrims from around the world to gather in Saint Peter's Basilica and Saint Peter's Square in Rome to pray the Rosary to the Virgin Mary and invoke peace. Here are excerpts from his address:

"Now joined in the prayer of the Holy Rosary, as we ask for the intercession of our Mother Mary, we wish to tell the whole world that it is possible to build peace, a new peace; that it is possible to live together with all peoples of every religion and every race; that we wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ, united as brothers and sisters, all united in a world of peace.

"War divides; hope unites. Arrogance tramples upon others; love lifts up. Idolatry blinds us; the living God enlightens. My dearest friends, all it takes is a little faith, a mere "crumb" of faith, in order to face this dramatic hour in history together — as humanity and alongside humanity. Prayer is not a refuge in which to hide from our responsibilities, nor an anesthetic to numb the pain provoked by so much injustice. Rather, it is the most selfless, universal and transformative response to death: we are a people who are already risen!..."

"In the context of the 2003 Iraq war crisis, Saint John Paul II, a tireless advocate for peace, said with deep emotion: "I belong to that generation that lived through World War II and, thanks be to God, survived it. I have the duty to say to all young people, to those who are younger than I, who have not had this experience: "No more war" as Paul VI said during his first visit to the United Nations. We must do everything possible. We know well that peace is not possible at any price. But we all know how great is this responsibility" (*Angelus*, March 16, 2003). I make his appeal my own this evening, relevant as it is today.

"Prayer teaches us how to act. In prayer, our limited human possibilities are joined to the infinite possibilities of God. Thoughts, words and deeds then break the demonic cycle of evil and are placed at the service



Leo XIV lays flowers before the statue of Our Lady of Peace during the April 11 prayer vigil. Photo: © Vatican Media

of the Kingdom of God. A Kingdom in which there is no sword, no drone, no vengeance, no trivialization of evil, no unjust profit, but only dignity, understanding and forgiveness. It is here that we find a bulwark against that delusion of omnipotence that surrounds us and is becoming increasingly unpredictable and aggressive.

“The balance within the human family has been severely destabilized. Even the holy Name of God, the God of life, is being dragged into discourses of death. A world of brothers and sisters with one heavenly Father vanishes, as in a nightmare, giving way to a reality populated by enemies. We are met by threats, rather than the invitation to listen and to come together. Brothers and sisters, those who pray are aware of their own limitations; they do not kill or threaten with death. Instead, death enslaves those who have turned their backs on the living God, turning themselves and their own power into a mute, blind and deaf idol (cf. Ps 115:4–8), to which they sacrifice every value, demanding that the whole world bend its knee.

“Enough of the idolatry of self and money! Enough of the display of power! Enough of war! True strength is shown in serving life. With evangelical simplicity, Saint John XXIII once wrote: “The benefits of peace will be felt everywhere, by individuals, by families, by nations, by the whole human race.” And echoing the incisive words of Pius XII, he added: “Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war” (*Encyclical Letter Pacem in Terris*, 116).

Let us, therefore, unite the moral and spiritual strength of the millions and billions of men and women, young and old, who today choose to believe in peace, caring for the wounds and repairing the damage left behind by the madness of war. I receive countless letters from children in areas of conflict. In reading them, one perceives, through the lens of innocence, all the horror and inhumanity of actions that some adults boast of with pride. Let us listen to the voices of children!

Dear brothers and sisters, there are certainly binding responsibilities that fall to the leaders of nations. ►

► To them we cry out: Stop! It is time for peace! Sit at the table of dialogue and mediation, not at the table where rearmament is planned and deadly actions are decided! Yet there is a no less significant responsibility that falls to all of us — men and women from all over the world. We are an immense multitude that rejects war not only in word, but also in deed. Prayer calls us to leave behind whatever violence remains in our hearts and minds.

“Let us turn to a Kingdom of peace that is built up day by day — in our homes, schools, neighborhoods, and civil and religious communities. A Kingdom that counters polemics and resignation through friendship and a culture of encounter. Let us believe once again in love, moderation and good politics. We must form ourselves and get personally involved, each following our own calling. Everyone has a place in the mosaic of peace!...

“Dear brothers and sisters, let us return home having made a commitment to pray without ceasing and without growing weary, a commitment to a profound conversion of heart. The Church is a great people at the service of reconciliation and peace. She advances without hesitation, even when rejecting the logic of war may lead to misunderstanding and scorn. She proclaims the Gospel of peace and instills obedience to God rather than any human authority, especially when the inherent dignity of other human beings is threatened by continuous violations of international law. “Throughout the world, it is to be hoped that every community become a ‘house of peace,’ where one learns how to defuse hostility through dialogue, where justice is practiced and forgiveness is cherished. Now more than ever, we must show that peace is not a utopia” (*Message for the 59th World Day of Peace, January 1, 2026*).

Trump Responds

Feeling targeted by these repeated appeals for peace, President Trump, returning to Washington after a weekend in Miami, stopped before cameras and declared: “I’m not a big fan of Pope Leo. He’s a very liberal person, and he’s someone who doesn’t believe in fighting crime.” Later that evening, Trump intensified his criticism by posting another strongly worded statement on Truth Social directed at Leo XIV:

“Pope Leo is weak on crime and disastrous on foreign policy. I do not want a Pope criticizing the President of the United States because I am doing exactly what I was elected to do... I do not want a Pope who thinks it is acceptable for Iran to possess a nuclear weapon...

“Leo should be grateful because, as everyone knows, he was not on anyone’s list to become Pope, and he was only placed there by the Church because he was American and because they thought it would be the best way to manage President Donald J. Trump.

Leo would not be at the Vatican if I were not in the White House.”

Trump was therefore implying that it was because of him — rather than the Holy Spirit — that Cardinal Robert Prevost had been elected Pope.

Why This War?

One may wonder why President Trump, who was elected after promising no longer to involve the United States in endless wars, continues to insist that this military intervention against Iran is necessary in order to prevent the country from obtaining nuclear weapons. In fact, this seems rather similar to the argument used by the United States for the war against Iraq in 2003, when President Bush claimed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, something that later proved to be false.

Furthermore, Joe Kent, former Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, stated on May 7, 2026, that the entire U.S. intelligence community, including the CIA, had concluded prior to the outbreak of the war that Iran was not developing nuclear weapons. According to Kent, U.S. intelligence agencies had also accurately anticipated Iran’s response: attacks on American military bases in the region and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Finally, according to an investigation by *The New York Times* by Jonathan Swan and Maggie Haberman (April 13–14, 2026), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and David Barnea, Director of Mossad (Israel’s foreign intelligence agency), played a key role in Donald Trump’s decision to attack Iran. During a secret meeting in the White House Situation Room on February 11, 2026, Netanyahu reportedly presented Trump with a strategic scenario — including videos, projections, and a Mossad presentation — intended to persuade him that a rapid collapse of the Iranian regime was achievable. This presentation, which reportedly contradicted the more cautious assessments of the CIA, is said to have been a decisive factor in convincing Trump to support Israel’s military operation.

Some even suggest that religious beliefs could encourage the United States, Israel, and even Iran to continue this conflict and turn it into a world war. Certain American fundamentalist Christian groups seek to bring about the “Battle of Armageddon,” which according to the Bible (Revelation 16:16) will pit Israel and its allies against a coalition of hostile nations, thereby hastening the Second Coming of Jesus after this final war.

Meanwhile, some Jews in Israel believe that their Messiah will appear at the end of such a conflict, while Muslims await a similar figure known as the Mahdi. According to this line of thinking, for those who hold such beliefs, negotiation may appear pointless because they see it as preferable to hasten the end of the world!



Leo XIV responds to journalists aboard the papal plane

Pope Leo: “There is a better way”

On April 13, journalists accompanying Pope Leo XIV aboard the aircraft on his apostolic journey to Algeria and three other African countries naturally asked him about the comments made the previous day by President Trump. The Holy Father replied in English with remarkable calm:

“I am not afraid of the Trump administration. I am not a politician, nor do I intend to enter into a debate with him. The message is always the same: to promote peace. I will continue to speak out loudly against war, to promote dialogue and multilateral relations among states in order to find just solutions to problems. Too many people in the world are suffering today. Too many innocent people are being killed. And I believe someone must stand up and say that there is a better way.”

On April 23, 2026, during a press conference aboard the return flight from Africa to Rome, Italian journalist Ignazio Ingrao asked the Holy Father the following question:

“During the Peace Meeting in Bamenda, Cameroon, you described a world turned upside down, where a handful — a minority of tyrants — risks destroying the planet... In light of that, I would like to ask

you: negotiations aimed at ending the conflict with Iran remain uncertain and are having major repercussions on the economy. Would you favour regime change in Iran, given that civil society and students have taken to the streets in recent months? And above all, what appeal would you make to the United States, Iran, and Israel to break the deadlock and put an end to this escalation?”

Leo XIV replied: “I would like to begin by saying: we need to promote a new attitude, a culture of peace. Often, when we assess certain situations, the immediate response is: we must intervene through violence, through war, by attacking. As we have seen, many innocent people have died. I have just seen a letter, which you may have seen, written by some of the families of children who died on the first day of the attack. They speak about the fact that they have now lost their boys, their girls — children who have died. And I say: [the question is not] whether this is a regime change; it is not a regime change... The question is how to promote the values we believe in without the deaths of so many innocent people.

“The issue of Iran is obviously very complex. Even the negotiations they have attempted to conduct: one day Iran says ‘yes,’ the United States says ‘no,’ and vice versa, and we do not know where it is leading. And this chaotic situation has developed, creating serious consequences for the global economy. But there is also an entire population in Iran, made up of innocent people, who are suffering because of this war. As for whether this is a regime change or not... it is not clear what regime is actually in place at this moment after the first days of the Israeli and American attacks against Iran. Rather, I would encourage continued dialogue for peace: that the parties commit themselves, that they seek, that they make every effort to promote peace.

“[In the face of] the threat of war, [I say] that international law must be respected. It is very important that innocent people be protected, and that has not happened in various places. I have with me the photograph of a Muslim child who, during my visit to Lebanon, was there waiting with a sign saying: ‘Welcome, Pope Leo!’, and who was later killed during these recent days of war. There are many human situations, and I think we must be able to reflect in this way. **As Church, I repeat, as a pastor: I cannot be in favour of war, and I would encourage everyone to make efforts to seek answers that come from a culture of peace rather than from hatred and division.**”

Then, in English, in response to a question about executions carried out by the Iranian regime, Leo XIV broadened his condemnation so that it would apply to all sides, including implicitly American strikes:

“I condemn every unjust action. I condemn the killing of other people. I condemn capital punishment. I believe that human life must be respected, and that

▶ the life of every person — from conception to natural death — must be respected and protected. Therefore, when a regime, when a country makes decisions that unjustly take the lives of other people, it is obvious that this must be condemned.”

The Church Is Against Nuclear Weapons

On May 5, during an interview with conservative host Hugh Hewitt on the American conservative network *Salem News Channel*, President Trump renewed his criticism of the Pope, saying:

“The Pope prefers to speak as though it were acceptable for Tehran to have a nuclear weapon. I think he is putting many Catholics and many people at risk.”

In reality, Leo XIV never stated that Iran should possess a nuclear weapon. That same evening, as he was leaving his residence at Castel Gandolfo, the Holy Father responded as follows to journalists regarding Donald Trump’s latest remarks:

“The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gos-

pel and to preach peace. If someone wishes to criticize me for proclaiming the Gospel, let him do so with the truth: the Church has spoken out against all nuclear weapons for many years, so there is no doubt on this matter. I simply hope to be heard for the value of the Word of God. I have spoken from the very first moment of my election and, now that we are approaching the anniversary, I repeat once again: peace be with you.”

The Pope also responded, in English, on the issue of just war: “Since the beginning of the nuclear age, the entire concept of war must be re-evaluated according to present-day realities. I will always believe that dialogue is better than entering into a nuclear conflict.”

History teaches us that, at times, a word spoken at the right moment, with the courage not to remain silent, changes the course of events. Leo XIV chose to take that risk — the risk of proclaiming the Gospel and preaching peace. Let us all embrace this message and put it into practice. ❖

Alain Pilote

What Is a “Just War”?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), in no. 2309, defines the conditions under which a war is justified, or deemed “just”; the only wars permitted are those involving self-defense:

“The strict conditions for legitimate defense by military force must be rigorously considered. The gravity of such a decision subjects it to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. It is necessary that:

-- **The harm inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or the community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain.**

-- **All other means of putting an end to it must have proved impractical or ineffective.**

-- **There must be a serious likelihood of success.**

-- **The use of arms must not cause evils and disorders more serious than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in the assessment of this condition.**

These are the traditional elements listed in the doctrine known as “just war.”

The assessment of these conditions of moral legitimacy is a matter for the prudent judgment of those responsible for the common good.”

Therefore, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, waging war against Iran to prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons (what would be called a preventive war in this case) cannot be clas-

sified as a just war.

The decisive criterion of the CCC, in n. 2309, is: **“The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain.” A potential, future, or hypothetical threat (such as a nuclear program) does not constitute a real and certain armed aggression.**”

Furthermore, the possession or potential acquisition of a nuclear weapon is not a *casus belli* (*in event or act used to justify a war*). The CCC never considers the possession of weapons, military capability, or a nuclear program to be an armed aggression. Catholic doctrine condemns nuclear proliferation, but does not permit attacking a country to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, the “last resort” criterion is not met. For a war to be just, all nonviolent solutions must have been exhausted: diplomacy, inspections, sanctions, international mediation, and deterrence. In the case of Iran, non-military alternatives still exist. Therefore, the “last resort” has not been reached.

Finally, the criterion of proportionality makes war even less justifiable. The CEC requires that “the use of arms must not produce evils greater than the evil to be eliminated.” A war against Iran, a country of 90 million people in a volatile region, with the risk of nuclear or regional escalation, would almost certainly cause greater harm than the threat it purports to prevent. ❖

Catholic Character Formation for Children

I. Fundamental Principle: the Child Is not Neutral

The modern world repeats that a child will “choose later,” as if the soul were an empty field. False.

A child is born wounded by original sin and called to holiness. Either the child is formed for God, or the world will deform him.

Christ Himself made this clear: “Let the children come to Me.” He did not say:

“Let the world educate them first and then let them decide.”

Forming Catholic character is not optional; it is a serious responsibility of parents.

II. The Home: the First Seminary and the First Battleground

Character is not taught only through words, but through atmosphere. A Catholic home should include:

Visible signs: crucifix, image of the Blessed Virgin, holy water

Sacred routines: daily prayer, blessing before meals

A clear moral order: Good is good, evil is evil, no moral relativism

A child should breathe Catholicism, not merely hear about it.

III. The Four Pillars of Catholic Character

1. Piety (Relationship with God)

Without prayer, there is no strong soul. Teach from an early age:

- The Sign of the Cross properly
- Basic prayers (Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed)
- Love for the Eucharist (even if children do not yet understand everything)

A child who prays resists. A child who does not pray falls.

2. Discipline (Self-Mastery)

Character is forged through obedience:

- Obey without arguing
- Carry out responsibilities even when you do not feel like it
- Accept correction without rebellion

The world teaches: “Do what you feel.” The Church teaches: Master what you feel.

3. Virtue (Always Choosing the Good)

Introduce concrete virtues:

Fortitude: Not giving in over small difficulties

Temperance: Not having everything one desires

Justice: Respecting others and sharing

Prudence: Thinking before acting

It is not enough simply to “behave well”; we must form virtuous souls.

4. A Spirit of Courage (Defence of the Faith)

A Catholic child is neither weak nor passive.

Children must learn:

- That the faith will be challenged
- That not everything the world says is true
- That being Catholic involves sacrifice

Without hatred, but without cowardice.

IV. Practical Methods(Without Naivety)

1. Constant Repetition

Character is formed through habits, not long speeches. Five firm minutes every day are better than one occasional hour.

2. The example of the Father

If the father does not pray, the son will not pray either. If the father shouts, the son imitates him. Children imitate more than they listen.

3. Just Correction

Love does not mean allowing everything.

- Correct firmly
- Explain why

Do not humiliate, but do not soften the reality of sin. Christ forgave... But He also said: “Go, and sin no more.”

4. Daily Small Sacrifices

Teach children to offer:

- Turning off the television without complaining
- Sharing something they enjoy
- Finishing responsibilities even when difficult

This is how the soul is trained for the Cross.

V. Modern Errors that Destroy Character

“Let the child choose his religion.”

“I do not force my child to pray.”

“He is too young to understand.”

“I do not want to frustrate him.”

This does not form freedom. It forms weakness.

VI. Final Goal: Former Saints, not Merely “Good People”

The goal is not simply to raise “well-behaved” children, but souls that love Christ above all things. A well-formed child:

- Loves truth
- Rejects sin
- Remains strong under pressure
- Lives with a supernatural outlook

You are not simply raising a child... You are forming an eternal soul. The world wants comfortable children. Christ wants steadfast disciples.

Catholic character does not happen by chance: It is built day by day through prayer, discipline, and spiritual struggle. ❖

At Pompeii, Leo XIV Entrusts the World to the Power of the Rosary

On the occasion of the first anniversary of his election as Pope, Leo XIV travelled to the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii, near Naples, Italy. The first stone of the shrine was laid exactly 150 years ago, on May 8, 1876, by its founder, Saint Bartolo Longo (see *Michael Journal*, January–February 2025), who was canonized in October 2025 by Pope Leo XIV.

May 8 is also the day on which, every year, tens of thousands of faithful gather in the city to participate in the devotional practice of the Supplication to Our Lady of Pompeii, which consists primarily of the Rosary and the prayer written in 1893 by Saint Bartolo Longo, intended especially to foster peace in the world.

The following are extensive excerpts from the Holy Father's homily:

by Leo XIV

Exactly one year ago, when I was entrusted with the ministry of the Successor of Peter, it was precisely the day of the Supplication to the Virgin, this beautiful day of the Supplication to Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii! So, I had to come here, to place my service under the protection of the Holy Virgin. My choice of the name Leo places me in the footsteps of Leo XIII, who, among his other merits, also developed an extensive Magisterium on the Holy Rosary. (Pope Leo XIII wrote 11 encyclicals specifically dedicated to the Rosary.) Added to all this is the recent canonization of Saint Bartolo Longo, apostle of the Rosary. This context provides us with a key to reflecting on the Word of God we have just heard.

The Gospel of the Annunciation introduces us to the moment at which the Word of God is incarnated in Mary's womb. From this womb radiates the Light that gives full meaning to history and to the world. The greeting that the angel Gabriel addresses to the Virgin is an invitation to rejoice: "Hail, full of grace" (Lk 1:28; cf. Zeph 3:14). Yes, the Hail Mary is an invitation to joy: it tells Mary, and through her all of us, that upon the ruins of our humanity, tested by sin and therefore ever prone to oppression, abuse and war, the caress of God has come, the caress of mercy, which takes on a human face in Jesus.

Mary thus becomes the Mother of Mercy. A disciple of the Word and an instrument of His Incarnation, she truly reveals herself to be "full of grace". Everything in her is grace! By offering her own flesh to the Word, she too becomes, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, following Saint Augustine, "the mother of the members of Christ... having cooperated by charity that faithful might be born into the Church, who are members of that Head" (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen*



Leo XIV in front of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii

gentium, 53; cf. Saint Augustine, *De S. Virginitate*, 6). In Mary's "Let it be to me", not only Jesus is born, but also the Church, and Mary becomes both the Mother of God – Theotòkos – and Mother of the Church.

What a great mystery! Everything happens in the power of the Holy Spirit, who overshadows Mary and makes her virginal womb fruitful. This moment in history possesses a tenderness and a power that draw the heart and lift it to that contemplative height where the prayer of the Holy Rosary takes root. A prayer which, having arisen and developed progressively during the second millennium, has its roots in the history of salvation, and finds its prelude precisely in the Angel's greeting to the Virgin. "Hail Mary"!

The repetition of this prayer in the Rosary is like an echo of Gabriel's greeting, an echo that spans the centuries and guides the believer's gaze to Jesus, seen through the eyes and heart of His Mother. Jesus adored, contemplated, and assimilated in each of His mysteries, so that with Saint Paul we may say: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:19).

The Rosary is an act of love

Preceded by the proclamation of the Word of God, nestled between the Our Father and the Glory Be, the Hail Mary repeated in the Holy Rosary is an act of love. Is it not characteristic of love to repeat, without tiring: "I love you"? An act of love which, through the beads of the rosary, as is clearly seen in the Marian painting in this Shrine, leads us back to Jesus and brings us to the Eucharist, "the fount and apex of the whole Christian life" (*Lumen gentium*, 11).

Saint Bartolo Longo was convinced of this when he wrote: "The Eucharist is the living Rosary, and all the mysteries are found in the Holy Sacrament in an active and vital form" (*The Rosary and New Pompeii*, 1914, p. 86). He was right. In the Eucharist, the mysteries of Christ's life are all found, so to speak, concentrated in the memorial of His sacrifice and in His real presence. The Rosary has a Marian character, but a Christological and Eucharistic heart (cf. Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 1). If the Liturgy of the Hours marks the rhythm of the Church's praise, the Rosary marks the rhythm of our life, continually bringing it back to Jesus and the Eucharist.

The Rosary is a compendium of the Gospel

Generations of believers have been shaped and sustained by this prayer, which is simple and popular, yet at the same time capable of reaching mystical heights and serving as a treasure-trove of the most essential Christian theology. For what could be more essential than the mysteries of Christ, than His holy Name, spoken with the tenderness of the Virgin Mary? It is in this Name, and in no other, that we can be saved (cf. Acts 4:12). By repeating it in every Hail Mary, we in some way experience the home of Nazareth, almost hearing once more the voices of Mary and Joseph during the long years when Jesus lived with them.

We also experience the Upper Room, where the Apostles, together with Mary, awaited the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is what the first reading pointed out to us. How can we fail to imagine that, in that time between the Ascension and Pentecost, Mary and the Apostles vied with one another in recalling the various moments of Jesus' life? Not a single detail was to be overlooked! Everything was to be remembered, assimilated, imitated.

Thus was born the Church's contemplative journey, of which, in the likeness of the Liturgical Year, the Rosary offers a synthesis in the daily meditation on the holy Mysteries. The Rosary has rightly been considered a compendium of the Gospel, which Saint John Paul II wished to integrate with the Luminous Mysteries. This dimension was also very much alive in Saint Bartolo Longo, who offered pilgrims profound meditations to save the Holy Rosary from the temptation of mechanical recitation and to ensure it retained the biblical, Christological and contemplative spirit that must characterize it.

The Rosary is a wellspring of charity

Sisters and brothers, if the Rosary is "prayed" and, I dare say, "celebrated" in this way, it is also, as a nat-

ural consequence, a wellspring of charity. Charity towards God, charity towards neighbour: two sides of the same coin, as the second reading reminded us, taken from the First Letter of Saint John, concluding with the exhortation: 'Let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth' (1 Jn 3:18). For this reason, Saint Bartolo Longo was an apostle of the Rosary and, at the same time, an apostle of charity. In this Marian city, he took in orphans and the children of prisoners, showing the regenerative strength of love. Here even the smallest and the weakest are welcomed and cared for in the Works of the Sanctuary.

The Rosary directs our eyes towards the needs of the world, as the Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* emphasized, proposing in particular two intentions that remain of pressing relevance: the family, which is suffering from the weakening of the marital bond, and peace, threatened by international tensions and by an economy that prioritizes the arms trade over respect for human life.

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Let us pray the Rosary for peace

When Saint John Paul II proclaimed the Year of the Rosary (Oct. 2002-Oct. 2003) – next year will mark a quarter of a century since then – he wished to place it in a special way under the gaze of Our Lady of Pompeii. Times have not improved since then. The wars still being fought in

so many regions of the world call for a renewed commitment, not only economic and political, but also spiritual and religious. Peace is born in the heart. The same Pope, in October 1986, gathered the leaders of the major religions in Assisi, inviting everyone to pray for peace.

On several occasions, including recently, both Pope Francis and I have asked the faithful throughout the world to pray for this intention. We cannot resign ourselves to the images of death that the news presents to us every day. From this Shrine, whose façade Saint Bartolo Longo conceived as a monument to peace, we faithfully raise our supplication today. Jesus told us that prayer offered in faith can obtain anything (cf. Mt 21:22). And Saint Bartolo Longo, reflecting on Mary's faith, describes it as "almighty by grace". Through her intercession, may the God of peace pour out an overflowing abundance of mercy, touching hearts, soothing grudges and fratricidal hatred, and enlightening those who bear the special responsibilities of governance.

Brothers and sisters, no earthly power will save the world, but only the divine power of love, this divine power of love that Jesus, the Lord, has revealed to us and given us. Let us believe in Him, let us hope in Him, let us follow Him! ❖



150th Anniversary of the Apparitions of Our Lady of Mercy at Pellevoisin

Mary Leads Us to the Heart of Jesus

As Mother of God and Mother of the Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary has appeared many times throughout the centuries to remind us of the teachings of her Son Jesus and to lead us to Him. As a mother, she is concerned for the eternal salvation of each of her children on earth, entrusted to her by Jesus at the foot of the Cross, when He said to the Apostle Saint John: "Son, behold your mother."

Sixteen of these Marian apparitions have been officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, including five in France during the 19th century, which therefore appears to be a land especially favoured by the Virgin Mary:



- In 1830, at the convent on Rue du Bac in Paris, where the Virgin Mary appeared to Saint Catherine Labouré;
- In 1846, at La Salette, to Mélanie Calvat and Maximin Giraud;
- In 1858, at Lourdes, to Saint Bernadette Soubirous;
- In 1871, at Pontmain, to three children;
- In 1876, at Pellevoisin, to Estelle Faguette.

Remarkably, if one connects these five locations on a map of France, they form the letter "M" — the "M" for Mary. And right at the centre of this map lies the final apparition site, Pellevoisin, where the Virgin

Mary appeared fifteen times in 1876 under the title "Our Lady of Mercy" to a 33-year-old woman, Estelle Faguette, who was miraculously healed and to whom the Blessed Virgin entrusted numerous messages concerning the conversion of sinners and especially devotion to the Scapular of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In 2026, we therefore celebrate the **150th anniversary** of this apparition.

This apparition is probably the least known of the five recognized Marian apparitions in France, but that may soon change. On August 22, 2024, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican, addressed a letter to Archbishop Jérôme Beau of Bourges (the diocese in which Pellevoisin is located) entitled:

"Our Lady of Mercy, Lead Us to the Heart of Christ: Letter to the Archbishop of Bourges (France) Regarding the Spiritual Experience of Estelle Faguette."

The Cardinal concluded his letter with this favourable judgment: "Your Excellency, not only can I affirm that there are no doctrinal, moral, or other objections to this spiritual event and that the faithful 'may prudently give their assent,' but, on the contrary, the devotion in this case, already flourishing, is particularly recommended for those who freely wish to embrace it. Everyone may find in it a path of spiritual simplicity, trust, and love capable of doing much good. It is therefore possible to issue the decree of nihil obstat ('nothing stands in the way'). This will certainly be a benefit for the whole Church."

A Humble Servant Chosen by Mary

The story of Pellevoisin begins with a simple woman: Estelle Faguette. Born on September 12, 1843, into a modest family, she worked as a servant at the Château de Montbel, near Pellevoisin, in the Diocese of Bourges.

Estelle Faguette was born in Saint-Memmie (Marne) into an extremely poor family. Deeply concerned for the poor and the sick, she entered the novitiate of the Augustinian Hospitaller Sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris in 1860. In 1863, however, a serious fall on a staircase forced her to abandon religious life.

In 1865, she entered the service of the Count and Countess de La Rochefoucauld and followed them to the Château de Montbel, three kilometres from Pellevoisin, where she worked as a servant and governess for children. She brought her parents, who had become impoverished and destitute, to live near her

and supported them with her meagre financial resources.

In 1875, Estelle's health deteriorated seriously. She suffered from chronic peritonitis that had become tubercular and had spread to her stomach and lungs. On August 29, Professor Bucquoy of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris declared her condition hopeless.

Aware that there was no longer any human hope for recovery, Estelle wrote a letter to the Virgin Mary in September and had it placed in a Lourdes grotto that the Count and Countess had built in the castle grounds. She asked for healing so that she might continue caring for her parents.

As her condition became increasingly alarming, Estelle was brought back to her parents' home near the church in Pellevoisin. On February 14, 1876, her doctor declared that she had only a few hours left to live.

The First Apparitions

It was then, during the night of February 14–15, 1876, that the Virgin Mary appeared to her for the first time in her room. Fifteen apparitions would take place that year, from February 14 until December 8. The first five concerned Estelle's healing. Estelle later described this first apparition:

"I was trying to rest when suddenly the devil appeared at the foot of my bed... Hardly had he arrived when the Blessed Virgin appeared on the other side, near the corner of my bed... She said sharply to him: 'What are you doing here? Can you not see that she wears my livery and that of my Son?' He disappeared, gesturing angrily."

Then Mary turned toward Estelle and gently said: "Do not be afraid. You know well that you are my daughter. Take courage and be patient; my Son will allow Himself to be moved. You will still suffer for five days in honour of the five wounds of my Son. On Saturday, you will either be dead or healed. If my Son restores your life, I want you to proclaim my glory."

Estelle then saw a white marble plaque between herself and Our Lady. Mary explained that it would be placed at Pellevoisin: "At Notre-Dame-des-Victoires they already have many signs of my power; at Pellevoisin there is nothing. They need encouragement."

During the following nights, the Virgin continued to appear to Estelle and repeatedly reassured her: "Do not be afraid; I am here." She also told her:

"If my Son grants you life, do not think that you will be spared suffering. You will suffer and you will not be free from sorrows. That is what gives merit to life."

She added that her heart had been touched by Es-



Estelle Faguet (1843-1929)

telle's prayers, especially the letter she had written in September:

"What touched me most was when you wrote: '*See the sorrow of my parents if I were taken from them; they are on the verge of begging for bread.*' I showed that letter to my Son. Your parents need you."

The Healing

We now come to the night of February 18–19, for the fifth apparition of Mary. Estelle recounts:

"The Blessed Virgin approached to the middle of my bed curtains. My God, how beautiful she was! She remained for a long time without saying anything and stood amid a clear mist... She was smiling and reminded me of my promises."

Estelle saw again the ex-voto plaque that she had previously seen, but this time it was no longer entirely white. In the four corners were golden rosebuds, and at the top appeared a flaming golden heart surrounded by a crown of roses and pierced by a sword. Written upon it were these words: "I called upon Mary in the depths of my misery. She obtained from her Son my complete healing."

Estelle renewed her promise to do everything within her power for Mary's glory. The Blessed Virgin then said: "If you wish to serve me, be simple, and let your actions correspond to your words."

After a brief pause, Mary became serious and added: "**What grieves me most is the lack of reverence shown toward my Son in Holy Communion, and the attitude people adopt in prayer when their minds are occupied with other things. I say this especially for those who claim to be devout.**"

After these words, her smile returned. Estelle asked whether she should immediately speak of everything that Mary had told her. The Virgin answered:

"Yes, yes, proclaim my glory; but before speaking of it, you must wait for the advice of your confessor and spiritual director. You will encounter obstacles; people will call you a visionary, an enthusiast, or a madwoman. Pay no attention to such things. Remain faithful to me and I will help you."

At that moment, Estelle felt all of her terrible suffering disappear. A powerful strength filled her. She later wrote:

"I asked what time it was; it was half past midnight. I felt healed, except for my right arm, which I was unable to use until after receiving Holy Communion."

The following day, the priest came to bring her Holy Communion and, with tears in his eyes, realized that Estelle had been completely healed.

► On February 19, 1876 — exactly as the Blessed Virgin had foretold — Estelle was cured. When the doctor came to examine her, he too observed her complete recovery and was unable to offer any explanation.

During the apparitions, Mary introduced herself with a magnificent title: **“I am all-merciful.”**

This phrase summarizes almost the entire message of Pellevoisin. Mary did not come to announce catastrophes or inspire fear. Rather, she came to remind the world of the tenderness of God’s Heart for sinners, the sick, the weak, and wounded souls.

At Pellevoisin, the Virgin never places herself at the centre. She constantly leads souls to Jesus. Cardinal Fernández rightly emphasized this point in his recent letter: “Everything is attributed to Christ.” Even Estelle’s healing is presented as a grace obtained through Mary’s intercession with her Son.

The Scapular of the Sacred Heart

One of the most remarkable aspects of Pellevoisin concerns Mary’s request regarding the Scapular of the Sacred Heart, during the ninth apparition on September 9. Estelle recounts:

“The Blessed Virgin said: ‘For a long time the treasures of my Son have been open; let them pray.’” As she spoke these words, she lifted the small woolen piece that she wore upon her breast. Until then, Estelle had seen it without understanding what it was, because it had appeared completely white. But as Mary lifted it, Estelle saw a vivid red heart standing out clearly.

She immediately thought: “It is a Scapular of the Sacred Heart.” Mary then said: “I love this devotion.” After a pause, she added: “This is where I shall be honoured.”

During the eleventh apparition, on September 15, Mary said to Estelle: “I will take into account the efforts you have made to remain calm; I ask this not only for your own sake, but also for the Church and for France. In the Church, there is not the peace that I desire.” She sighed and gently shook her head, saying: “There is something.”

She did not explain further, but Estelle immediately understood that she was speaking of divisions and discord. Mary then continued slowly: “Let them pray and place their trust in me.”

Then, speaking sadly, she added: “And France! What have I not done for her? How many warnings have I given, and still she refuses to listen! I can no longer restrain my Son.”

She appeared deeply moved as she added: “France will suffer.” She emphasized these words. Then, after another pause, she repeated: “Courage and confidence.”

At that moment Estelle thought to herself: If I repeat these words, perhaps no one will believe me. The

Blessed Virgin immediately understood her thought and replied: “I have already paid in advance; too bad for those who refuse to believe you — later they will recognize the truth of my words.” Then she departed quietly.

Later, during the thirteenth apparition on November 5, Estelle again saw the Blessed Virgin: “She was beautiful as always.” As Estelle looked upon her, she reflected on how unworthy she felt of such extraordinary graces and how many others seemed more deserving.

Mary looked at her and smiled: “I have chosen you. I choose the little and the weak for my glory.” After a pause, she added: “Take courage; the time of your trials is about to begin.” Then she crossed her hands upon her breast and disappeared.

The Final Apparition

Mary appeared one final time to Estelle on December 8, 1876, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Estelle recounted: “Today after High Mass, I saw again that gentle Mother. She was more beautiful than ever.”

After remaining silent for a moment, as she had done previously, Mary said: “My daughter, remember my words.” At that instant Estelle saw all of Mary’s messages pass before her mind, from February onward.

Mary then said: “Repeat them often; they will strengthen and console you in your trials. You will see me no more.”

Estelle cried out: “What will become of me without you, my good Mother?” The Blessed Virgin answered: “I shall remain invisibly beside you.”

Estelle then saw, in the distance, a large crowd of people making threatening gestures. Frightened, she looked toward Mary. Smiling, the Virgin reassured her:

“You have nothing to fear from them. I have chosen you to proclaim my glory and spread this devotion.”

The Blessed Virgin was holding the Scapular with both hands. Encouraged by her kindness, Estelle said: “My good Mother, would you give me that Scapular?”

Mary did not seem to hear the request directly. Instead, smiling, she said: “Rise and kiss it.” Estelle immediately stood up and kissed it.

Then Mary spoke again concerning the Scapular: “You yourself will go to the Bishop and present him with the model you have made. Tell him to help you with all his power, for nothing would please me more than to see this livery worn by each of my children, and for them to strive to make reparation for the outrages my Son receives in the Sacrament of His love.”

As she spoke these words, Mary extended her hands. Estelle saw what seemed to be an abundant shower falling from them, and in every drop she be-



Our Lady of Mercy of Pellevoisin

believed she could read the names of graces: "Piety, salvation, confidence, conversion, health..." And many others besides.

Then the Blessed Virgin added: "These graces come from my Son; I take them from His Heart. He cannot refuse me."

The Final Years of Estelle

In 1900, the Bishop of Orléans, Stanislas-Arthur-Xavier Touchet, brought Estelle to the Vatican, where she met Pope Leo XIII on January 30. Estelle asked that the Scapular receive official approval, which the Pope granted on April 4, 1900, when the Congregation of Rites published a decree approving the Scapular of the Sacred Heart.

On December 22, 1922, the Congregation of Rites authorized a votive Mass every September 9 at the village church and at the chapel of the apparitions in the sanctuary.

In 1925, Estelle entered the Dominican Third Order after receiving the habit in 1923, taking the name Sister Margaret Mary.

On August 23, 1929, Estelle Faguette died at the age of eighty-six, remaining steadfast to the end in her belief in the apparitions.

Her life was marked by many severe trials, accepted with resignation and strengthened by the extraordinary graces she had received. Her death was gentle and peaceful.

Throughout her long life, Estelle endured many humiliations, calumnies, and false accusations. Yet despite all of this, she never wavered, tirelessly repeating the words that the All-Merciful Mother had spoken to her: "Proclaim my glory. I have come for the conversion of sinners. Courage and confidence."

Pellevoisin and Our Times

Why does Pellevoisin seem so relevant today? Because the modern world suffers precisely from the wounds for which the Blessed Virgin offered a remedy at Pellevoisin: anxiety, despair, loss of trust, forgetfulness of divine mercy, and a growing coldness toward the Sacred Heart.

Through Estelle Faguette, Mary speaks to humble souls. She reminds us that God often works through little instruments. She shows us that trust deeply touches the Heart of Jesus.

The Sanctuary of Pellevoisin has therefore become a place of prayer, confession, Eucharistic adoration, and interior healing. Many pilgrims testify to receiving a profound peace through the intercession of Our Lady of Mercy.

The great teaching of Pellevoisin can be summarized in a few words: Mary leads us to the Heart of Christ.

Indeed, the very title of Cardinal Fernández's letter expresses this beautifully: "Our Lady of Mercy, lead us to the Heart of Christ." Everything is contained in these words.

In an age often marked by spiritual coldness and discouragement, Pellevoisin reminds us that the Heart of Jesus remains open and that Mary continues to intercede for her children.

Pellevoisin is not merely a memory from the past. It is a present invitation to live more deeply in trust, simplicity, and love. We can make our own this prayer inspired by the message of Pellevoisin:

"Our Lady of Mercy, lead us ever more deeply into the most loving Heart of Jesus." ❖

Leo XIV's Apostolic Journey to Africa A Message of Peace, Hope, and Justice



From April 13 to 23, 2026, the Holy Father made an apostolic journey to four African countries: Algeria, Cameroon, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea. Through their diversity of languages, cultures, and challenges, these countries represented the many realities of the African continent.

African countries face many of the same social and financial difficulties as Western countries. Africans, like Europeans, North Americans, and people on other continents, are all victims of international financiers and bankers. This is why the Holy Father's words are valid and applicable not only to Africa but also to all other countries of the world whose peoples thirst for peace and justice. For example, during the General Audience in Rome on Wednesday, April 29, Leo XIV described the second country he visited, Cameroon, in these words:

“Cameroon is known as “Africa in miniature”, because of the variety and richness of its natural environment and its resources, but we can also interpret this expression to mean that the great needs of the entire continent are found in Cameroon: the need for a fair distribution of wealth; the need to provide space for the young, overcoming endemic corruption, that of promoting integral and sustainable development, countering the various forms of neo-colonialism with far-sighted international cooperation.”

The average age of the population in African countries is under twenty years old (compared to forty-one years in Canada), making it by far the youngest population in the world. Twenty percent of Catholics worldwide are African, and this percentage will continue to increase in the years ahead. Africa is the continent experiencing the fastest growth in the Catholic popula-

tion, increasing by more than three percent in a single year.

This is where the future of the Church lies, and this is where people thirst for justice and peace and remain open to the Church's teachings on social justice, as well as practical ways of applying them, including, naturally, the Economic Democracy promoted by Michael Journal and increasingly spreading throughout Africa, even in academic circles.

The Pope concluded his General Audience of Wednesday, April 29, with these words: “Dear brothers and sisters, the Pope's visit is, for the African peoples, a chance to make their voices heard, to express the joy of being God's people and the hope for a better future, of dignity for each and every one. I am happy to have given them this opportunity, and at the same time I thank the Lord for what they have given me, an immeasurable treasure for my heart and my ministry.”

It is stated in this issue's editorial of MICHAEL that peace is founded upon justice. Throughout all his speeches in Africa, the Holy Father strongly emphasized these words and the conditions required to put them into practice. This is what we shall discover in the following paragraphs, which present extensive excerpts from his addresses.

Algeria

Providence arranged that the first of the four countries visited by the Pope would be Algeria, allowing Leo XIV to walk in the footsteps of Saint Augustine, Doctor of the Church and Bishop of Hippo (now called Annaba), Algeria, who taught the search for truth and the dignity of every human being created in the image and likeness of God.

Before becoming Pope, Leo XIV had served for several years as Superior of the Augustinian Order and therefore had a special attachment and devotion to Saint Augustine, who deeply shaped his spirituality.

During his meeting with authorities, civil society, and the diplomatic corps in Algiers on April 13, the Pope declared:

“The one who accumulates wealth and remains indifferent to others is unjust. This view of justice is both simple and radical for it recognizes the image of God in others. Indeed, a religion without mercy and a society without solidarity are a scandal in God's eyes. Yet many societies that consider themselves advanced are plunging ever deeper into inequality and exclusion. Africa knows all too well that people and organizations that dominate others destroy the world, which the Most High has created in order that we might all live together. (...)

“The true strength of a nation lies in the cooperation of everyone in pursuing the common good. Authorities are called not to dominate, but to serve the people and foster their development. Political action thus finds its guiding criterion in justice, without which there can be no authentic peace, and is expressed in the promotion of fair and dignified conditions for all.”

Cameroon

On April 15, the Pope addressed the following words at the Presidential Palace in Yaoundé before civil authorities and members of the diplomatic corps:

“We are living, in fact, at a time when hopelessness is rampant and a sense of powerlessness tends to paralyze the renewal so deeply desired by peoples. There is such a hunger and thirst for justice! A thirst for getting involved, for a vision, for courageous choices and for peace! It is my great desire to reach the hearts of all, especially young people, who are called to help shape a world that is more just, including in the political sphere.

“Sixteen hundred years ago, Saint Augustine wrote words that have great relevance today: ‘Those who rule serve those whom they seem to command; for they rule not from a love of power, but from a sense of the duty they owe to others — not because they are proud of authority, but because they love mercy.’ From this perspective, serving one’s country means dedicating oneself, with a clear mind and an upright conscience, to the common good of all people in the nation. This includes dedication to both the majority of the population and the minorities, as well as their mutual harmony.

“I called on the human family at the beginning of this year to reject the logic of violence and war, and to embrace a peace founded on love and justice. A peace that is unarmed, that is, not based on fear, threats or weapons, and at the same time disarming, because it is capable of resolving conflicts, opening hearts and generating trust, empathy and hope. Peace cannot be reduced to a slogan: it must be embodied in a way of life that renounces all forms of violence, both personally and institutionally. For this reason, I strongly reiterate: “The world is thirsting for peace... Enough of war, with all the pain it causes through death, destruction and exile!” This cry is intended as an appeal that contributes to the efforts for an authentic peace, prioritizing it over any partisan interest.

“Peace, in fact, cannot be decreed: it must be embraced and lived. It is a gift from God, which unfolds through patient and collective effort. It is everyone’s responsibility, beginning with civil authorities. To govern means to love one’s own country as well as neighboring countries; the commandment “love your neighbor as yourself” is equally applicable to international relations! To govern means truly listening to citizens, valuing their intelligence and their ability to help build lasting solutions to problems. (...)



“In the face of such generous dedication within society, transparency in the management of public resources and respect for the rule of law are essential to restoring trust. It is time to examine our conscience and take a bold leap forward. Just and credible institutions become pillars of stability. Public authorities are called to serve as bridges, never as sources of division, even when insecurity seems prevalent. Security is a priority, but it must always be exercised with respect for human rights, combining rigor and magnanimity, with particular attention to the most vulnerable. Authentic peace arises when everyone feels protected, heard and respected, when the law serves as a secure safeguard against the whims of the rich and powerful.

“Indeed, in order for peace and justice to prevail, the chains of corruption — which disfigure authority and strip it of its credibility — must be broken. Hearts must be set free from an idolatrous thirst for profit: true profit comes from integral human development, that is, the balanced growth of all the aspects that make life on this earth a blessing.”

On April 16, the Holy Father spoke at Saint Joseph Cathedral in Bamenda, in northern Cameroon:

“The masters of war pretend not to know that it takes only a moment to destroy, yet a lifetime is often not enough to rebuild. They turn a blind eye to the fact that billions of dollars are spent on killing and devastation, yet the resources needed for healing, education and restoration are nowhere to be found. Those who rob your land of its resources generally invest ▶

► much of the profit in weapons, thus perpetuating an endless cycle of destabilization and death. It is a world turned upside down, an exploitation of God's creation that must be denounced and rejected by every honest conscience. We must make a decisive change of course — a true conversion — that will lead us in the opposite direction, onto a sustainable path rich in human fraternity. The world is being ravaged by a handful of tyrants, yet it is held together by a multitude of supportive brothers and sisters! (...)

"Peace is not something we must invent: it is something we must embrace by accepting our neighbor as our brother and as our sister. We do not choose our brothers and sisters: we simply must accept one another! We are one family, inhabiting the same home: this wonderful planet that ancient cultures have cared for across millennia."

On April 17, the Holy Father met with the academic community at the Catholic University of Central Africa in Yaoundé and delivered the following words:

"The greatness of a nation cannot be measured solely by the abundance of its natural resources, nor even by the material wealth of its institutions. No society, in fact, can flourish unless it is grounded in upright consciences, formed in the truth. In this sense, the motto of your university — "In the service of truth and justice" — reminds you that the human conscience, understood as the inner sanctuary where men and women discover themselves drawn by the voice of God, is the very ground upon which just and stable foundations for every society must be laid. To form consciences that are free and endowed with a holy restlessness is a necessary condition for the Christian faith to appear as a fully human proposal. Such a faith is capable of transforming the lives of individuals and of society, of inspiring prophetic change in the face of the tragedies and forms of poverty of our time, and of encouraging a continual search for God that is never satisfied.

"It is indeed within the conscience that moral discernment is formed, by which we freely seek what is true and upright. When the conscience takes care to be enlightened and rightly formed, it becomes the source of a coherent way of acting, directed toward the good, justice and peace.

"In contemporary societies, and therefore in Cameroon too, we can witness an erosion of the moral values that once guided community life. As a result, today there is a tendency to approve casually certain practices that were once considered unacceptable. This dynamic can be explained in part by social changes, economic pressures and political forces that shape individual and collective behavior. Christians, and especially young African Catholics, must not be afraid of "new things." Your university, in particular, can form pioneers of a new humanism in the context of the digital revolution. While the African continent is well acquainted with its alluring aspects, it also knows

the darker side of the environmental and social devastation caused by the relentless pursuit of raw materials and rare earths. Do not look the other way: this is a service to the truth and to all humanity. Without this demanding educational effort, passive adaptation to dominant paradigms will be mistaken for competence, and the loss of freedom for progress.

"This is all the more true in light of the spread of artificial intelligence systems, which increasingly shape and permeate our mentality and social environments. Like every great historical transformation, this too calls not only for technical competence, but also for a humanistic formation capable of making visible the logic behind economics, embedded biases and forms of power that shape our perception of reality. Within digital environments — structured to persuade — interaction is optimized to the point of rendering a real encounter superfluous; the otherness of persons in the flesh is neutralized, and relationships are reduced to functional responses. Dear friends, you, however, are real persons! Creation itself has a body, a breath, a life to be listened to and safeguarded. It "groans and suffers" (cf. Rom 8:22), just as each one of us does.

"When simulation becomes the norm, it weakens the human capacity for discernment. As a result, our social bonds close in upon themselves, forming self-referential circuits that no longer expose us to reality. We thus come to live within bubbles, impermeable to one another. Feeling threatened by anyone who is different, we grow unaccustomed to encounter and dialogue. In this way, polarization, conflict, fear and violence spread. What is at stake is not merely the risk of error, but a transformation in our very relationship with truth.

"It is precisely in this sphere that the Catholic university is called to assume a responsibility of the highest order. For it does not merely transmit specialized knowledge, but shapes minds capable of discernment and hearts ready for love and service. Above all, it prepares future leaders, public officials, professionals and other actors in society to carry out with integrity the responsibilities entrusted to them, to exercise their duties with uprightness and to situate their activity within an ethical framework at the service of the common good.

"Dear sons and daughters of Cameroon, dear students, in the face of the understandable tendency to migrate — which may lead one to believe that elsewhere a better future may be more easily found — I invite you, first and foremost, to respond with an ardent desire to serve your country and to apply the knowledge you are acquiring here to the benefit of your fellow citizens. This is the *raison d'être* of your university, founded thirty-five years ago to form pastors of souls and lay people committed to society: these are the witnesses of wisdom and justice, of which the African continent needs. (...)



Pope Leo XIV in front of the monument dedicated to Saint Augustine, inaugurated on the occasion of his visit and installed in front of the Catholic University of Central Africa in Yaoundé, of which Saint Augustine is the patron saint.

“Dear professors, your role is essential. I therefore encourage you to embody the values you wish to impart — above all justice and fairness, integrity, a spirit of service, and a sense of responsibility. Africa and the world stand in need of people who are committed to living according to the Gospel and to placing their talents at the service of the common good. Do not betray this noble ideal! As well as being intellectual guides, be role models whose scientific rigor and personal integrity form the consciences of your students.

“Africa, indeed, must be freed from the scourge of corruption. For young people, this awareness must take root from their years of formation, thanks to the moral rigor, selflessness and coherence of life shown by their educators and teachers. Day by day, lay the indispensable foundations for the building of a consistent moral and intellectual identity. By bearing witness to the truth — especially in the face of the illusions of ideology and passing fashions — you will foster an environment in which academic excellence is naturally united with human uprightness.”

On April 18, the Pope spoke in his homily during Mass celebrated at Yaoundé City Airport just before his departure for Angola:

“Jesus draws near to us. He does not immediately calm the storm, but comes to us in the midst of the danger, and invites us, in our joys and sorrows, to remain together with him, like the disciples, in the same boat. He invites us not to distance ourselves

from those who suffer, but to draw near to them, to embrace them. No one must be left alone to confront life’s adversities. For this reason, every community has the obligation to create and sustain structures of solidarity and mutual aid in which, when faced with crises — be they social, political, medical or economic — everyone can give and receive assistance according to their own capacity and needs. **The words of Jesus, “it is I,” remind us that in a society founded on respect for human dignity, everyone’s contribution is valued as important and unique, regardless of the status or position that each one has in the eyes of the world.**

“The exhortation “do not be afraid,” then, takes on a broader meaning, even at a social and political level, as an encouragement to confront problems and challenges — particularly those associated with poverty and justice — together, with a sense of civic and civil responsibility. Faith does not separate the spiritual from the social. Indeed, it gives Christians the strength to interact with the world, responding to the needs of others, especially the weakest.

“The isolated efforts of individuals are not enough for the salvation of a community: instead, what is needed is a communal commitment, which integrates the spiritual and moral dimensions of the Gospel in the heart of local institutions and structures, making them instruments for the common good, and not places of conflict, self-interest or sterile struggles.



► People of God living and journeying in Cameroon, do not be afraid! Remain firmly united to Christ our Lord! With the power of his Spirit, you will be the salt and light of this land! Thank you very much.”

Angola

Upon his arrival in Luanda, the capital of Angola, later on April 18, the Supreme Pontiff addressed the following words to civil authorities and members of the diplomatic corps, referring to the many African countries whose natural resources are exploited by foreign corporations while local populations remain trapped in poverty. In Angola’s particular case, the principal natural resource involved is oil:

“You know well that all too often people have looked — and continue to look — to your lands in order to give, or, more commonly, in order to take. It is necessary to break this cycle of interests, which reduces reality, and even life itself, to mere commodities.

“For the entire world, Africa is a reservoir of joy and hope, which are virtues that I would not hesitate to call “political,” because her young people and her poor continue to dream and to hope. They are not content with what already exists; they strive to rise above, to prepare themselves for great responsibilities, and to take an active part in shaping their own future. Indeed, the wisdom of a people cannot be stifled by any ideology, and the longing for the infinite that dwells in the human heart is a principle of social transformation

far deeper than any political or cultural program. I am here among you, at the service of the finest powers that animate the persons and communities, of which Angola is a rich and vibrant mosaic. I wish to listen to and encourage all those who have already chosen the paths of goodness, justice, peace, tolerance and reconciliation. At the same time, together with the millions of men and women of good will who constitute the primary wealth of this country, I also pray for the conversion of those who choose contrary paths and hinder its harmonious and fraternal development.

“Dear friends, I have mentioned the material riches upon which powerful interests lay their claim, even within your own country. How much suffering, how many deaths, how many social and environmental disasters are brought about by this logic of extractivism!

“Despots and tyrants of both body and spirit seek to render souls passive and passions gloomy; they prefer a populace prone to inertia, docile and subservient to power. For in sadness, we are indeed at the mercy of our fears and imagination; we take refuge in fanaticism, in submission, in the deafening noise of the media, in the glimmer of gold, in the identitarian myth. Discontent, a sense of powerlessness and uprootedness divide us rather than bringing us together. This spreads a climate of estrangement from the public sphere, contempt for the misfortune of others and the negation of all fraternity. Such discord disintegrates the constitutive relationships that each person maintains with oneself, with others and with reality. (...)

“Together, you can make Angola a project of hope. The Catholic Church, whose service to the country I know you greatly esteem, desires to be leaven in the dough and to foster the growth of a just model of co-existence, free from the various forms of slavery imposed by the elite who are laden with much wealth but false joys. Only together can we multiply the talents of this wonderful people, even in the urban peripheries and the remotest rural areas, where life is vibrant and the future of the people is being prepared. Let us remove the obstacles to integral human development, working and hoping together alongside those whom the world has discarded but whom God has chosen. For thus our hope has arisen: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone” (Ps 118:22), Jesus Christ, the fullness of man and of history. May God bless Angola!”

During his visit to the Shrine of Mamã Muxima on Sunday, April 19, Pope Leo XIV addressed the following words at the conclusion of the Rosary:

“Praying the Rosary, then, commits us to loving every person with a mother’s heart — concretely and generously — and to dedicating ourselves to the good of one another, especially the poorest. A mother loves all her children in the same way and with her whole heart, even though each one is different. In the presence of the Mother of the Heart, we too want to promise to do likewise. We strive without measure so that no one may lack love. We also seek to provide the necessities for living with dignity and happiness: that the hungry may have enough to eat, that the sick may receive the necessary care, that children may be guaranteed a proper education, and that the elderly may live their later years in peace. A mother thinks of all these things. Indeed, Mary thinks of all these things, and she also invites us to share in her maternal concern.

“Dear young people, members of the Legion of Mary, brothers and sisters, Our Lady asks us to let ourselves be moved by the sentiments of her heart, so that like her, we may be workers for justice and bearers of peace. Here, a great project is underway: the construction of a new shrine, able to welcome all who come on pilgrimage. Everyone — especially you young people — should take this as a sign.

“For the Mother of Heaven entrusts a great project to you as well: to build a better, welcoming world, where there is no more war, injustice, poverty or dishonesty, and where the principles of the Gospel increasingly inspire and shape hearts, structures and programs, for the good of all.

“It is love that must triumph, not war! This is what the heart of Mary — the heart of the Mother of all — teaches us. Let us set out, then, from this shrine as “messenger angels” of life, bringing Mary’s tender embrace and God’s blessing to everyone... Dearest friends, let us offer everything to Mary, giving ourselves entirely to our brothers and sisters, and let us joyfully

receive, through her intercession, the Lord’s blessing, so that we may bring it to everyone we meet. Amen.”

Immigration

April 23, aboard the aircraft returning him from Equatorial Guinea to Rome, a question was put to the Holy Father regarding immigration.

Response of Pope Leo XIV: “The issue of immigration is very complex and affects many countries — not only Spain, not only Europe or the United States: it is a global phenomenon! That is why my answer begins with a question: what is the North doing to help the South, or those countries where young people today see no future and, for this reason, dream of going North? Everyone wants to go North, but often the North has no solution to offer them. Many are suffering.

“The issue of human trafficking is also part of migration. Personally, I believe that a state has the right to establish rules at its borders. I am not saying that everyone should enter without order, sometimes creating, where they go, situations that are even more unjust than those they left behind.

“But having said that, I ask myself: what are we doing in the wealthier countries to change the situation in poorer countries? Why can we not try — both through public assistance and through investments by large wealthy corporations and multinational companies — to change the situation in countries like those we visited during this trip?

“Africa is considered by many as a place where one can go to extract minerals, take its wealth, and enrich others in different countries. Perhaps we should, at a global level, become more committed to promoting greater justice, equality, and the development of these African countries so that their people will not need to emigrate to other countries, to Spain and elsewhere.

“And the other point I would like to address is that, regardless of the circumstances, these are human beings, and we must treat human beings humanely, and not treat them — as often happens — worse than animals. There is a great challenge here: a country may say that it cannot receive more people, but when they arrive, they are human beings and deserve the respect due to every person by reason of their dignity.” ❖

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The Rich Can Be Converted

by **Juan Castro Soto**

One might think that we are about to defend the accumulators of wealth, the bankers, the richest business leaders, the giants of the economy, whether capitalist or “socialist.” Nothing could be further from the truth. We simply wish to explain that these millionaires may not be as rich as they appear, and that poverty itself might be defined by the number of one’s needs.

The Economic Aspect

With the invention of metal and paper money, feelings of greed and avarice — which have long dominated human existence alongside selfishness and envy — became even more intense. Through the symbolism attached to money, many discovered that wealth could be concentrated in quantities that no one would ever want if it existed in its actual material form.

For if, instead of possessing millions of dollars, one possessed land, jewellery, automobiles, food supplies, and endless products and services, everything would become a burden. Who would want vast areas of land if they could not cultivate them? What use would there be for enormous quantities of food when one has only a single mouth and stomach, and only twenty-four hours a day in which to consume it? What use would there be for countless clothes when one has only one body, or dozens of pairs of shoes for only two feet? What use would there be for so many cars when only one can be driven at a time? And who would take care of all of it?

In truth, excessive possessions become a form of slavery and a source of pointless anxiety. Too much real wealth would become a nightmare and could eventually destroy one’s freedom, one’s health, and even one’s life. However, if that immense wealth is represented by coins, paper money, or numbers on a screen, one can possess much more. And if a person feels superior to others simply because he possesses more money, he will do everything possible to obtain it, thereby attempting to fill an inner lack of self-worth.

In accounting terms, Louis Even was correct in saying that everyone becomes a capitalist when they possess capital — even socialists, and even those who do not possess any capital at all. Yet there are other factors involved beyond accounting. Capitalism is an entire social system involving countless economic, political, and ideological variables created by capitalists themselves — it is a culture. The same could be said of socialism and socialists, who often appear equally concerned with capital rather than with society itself.

From this broader perspective, Louis Even would probably not say that a person is a capitalist merely because he possesses capital. That would be like saying that a person becomes a zebra simply by painting stripes on himself. Human beings are far more than that.

The Ideological Aspect

We are speaking here of every form of capital: technological capital, natural resources, human “resources,” money, and other forms of financing. For example, if we consider human labour itself as part of capital, does that mean that we are all capitalists?

Certainly not. Being a capitalist means much more than simply being part of the workforce. Above all, it means placing capital above everything else — even above human persons — to the point of making it into a god. This is also a matter of ideology and values, where capital becomes an end in itself, accumulated and hoarded rather than serving as a means of exchange and commerce.

From this arise dispossession, labour exploitation, extreme wealth, and extreme poverty. Indeed, most of the major problems in the world stem from this struggle over money, whether under capitalism or socialism.

This ideological aspect, which turns money into an idol, is itself enough to make a person a capitalist. In this sense, even a poor person may be capitalist without possessing any capital at all. It depends less upon what one possesses than upon what one would do with it — or wishes to do with it — even if one does not have it.

A capitalist without capital. Simply desiring to become a millionaire can make a person a capitalist, even when there is not a single dollar in his pocket.

By contrast, a cooperative enterprise possessing various forms of capital for productive work is not capitalist for that reason alone, because its principal objective is the well-being of people rather than the accumulation of capital. Thus capitalism can become more ideological than economic. Yet ideology alone is still not enough.

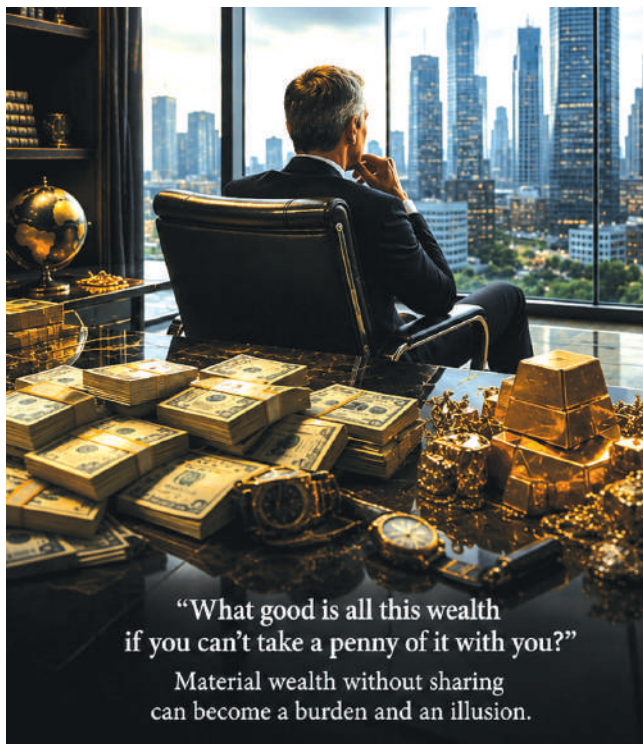
The Political Aspect

For the current system to function in such an unequal manner, it requires a policy of monetary scarcity created through debt, interest, taxes, insufficient wages, monetary monopolies, disparities between currencies, and a lack of democracy.

Indeed, today’s financial system operates on the basis of a shortage of money that impoverishes the majority while enriching a small minority, giving rise to greed, usury, elitism, privileges, power, and social

classes. In this way, ninety-nine percent of wealth becomes concentrated in one percent of the population.

In reality, what discredits the rich today is not wealth itself but its contrast with poverty; it is indifference toward the poor and the attempt to justify poverty.



If, on the contrary, everyone were millionaires, who would possess all the real wealth of goods and services if everyone had enough money to accumulate it?

Each person would possess only what he actually needs and would still retain millions that could not truly be used. But that would not matter. After all, it is only money — and, in reality, there would be more than enough of it.

What truly matters is that production reaches those who need it. Real wealth is limited, while money itself can be given almost unlimited values. Yet there is enough real wealth for everyone, while money exists only for a few.

What Jesus said

One can read in Matthew 19:16-22:

“Then a young man came to Jesus and asked Him: ‘Teacher, what good thing must I do to obtain eternal life?’ Jesus replied: “‘Why do you ask Me about what is good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the Commandments.’ ‘Which ones?’ the young man asked. Jesus answered: ‘You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honour your father and mother; and love your neighbour as yourself.’ The young man replied: “‘I have kept all

these Commandments. What do I still lack?’ Jesus answered: ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow Me.’ When the young man heard these words, he went away sorrowful, because he possessed great wealth.”

Certainly, in a financial system built upon debt and scarcity — a system that enriches a few while impoverishing the majority — “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle” than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 19:24). Jesus was right. But it was not because the rich person himself is necessarily evil.

What is truly defective is the financial system itself — the monetary design of the economy and the management of money that traps both those who possess it and those who do not.

Jesus also spoke of the emptiness of accumulating riches (Luke 12:32 ff.), but the wealthy seem never to realize this. Many millionaires could not spend all their money over several generations. Yet they remain poor rich people — always needing more money and more power.

Even the Greek philosopher Epicurus, three centuries before Christ, warned restless hearts: “Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you do not have.” He advocated balance and interior peace.

But Jesus was not an economist, nor did He come to propose financial solutions. He simply made a diagnosis: the rich do not enter the Kingdom of God because they do not let go of their wealth and their greed.

When Abundance Reaches Us

In reality, the financial system alone distorts human nature and disrupts the entire social order.

History teaches us that a “good capitalism” is not really capitalism, and a “good socialism” is not really socialism either. Goodness has never been their defining characteristic; both have often become distorted and harmful in practice.

Jesus, however, pointed toward a new paradigm. He had different ideas, a different vision, and a different system. He invited people to share bread and other riches as He Himself did, without expecting anything in return.

This implies a new model of the human person: capital placed at the service of people and, consequently, a better society where generosity, trust, fraternity, freedom, and honesty flourish — qualities often lacking in both capitalism and socialism.

For this reason, Louis Even promoted throughout the twentieth century the model of Economic Democracy developed by the British engineer Clifford Hugh Douglas, convinced that it represented the closest practical approach to the social justice promoted by Jesus.

If money ceased to be scarce and became accessible to everyone, no one would be more important ▶

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The Rich Can Be Converted

(continued from page 31)

than another. Money would lose many of the elements that feed selfishness, envy, and competition.

If money were no longer scarce, how could anyone manipulate or bribe others if everyone already possessed the money they needed — and even more?

No one would live in anxiety over an uncertain future. No one would fear for the future of their children because the system itself would provide security and hope. No one would need to become rich. Everything depends upon abolishing the system of scarcity so that the vices associated with capitalism and socialism — exploitation, theft, and dependence — may disappear.

The abundance of money would mean private property for everyone rather than for a privileged few. It would represent capital and wealth for each individual.

And beyond satisfying needs, it would gradually reduce them, because people would increasingly abandon what is superfluous and focus on what is truly necessary, leaving less room for greed.

Saint Francis of Assisi expressed it this way: "I desire little, and the little I desire, I desire but little." And thus, possessing nothing, he possessed everything.

So no — it is not human nature to be a usurious capitalist, a hypocritical socialist, or someone beyond hope like the rich young man.

It is the scarcity of money within the financial system that permits greed and domination throughout the world, encouraging what is weakest and poorest within human nature — where even the poor themselves need conversion.

Obviously, the principal responsibility lies with the bankers who create and distribute money; then with politicians who permit and enforce such systems; followed by wealthy business leaders and social elites who benefit from them; and finally with the poor, who perform the labour and create real wealth while hoping to climb the pyramid of money.



In this way, the economy shapes society itself: its politics, thoughts, emotions, and customs. But if the system itself changes, then usury, selfishness, and their driving force — envy — disappear as well.

There will be no class struggle and no dictatorship of any kind, whether of the rich or of the proletariat. There will be Economic Democracy, where society more closely resembles the Kingdom of which Jesus spoke.

We will discover another model of the human person — a kind of humanity 2.0 — something not yet fully known, yet already present within ourselves.

Did you know that local currencies could become one of the first stones in building that Kingdom? ❖

Juan Castro Soto