

CIOFS Ongoing Formation Program for 2014

Theme V: St. Louis, social justice and evangelization¹



“Often, in summer, after Holy Mass, he would go to sit in the woods near Vincennes. He would lean against an oak tree and would have us sit around him. And all those who had a problem would come to speak with him without being impeded by an attendant or anyone else.” (Jean de Joinville, *Life of St. Louis*)

“If our Lord wants you to be anointed with the oil with which the kings of France are consecrated, make sure that you possess the qualities that are proper for kings, that is, those of never

separating yourself from justice.” (*Teachings of St. Louis to his son Philip*)

HISTORICAL ASPECT: “ST. LOUIS, A NEW SOLOMON”

Although the expression “social doctrine of the Church” appears first at the end of the 19th century, the concept of social justice is already well established in the 13th century and it develops in three camps: in economics, manifesting itself above all in the struggle against usury; in politics, where it is present in peace efforts; in religion, where it is nourishment for evangelization which was considered at that time a duty when dealing with heretics and followers of non-Christian religions.

St. Louis wished to follow the steps of Solomon – the model of the wise and just king – as evidenced by his willingness to personally administer justice and arbitration be it among the feudal lords or between them and the people. His generous financial aid that he made available for the foundation of hospitals (from fifteen to twenty) and for other diverse initiatives demonstrates his concern that the **poor** receive the minimum subsistence to which they have a right.



Influenced by Franciscan spirituality, St. Louis strove, consistently with his status as king, to practice detachment from material goods. In private, for example, he would wear very simple clothes and at table he would always pour water in his glass before they poured the wine, and, when it was possible, he would fast.

His canonization will make of him the model of Christian king.

¹ Source: <http://www.catholique78.fr/8-themes-approfondir-0010200>. Theme adapted by Michèle Altmeyer, OFS with the kind permission of the Diocese of Versailles. English translation: Mary Stronach, OFS. Edited by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR.

PASTORAL ASPECT: “THE HUMAN PERSON AT THE CENTER, IN ALL HIS DIMENSIONS”

St. Louis embodies the image of justice. He even inaugurates a direct form of justice, taking the liberty to change, on appeal, court decisions of the feudal lords. Thus, he gives an example of a higher authority concerned about reminding everyone of his rights and duties.

The notion of justice, be it on the spiritual plane or on the temporal plane, is directly inspired by the Gospel and it has developed in the context of Christianity as evidenced by St. Thomas Aquinas in his writings on the “just wage.”



The present economic crisis gives us the occasion to reflect on the use of material goods: what do we do with our money and our talents? How do we use them to serve society and the common good? How much free time do we dedicate to family life, time with our members, personal and spiritual time? Are we running the risk of becoming “almost slaves to materialism?”

Then, what is a just society? It is a society that recognizes the talents of a person and makes sure that each person can use them through his work and efforts. A society

committed to strive against poverty, be it material or spiritual. A society which is vigilant so that no human being, either in our country or elsewhere, should be reduced to the ranks of becoming simply a means of production. (CC.GG. 18-23)

The concern about justice that was in St. Louis’ heart should spur us to put our material and spiritual riches at the service of all.

ST. LOUIS TO TODAY...

Being present in the world

Do we perceive flagrant injustices in our surroundings? Christ admonishes us, saying to us: “Whatever you do to the least of my brothers, you do unto me.” (Mt. 25, 40) What are the means at our disposal to fight against injustices?

Transmission

How do we help our children and our young people to become attentive to social justice, which is inherent in Christianity?

Spiritual life

For the advent of this kingdom of justice and love that God wants, we are invited to intercede with prayer and to concretely take responsibility to transform the situation. Are we always able to combine prayer and responsibility?



Mission

For St. Louis, evangelization was an essential component in the pursuit of justice because every person must be able to have access to the Word of God. Can this way of conceiving evangelization enlighten the contemporary call to the New Evangelization?

Formation

There is a statement in the social doctrine of the Church, called the "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," which sums up the experience and Christian reflection on social issues. Is this concern of the Church also my concern?

LIVING THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The fundamental equality of all men and women, and social justice



“Since all men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness, since they have the same nature and origin, have been redeemed by Christ and enjoy the same divine calling and destiny, the basic equality of all must receive increasingly greater recognition.

True, all men are not alike from the point of view of varying physical power and the diversity of intellectual and moral resources. Nevertheless, with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural,

whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are still not being universally honored. Such is the case of a woman who is denied the right to choose a husband freely, to embrace a state of life or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men.

Therefore, although rightful differences exist between men, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about. For excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace.

Human institutions, both private and public, must labor to minister to the dignity and purpose of man. At the same time let them put up a stubborn fight against any kind of slavery, whether social or political, and safeguard the basic rights of man under every political system. Indeed human institutions themselves must be accommodated by degrees to the highest of all realities,



spiritual ones, even though meanwhile, a long enough time will be required before they arrive at the desired goal.” (Constitution on the Church in the Modern World “*Gaudium et spes*” §29).

LIVING THE GOSPEL (Lk 14: 12-24)

Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

When one of those at the table heard this, he said, ‘Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the Kingdom of God.’ Jesus replied:

“A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, everything is now ready.’ But they all began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field and I must go and see it. Please, excuse me.’ Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen and I’m on my way to try them out. Please, excuse me.’ Still another said, ‘I just got married so I can’t come.’

The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to the servant: ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’ The servant said, ‘Sir, what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’ Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. Because I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

