

Millennium Development Goals and Catholic Social Teaching: Ongoing Responsibility and Response

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This paper begins by making a case for the congruence between core ideals of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aim to confront global poverty in a multifaceted approach and were entered into by a vast majority of the international community at the beginning of this millennium. Then the paper goes on to argue that given the current danger of falling short of the Goals' 2015 deadline and because the MDGs so clearly forward key aspects of CST, the Catholic Bishops and the Vatican need to redouble efforts to increase the commitment of both developed and developing nations. Finally, the author concludes that failing to do so is morally unacceptable.

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Introduction

50,000 people die every day due to poverty related causes. 30,000 children die every day from hunger and preventable diseases.² These shocking figures are both real and a responsibility. But what should and can be done and by whom? At the beginning of this millennium, the international community pledged to take action against these unacceptable and tragic realities. This paper seeks to show that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are concrete steps in forwarding many of the ideals of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) and that because they are such, the Roman Catholic hierarchy needs to continue and increase efforts aimed at securing greater commitment and focus from the parties pledged to the Goals. I will first provide a basic foundation for understanding the context and uniqueness of the MDGs, and will then proceed to expound the ways in which they reflect the aims of CST as propounded by both the Vatican and the U.S. bishops. Subsequently, I will first discuss the risk of not achieving the Goals and then delineate the efforts to encourage implementation undertaken by the Catholic hierarchy thus far. Finally, I will propose that given both the profound concurrence between CST and the MDGs and the urgency of the situation, efforts on the part of the hierarchy need to be continued and increased.

Development of the MDGs

To begin, the MDGs are not an end of the Millennium phenomena. Indeed, systematic attempts to eliminate, or at least drastically reduce, global poverty have antecedents that go back to the founding of the U.N., the stalled Development Decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and many reports, books, and associated advocacy efforts on the issue. However, as David

² “End Hunger and Extreme Poverty,” United Nations Millennium Campaign, accessed 7 April 2010, <http://www.endpoverty2015.org/goals/end-hunger>.

Hulme notes, in the 1980s, “with the arrival of Reagan and Thatcher, the intellectual ascendancy of neo-liberal ideas around the world, and the informal shifting of responsibility/authority for reducing poverty from the U.N. to the International Financial Institutions, the idea of a concerted public effort at global poverty reduction stalled.”³ Nevertheless, with the seminal works of thinkers such as Paul Streeten et al., Mahbub ul Haq, and Amartya Sen, the paradigm of “human development” began to catch on in global policy making. As Dr. Haq describes it, after many decades of development, economists and policy makers had “finally begun to accept the axiom that human welfare—not GNP—is the true end of development.”⁴

The 1990s saw the advent of the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) *Human Development Report* (HDR) and the return of UN Summitry. Throughout the decade there were many “national, regional and international consultations that involved millions of people and represented a wide range of interests, including those of governments, civil society organizations and private sector areas.”⁵ Additionally, in 1996 the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) created the International Development Goals (IDGs) to “define how its 23 bilateral donors would work together to improve lives in developing countries in the 21st century.”⁶ These set an important precedent because they were “time bound and quantifiable,” but they were “never

³ David Hulme, “The Making of the Millennium Development Goals: Human Development Meets Results-based Management In an Imperfect World,” working paper, Brooks World Poverty Institute, accessed 29 March 2011, <http://www.capabilityapproach.com/pubs/Hulme07.pdf>, 4.

⁴ Mahbub ul Haq, *Reflections on Human Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.

⁵ United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2003: Millennium Development Goals Among Nations to End Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 29.

⁶ Ibid.

whole-heartedly adopted by developing countries or by civil society groups” and were seen “as the brainchild solely of rich countries.”⁷

Thus there was considerable lead-up to the largest ever gathering of heads of state, which took place in 2000 at the U.N. Millennium Summit. With the solid grounding of the human development model, and the involvement of both developing and developed nations, the summit produced the Millennium Declaration, which committed countries “*rich and poor*” to doing all they can to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and equality, and achieve peace, democracy and environmental sustainability.”⁸ From this Declaration came the Goals and their targets. The goals are 1.) To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger 2.) Achieve universal primary education 3.) Promote gender equality and empower women 4.) Reduce child mortality 5.) Improve maternal health 6.) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases 7.) Ensure environmental sustainability 8.) Develop a global partnership for development. Goals 1-7 contain time-bound and quantitative targets, and are primarily the responsibility of the “poor countries.”⁹ Goal 8 enumerates the rich countries’ side of the partnership for development and leaves it up to those countries to “set their own deadlines for targets requiring their action.”¹⁰ Of course, both sets of goals are intimately linked and success depends on sustained action and commitment of both developed and developing nations.

Thus, the MDGs are “benchmarks of progress” toward the vision of the Declaration, which was “guided by the basic values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility.”¹¹ Improving upon former U.N. objectives, which “focused on

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 1 emphasis added.

⁹ Ibid, 162.

¹⁰ Ibid, 145.

¹¹ Ibid, 27.

economic growth,” the MDGs place “human well-being and poverty reduction at the centre of global development.”¹² They are thus “building blocks for human development” and human rights¹³, and are expressions of ideals with considerable moral force. And as the prominent Catholic moral theologian Lisa Sowle Cahill notes, the moral force of these ideals “comes from the fact that they name essentials of human flourishing that few of the most ardent deconstructionists or practitioners of *Realpolitik* would have the hardhood to deny.”¹⁴

The MDGs and Catholic Social Teaching

In addition to reflecting many of the aspirations of “human development” and being “directly linked to economic, social and cultural rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (articles 22,24,25,26)”¹⁵, the MDGs also clearly reflect many of the aspirations of CST. Though not a monolithic body, there is nonetheless, as Donal Dorr notes, “a certain organic unity in Catholic Social Teaching” which is “based on an enduring commitment of the Church to certain basic values.”¹⁶ Given the relatively limited scope of this essay and the vast and complex array of CST, I will focus on several major themes of CST, citing major documents in which they appear and stressing how the principles are advanced by the MDGs.

First, CST has consistently affirmed both the need for an ever-greater realization of the unity of the human family and the duty of concern for all its members. The Second Vatican Council document *Guadium et Spes* makes clear that “in our times a special obligation binds us

¹² Ibid, 26.

¹³ Ibid, 28.

¹⁴ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Toward Global Ethics,” *Theological Studies*, 63 (2002): 336.

¹⁵ *Human Development Report*, 28.

¹⁶ Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, (New York : Orbis Books, 1993), 365.

to make ourselves the neighbor of absolutely every person.”¹⁷ This obligation manifests itself in the virtue of *solidarity*, which Pope John Paul II explains “is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far,” but rather, “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the *common good*: that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are *all* really responsible *for all*.”¹⁸ The Millennium Declaration reads almost as if it had such universal concern and commitment in mind when it declares: “In addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level.”¹⁹ The Goals developed from the Declaration reflect a realization of this universal concern, if not in the hearts and minds of all individuals, at least in the commitment of leaders to a policy that concretely addresses the needs of fellow human beings suffering from dire poverty.

Such commitment is particularly clear with regard to MDG 8, which in its enumeration of the duties of rich nations reflects both the general call in CST for concern and specific calls for how such concern should be manifested by rich nations on a global policy level. Exhortations for generous and multifaceted aid have been present in official CST since the time of John XXIII²⁰ and Paul VI²¹ and have been consistently reaffirmed, most recently by Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*.²² Official CST has also consistently called for equity in trade

¹⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Guadium et Spes*, in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (New York: Maryknoll, 1992), no. 27.

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (New York: Maryknoll, 1992), no. 38.

¹⁹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 55/2, *United Nations Millennium Declaration*, September 8, 2000, available at www.un.org/millennium/declaration/aes_552e.htm.

²⁰ See John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra* in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (New York: Maryknoll, 1992), nos. 157-177.

²¹ See Paul VI *Populorum Progressio* in *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (New York: Maryknoll, 1992), 45-53.

²² See Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents, nos. 22, 41, 58, 60.

relations since *Populorum Progressio*²³. More recently, urgent pleas for reform have been prompted by the issue of “imbalances” in both the “world monetary and financial system” and “technology transfer” as well as by the problem of the crushing burden of debt.²⁴ Goal 8 directly addresses many of these concerns by committing rich countries to the following: to “develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and nondiscriminatory,” to address the least developed countries’ needs, including “tariff -and quota-free access to exports, enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted countries, cancellation of bilateral debt, and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction,” to deal comprehensively with “developing countries’ debt problems” through measures to make such debt sustainable, and to “make available the benefits of new technologies.”²⁵

At the base of CST are also strong claims for innate human dignity and concomitant human rights. Often called the “Catholic charter of human rights,” Pope John XXIII’s 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (PT), lays out the basic rights to “life, to bodily integrity, and to the means which are suitable for the proper development of life,” including “food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care, and finally the necessary social services.”²⁶ The MDGs affirm and seek to advance the rights to food, education, health care, and decent living standards²⁷, and are thus concrete steps toward achieving basic rights that are claimed for all in CST, yet remain unrealized for the vast majority of people.

²³ See *Populorum Progressio*, nos .57-61.

²⁴ See *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 43.

²⁵ *Human Development Report*, 145 emphasis added.

²⁶ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* in *Catholic Social Thought : The Documentary Heritage*, ed. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (New York : Maryknoll, 1992), no.11.

²⁷ *Human Development Report*, 29.

Closely related to human rights and dignity in CST is the stress on the need for integral and authentic *human development*. Like the secular concept of human development, the Catholic concept has evolved over the years. Initially, the focus was on economic development with little nuance, as with John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra*.²⁸ However, as Donal Dorr notes, with *Populorum Progressio* (PP), Pope Paul VI “gives a framework or anticipation of the shape of genuine human development.”²⁹ Pope Paul clearly delineates the “aspirations” of seeking “to do more, know more and have more in order to be more”³⁰ and puts forward a vision of development *not* “limited to mere economic growth” but rather dedicated to the promotion “of every man and of the whole man.”³¹ Thus authentic development has as its end the greater realization of human well-being and flourishing. This vision has been reaffirmed many times, notably by John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and more recently by Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate*. Because the Goals share a common motivation with the secular notion of human development and thus “reflect a vital commitment to promoting human well-being that entails dignity, freedom and equality for all people”³², they also reflect many, though not all, of the aspirations for the authentic development advocated in CST.

CST also makes clear the need to realize authentic development through genuine collaboration and stresses the responsibilities of both rich and poor nations. Indeed, the documents of CST are replete with calls for cooperation and “mutual assistance” between the various actors engaged in development. Pope John Paul II clearly expounds the need for cooperation in his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, declaring that collaboration for human development “is in fact a duty of *all towards all*, and it must be shared” by all parts of the

²⁸ See *Mater et Magistra*, nos. 157-177.

²⁹ Dorr, 181.

³⁰ *Populorum Progressio*, 6.

³¹ *Ibid*, 14.

³² *Human Development Report*, 27.

world.³³ In that same document, Pope John Paul also stresses the responsibilities of developing nations, asserting that development “demands above all a spirit of initiative on the part of the countries which need it” and is “most appropriately accomplished in the dedication of each people to its own development, in collaboration with others.”³⁴

The eighth MDG, which as noted above reflects the responsibilities of “rich” nations, also represents a clear move toward the cooperation envisioned in CST. Specifically, the assistance from rich countries is based on “performance” and requires developing countries to demonstrate “good-faith efforts to mobilize domestic resources, undertake policy reforms, strengthen institutions and tackle corruption and other aspects of weak governance.”³⁵ It also reflects a broad-based cooperation between governments, NGOs, and the private sector.³⁶ Thus although the goal does not come with time-bound targets, it nonetheless represents a move in the direction toward the assumption of responsibility by rich and poor countries as well as the private and public sector, and toward genuine cooperation between all.

In addition to the above noted *responsibility* of the peoples of developing nations to participate in their own development, CST also strongly propounds the *right* to participate in the life of the community and in the building up of the common good. This notion is also clearly linked to the fundamental human dignity of persons: their dignity is expressed through participation in their community. As the 1971 Synod of Bishops states, “Participation constitutes

³³ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 32. The text was cut short to avoid confusion over reference to the “4 worlds,” the “4th world” being pockets of dire poverty within developed countries.

³⁴ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 44.

³⁵ *Human Development Report*, 145

³⁶ *Ibid.*, see targets 15- 17.

a right which is to be applied both in the economic and in the social and political field.”³⁷ By promoting the fundamental capabilities of living a healthy life, being educated, and having a decent standard of living, the MDGs are also necessarily contributing to a greater realization of participation and ability to contribute to the common good. Additionally, specific targets reflect conscious promotion of participation in the economic realm, such as number 16 under MDG 8, which articulates a commitment to “develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.”³⁸

The Declaration and the MDGs also reflect the idea of making a “preferential option for the poor.” This notion reflects many of the themes already touched upon, and as the prominent Catholic social ethicist Thomas Massaro, notes, the entire tradition of CST “can be interpreted as a unified effort on the part of church leaders to advocate for a more humane society where the most vulnerable members are better protected from harm.”³⁹ However, the concept is still worth stressing on its own. John Paul II makes the implications of such a stance for the international stage quite clear, saying that “the motivating concern for the poor.... must be translated at all levels into concrete actions, until it decisively attains a series of necessary reforms.”⁴⁰ He goes on to add that “the leaders of nations and the heads of international bodies.... should not forget to give precedence to the phenomenon of growing poverty.”⁴¹ The Declaration reflects a similar “concern for the poor” announcing: “As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world’s people, *especially the most vulnerable*.”⁴² The goals emanating from the Declaration clearly

³⁷ Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971 in Catholic Social Thought : The Documentary Heritage, ed. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (New York : Maryknoll, 1992), no. 291. The MDGs lack of promotion of the political side of participation will be noted below.

³⁸ *Human Development Report*, 3.

³⁹ Thomas Massaro, *Living Justice* (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2008), 115.

⁴⁰ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nos. 42-43.

⁴¹ *Ibid*.

⁴² *Human Development Report*, 27 emphasis added.

represent a focus in public policy on the needs of the poor, addressing the myriad ways that they are poor, not just the lack of a certain level of income.

Finally, especially in more recent documents CST has made clear the need for ecological concern and sustainability in development. In *Caritas in Veritate* Pope Benedict asserts that “the subject of development is also closely related to the duties arising from *our relationship to the natural environment*” and that in our use of the environment “we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.”⁴³ Goal 7 represents a clear step in the right direction of coupling concern for the environment with concern for human well-being in development. Target 9 specifically seeks to “integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources,” and so clearly reflects a conscious effort to undertake development in a way that safeguards the Earth’s resources for future generations. Moreover, Goal 7 also retains its focus on the well-being of the human subjects of development by seeking to halve the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and to make improvements in the lives of 100 million slum dwellers; in this way the Goal clearly reflects the Catholic focus on human flourishing while also recognizing the links between poverty and environmental problems.⁴⁴

Thus far, I have focused on Vatican and universal magisterial documents, but since Paul VI’s 1972 apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, in which he calls for Christian communities to “analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country”⁴⁵, conferences of

⁴³ *Caritas in Veritate*, no.48.

⁴⁴ *Human Development Report*, 123.

⁴⁵ Edward Deberri and James E. Hug, *Catholic Social Teaching, Our Best Kept Secret* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2003),131.

regional bishops have also put out stirring and comprehensive documents of social teaching.⁴⁶ The MDGs are also reflective of the themes and aspirations contained in these bodies of teaching.

One particularly clear and comprehensive example is *Economic Justice for All* (EJFA) promulgated in 1986 by the U.S. Bishops. This document elegantly and authoritatively synthesizes and expounds the major themes and principles of CST and applies them to the American economic situation, both domestic and international. The bishops prophetically state both that “basic justice implies that all peoples are entitled to participate in the increasingly interdependent global economy in a way that ensures their freedom and dignity” and that the creation of a global economic order in which human rights “are secure for all must be the prime objective for all relevant actors on the international stage.”⁴⁷ They also stress that “the preferential option for the poor is the central priority for policy choice”⁴⁸ and call for “a U.S. international economic policy designed to empower people everywhere and enable them to continue to develop a sense of their own worth, improve the quality of their lives, and ensure that the benefits of economic growth are shared equally.”⁴⁹

As with the larger corpus of CST, because the MDGs reflect the commitment to the greater realization of human development, human rights and human dignity (including the right of “participation”), as well as world-wide cooperation in achieving such ends, they are clearly in line with much of the bishops’ vision. Also, as it does with the larger body, Goal 8 specifically

⁴⁶ It should, however, be noted that whether the Vatican still supports this regional approach is highly doubtful; see for instance the Vatican’s English Translations of John Paul II’s “motu proprio” apostolic letter, “The Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences,” in *Origins*, Vol. 28, no. 9 (1998), 152-158.

⁴⁷ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy” (1986), accessed 13 March 2011, http://www.usccb.org/jphd/economiclife/pdf/economic_justice_for_all.pdf, 258.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 260.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 292.

corresponds to many of the bishops' calls, such as cooperation to deal with global debt, increased aid, and the need for more equitable trade.⁵⁰

Given all that has been said, perhaps the most important thing to stress is that the MDGs jibe with CST in ways beyond the obvious goal of reducing global poverty. The MDGs represent a significant shift away from a singular focus on poverty reduction through economic development; they reflect the basic thrust of the secular human development paradigm, namely, specifically aiming at increasing human capabilities and thereby enhancing human well-being. In this way they mirror CST's calls for authentic and integral human development, which, as the present pontiff explains, has the goal of "rescuing people, *first and foremost*, from hunger, deprivation, endemic diseases and illiteracy."⁵¹ The MDGs also call for a mode of poverty reduction and human development which represents many of CST's calls to greater unity, cooperation, shared responsibility, and solidarity.

Though there is great concurrence between CST and the MDGs, several clarifications need to be made before proceeding. First, the vision of integral and authentic human development presented in CST does not end with the achievement of these relatively modest goals. Rather, such development includes more extensive and wide-ranging social, political, cultural, and even religious dimensions. Nor do the MDGs cover all that is required for achieving full human development as conceived in prominent frameworks such as that of Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen. As the U.N. HDR of 2003 notes, although the MDGs contribute to building up certain essential capabilities, "they do not reflect all the key dimensions of human development, which is a broader concept."⁵² Among the most notable limitations of

⁵⁰ See *Economic Justice for All*, 265-277.

⁵¹ *Caritas In Veritate*, no. 21. emphasis added.

⁵² Human Development Report, 28.

the MDGs is the lack of time-bound goals for achieving political and civil freedoms for marginalized peoples to participate in their communities.

It should also be noted that the Catholic and secular models of human development are not identical. While both notions of development stress human well-being and human flourishing, the notion of such flourishing in CST includes aspects not present in the human development framework. The most obvious difference is the emphasis in CST on the necessity of fostering openness to the transcendent and on the “interior dimension” of human beings.⁵³ Nor is there complete overlap between secular and Catholic framings of human rights; notably, in a comprehensive theological framework in which God is the ultimate source of rights grounds the Catholic understanding.⁵⁴ However, despite these points of divergence, there is nonetheless significant concurrence between the secular and Catholic frameworks of both human rights and human development, and it is clear that the MDGs represent significant commitments to advancing both.

The Necessary Catholic Response

Troublingly however, there is a danger that such advance might be stalled and that the attainment of the Goals might fall far short of the 2015 target. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon recently asserted in February of 2010 that “with five years to go to the target date of 2015, the prospect of falling short of achieving the Goals because of lack of commitment is very real.”⁵⁵ Mr. Ban explains that serious shortfalls exist in the “necessary finance, services, technical support and partnerships” and that as a consequence “improvements in the lives of the

⁵³ See *Solicitude Rei Socialis*, no. 29; *Caritas in Veritate*, nos. 11 & 16; and *Populorum Progressio*, no. 15.

⁵⁴ Massaro, *Living Justice*, 83.

⁵⁵ UN General Assembly, 64 session, Report of the Secretary General (A/64/655), accessed 11 February 2010, [www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc=A/64/655](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.html?doc=A/64/655), 4.

poor have been unacceptably slow to achieve, while some hard won gains are being eroded.”⁵⁶

He further asserts that the shortfalls are not because the MDGs are “unreachable or because the time is too short, but rather because of the unmet commitments, inadequate resources, lack of focus and accountability, and insufficient interest in sustainable development.”⁵⁷

In September 2010 a summit of world leaders was held at the United Nations with a major aim of boosting progress toward the MDGs. Many of the world leaders, including President Obama, acknowledged that progress has been limited and the summit concluded with a “global action plan” toward achieving the goals by the 2015 deadline. This is surely a positive development. However, given that a large part of the problem has been and will likely continue to be the failure of both developed and developing nations to fully follow through on their commitments, there is an urgent need to continue to draw attention to the Goals and to encourage all partners to live up to their pledges and to sort out any obstacles to achievement. The Catholic hierarchy can and should play a prominent role in such encouragement.⁵⁸

The hierarchy would be justified in playing a role in this public endeavor for the same reason that they are justified in promulgating social teaching in the first place. As John Paul II makes clear in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, “The Church does not have *technical solutions* to offer for the problems of development as such,” but, “whatever affects the dignity of individuals and peoples, such as authentic development cannot be reduced to a ‘technical’ problem” and thus the Church “has something to say ...about the nature, conditions, requirements, and aims of authentic development, and also about the obstacles which stand in its way.”⁵⁹ On this basis, the Church puts forward its ideals and exhorts world leaders and the international community to live

⁵⁶ Ibid., no. 116.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ I use the term “Catholic hierarchy” to refer to the universal and regional Magisterium.

⁵⁹ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no.41. emphasis is original to the text.

up to their commitments on this matter which so clearly “affects the dignity of individuals and peoples.” The Church can thus have a positive “discursive contribution” to the formation and implementation of just policies, to use the prominent sociologist Jose Casanova’s formulation.

It should be noted that the role of the Catholic Church in advancing the achievement of the Goals is clearly not limited to the action of the hierarchy. Indeed, the Roman Catholic Church is not a monolithic, top-down actor on the global stage. As Fr. J. Bryan Hehir makes clear, “some influences flow from the center out, some form the periphery back to the center, and some engage two or more local churches without deep involvement from the Vatican.”⁶⁰ This fact is manifested in the multifaceted efforts at combating global poverty within the United States Catholic community. One example that illustrates the complex nature of the Church’s action on the issue is the joint effort by USCCB Catholic Relief Services (CRS) called the “Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty.”⁶¹ This endeavor focuses on U.S. economic policies on trade, aid, and debt and engages lay Catholics to join with the U.S. Bishops and CRS in the effort to advocate for justice in such policies. The endeavor also incorporates the many programs of CRS. Thus with regard to the MDGs specifically, the U.S. Church is involved as one of the “private sector” actors undertaking direct initiatives toward implementation, and as an advocate, encouraging the U.S. government to fulfill its commitments. And in these and other endeavors, the hierarchy, the laity, and the non-Catholic employees of Catholic NGOs all play interconnected roles.

⁶⁰ J. Bryan Hehir, “Overview,” in *Religion and World Affairs*, proceedings of a conference organized by the DACOR Bacon House Foundation, Oct. 6, 1995, 17.

⁶¹ “Catholic Campaign Against Human Poverty,” accessed 28 April 2011, http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/ccgp_history.shtml

But as the promulgators of the teaching and as the visible heads of the institution, the hierarchy has a specific responsibility to encourage successful implementation of the Goals by utilizing the very public and prominent position they occupy. To a certain extent, the hierarchy has recognized this responsibility and undertaken significant advocacy toward implementation.

First, the Vatican has indeed recognized the importance of the MDGs and has encouraged successful implementation in both public and private ways. On several occasions the Holy See's permanent observer to the U.N., Archbishop Celestino Migliore, has lauded the Goals in interventions at the General Assembly and advocated for commitment to achieving them. At the 63rd Session of the General Assembly in 2008, Msgr. Migliore made clear that "the globalization of solidarity through the prompt achievement of the MDGs established by the Millennium Declaration is a crucial moral obligation of the international community."⁶² Pope Benedict has himself applauded and encouraged the efforts, making numerous public statements as well as directly exhorting world leaders to fulfill commitments. A notable instance of the latter was the Pope's letter to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi ahead of the 2009 Group of Eight summit L'Aquila, wherein he expressed his hope that "all creative energy will be devoted to achieving the UN Millennium Goals concerning the elimination of extreme poverty by 2015."⁶³

Second, as noted above, the U.S. Bishops together with CRS have undertaken the "Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty." This undertaking represents part of the Bishops' sustained effort at advocating greater justice in U.S. policies on trade, aid, and debt; in advocating for these policies the Bishops are necessarily advocating for the furtherance of MDG

⁶² Msgr. Migliore, "Intervention by the Holy See Delegation at the 63rd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on Millennium Development Goals," (2008) accessed March 29, 2011, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2008/documents/rc_seg-st_20080925_millennium-development_en.html.

⁶³ Benedict XVI, "Papal Letter to Italian Leader Ahead of G-8," (2009) accessed March 29, 2011, <http://www.zenit.org/rssenglish-26420>.

8. The bishops have also specifically addressed the MDGs in letters to national political leaders as well as to world leaders in conjunction with other conferences. A clear example of the effort at global advocacy is the National Conferences of Catholic Bishops' joint letter to the leaders of the G8 nations in June 2009, wherein they asserted the need "to increase Official Development Assistance in order to reduce global poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals" and clarified that this also "requires deepening partnerships with developing countries so that their peoples can be active agents in their own development."⁶⁴

Thus the hierarchy has been attentive to the Goals, but it seems that there is a great deal more that could be done. Both the Vatican and the U.S. Bishops have significant access to policy makers and can command wide attention when they choose to shine the spotlight on an issue. Therefore, the Vatican and Bishops need to make a clear and sustained case that the MDGs are the Church's Goals as well, and that meeting them is both of utmost importance to the Church and a moral imperative for global society. To this end, building on the most recent pledges made in September 2010, the hierarchy must bring media attention to the Goals, continue and increase their advocacy aimed at getting world leaders and other prominent partners to fulfill their commitments, and encourage increased involvement and advocacy by the laity. Such a sustained and outspoken effort is justified by the fact that the Goals so clearly meet many of the calls made in CST as noted above.

Now, saying that the hierarchy has an important role in advocating for the Goals does not mean that the continued engagement of the laity in efforts such as the "Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty" is not important. In fact, as noted above, a crucial part of what the

⁶⁴ National Conferences of Catholic Bishops, "Letter to the Leaders of G8 Nations," (2008) accessed March 29, 2011, <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2008/08-091.shtml>

Vatican and the Bishops need to do is encourage vastly increased participation in precisely such endeavors. Of course, I also do not mean to imply that the laity's involvement is contingent upon the hierarchy *getting* them involved, but simply that the hierarchy can play a constructive role in fostering greater vigilance and action and stimulating deeper concern for the core values at stake.

To sum up, in this paper I have tried to show that as concrete steps toward the greater realization of both "human development" and "human rights," the MDGs also reflect many of the ideals of Catholic Social Teaching. I have outlined the ways in which they further calls for global concern and solidarity, the greater realization of certain basic human rights, the achievement of integral and authentic human development through multifaceted and genuine cooperation, the need for a focus or "preferential option" for the poor in public policy, and the necessity of coupling ecological and humanitarian concerns. I have also contended that based on this concurrence and in light of the risk of not reaching the Goals, the hierarchy should be as active as possible in promoting renewed commitment and focus by continuing and increasing direct advocacy, drawing media and public attention, and fostering increased awareness of and action by lay Catholics.

To be clear, I am not trying either to deny that there are enormous complexities in and obstacles to implementing the Goals or to imply that the Vatican and Bishops should propose technical solutions for solving them. Implementing the Goals with effective policies is undoubtedly a complex matter and there are surely many real and intricate impediments to successful implementation; these need to be sorted out by all committed parties. However, the hierarchy is responsible for doing all they can to see that the committed parties *live up to their commitment* and do in fact come to an adequate way of meeting the Goals.

Thus all I am contending is that the hierarchy should make it utterly clear that achieving the Goals is imperative and that there must be renewed effort by all parties to overcome the obstacles standing in the way of achievement. Again, they should draw public and media attention, continue to engage in direct advocacy, and encourage lay Catholics to become involved in advocating their governments to renew commitments. The hierarchy can and must undertake this effort precisely because achieving the Goals would represent the fruition of significant aspirations of the official teaching. If as the U.N. Secretary-General asserts, falling short of the goals “would be an unacceptable failure, moral and practical”⁶⁵, it would also be an unacceptable failure for the hierarchy not to do everything within its power to see that the Goals are met. While efforts have been made, much more can still be done.

⁶⁵ UN General Assembly, 64 session, Report of the Secretary General (A/64/655), accessed 11 February 2010, [www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc=A/64/655](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.html?doc=A/64/655), 4.