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September 16, 2021



**Catholic Social Teaching in Action:
The Work of the Holy See at the United Nations**



Introduction

- The Holy See has international juridical personality as a sovereign state and participates formally in bilateral and multilateral diplomatic work.
- The Pope receives diplomats, speaks to them on almost every foreign trip, has repeatedly come to the United Nations, is rumored to be attending the COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland, this November.
- The Holy See's participation is occasionally criticized from the left by those with absolutist notions of secularity or the separation of Church and State, those on the right by those who have concerns over the cooperation of the Church with various governments and international bodies that they preferred to be marginalized or eliminated, as well as Catholics who have questions about the Church's involvement in the secular order, as if the Church is an NGO or social-service agency rather than something that prioritizes proclaiming the Gospel, celebrating the Sacraments and the diakonia.



Introduction

- Biblical Ground
 - Salt of the Earth (Mt 5:13)
 - Light of the World (Mt 5:14)
 - Leaven that makes the whole dough rise (Mt 13:33)
 - Caesar and God (Mt 22:21)



Brief History of Holy See Diplomacy

- Edict of Milan
- Definition of *Sancta Sedes* or “Holy See”
 - Distinction from Vatican City State
 - Distinction from Catholic Church
- Apocrisarii, Legati, Nuntii
- Development of the civil authority of the Pope
- Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085)
- Modern diplomacy begins in 13th Century in Northern Italy



Brief History of Holy See Diplomacy

- The papacy as arbiter in the age of global exploration and colonization.
- The Protestant Reformation, The Peace of Augsburg in 1555, the Edict of Nantes in 1598, and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648
- The Rupture of the French Revolution & the 1815 Council of Vienna
- The Period between 1870-1929. Growth of bilateral relations.
- Growth of multilateral diplomacy. League of Nations. World War I and World War II. Cold War.



Survey of the Holy See's Diplomatic Profile

- The Holy See has bilateral diplomatic relations with 183 countries.
- The Holy See also has diplomatic relations with the European Union, The Sovereign Military Order of Malta, and relations of a special nature with Palestine.
- The Holy See participates in various Intergovernmental Organizations and Bodies and International Programs.
- The Vatican City State also participates in various International and Intergovernmental Organizations, including the Universal Postal Union, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Grains Council, the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization, the European Telecommunication Satellite Organization, the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications, and International Institute of Administrative Sciences.



The Holy See's Goals of Engagement

- Not concerned principally with what most States are, e.g., borders, economic benefits, military security.
- Articulating the ethical principles that ought to underpin the social and political order on the basis of universally applicable principles that are as real as the physical elements of the natural environment.



The Holy See at the United Nations

- Initial Concerns of Pope Pius XII
- Overlap of four UN Pillars with Catholic Social Teaching
 - to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
 - to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
 - to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
 - to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.



The Holy See at the United Nations

- Early Involvement of Holy See (1945-1964)
 - In 1951, ECOSOC invited the Holy See to serve as members of an **Advisory Committee on Refugees** and the Holy See participated in the **1951 Geneva Conference of Plenipotentiaries** on a Convention on the status of refugees. The Holy See signed the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* in 1952 and became a party to it in 1956.
 - The Apostolic Nuncio in Paris was unofficial delegate-observer of the Holy See to **UNESCO** from 1945-1952, and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to UNESCO from 1952.
 - In 1955, the UN Secretary General invited the Holy See to participate in the first **UN Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy**, eventually leading to the Holy See's becoming a charter member of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

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The Holy See at the United Nations

- Early Involvement of Holy See (1945-1964)
 - In 1958, The Holy See was participated in the 26th Session of ECOSOC in Geneva in 1958, became a Permanent Observer to the **Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)**, and was invited by the UN to attend the **Conference on the Law of the Sea** in 1958 in Geneva.
 - **Bishop James Griffiths**, auxiliary of New York and head of the Committee on Peace for the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), a predecessor to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, became in the mid-1950s a liaison between the Holy See and the UN in New York, following the situation in Hungary at the time, representing the Holy See as a delegate on various UN technical assistance conferences, especially on the Special Committee on Refugees, the situation in the Middle East, China, and the population control movement.



The Holy See at the United Nations

- Permanent Observer Status
 - No provisions in UN Charter for Observer States, but only 51 States in 1945 could meet requirements of Membership or to gain approval of Security Council. Others wanted neutrality.
 - The following countries were Permanent Observers States: Switzerland, Austria, Bangladesh, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, German Democratic Republic, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Monaco, Republic of Korea, Republic of Vietnam, Spain, Vietnam.
 - Holy See became a Permanent Observer State April 6, 1964
 - July 1, 2004. Resolution 58/314 gave the Holy See all of the rights and responsibilities except the right to vote, the right to submit resolutions without co-sponsoring, and the right to put forward candidates for the various UN and UN-related offices.
 - On November 29, 2012, the State of Palestine was granted Permanent Observer State Status, making it presently the second along with the Holy See.



The Holy See at the United Nations

- Five Papal Visits to the United Nations
 - Paul VI, October 4, 1965
 - John Paul II, October 2, 1979
 - John Paul II, October 5, 1995
 - Benedict XVI, April 18, 2018
 - Francis, September 25, 2015

- They have stressed various themes stressed in their visits: Esteem for the Institution, which they consider essential for the world; the constant need for reform so that it may live up to its ideals; the UN is a temporal reflection of “catholicity,” aspiring to be unique and universal; the UN is a “school of peace” essential for the building and maintenance of peace; to carry out this mission of peace, the UN must help nations and the international community to live up to the responsibility to protect; there is a need for true justice, not just words or “declarationalist nominalism”; The UN must promote and protect the dignity of every person, beginning with promoting and protecting respect for the sacredness of every human life.



The Holy See at the United Nations

- Esteem for the Institution
 - Paul VI: “Our message is meant to be, first of all, a **moral and solemn ratification of this lofty institution**. ... The edifice that you have constructed **must never collapse**; it must be **continually perfected and adapted** to the needs that the history of the world will present.”
 - John Paul II: “How can we fail to acknowledge the role of the United Nations Organization? **Fifty years after its founding, the need for such an Organization is even more obvious.**”
 - Benedict XVI: “My presence at this Assembly is a **sign of esteem** for the United Nations, and it is intended to **express the hope that the Organization will increasingly serve as a sign of unity between States and an instrument of service to the entire human family.**”
 - Francis: “This is the fifth time that a Pope has visited the United Nations. I follow in the footsteps of my predecessors. ... All of them expressed their **great esteem for the Organization, which they considered the appropriate juridical and political response to this present moment of history.** ... I can only reiterate the appreciation expressed by my predecessors, **in reaffirming the importance which the Catholic Church attaches to this Institution and the hope which she places in its activities.**”



The Holy See at the United Nations

- An Institution always in need of reform
 - John Paul II: “The United Nations Organization needs to **rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution** and to become a **moral center** where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a ‘family of nations.’”
 - Francis: “The experience of the past seventy years has made it clear that **reform and adaptation to the times is always necessary** in the pursuit of the ultimate goal of granting all countries, without exception, a share in, and a genuine and equitable influence on, decision-making processes. **The need for greater equity** is especially true in the case of those bodies with effective executive capability, such as the Security Council, the Financial Agencies and the groups or mechanisms specifically created to deal with economic crises.”
 - Francis: “The experience of these seventy years since the founding of the United Nations in general, and in particular the experience of these first fifteen years of the third millennium, reveal both the effectiveness of the full application of international norms **and the ineffectiveness of their lack of enforcement.**”



The Holy See at the United Nations

- The UN is a temporal reflection of “catholicity,” aspiring to be unique and universal.
- Paul VI: “We would be tempted to say that **your chief characteristic is a reflection, as it were, in the temporal field of what Our Catholic Church aspires to be in the spiritual field: unique and universal.** Among the ideals by which mankind is guided, one can conceive of nothing greater on the natural level. **Your vocation is to make brothers not only of some, but of all peoples.** A difficult undertaking? Unquestionably; but this is the undertaking, your very noble undertaking.”
- John Paul II: “Although their respective purposes and operative approaches are obviously different, the Church and the United Nations constantly find **wide areas of cooperation on the basis of their common concern for the human family.** ... There is a moral logic that is built into human life and that makes possible dialogue between individuals and peoples.”



The Holy See at the United Nations

- The UN is essential for the building and preservation of peace and is meant to be a “school of peace.”
 - Paul VI: “The words that you expect from us and which we cannot pronounce without full awareness of their gravity and solemnity: Never war against the other, never, never again. **Was it not principally for this purpose that the United Nations came into being: against war and for peace?** ... It is peace, peace that must guide the destinies of peoples and of all mankind.”
 - Francis: “War is the negation of all rights and a dramatic assault on the environment. If we want true integral human development for all, we must work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and peoples.”
 - Paul VI: “**The United Nations is the great school where ... education [in the way of peace] is imparted,** and we are today in the Assembly Hall of that school. **Everyone taking his place here becomes a pupil and also a teacher in the art of building peace.** ... This is the finest aspect of the United Nations; it is its most truly human aspect.”



The Holy See at the United Nations

- To carry out this mission of peace, it must help nations and the international community live up to the responsibility to protect
- Benedict XVI: “Recognition of the unity of the human family, and attention to the innate dignity of every man and woman, today find **renewed emphasis in the principle of the responsibility to protect**. This ... was already present implicitly at the origins of the United Nations, and is now increasingly characteristic of its activity. Every State has the primary duty to protect its own population from grave and sustained violations of human rights, as well as from the consequences of humanitarian crises, whether natural or man-made. **If States are unable to guarantee such protection, the international community must intervene with the juridical means provided in the United Nations Charter and in other international instruments.**”



The Holy See at the United Nations

- There is a need for true justice, not just words:
 - Francis: **“Solemn commitments, however, are not enough, although they are certainly a necessary step toward solutions. ... Our world demands of all government leaders a will which is effective, practical and constant. ... Such is the magnitude of these situations and their toll in innocent lives, that we must avoid every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism that would assuage our consciences. We need to ensure that our institutions are truly effective in the struggle against all these [aforementioned] scourges.”**



The Holy See at the United Nations

- Promoting and protecting human dignity necessarily involves promoting and protecting respect for the sacredness of every human life:
 - Francis: “The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the **foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life**, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, those considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic.”



Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* (173)

- “I would also note the need for a reform of the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth.
- “This calls for clear legal limits to avoid power being co-opted only by a few countries and to prevent cultural impositions or a restriction of the basic freedoms of weaker nations on the basis of ideological differences.
- “At the same time, the work of the United Nations, according to the principles set forth in the Preamble and the first Articles of its founding Charter, can be seen as the development and promotion of the rule of law, based on the realization that justice is an essential condition for achieving the ideal of universal fraternity.
- “There is a need to ensure the uncontested rule of law and tireless recourse to negotiation, mediation and arbitration, as proposed by the Charter of the United Nations, which constitutes truly a fundamental juridical norm.
- “There is need to prevent this Organization from being delegitimized, since its problems and shortcomings are capable of being jointly addressed and resolved.”



Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* (257)

- “If we want true integral human development for all, we must work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and peoples.
- “To this end, there is a need to ensure the uncontested rule of law and tireless recourse to negotiation, mediation and arbitration, as proposed by the *Charter of the United Nations*, which constitutes truly a fundamental juridical norm.”
- “The seventy-five years since the establishment of the United Nations and the experience of the first twenty years of this millennium have shown that the full application of international norms proves truly effective, and that failure to comply with them is detrimental. The *Charter of the United Nations*, when observed and applied with transparency and sincerity, is an obligatory reference point of justice and a channel of peace.
- “Here there can be no room for disguising false intentions or placing the partisan interests of one country or group above the global common good. If rules are considered simply as means to be used whenever it proves advantageous, and to be ignored when it is not, uncontrollable forces are unleashed that cause grave harm to societies, to the poor and vulnerable, to fraternal relations, to the environment and to cultural treasures, with irretrievable losses for the global community.”



The Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations

- The Pope is represented at the UN on a daily basis by the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN.
- To carry out his mission, the Permanent Observer is assisted by other Holy See diplomats and a support team in the Permanent Observer Mission.
- Since 1964, there have been seven Permanent Observers
 - Msgr. Alberto Giovannetti (1964-1973)
 - Archbishop Giovanni Cheli (1973-1986)
 - Archbishop (Cardinal) Renato Martino (1986-2002)
 - Archbishop Celestino Migliore (2002-2010)
 - Archbishop Francis Chullikatt (2010-2014)
 - Archbishop Bernardito Auza (2014-2019)
 - Archbishop Gabriele Caccia (2019-present)



Some Perennial and Present Priorities of Holy See Diplomacy

- Peace
- Fundamental human rights
- Development and seeking to lift the poor out of poverty.
- Freedom, especially religious freedom and freedom of conscience
- Intercultural dialogue – fraternity and social friendship (*Fratelli Tutti*)
- Support for democratic institutions
- Care for migrants and refugees
- Care for our common home



The Social Content of the Kerygma

- Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (177-181)
 - The kerygma has a clear social content
 - The Gospel has an immediate moral implication centered on charity
 - Our redemption has a social dimension because God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men.



The Social Content of the Kerygma

- Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (177-181)
 - Reading the Scriptures also makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of “charity à la carte”, or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience. The Gospel is about *the kingdom of God* (cf. *Lk 4:43*); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society.
 - True Christian hope, which seeks the eschatological kingdom, always generates history.
- These are the convictions that undergird the International Diplomatic work of the Holy See, as part of the Church’s seeking to be the salt of the earth, the life of the world, and the leaven that raises the world.



Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.
Believe what you read,
Teach what you believe,
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,
Fr. Roger J. Landry



Most Recent Homilies

God's Comfort and the Conversion Required to Receive It, Second Sunday of Advent (B), December 6, 2020

Accepting, Following and Announcing Jesus without Offense, Second Sunday of Advent (EF), December 6, 2020

Walking the Way of the Kingdom Jesus Indicates, First Saturday of Advent, December 5, 2020

Running to Meet Our Light, Strength and Salvation, First Friday of Advent, December 4, 2020

Listening to and Acting on the Long Awaited One's Words, First Thursday of Advent, December 3, 2020

Going Hungry to Meet Christ in a Three-Fold Banquet, First Wednesday of Advent, December 2, 2020

Childlike Eyes to See, First Tuesday of Advent, December 1, 2020

Singing the Song of the Lamb, 34th Wednesday (II), November 25, 2020

Turning to the Lord Who Comes to Judge the Earth, 34th Tuesday (II), November 24, 2020

Following the King and Lamb Wherever He Goes, 34th Monday (II), November 23, 2020

Most Recent Articles

Our Duty and Salvation, The Anchor, November 27, 2020

Living the Reality of the Kingdom of Christ, National Catholic Register, November 19, 2020

The Knights Our Age Needs, The Anchor, November 13, 2020

Remembering Andrew Walther, November 7, 2020

Just a Parish Priest, The Anchor, October 30, 2020

Coming to Know the Original Three-Dimensional Carlo Acutis, The Anchor, October 16, 2020

A Good Shepherd Full of Christian and Priestly Virtues, The Pilot, October 5, 2020

Returning to the Sacrament of Divine Love, The Anchor, September 18, 2020

The Pastoral Malpractice of Liturgical Abuse, The Anchor, September 4, 2020

The Chosen, The Anchor, August 21, 2020

Most Recent Talks

Receiving the Lord Jesus as Mary and Joseph, Advent Day of Recollection for the Leonine Forum, December 5, 2020

Novena in Preparation for the Immaculate Conception, Leonine Forum, November 28 to December 8, 2020

Blessed Michael McGivney and the Call to Holiness, McGivney Festival Young Adult Prayer Vigil, October 31, 2020

Apprenticeship in the Art of Living, Duc in Altum Virtual Schools Summit, October 28-30, 2020

Preaching on Marital Love and Accompanying Couples toward the Full Embrace of the Church's Teaching, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Divorced and Remarried, Challenges and Triumphs in Pastoral Care, Diocese of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20, 2020

The Heart of the New Evangelization: Meeting, Knowing and Loving Jesus Back, New Zealand Evangelion's in his Name Virtual Conference, October 10-11, 2020

Christian Anthropology: The Human Person in the Modern World, Leonine Forum Opening Lecture, October 8, 2020

Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching, UNSRC Catholic Club, August 27, 2020

Making Better Confessions, Catholic Information Conference, July 24, 2020

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Questions

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