

MEN FOR OTHERS

by Pedro Arrupe, S.J.

Education for social justice and social action today

FOREWORD

The address of Father Pedro Arrupe to the "Tenth International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe," in Valencia, Spain, on July 31, 1973, caused a stir because it called with insistence for change. Continuing education for social justice poses no threat while it remains on the level of abstract theory. Father Arrupe brings doctrine to bear on the personal lives of all who hear him. To accept what he has to say is to accept and work for change in one's own manner of life and environment - not an easy thing at all.

Words like "radical" have been used about this address. That word is not hard to accept if it means going to the root of the matter and the discourse is indeed radical, as is the teaching of Pope Paul VI in

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Re-Education for Justice

Education for justice has become in recent years one of the chief concerns of the Church. Why? Because there is a new awareness in the Church that participation in the promotion of justice and the liberation of the oppressed is a constitutive element of the mission which Our Lord has entrusted to her.¹ Impelled by this awareness, the Church is now engaged in a massive effort to education - or rather to re-educate - herself, her children, and all men and women so that we may all "lead our life in its entirety... in accord with the evangelical principles of personal and social morality to be expressed in a living Christian witness."²

which enables us to renew ourselves ceaselessly and thus to adapt ourselves to new situations as they arise.

What is this something? It is the spirit of constantly seeking the will of God. It is that sensitiveness to the Spirit which enables us to recognize where, in what direction, Christ is calling us at different periods of history, and to respond to that call.

In accord with God's will

generations succeeding us must be encouraged to develop, if we and they are to serve this evangelical ideal of justice.

The first line of reflection begins with the Synod of Bishops of 1971, and its opening statement on "Justice in the World:"

Gathered from the whole world, in communion with all who believe in Christ and with the entire human family, and opening our hearts to the Spirit who is making the whole of creation new, we have questioned ourselves about the mission of the People of God to further justice in the world.

Scrutinizing the "signs of the times" and seeking to detect the meaning of emerging history... we have listened to the Word of God that we might be converted to the fulfilling of the divine plan for the salvation of the world...

We have... been able to perceive the serious injustices which are building around the world of men and women a network of domination, oppression and abuses which stifle freedom and which keep the greater part of humanity from sharing in the building up and enjoyment of a4(e t) (m)17(i)2l buhstic2(d)-8(t)-1(h(i)2l b)hreedo (of)-15orld.

of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." We cannot, then, separate action for justice and liberation from oppression from the proclamation of the Word of God.

Differences on what to do

This is plain speech indeed. However, it did not prevent doubts, questionings, even tensions from arising within the Church itself. It would be naïve not to recognize this fact. Contradictions, or at least dichotomies, have emerged regarding the actual implementation of this call to action, and our task now is to try to harmonize these dichotomies if we can. This would be in the spirit of the Holy Year that is coming, which is the spirit of reconciliation.

To begin with, let us note that these dichotomies are differences of stress rather than contradictions of ideas. In view of the present call to justice and liberation, where should we put our stress – in our attitudes, our activities, our life style:

1. Justice among persons, or justice before God?
2. Love of God, or love of the neighbor?
3. Christian charity or human justice?
4. Personal conversion or social reform?
5. Liberation in this life or salvation in the life to come?
6. Development through the inculcation of Christian values, or development through the application of scientific technologies and social ideologies?

Justice and the Church

1. Quite clearly, the mission of the Church is not coextensive with the furthering of justice on this planet. Still, the furthering of justice is a *constitutive element* of that mission, as the Synod teaches. Recall the Old Testament: that First Alliance, the pact of Yahweh with his chosen people, was basically concerned with the carrying out of justice, to such a degree that the violation of justice as it concerns people implies a rupture of the Alliance with God. Turn, now, to the New Testament, and see how Jesus has received from his Father the mission to bring the Good News to the poor, liberation to the oppressed, and to make justice triumph. "Blessed are the poor" - why? Because the Kingdom has already come; the Liberator is at hand.

Love of neighbor

2. We are commanded to love God *and* to love our neighbor. But note what Jesus says: the second commandment is *like unto* the first; they fuse together into one compendium of

the Law. And in his vision of the Last Judgment, what does the Judge say? “As long as you did this for one of the least of my brothers, you did it for me.”³

As Father Alfaro says:

Inclusion in or expulsion from the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus depends on our attitude toward the poor and oppressed; toward those who are identified in Isaiah 58,1-2 as the victims of human injustice and in whose regard God wills to realize his justice. What is strikingly new here is that Jesus makes these despised and marginalized folk his *brothers*. He identifies himself with the poor and the powerless, with all who are hungry and miserable. Every person in this condition is Christ’s brother or sister; that is why what is done for them is done for Christ himself. Whoever comes effectively to the aid of these brothers and sisters of Jesus belongs to his Kingdom; whoever abandons them to their misery excludes himself or herself from that Kingdom.⁴

Love and justice meet

3. Just as love of God, in the Christian view, fuses with love of neighbor, to the point that they cannot possibly be separated, so, too, charity and justice meet together and in practice are identical. How can you love someone and treat him or her unjustly? Take justice away from love and you destroy love. You do not have love if the beloved is not seen as a person whose dignity must be respected, with all that that implies. And even if you take the Roman notion of justice as giving to each his due, what is owing to him, Christians must say that we owe love to all people, enemies not excepted.

Just as we are never sure that we love God unless we love others, so we are never sure that we have love at all unless our love issues in works of justice. And I do not mean works of justice in a merely individualistic sense. I mean three things:

Works of justice

First, a basic attitude of respect for all people which forbids us ever to use them as instruments for our own profit.

Second, a firm resolve never to profit from, or allow ourselves to be suborned by, positions of power deriving from privilege, for to do so, even passively, is equivalent to active oppression.

The struggle never ends

5. It follows that this purification, this social asceticism, this earthly liberation is so central in our Christian attitude toward life that whoever holds himself aloof from the battle for justice implicitly refuses love for his fellows and consequently for God. The struggle for justice will never end. Our efforts will never be fully successful in this life. This does not mean that such efforts are worthless.

God wants such partial successes. They are the first-fruits of the salvation wrought by Jesus. They are the signs of the coming of his Kingdom, the visible indications of its mysterious spreading among us. Of course, partial successes imply partial failures; painful failures; the defeat of many people, many of us, who will be overcome and destroyed in the fight against this “world.” For this “world” will not take it lying down, as the vivid American expression has it. It will persecute, it will try to exterminate those who do not belong to it and stand in opposition to it.

But this defeat is only apparent. It is precisely those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice who are blessed. It is precisely the crucified who pass through the world “doing good and healing all.”⁵

Technologies necessary

6. To point out in very general fashion that there are injustices in the world – something which everybody knows without being told – that is not enough: agreed. Having stated principles, we must go to a map of the world and point out the critical points – geographical, sociological, cultural – where sin and injustice find their logment: also agreed. To do this, technologies are needed as instruments of analysis and action, and ideologies are needed to program analysis and action so that they will actually dislodge and dismantle injustice: by all means agreed.

What role is left, then, for the inculcation of Christian values, for the Christian ethos? This: we cannot forget that technologies and ideologies, necessary though they are, derive their origin, historically, from a mixture of good and evil. Injustice of one kind or another finds in them too a local habitation and a name.

But not enough

Put it this way: they are tools, imperfect tools. And it is the Christian ethos, the Christian vision of values, that must use these tools while submitting them to judgment and relativizing their tendency to make absolutes of themselves. Relativizing them, putting them in their place, as it were, with full realization that the Christian ethos cannot possibly construct a new world without their assistance.

Forming men and women

With this background, let us now enter upon our second line of reflection, which bears on

What is it to humanize the world if no

5. Acts 10.38

6. Rom 12.21