
The Holy See and International Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping

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The latter part of the 20th century and beyond had witnessed significant world events that threaten peace. During the same period, Vatican II was born, a World Church. Corollary to that, the Holy See decided to engage with the world as a Permanent Observer Mission at the United Nations. Indications of the Church's commitment to peace range from doctrinal pronouncements to pastoral resolutions. She responds and progresses mutually with the world with her rich reservoir of Catholic social principles. The principles of human dignity, solidarity, and common good may be concepts that are only a hundred and more years old but events that threaten the existence of a peaceful world constantly invoke their significance. The involvement of the pontificate of Pius XII until that of John Paul II in addressing world issues using the three Catholic social teachings are tackled in this study to demonstrate the lead of consistence and the shifts in the utilization of said principles in the context of a rapidly globalizing world.

Keywords: Catholic Social Teaching, Holy See, Peacekeeping, Vatican II.

Introduction

This paper aims to study the Holy See's application of Catholic Social Teaching (CST)¹ in its activities of peacemaking and conflict resolution in the international stage. The pontificates of Pius XII until that John Paul II will be examined chronologically to follow world conflicts and since 1964, the Holy See has been a *permanent observer* in the United Nations (UN). A permanent observer is a nonmember state of the UN but is a member of at least one of its specialized agencies (United Nations). The Holy See, while maintaining diplomatic relations with others states, is a full-fledged member of numerous specialized agencies of the UN. It cannot vote, but its presence in the UN implies interest, sympathy, and concern for the deliberations and activities of the UN (Gratsch, 1997, p.10-11).



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The Holy See concurs with the UN's ideals on maintaining and promoting peace, but it remains a permanent observer *by its own choice* in order to maintain neutrality in specific political problems (The Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations).

As to the promotion of peace as part of the Church's mission, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* states that:

The promotion of peace in the world is an integral part of the Church's mission of continuing Christ's work of redemption on earth. In fact, the Church is, in Christ, a "sacrament" or sign and instrument of peace in the world and for the world." (CSDC, 516).

The Second Vatican Council, particularly the doctrine *Gaudium et Spes*, continues to affirm that the Church should, "in no way be identified with the political community nor is she bound to any political system" (GS, 76). The Church, through the Holy See, works for peace and sees it as a moral rather than a political commitment. The Church's moral authority is about the *formation of consciences* in any particular personal situation and *interventions at the national and international levels*. She is in solidarity with humanity and her commitment to the common good speaks of her mission in international affairs (Martino, 2003).

The Juridical Personality of the Holy See under International Law

The Church, through the Holy See, has the juridical means to carry out the redemptive mission of Christ on earth (CSDC, 444). The word *See* is from the Latin word *Sedes*, which pertains to the chair of St. Peter. The Holy See includes the Pope, the Roman Curia, and the

Central Administration of the Catholic Church (Araujo & Lucal, 2004). The juridical personality of the Holy See is not within the criteria of conventional state sovereignty and personality, but it is perceived as a 'distinctive entity' or *sui generis* (Araujo & Lucal, 2004). The Holy See's personality within the international realm is unique, and this is attested to by an exchange of letters between the Holy See and then UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in 1957. Both parties agreed that the papacy is to be represented at the UN as the Holy See. The Holy See represents both the spiritual and religious character of the papacy (Gratsch, 1997, p.10-11). As the *Compendium* puts it:

The Holy See, or Apostolic See, enjoys full international subjectivity as a sovereign authority that performs acts which are juridically its own. It exercises an external sovereignty recognized within the context of the international community which reflects that it is exercised within the Church and is marked by organizational unity and independence. The Church makes use of the juridical means necessary or useful for carrying out her mission. The international activity of the Holy See is manifested objectively under different aspects: the right to active and passive delegation; the exercise of ius contrahendi in stipulating treaties; participation in intergovernmental organizations, such as those under the auspices of the United Nations; and mediation initiatives in situations of conflict. This activity aims at offering non-partisan service to the international community, since it seeks no advantage for itself but only the good of the entire human family. In this context, the Holy See particularly avails itself of its own diplomatic personnel (CSDC, 444).

From the aforementioned, the role of the Holy See as a state is specified. The Holy See is nonpartisan and free from any affiliation in the international community. Its

international activities include: to actively and to passively delegate its duties and capabilities to other recognized/competent entities, to conclude a contract (*ius contrahendi*), to participate in intergovernmental organizations (most especially the ones in the UN), and to mediate in situations of conflict. As a state, the Holy See is an *actor*—it deals with other member-states, and it can have diplomatic relations with them.

Vis-à-vis public international law, the distinctiveness of the Holy See does not mean it is an incomprehensible juridical person. Its uniqueness is not restricted to purely spiritual or religious matters. Its exercise of sovereignty includes involvement in matters of international peace, human dignity, human rights, and the common good through negotiations and formulation of legal instruments and formation of bilateral and multilateral treaties. Therefore, the international personality of the Holy See is of “exceptional nature . . . a sovereign subject . . . with a mission essentially religious and a moral order . . . universal in [its]scope” (Araujo & Lucal, 2004, p.4 & 9). The Holy See is thus both concerned and involved in the affairs of the world primarily because it is a consequence of her spiritual and religious mission (GS, 76).

The juridical personality of the Holy See in international law shows that maintaining peace in the world entails involvement in the political realm. The Holy See draws from the CST principles of human dignity, solidarity, and common good in its engagement in international conflict resolution and peacekeeping.

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

As the body of the official CST grows, certain values and principles consistently recur as themes. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) summarized these themes in seven core principles, identifying them as the foundations of Catholic social thought (De Berri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003, p. 19). This study about the Holy See’s activities in international conflict resolution and peacekeeping focus on three core principles: the *dignity of the human person*, *solidarity*, and the *common good*. These core principles become foundation for the other principles such as *call to family, community and participation*, *rights and responsibilities*, *preferential option and love for the poor and vulnerable*, *dignity of work and the rights of workers*, and *stewardship*.

Dignity of the Human Person

Gaudium et Spes affirms that the dignity of the human person comes from God: “. . . the sacred Scripture teaches that man was created to the image of God.” (GS, 12). This teaching is echoed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and in the *Compendium* and is further expanded Christologically. The image of the human person finds its fullest self in Christ, who not only is the perfect image of God but also redeemed humanity by His sacrifice, so that all could enjoy equal dignity and the rights that flow from it. The *Compendium* emphasizes dignity by adding the words “incomparable” and “inalienable,” specifying that human dignity is given by God alone. In this light, the human person should always be respected regardless of his or her status (CCC, 1934 & CSDC, 105).

The human person’s dignity is both personalist and social. It is *personalist* because

dignity comes from being a human person (Byron, 2007, p. 297), and it is *social* at the same time because “by innermost nature man is a *social being*; and if he does not enter into relations with others he can neither live nor develop his gifts . . .” (GS, 12). The equality of human persons comes from respecting and promoting the dignity of the human person (CCC, 1935). The Church believes that loving God includes loving one’s neighbor, for human dignity is the result of God’s creative and inviting love for Him and others.

Solidarity

Human solidarity is grounded in the idea that *all belong to one human family* (De Berri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003, p.20 -21) and that the Church is in solidarity with the whole human family (GS, 1). *Gaudium et Spes* teaches that “nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts”For that reason, solidarity is called “friendship” or “social charity” (CCC, 1939); it finds its meaning in the social nature of the human persons (CSDC, 192), and it is to be directed to a moral value. The moral value of solidarity should lead toward a more *just* social order (CCC, 1940), and the social nature of human persons can make this happen by working together for the resolution of conflicts through the most peaceful means (De Berri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003, p.30).

There is an intimate bond between solidarity and the common good. As a virtue, solidarity leads par excellence to the common good (CSDC, 193). This applies to the international level as solidarity leads to world peace (CCC, 1941).

Common Good

The standard definition of common good (CG) comes from John XXIII’s *Encyclical Letter on Christianity and Progress (Mater et Magistra)*, no. 65. The common good:

“Embraces the sum total of those conditions of social living, whereby men are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection.”

In other words, CG pertains to the “social conditions that allow people to reach their full human potential and to realize their human dignity” (Byron, 2007, p. 242). CG includes respect for human dignity (GS, 26; CCC, 1907) and demands that every person be enabled to find fulfillment or attain fullest meaning “with” and “for” others for their social well-being and development (CSDC, 165 & 167; CCC, 1908). Moreover, CG includes such conditions as peace, stability, and security of just order (CCC, 1909; CSDC, 166). This principle extends to international structures as well, for the just development of the human family (Byron, 2007, p. 301).

The Holy See and Its International Interventions in Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping

No specific political or economic theory is within the Church’s teaching competence. Of injustices made by political and economic systems, the Church, through the Holy See, has the duty to speak the truth of human nature based on dignity and its appropriate protection (Neuner & Dupuis, 2001, p. 900). The subsequent sections will demonstrate how the different pontificates in the latter part of the 20th century responded to major events. These responses are evaluated

according to how they applied the principles of human dignity, solidarity, and common good.

Pius XII (2 March 1939–9 October 1958)

Pius XII (Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli) was elected pope on March 2, 1939. He had a long papacy and confronted several challenges such as: the abuses of the Nazi, fascist, and Soviet regimes; the Holocaust; postwar reconstruction; the Communist threat; and the Cold War. His long papacy was initially described as “ascetic.” Later, it was criticized for its alleged “silence” during the Holocaust, its inconsistent impartiality during World War II, and its “fervent” anticommunist position from post-World War II to Cold War periods (Coppa).

Major Event / Political Climate

The pontificate of Pius XII witnessed World War II and the beginning of the Cold War. World War II was caused by German, Italian, and Japanese expansionism and their authoritarian and militaristic ideology of fascism. The key leader of Germany, Adolf Hitler, wanted to purify and unify all Germans and to expand the German empire. The war began with the surrender of Poland in 1939. The domination by the Germans ensued in the whole European continent (Spiegel, Taw, Wehling, & Williams, 2004, p. 239-253).

Holy See Responses

Diplomatic Moves

From May 3 to August 24, 1939, Pius XII appealed for peace through diplomatic channels, hoping to settle the differences between Italy and France, and Germany and

Poland. While maintaining neutrality, he sent his messages to the German resistance movement and to the Allies from November 1939 to February 1940 aimed at limiting the scale of war. He tried to keep Italy out of the conflict by having personal meetings with King Victor Emmanuel III on December 21 and 28, 1939, and through correspondence with Italian leader Benito Mussolini. Rome was spared even with Italy’s entry into war on June 10, 1940, because of Pius XII’s intervention (Leiber & Mcinerny, 2001, p. 87).

No Condemnation of the Holocaust

In his 1942 Christmas Message, Pius XII spoke for the countless persons killed and tortured because of race and nationality. He did not openly condemn the Holocaust because it may endanger more people—but this sparked a subject of great controversy in the Holy See.

Papal Interventions for the Jews

An estimated 860,000 Jews were saved by the interventions made by papal representatives (personal representatives and Church leaders). Among these leaders was Cardinal Angelo Roncalli (later John XXIII) who, in Turkey, helped 20,000 Jews escape by securing permissions for safe conducts from the Turkish government (Cardinale, 1970, p. 83).

Papal Charity

The *Pontificia Opera di Assistenza* (the papal charity) offered assistance during the war without discrimination to all suffering persons, such as prisoners, deportees, internees, refugees, persecuted persons, and many others. Moreover, it assisted in the reconstruction of buildings, relocation of 52,000 refugees, and

inquiring about 11,293,511 missing persons. The pope himself went to the streets of Rome to assist in giving material and moral relief to those affected by the war (Leiber & Mcinerny, 2001, p. 398).

Application of CST Principles

Pius XII on human dignity, solidarity, and common good. Although Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (1943) was not strictly a social encyclical, it still showed the esteem of the pope toward Christian life and charity, i.e., charity must be put into practice by doing good to others. Charity toward the neighbor (which is also an essential work of justice) embodies effective love of God and of Christ (ND, 2021). For that reason, charity for others is not only a recognition of dignity but also a manifestation of solidarity and a pursuit of CG. Exercising solidarity and working for CG were shown in Pius XII's vision of cooperation with the many governments of the world for the creation of a just international order. By engaging with the UN, which was established during his pontificate, Pius XII bolstered the Church's long standing commitment to the shared work for peace and justice in the world (De Berri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003, p. 7).

Evaluation

Pius XII was called a "true apostle of peace" for his insistence on peace both in doctrinal and pastoral points of view (Martino, 2003). He did not issue any social encyclical during his pontificate, but he believed that international order can be achieved by morality and law with its focus on justice and peace (CSDC, 93). As a state, the Holy See dialogued with civil authorities to mutually agree on different matters, to strengthen

relations and cooperation, and to prevent or resolve disputes. Constructive dialogue affirms the dignity and love of neighbor. It demands that differences be settled and conflicts be addressed in a patient and respectful way (De Berri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003, p. 21). This dialogue is rooted in charity. Pius XII was a consistent proponent of charity in his papacy. In his encyclical *Mystici Corporis*, he stated that charity should be put into practice by good works that are directed toward God and neighbor (ND, 2021).

Pius XII's dialogue rooted in charity is a great practice of affirming and defending human dignity, an application of solidarity and working for CG. Pius XII prayed and assisted in giving material and moral relief during and after the war. Through this example, Pius XII showed that dialogue is a matter of not only discussions between state-leaders but also a concrete application of Christ's commandment of love for the suffering.

Pius XII's untiring peace efforts are consistent with the strategy of peacekeeping. Peacekeeping is a work of charity and is fruitful when it eliminates or minimizes war and violence. It should be consistent with the respect of rights and human dignity (Peschke, 1994, p. 589). Many remember Pius XII's hesitation in condemning the Holocaust. Although he did not publicly condemn the Holocaust, Pius XII worked privately, asking Catholic institutions and governments in Hungary, Palestine, and Latin America to accommodate Jews. Moreover, his diplomatic efforts during the war had contributed to minimizing acts of violence against the Jews (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise).

John XXIII (28 October 1958– 3 June 1963)

John XXIII (Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli) was elected pope on October 28, 1958. His papacy was short-lived but most notable for initiating and convoking the Second Vatican Council. He believed that the Church should embrace *aggiornamento* or change in its approach to the world. John XXIII's social encyclicals (most especially *Pacem in Terris*) continue to have their lasting effect on the growing body of CST principles.

Major Event / Political Climate: The Cold War and the Rise of Communism

The Cold War divided the world into two: the US-led Western democracies and the Soviet-led communist regimes (Spiegel, Taw, Wehling, & Williams, 2004). With the political ideology of communism on the rise (which began in Eastern Europe), the Church, through the Holy See, maintained her moral and spiritual force in her universal mission given by Christ. She neither associated herself with any political bloc, system, or interest that might hinder her universal mission.

Holy See Responses*Diplomatic Moves*

From the construction of the Berlin Wall (which began on September 10, 1961, just four months after the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* was issued) to the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis on October 25, 1962, the pope appealed to heads of states for world peace. This particular gesture of the pope was not only timely but also efficacious. The day after the pope's appeal, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev withdrew the Soviet missiles in

Cuba. The Vatican's official newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, confirmed through authentic Soviet sources that the Soviet Union recognized the pacifist stance of the Catholic Church (Graham, 1970, p.57-58). The pope demonstrated a moral power that relieved tensions and helped achieve an atmosphere for peace (Cardinale, 1970, p. 94).

Issuance of the Encyclical Letter Pacem in Terris

On April 11, 1963, the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* was issued shortly after the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and the establishment of the Berlin Wall in 1961. The encyclical was addressed to "all people of good will," to make known the dangers of nuclear war and to appeal for world peace based on truth, justice, charity, and liberty (De Berri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003, p. 937).

John XXIII gave his support for the establishment of cordial East-West relations (through political dialogues) in the face of severe ideological differences between the two (Graham, 1970, p. 69). His openness to the world is reflected in his encyclical. He believed that the issues of the world and the appropriate resolutions thereto change over time (p. 70). Thus, he adopted a fresh approach toward communist countries by distinguishing new communist movements from the old. He insisted that cooperation among people with differing views on the ultimate meaning of life is possible (Cardinale, 1970, p. 93).

Application of CST Principles

John XXIII's approach to human dignity.

John XXIII argued using natural law. He taught that human dignity is a principle in itself because a human person possesses intelligence and free will. This human person has rights and obligations that are universal and, hence, inviolable (John XXIII, 1963).

John XXIII on active solidarity and common good. To achieve the universal CG, nations have to be in active solidarity with one another through friendly relations (PT, 100). He affirmed that safeguarding and promoting the dignity and the universal, inviolable, and inalienable rights of each human person is a duty extended to a universal authority such as the UN (PT, 145). A universal authority with worldwide power and proper means to work for CG is demanded by such moral order characterized by the growing interdependence between political communities (ND, 2136).

John XXIII also addressed the issue of weapons, especially nuclear disarmament. He wrote that the arms race should cease, that the stockpiles of weapons should be reduced equally between parties, that nuclear weapons should be banned, and that all should agree on disarmament (PT, 112). All of these are in consideration of human dignity, which is the basis of every social teaching.

Evaluation

In the words of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church is at the service of humankind because she “shares the same journey” and “shares the earthly lot” with the world; she can contribute greatly by humanizing the human family and its history (GS, 40). The Church is consistent

with her social doctrine as *learner* and *teacher* in the world (GS, 4).

Vatican II urged the Church to “face [the] future without fear,” to be predominantly pastoral, to serve as “beacon,” “catalyst,” and “matrix” of unity for the human race. Above all, the Council (and Pope John XXIII) rejected “scolding” and “suspicious” approaches to the world (O'Malley, 2008, p. 95-96).

John XXIII embodied a Church that is open to the world. Like Pius XII, he appealed to nation-leaders for peace. In addition, he reached out to nation-leaders beyond Europe in his diplomatic efforts of constant appeals for peace. He was clearly optimistic about the possibility of peace in the world while remaining consistent with the Church's nonpartisan stance. The Church favors no one and believes in mercy and forgiveness.

John XXIII's diplomacy for peace with heads of states was similar to his predecessor. But it was this pope who began teaching about the necessity for a global government (or *structures of peace*) organized to serve authentic human development and the universal CG (p. 33). His successors took up this point. The legacy of his social encyclical *Pacem in Terris* was its response to the growing global interdependence that characterized the political climate during his time. He also articulated for the Church a new approach to the modern world (ND, 916).

The Church has a unique responsibility for shaping the values and institutions in and for the world (De Berri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003, p. 7). In *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII developed a number of principles guiding Christians and policy makers alike in

addressing threats to world peace. Like his predecessor, John XXIII believed that the universal CG is achieved through friendly relations (PT, 100) and is a duty for all in solidarity with one another. In this way, human dignity can be protected. He supported the UN because it is a family in itself.

John XXIII also believed that peace is possible if the moral order created by God is respected. That is why as a family, persons have duties toward themselves and to their states, and states toward other states and the whole world. Just as there are rights, there are also corresponding duties.

Paul VI (21 June 1963–6 August 1978)

Paul VI (Giovanni Battista Enrico Antonio Maria Montini) was elected pope on June 21, 1963. Known as the “pilgrim pope,” Paul VI was one of the most traveled popes in history (and the first to have visited five continents during his papacy). He continued the work of John XXIII and successfully concluded Vatican II. His social encyclicals showed awareness to problems occurring during his time (Vatican Archive).

Major Event / Political Climate: The Cold War and the Vietnam War

The ideological tension between the US and the Soviet Union had reached Asia, particularly Vietnam. The rise of ideological tensions was attributed to the change of leaders in the US and the Soviet Union. US President Kennedy was replaced by Lyndon Johnson who had limited experience in foreign policy but had a strong anticommunist stance. Soviet leader Khrushchev (who maintained good relations with John XXIII) was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin who

both engaged in robust military spending and maintained repressive regimes in Eastern Europe (Spiegel, Taw, Wehling, & Williams, 2004, p. 296).

Holy See Responses

The UN Legacy: Established Permanent Observer Mission at the UN

John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris* is believed to have primed Paul VI for his international affairs. Paul VI was an advocate of the papal diplomatic system as a means for establishing and maintaining peace. On March 21, 1964, he established the permanent observer mission of the Holy See at the UN. Several months later, on October 4, 1965, Paul VI addressed the UN General Assembly at its headquarters in New York. This was considered a big step in the foreign policy of the Holy See, most especially when the pope uttered the famous lines, “No more war, never again!” The pope’s high hopes and praises for the organization are contained in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, which was issued on March 26, 1967 (Paul VI, 1967). He believed that the sponsorship of the UN and the Holy See’s neutral arbitration in conflicts would be effective (Graham, 1970, p. 97, 100-101).

Diplomatic Move: Established Cordial Relations with Communist Countries

Paul VI exchanged messages of goodwill with communist leaders (President Nikolai Podgorny of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Union, Mao Tse Tung of Communist China, and Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam) and with US President Johnson. Tangible successes in his dealings with communist countries include: the release of the Archbishop of Prague Monsignor Beran and

other prelates on October 3, 1963; the achievement of a partial agreement with Hungary in September 1964; the temporary ceasefire during the Vietnam War in December 1965; and the signing of a protocol with the Democratic Federation of Yugoslavia on June 25, 1966. The Holy See's good ties with communist countries led to unprecedented visits to the Vatican by USSR Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on April 28, 1966, by President Podgorny on January 30, 1967, and by Romanian Premier Ion Gheorge Maurer on January 24, 1968 (p. 102-103).

Application of CST Principles

Paul VI on human dignity. “[F]or it is above all a question of human life, and human life is sacred; no one can dare attack it” (Paul VI, 1987). Human life and dignity have an intrinsic value and are essential for a just and ordered society (Byron, 2007, p. 298). Paul VI reiterated this teaching when he affirmed the protection of the right to life of every human person. Restating the introduction of *Gaudium et Spes*, Paul VI states:

The Church...can never disassociate herself from the rights of man, created in the image and likeness of his Creator. She feels injured when the rights of man, whoever he may be, and wherever he may be, are ignored and violated (Paul VI, 1987).

Paul VI on solidarity. Paul VI, addressing the UN said, *You are organizing fraternal collaboration between nations. You are establishing here a system of solidarity that will ensure that the lofty civilizing goals receive unanimous and orderly support from the whole family of nations, for the good of each and all (Paul*

VI, 1987).

Paul VI envisioned the whole human family working together. He said that solidarity is an *extra effort of the conscience* by everyone. From his foremost message to the UN General Assembly to the end of his pontificate, he called upon the nations to address one of the most pressing problems during his time—the *arms race*. He said, “If you want to be brothers, let the arms fall from your hands. A person cannot love with offensive weapons in his hands” (Paul VI, 1987).

Paul VI on common good. He said that CG of nations is CG of man. This CG that includes peace, stability, and a just order enables an enjoyment of dignity, expressing “strongly and clearly the unanimous aspiration of men’s hearts and the universal witness of their consciences.” (Paul VI, 1987). Paul VI emphasized the strong need and hope for the UN to achieve a community of free humanity (Byron, 2007, p. 340). This statement alone echoed the confident hope of his predecessor John XXIII: “an order founded on truth, built according to justice, vivified and integrated by charity, and put into practice in freedom” (PT, 167).

Evaluation

With the changes enunciated by Vatican II, Paul VI had to demonstrate that the Church is both a teacher and a learner in her social doctrines. He believed in “building a civilization of love” on a global scale (Martino, 2003). Such was his esteem for collaboration with the world that he left a legacy that is continued by the Holy See: the permanent observer status at the UN. As stated earlier, it

is by its own choice that the Holy See remains a permanent observer for reasons of neutrality. Since the Holy See is recognized as having its own juridical personality, Paul VI took this opportunity to exchange messages of goodwill with the communist leaders and the US president. His efforts led to good communication ties and tangible results of mediating in conflicts.

Like John XXIII, he had high hopes for the UN. Four years after he moved to have the Holy See recognized as a Permanent Observer to the UN, he issued his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. The encyclical had the highest esteem for promoting international collaboration. Under the second heading entitled *Development in Solidarity*, Paul VI wrote that development through international collaboration upholds peace and justice (PP, 78). Like his predecessor, he acknowledged that the issues of the world and the solutions thereto should change (PP, 9). He believed that to struggle in solidarity with the whole human family is to promote CG (PP, 82)—CG that includes peace, stability, and security of just order (CCC, 1909;CSDC, 166).He bears the name of “pilgrim pope”—truly another embodiment of a world Church.

John Paul II (16 October 1978–2 April 2005)

John Paul II (Karol Jozéf Wojtyła) was elected pope on October 16, 1978. Because he had the longest papacy compared to his predecessors, he had more meetings with the faithful (in General Audiences and pastoral visits) and with heads of states. The Vatican website states that he met with government personalities in his 38 official visits, 738

audiences and meetings with Heads of State, and 246 audiences and meetings with Prime Ministers (Holy See Press Office).

Major Event / Political Climate: End of Cold War and Rise of Intra-state Conflicts

John Paul II’s pontificate witnessed the waning of the Cold War and the rise of a new pattern of regional crisis all over the world. The collapse of the communist regime in 1989 did not stop the conflicts in the Middle East, in the Balkan Region, and many others. The question was: what could international institutions, most especially the UN, do to stabilize conflict-prone regions and to scale back the development of nuclear weapons? (Spiegel, Taw, Wehling, & Williams, 2004, p. 393). The Church, through the Holy See and her continuing support for the UN, reiterated her duty to guide nations and not to impose her teachings on them (Bugarin, 2001, p. 996). This duty of guiding nations had a crucial impact on the pontificate of John Paul II. By the year 2005, the Holy See had formal diplomatic relations in 174 countries. Until now, it continues to be represented at the UN, at the European Union, and any other international agencies and organizations. Every New Year, John Paul II met with the diplomatic corps for peace (p. 999).

Holy See Responses

The Primacy of the Human Person

In his first UN address on October 2, 1979, and 16 years later on October 8, 1995, John Paul II expressed his commitment to the cause of human freedom and the defense of basic human rights. He said that the cause of peace is the cause of the human rights—and above those rights is the right to religious

freedom (which is in search of the truth) (p. 996).

World Day of Peace (Highlights)

John Paul II initiated the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi on October 27, 1986. On January 9 and June 3, 1993, he called for a special prayer for peace in Europe, particularly in the Balkan region. On December 14, 2001, a day of fasting for peace was held, and the pope took the opportunity to invite leaders of the world and of religions for a Day of Prayer for Peace in the World in Assisi on January 24, 2002. Before the event on January 24, he released a message for the celebration of World Day of Peace on January 1, 2002. It called on Jewish, Christian, and Islamic leaders and people to publicly condemn terrorism and to discourage terrorists from using religion or moral views as grounds for terrorist actions (Vatican Archive, 2002).

On April 7, 2002, and November 16, 2003, he called for a Day of Prayer for Peace in view of tensions in the Holy Land. Moving on to the Middle East region, he called for a day of fasting for peace on May 5, 2003, in response to the Second Iraq War. He met with authorities to discuss with them how the war on Iraq could be averted (Vatican Archive, 2002).

The Revolution of Conscience against Communism and Terrorism

Ever since his first UN address, John Paul II has spoken against the material power of totalitarianism and authoritarian regimes. Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet Union leader, publicly admitted that the pope was a pivotal figure in the collapse of communist

regimes in 1989 by his “revolution of conscience.” Through the pope’s diplomacy, religious freedom was allowed in Soviet territories beginning December 1989. However, the pope was not successful against communist regimes in China and Vietnam (Bugarin, 2001, p. 998).

As to terrorism, the pope was firm in his address to the representatives of world religions on January 24, 2002, that religion should not be used for violence as it “... contradicts religion’s deepest and truest inspiration.” He condemned terrorism as a true crime against humanity, but he warned against perpetuating prejudices against a nation, ethnic group, or religion simply because some of their members commit acts of terror. He called on religious leaders to engage in interreligious understanding and cooperation for the dignity of the human person and “to listen” so that peace could be attained (Vatican Archive, 2002).

Negotiation by Presence and Letters

As a witness of peace, John Paul II did not limit himself to mere issuance of statements and/or sending representatives. Rather, he sought to contribute to international conflict resolutions by being *personally involved* in the process whether by visiting conflicting parties or territories or by sending personal letters of appeals for peace.

Whenever possible, John Paul II would personally meet with leaders involved in conflicts and/or go to areas affected by disputes. Examples include: his meeting with US President Reagan during June 7, 1982 (at the time of the Cold War) in which they came up with a pledge to work for world peace

(Vatican Archive); his visit in Kenya at the height of the genocide in Rwanda calling for forgiveness and reconciliation as solutions to ethnic conflicts in East Africa (New York Times); his visit to Sarajevo in 1997 during the time of the Balkan War despite the risks against his life; his visit to Great Britain and Argentina during the Falklands/Malvinas War (Bugarin, 2001, p. 1000); and his five-day pilgrimage to Cuba (from January 21 to 25, 1998), which resulted in the pardon and release of 106 political prisoners (Cuba Releases Prisoners, 1998, p. 223).

John Paul II also sent personal letters of appeals for peace to parties in dispute aside from his personal visits. Such was the case when he sent letters to US President Reagan and USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev on November 17, 1985 during the Geneva Summit (Bugarin, 2001, p. 1000).

If circumstances did not permit his personal presence, John Paul II still acted by sending personal letters appealing for peace and proposing solutions to disputes. Examples include the following requests during the Beagle Channel Conflict, which resulted in a joint declaration and eventually, a treaty of peace and friendship between Argentina and Chile (United Nations, 1977); his diplomatic negotiations to end the 1989 Gulf War, which included sending letters to US President George Bush and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein (Bugarin, 2001, p. 1000); and his sending of letters to Israeli Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat during the Middle East Peace process, which resulted in Israel's transfer of 80 percent of the West Bank town of Hebron to the Palestinian Authority by January 1997 (The Guardian, 2011).

Other Attempts (Sending of Delegates and Envoys)

Aside from personally visiting areas in conflict and sending personal letters to disputing leaders, John Paul II sent delegates and envoys to represent him, to deliver his message, and to work for peace. He addressed the issue on nuclear arms race (Vatican Archive) and appealed for peace in both intra- and interstate or regional conflicts that earned international attention such as the Second Iraqi War (BBC, 2003) and the conflicts in Mozambique (Bugarin, 2001) in the Holy Land, and in the Balkan region (Vatican Archive).

Some of John Paul II's efforts on the sending of delegates were successful. For instance, the tensions in the Holy Land were resolved with the end of hostilities in Bethlehem and the reopening of the Basilica of the Nativity (Hill, 2009). The mediation in the Mozambican Civil War was also successful. However, the efforts in Algeria, Balkan region, and Rwanda, were not fruitful. In addition, there were no reports that the sending of delegates, regarding the nuclear arms race, on the War on Kosovo, and the Second Iraqi War bore positive results.

Nonetheless, what these demonstrate is that John Paul II believes in a personal approach (either by his personal presence, letters, and delegates) in contributing to peace and resolving conflicts. Although not always successful, the pope's efforts show his commitment to being a personal witness of peace.

Application of CST Principles

John Paul II on the dignity of the human person. He was the only pope who

made explicit the primacy of the human person in his social teachings. Like his predecessors, he had high esteem for the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and the international organization, which promotes and safeguards those rights. In his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), John Paul II stated that the human person reflects a contemporary society in need of redemption (De Berri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003, p. 10). In the same encyclical, he echoes the spirit of Vatican II: the human person “Is the primary and fundamental way that the Church must travel fulfilling her mission” (John Paul II, 1979). This was likewise reiterated in his social encyclical commemorating *Rerum Novarum*’s 100th anniversary, *Centesimus Annus*, which stated that the human person alone is the principle that inspires the Church’s social doctrine (John Paul II, 1991). The pope passionately defended the cause of human rights (first of which is the search for truth). He engaged with communist regimes by appealing to their consciences.

John Paul II spoke about human dignity in its social context. He affirmed that the Holy See agrees with the preamble of UDHR in “the recognition of personal dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of human family” (The Vatican, 1987). In several of his speeches addressed to the UN, he said that the inalienable rights of the human person must be taken together to keep the substance of dignity intact in its entirety. When inalienable rights are weakened, so will be the construction of peace. He reiterated the words of his predecessor Paul VI on *development as the new peace* that all must labor for *with all* powers. War, which is an injustice in itself, is against human rights that extend to

the “organic unity of the social order” and then to the whole system of international relations. John Paul II recalled the words of John XXIII in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* and said that the Church, through the Holy See, is close to the ideology of UN in its commitment to loyally persevere and to establish *true peace* on earth (John Paul II, 1987).

John Paul II on solidarity and common good. With the collapse of the communist regimes and as new nations emerged, John Paul II recommended that the UN promote international solidarity based on a *civilization of love* that puts at the center the dignity of the human person. He urged the UN to become a moral center of a *family of nations* (Jeffreys, 2004, p. 148). Solidarity was described by John Paul II as “concern for others” and “for the common good.” It was founded on Leo XIII’s term of solidarity as “friendship” and Paul VI’s “civilization of love” (Schumacher, 2005, p. 293).

John Paul II borrowed Paul VI’s “civilization of love” and explained that it is founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice, and liberty. This civilization promotes a culture that answers both the spiritual and the moral needs of persons. It not only creates but also shares the “good of persons and of communities.” It is for nations to belong in a family, to live with one another, and to exchange gifts (Jeffreys, 2004, p. 162-163).

The role of the Holy See in that civilization of love is to mediate. John Paul II emphasized that faithful to her tradition, the Church does her part by mediating in disputes—both in words and in deeds. He regarded his addresses to the UN and its other

specialized agencies as part of the Holy See's practice of mediating (John Paul II, 1987). His diplomatic efforts of personal visits and sending personal messages and representatives to parties in conflict were the concrete applications of this mediation.

Evaluation

John Paul II's use of CST principles, such as the dignity of the human person, solidarity, and the common good, was consistent with that of his predecessors. His reference to the dignity of the human person was always explicit in his doctrinal and pastoral actions and in his high regard for the UN. He wrote that the human person is the primary and fundamental way for the Church to fulfill her mission (RH, 14). In continuing the work of his predecessors, John XXIII and Paul VI, he offered the moral commitment of the Church to building peace.

As to solidarity, John Paul II thought it was a virtue often overlooked. He said that solidarity increases the chance for life and that the UN itself (embodying solidarity between nations) should be both self-giving in solidarity and responsibility (Jeffreys, 2004, p. 175). His high regard for the role of the UN in promoting solidarity echoed Paul VI's "civilization of love" and John XXIII's understanding of the Church's mission for peace as closely supporting the ideology of the UN. His approach to solidarity and working for CG is both on the spiritual (prayers) and the moral (revolutionizing consciences) levels.

John Paul II was a good mediator and a tireless peacemaker. He was committed to mediate ceaselessly in major disputes during his time such as the Cold War, the Balkan

War, the two Iraq wars, and the tensions in the Holy Land. He contributed greatly to the collapse of the Soviet regime (which eventually ended the Cold War) and the cessation of hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians in 1996. He may neither have prevented the escalation of the Balkan War, the two Iraq wars, nor have put an end to the renewed hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians beyond 1996, but John Paul II continued to revolutionize consciences. He did so through his letters, speeches, and prayers to and for the parties involved in the disputes. John Paul II's World Day of Peace prayers in Assisi were attempts to address interreligious wars. He believed that wars fought in the name of religion should cease and that leaders of religions all over the world should cooperate together for peace.

John Paul II believed more in negotiation and mediation than war. Although it is indicated in the CST that the Church is open to both pacifism and just wars, John Paul II's approach to wars clearly favors peacemaking.

Conclusion

This paper presented a historical survey of how different pontificates mediated in and responded to major political crises of their time. From this historical survey, several concluding points can be drawn.

The Holy See became a permanent observer at the UN in 1964 and remains neutral until now by its own choice. Moreover, Vatican II concretized the Church's engagement with the world as part of her mission. The different responses of the popes attest to this. The Church, through the Holy See, always puts the dignity of the human

person at the center of her mission. Her social teachings indicate that the true dignity of the human person springs from the realization of being created in the image and likeness of God and of being redeemed by Christ. Since the Trinity is a *communion of love*, this reflects the nature of human persons as social beings. The Church has always emphasized in her teachings that human persons cannot remain isolated and/or indifferent from one another because this will lead to dehumanization (Bernardo, 2008, p. 83).

The natural inclination to be with others validates the centrality of solidarity and responsibility toward the common good. Solidarity has to be both an *attitude* and an *active commitment* (Mendoza, 2009-2010, p. 57). The popes, most especially John Paul II, constantly regarded solidarity as a fundamental concept that must be put into practice (p. 59). Solidarity has to be inspired by and directed toward the common good, which is the responsibility of everyone (SRS, 38).

Thus, firstly, as regards continuities and changes/developments in the Holy See's international conflict resolution and peacekeeping, there is consistency in the application of CST principles. However, with John Paul II's explicit recognition of the primacy of the human person, there was a shift to a greater use of human rights language. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Church's recognition of human rights started earlier with John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* and was reaffirmed by Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dignitatis Humanae*. There is an increase in the use of human rights language throughout the pontificates, most especially with John Paul II who, in his October 3, 1979, speech at the UN headquarters in New York, told world representatives that respect for

human rights is a precondition to true peace (Weigel, 2011, p. 114).

Secondly, the Holy See does not use force or sanctions but resorts to dialogue. The Holy See is, thus, not interventionist in its peacekeeping and conflict-resolving activities. The Church's competence, albeit primarily religious and moral in nature, does not mean that she is ineffective or irresponsible in other areas. She works through speeches, diplomatic measures, concrete applications, and dialogue, for the good of the human family.

Thirdly, the Holy See's diplomatic role developed as it faced new problems. An example of this would be terrorism and religious wars. Terrorism and religious conflicts were given more attention because of the seriousness of repeated acts of violence driven by religious motives (Glatz, 2012). The World Day of Prayers for Peace at Assisi are a precedent to peaceful concrete actions taken by the Holy See to oppose terrorism and any other forms of violence sparked by religious motivations. However, the Holy See brought their moral support against terrorism on a different level through concrete national and international legal actions and reforms (L'Osservatore Romano, 2009). With these legal reforms, the Holy See demonstrates that it is committed both to prayer and to concrete national and international legal actions to counter the emergent problems of terrorism and religious wars.

Recommendations

The Holy See, specifically through future Popes, should continue these efforts. The *Compendium*, the *Catechism*, and other social encyclicals state that the Church's

mission is to transform society. Transforming society entails a faith that is expressed in concrete acts of justice (Mendoza, 2009-2010, p. 59). This is also echoed in the famous Statement of the Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, in 1971:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation (JW, 6)

Preaching the Gospel is incomplete without working for social justice while social justice has to be based on the Gospel values of human rights, family life, life in the society, peace, justice, and development (De Berri, Hug, Henriot, & Schultheis, 2003, p. 10). The interventions made by the Holy See, which were consistent with the Church's social teachings, should serve as examples for actions in the future. The Church admits to having no concrete solution to every problem of the world, but to enter into dialogue with national and international authorities in safeguarding and promoting human dignity, solidarity between peoples and nations, and the common good of peace.

As to the Church's moral authority, it would be in the Holy See's advantage to continue to be neutral and nonpartisan. Impartiality does not mean indifference or silence to international conflicts that especially threaten human life and dignity. Her contribution to peace still falls within the framework on social dialogue. Throughout the years, the Church has favored a free society over dictatorship, but she has not advocated any particular form of government or political ideology. She remains to exercise her

sovereignty *sui generis* (of its own kind) as a consequence of her spiritual and religious mission. Although the Church cannot be treated within the same perspective of conventional state sovereignty and personality, this does not remove the comprehensibility of her juridical personality. Her ways of encounter with national and international authorities follow basic international standard procedures and protocols, but in each case, she speaks from the light of faith (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 238). She would support whatever form of government or international system with programs that best respond to human dignity and common good (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 241).

Finally, for further development of the study—especially if any researcher plans to write a comprehensive evaluation of the international conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts of the popes after Vatican II—the researcher recommends two: (1) inclusion of the papacies of Benedict XVI and the current pope, Francis; and (2) more perspectives from political scientists who have analyzed how the Holy See works. Marrying theological and political may open new perspectives of thought and, thus, contribute to the integral development of nations and the enrichment of peace.

Endnote

1 For the meanings of abbreviations, please see “Abbreviations” after the endnote.

Appendix: The Holy See's Responses to International Conflicts

POPES	RESPONSES				RESULTS
		<i>Negotiations</i>			
	<i>Public Addresses</i>	<i>Letters</i>	<i>Personal Meetings</i>	<i>Sending of Envoys</i>	
Pius XII	Spoke for countless persons killed and tortured during the Holocaust (1942)	Wrote to German resistance movement; to the Allies (Nov. 1939-Feb. 1940); and to Italian leader Benito Mussolini	Met King Victor Emmanuel III (Dec. 21&28, 1939); offered assistance during WWII through <i>Pontificia Opera di Assistenza</i>	Sent papal representatives to issue passports to Jews	860,000 Jews relieved through passports and papal charities
John XXIII	Supported the establishment of cordial East-West relations (political dialogues)	Appealed to heads of states Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and US President John F. Kennedy (Oct. 1962)	Met Soviet Premier Khrushchev and US President Kennedy separately during and after the Cuban Missile Crisis		Cuban Missile Crisis ended; received constant visits from Premier Khrushchev
Paul VI	Addressed the UN General Assembly in New York after being given the status of permanent observer mission (Oct. 1965)	Wrote to communist leaders: Soviet President Nikolai Podgomy, President of China Mao Tse Tung, and Vietnam President Ho Chi Minh; and to US President Lyndon Johnson			Release of the Archbishop of Prague Monsignor Beran and other prelates (1963); partial agreement with Hungary (1964); temporary ceasefire in Vietnam War (1965); protocol signed with the Democratic Federation of Yugoslavia (1966); unprecedented visits by Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, Soviet President Podgomy, and Romanian Premier Maurer

John Paul II	Initiated World Day of Prayer for Peace (1986); condemned terrorism as crime against humanity (2002); and called for forgiveness and reconciliation in ethnic conflicts in Rwanda and in the whole East African region (1995)	Appealed for peace between US President Reagan and Soviet Premier Khrushchev (Nov. 1985); appealed for joint declaration between Argentina and Chile during the Beagle Channel Conflict; appealed for peace between US President George Bush Jr. and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War; and sent letters to Israeli Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat for the Middle East Peace process	Met US President Ronald Reagan at the height of Cold War (June 1982); visited Sarajevo during the Balkan War (1997); visited conflicting parties Great Britain and Argentina during the Falklands/Malvinas War	Sent delegates and envoys to UN to deliver his message on nuclear arms race and peace, and to Mozambique, Holy Land, and the Balkan Region	Collapse of communist regimes (1989); joint declaration between Argentina and Chile in the Beagle Channel conflict; Israel's transfer of 80% of the West Bank to Palestinian Authority (1997); Highlight of World Day Prayer of Peace: public condemnation on Terrorism by Islamic, Jewish and Christian leaders (2002); end of hostilities in Bethlehem and reopening of the Basilica of Nativity; Mozambican War ended
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Abbreviations

- CST – Catholic Social Teaching
- CSDC – Compendium on the Social Doctrine of the Church
- GS – *Gaudium et spes*
- USCCB – United States Catholic Conference of Bishops
- CCC – Catechism of the Catholic Church
- CG – Common Good
- ND – *Neuner-Dupuis*
- PT – *Pacem in terris*
- SRS – *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*
- JW – Justice in the World
- PP – *Populorum Progressio*

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