

# AN INTERSECTION BETWEEN FAITH AND LAW: INTEGRATING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS IN LEGAL EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract:**

This study explored the intersection between faith and law in the attempt to integrate Catholic Social Teachings in legal education and professional development in Nigeria. The development of peoples has always had the Church's close attention, particularly the development of those peoples who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases and ignorance; of those who are looking for a wider share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are aiming purposefully at their complete fulfilment. Following the Second Vatican Council, a renewed consciousness of the demands of the Gospel makes it the church's duty to put herself at the service of all, to help them grasp their serious problem in all its dimensions, and to convince them that solidarity in action at this turning point in human history is a matter of urgency. Various encyclicals have been written to address the Social Teachings of the Church, including Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* and Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, in the duty of their office of shedding the light of the Gospel on the social questions of their times. This paper enjoins entrenching Catholic Social Teachings in Law Teaching and Professional Development in Nigeria. The paper employs the qualitative research design. The expository and evaluative tools are used for analysis. The paper discovered that the Catholic tradition holds a wealth of wisdom that can enrich the understanding and practice of law, providing a moral compass that guides not only the choices people make but also the very frameworks within which they work. This would help in a just and integral development of the society.

## **Introduction**

Catholic Social Teaching is an aspect of ecclesiastical humanities that has been studied the least. In fact, it was only in 1988 that the Congregation for Catholic Education issued a directive that mandated the insertion of Catholic Social Teaching in the curriculum for the formation of priests in Major Seminaries (Congregation for Catholic Education 12). This decision of the Congregation became necessary because the economic, social, political and cultural structures were experiencing profound and rapid transformation which put the very future of human society at stake thus priests who are pastoral agents will work with the men and women of the world need a sure orientation that will enable them address the humanitarian issues that would stare them in the face.

It is the horrific dramas of life that have pushed many towards a situation of a "quasi-servile yoke" (John Paul II) that had informed the Church's decision to teach pastoral agents the rudiment of her social teachings so that these pastoral agents, armed with their knowledge of her social teachings would from the pulpit denounce the prevalent social ills of the society and offer hope to those who are stuck in the miry clay of man-made dehumanised conditions.

Since the directive of the Congregation for Catholic Education had delineated the Seminary as the *locus* within which the curriculum on catholic social teaching would be deployed and pastoral agents as its primary beneficiaries, the resultant effect was the notable absence of experts who would push for the mounting of the program in conventional universities. The lack of knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching was one of the eminent points that preoccupied the minds of participants at an intercontinental symposium that converged in Enugu, in August 1990, to celebrate the centenary of the social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, under the auspices of the Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace (CIDJAP). One of the points of the communique that was issued at the end of the symposium observed that:

There has been insufficient knowledge of these Teachings in our continent over the past 100 years. This sad discovery has challenged us to urge that these Teachings be incorporated into the curriculum of catechetical instructions of the laity and that they be made a compulsory discipline in the theological formation of priests and lay religious. We also urge that centres for the spread of these Social Teachings, like the CIDJAP, be established by local Churches. We also support the call by SECAM for the establishment, in all dioceses in Africa, of “strong Diocesan Commissions of Justice and Peace in Line with the thinking of the universal Church (qtd in Ike 51).

This means that up until the beginning of the millennium, most Seminaries in Africa and Nigeria in particular are wont to studying the catholic social teaching in relation to courses like moral theology, Christian ethics, anthropology and philosophy. It is only recently that some Seminaries are beginning to have experts in this field and thus mounting it as a standalone program.

This paper addresses this question: “If catholic social teaching is yet to have a well-developed curriculum that is deployed in Nigerian universities due to the absence of experts in the field, how can it be integrated within the framework of legal education and professional development in Nigeria”? The paper argues that integrating CST principles into legal education not only enriches the moral and ethical grounding of future legal practitioners but also aligns with the broader goals of social justice, human dignity, and the common good. The paper examines the current state of legal education in Nigeria, the core principles of CST, and how these can be systematically integrated into both curricular and extracurricular activities within legal training institutions. It concludes with recommendations for policy, curriculum development, and the continuous professional development of lawyers to reflect these values.

### **Historico-Theological Antecedence of Catholic Social Teaching**

Catholic Social Teaching is the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to guide Christian behaviour. It therefore belongs to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology. The CST did not fall from the sky, it has its historical background which this section traces.

### - **God's Liberating Action in the History of Israel**

God's love for humanity is unlimited; He demonstrated that from the moment He breathed life into man and entrusted the whole of creation into his care. This love which God has for man was strikingly and penetratingly made more concrete when, in the Book of Exodus, the Lord speaks these words to Moses: "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the land of the Egyptians, and bring them out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:7-8). The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace affirmed that,

The gratuitous presence of God - to which his very name alludes, the name he reveals to Moses, I am who I am" (Ex 3:14) - is manifested in the freeing from slavery and in the promise. This becomes historical action, which is the origin of the manner in which the Lord's people collectively identify themselves, through the acquisition of freedom and the land that the Lord gives them ("Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church", n. 21).

To show gratitude to God for his divine plan to salvage humanity, man has to honour and respect the covenant he made with God at Sinai. "The Ten Commandments" (Ex 34:28; cf. Deut. 4:13; 10:4) express the implications of belonging to God through the establishment of the covenant. Moral existence is a response to the Lord's loving initiative. It is the acknowledgement and homage given to God and a worship of thanksgiving. It is cooperation with the plan God pursues in history (Catechism of the Catholic Church, (CCC) n. 2062).

The Ten Commandments is a norm laid down by God to regulate human activities. "It is the privileged expression of the natural law. They teach us the true humanity of man. They bring to light the essential duties, and therefore, indirectly, the fundamental rights inherent in the nature of the human person" (CCC 2070). They describe universal human morality. In the Gospel, Jesus reminds the rich young man that the commandments (cf Mt 19:18), "constitute the indispensable rules of social life" (qtd. in Wilkins76).

The Decalogue presents a commitment that concerns not only fidelity to the one true God, but also the social relations among the people of the covenant. These relations are regulated in particular by what has been called the right of the poor: "If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren... you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his needs" (Deut. 15:7-8). All of this applies also to strangers: "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:33-34). The gift of freedom and the Promised Land, and the gift of the covenant on Sinai and the Ten Commandments are therefore intimately linked to the practices which regulated injustice and solidarity, the development of Israelite society.

### **The Prophets in Defence of the Oppressed**

Israel's attraction to the cultures and traditions of the other nations threw her into a state of inertia when it came to the issue of liberating the oppressed. It had severed its ties with the content of the Ten Commandments - their Magna Carta. This attitude

that the people of Israel imbibed brought about a “genuine decay of national vigour” (John Paul II, n. 17).

The function of the prophet was not primarily a function of predicting the Messiah. He does not foretell, but one who forth tells. He speaks not with foresight into the future but with insight into the ways in which people have broken the covenant. The prophet is one who is called not only to speak on behalf of Yahweh, but one who speaks on behalf of those who have no voice. He is a gadfly to the despot rulers and a harbinger of good tidings to the oppressed. One force that drives the prophets in their prophetic ministry was “the regeneration of Israel that it might continue to be what Yahweh had planned for it” (Vawter 4).

The prophets have one obsession: the mediation of the message of hope to the oppressed and the condemnation of the excesses of the malevolent rulers. Thus, the question of social justice is a special theme in the writings of the prophets. The prophets have preached their mission, the spirit of discipline, love and concern to reform a corrupt and broken society so that justice and equity could prevail. Leo Effiong Etim harped on the liberative Ministry of the prophets thus:

The sanctity of justice has been tremendously subverted and sabotaged by greed, spreads of the structure of sin and conflicts within and beyond communities. The prophets had always grappled with the root cause of this breakdown in moral ethics in order to check these abuses, and avoid predatory-leadership trends, as had been experienced in ancient Israel (Etim 10).

The prophets have trained their lenses on all the social activities in Israel. They never grew weary of sniffing around for any act of breach of trust which would adversely affect the vivacity of Israel's social order. Through them, Yahweh reveals himself as a God who is compassionate to the oppressed and their vindicator. “When Israel is the oppressed one he leads them out of slavery, when they inherit the land he again emerges as the protector of the landless” (Haughey 74). When Israel forgets the covenant, it is the prophets, most explicitly Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah, who proclaim to Israel that their fidelity to the covenant of the Lord must be manifested in concern for the poor (Cf. Am. 2:7; 5:11; 5:21-24; Jer. 22:3-4; Jer. 22:13, 15-16; Is. 58:1-8).

The prophet is a sign of contradiction; an object of attraction and repulsion; a friend and a foe, a blessing and a curse. It is his fate to be a troublemaker, turning things upside down, a whistle-blower drawing attention to political, economic, social, moral and religious programs, policies, teachings and activities that are not in accord with the revealed divine will for the human person and for the world. This description of the fate of the prophets is personified in Christ whose liberative stance fetched him the most despicable death - death on the cross.

### **The Liberating Mission of Christ**

It is good to comment on the liberating mission of Christ because “the new religious message of Jesus is closely linked to a new ethics, which is fully understandable, however, only against the background of the Old Testament and eschatological mission of the Messiah” (Schnackenburg 1063). It will be difficult to fully grasp Jesus' mission if it is treated in isolation from the foretelling and the forth telling of the Old Testament prophets. The kingdom of God as it was announced by the prophets has

become, in the New Testament, “The hidden but powerful presence of God in Jesus, restoring wholeness and life to all those who accept him in faith” (Kereszty 108).

PHEME PERKINS has captured Jesus' liberating mission succinctly when he explains the composition of the gospel of Luke. He gave us the impression that the rejection Jesus suffered in his hometown was what led him to the Synagogue and of course, informed his public announcement of his mission. PHEME contends that it was Jesus' rejection at Nazareth (from Mark 6:1-16) that is incorporated into a Synagogue scene that inaugurates Jesus' ministry in Luke 4:16-30” (Perkins 292). In this Gospel periscope, Jesus describes his messianic ministry with the words of Isaiah, which recalls the prophetic significance of the Jubilee.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Jesus therefore places himself on the frontline of fulfilment, not only because he fulfils what was promised and what was awaited by Israel, but also in the deeper sense that in him the decisive event of the history of God with mankind is fulfilled. He proclaims: “He who has seen me has seen the Father (Jn 14:9). Jesus in other words, is the tangible and definitive manifestation of how God acts towards men and women. God acts towards us with an unalloyed love. A love that compels him to offer his son as a ransom for our iniquities (Jn 3:16). Jesus our Saviour in appreciation of the love of the Father:

Announces the liberating mercy of God to those whom he meets on his way, beginning with the poor, the marginalized, and the sinners. He invites all to follow him because he is the first to obey God's plan of love.

Christians, all over the world, have been invited to follow the pattern and example of Jesus' life. This can be done, thanks to the Holy Spirit, the consoler, who internalizes Christ's own style of life in human hearts.

### **The Patristic Social Thoughts**

“Father of the Church” is the traditional title given to the Christian preachers, writers and theologians of the post-canonical period (Ramsey 386). They are men of great intellectual stature who have tirelessly and assiduously expended their time and energy defending the Church through their writings and preaching. They were so eloquent that their words have brought many to the church. What issued from their pens have become authentic theological treatises and are widely read because they are a product of deep thinking. Their opinions have always carried considerable weight in the church. The documents of the Second Vatican Council and the Social Encyclicals to mention significant examples, from recent times cite them very frequently.

The fathers were prolific writers who never let the ink of their pen to dry. Their writings took numerous forms:

sermons, letters, treatises on various subjects, biographies and hagiographies, autobiographies, histories and chronicles, apologies, scriptural exegesis, accounts of martyrdom, texts of liturgies, apophthegms and maxims, songs and poems, journals, apocryphal literature and inscriptions (387).

In some cases, the writings are anonymous. However, despite their anonymity, they have enjoyed a wider readership among the early Christians and have also influenced the lives of many Christians even to date. The importance of the writings of the Fathers was almost eclipsed by thirteenth-century scholasticism. It should be noted however that even in the scholastic and post-scholastic West, the teachings of the fathers have never been utterly neglected, and "one of the characteristic marks of a great theologian has always been his or her familiarity with patristic thought" (387).

The title originally was given to a Bishop or a member of the presbytery as early as the second century, who had distinguished himself because of his sound teaching. The title was later used to designate the ecclesiastical writers who flourished up to the fifth century A. D. Some of these writers were not necessarily members of the hierarchy, laymen are also to be found in their ranks. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 – c. 215) and Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 220) are perhaps the two most important Lay Fathers, and at last, part of Origen's (c. 185 - 254) prodigious literary career occurred when he was a layman. Some women too can be included. The most notable being the Spanish nun and pilgrim, Egeria (fl. before 448). The reason why the title of the Father is conferred on these writers who are not members of the clergy, according to Patrick Hammel, was because of "the valuable services these men and women have rendered to the church" (8).

The conferment of the title of the Father of the Church is not a free-for-all title. One must possess certain qualities before one receives this honour. This qualification that grants one admission into the League of the Fathers is often called the 'Marks of the Fathers of the church. These distinguishing characteristics of the Fathers which were invented by the Church to dissuade the community of believers from reading heretical materials from dissidents that paraded themselves as authentic teachers of the faith are: 1. antiquity which holds that for one to be referred to as a Father must have lived between 200 A.D to 800 A.D. 2. Orthodoxy of Doctrine which refers correct or sound doctrine. The teaching of a Father can only be accepted when it is free from any error or heresy. It must also be congenial with the universal and the traditional doctrine of the church as defined in opposition to heterodoxy or heresy. 3. Holiness of life is another characteristic of the Fathers which entails an unbiased and firm attestation about the sanctity of one's life and finally 4. Ecclesiastical approval refers to the fact the teachings of the Father must be approved by the relevant and competent ecclesiastical authority (9).

The Fathers of the church drew their teaching on social justice from the scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, and the exemplary life of Jesus Christ. They believe that although circumstances and environment may vary, injustice in any part of the world no matter how it is deceptively shielded is injustice. They speak bitterly against the suppression of the poor, the defenceless and the needy. What sharpens the social thinking of the Fathers and bolsters their resolve to obliterate injustice in society is their ability to recognize Christ as resident in his creatures. They hold that: "Christ is the head; the Church is the body. Where the body here on earth suffers, Christ the head suffers too. The crisis of a single individual is a crisis for the whole Church".

Arming themselves to the teeth with the prophetic admonitions and the exemplary life of Christ, the Fathers became the eloquent defenders of the defenceless. They wasted no time in giving a thorough diagnosis of the tragic social conditions that were

prevalent in their time. With the aid of their intelligence, they have published these diagnoses and indeed offered prognoses. This was to draw the attention of future generations of powerful men and women to the futility of oppressing the poor and maiming the defenceless. A survey of the historical evolution of Catholic Social Teaching would reveal that its content is drawn from reflections on relevant passages of the Scriptures and the approved writings of the Fathers.

### **Catholic Social Teachings: From the Classical to Modern Encyclicals**

Catholic Social Teaching, as previously established, deals with social issues such as the dignity of the human person, human rights, the rights of workers, the responsibilities of property ownership, politics, economics, a commitment to peace-making, solidarity, justice, and regard for the common good etc. It has become expedient for the church to propound her social doctrine because, she "has the right and duty to teach all truth necessary for salvation whether it was made known by divine revelation, (as in the Old and New Testament), or was discovered by human reason.

The Catholic social doctrine is developed from the barrels of condemnation the prophets and the early Fathers of the church have directed to injustices and social evils of every kind. The doctrine was not well articulated until the medieval period when St. Thomas Aquinas advocated for the Church's intervention in the activities of the state (O'Brien, David and Shannon 3). He calls for this intervention mainly to ensure that the dignity of the human person which was bestowed on him by the fact that he is created *imago Dei* should be jealously and protectively guarded.

The Church has a lot to contribute to the State by getting involved in the socio-political issues of the State and offering a prophetic voice that will challenge and transform society so that there may be joy and hope for all and sundry (GS n.1).

If the Church is to offer hope for life beyond the grave, she has to start by offering hope for and defending life before the grave. If she is to be a credible Church, she must be on the side of the poor and oppressed by making sure that unjust social arrangements do not trample underfoot the rights of the less privileged and keep them always at the margins of the society. The Church has to be prophetic in season and out of season and must avoid at all costs the unholy romance that sometimes exists between Church and State (Tete IX).

The urgency with which the church is expected to lend her voice to matters of socio-political nature in our time has its seminal background in the groundbreaking magisterial social teachings of the Church, but most especially in the 1891 encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, which crystallizes critical discussions of social issues. I would without equivocation ascribe to this encyclical the title, "the arrowhead of ecclesiastical social teaching". It was written at a time of political and economic turmoil and built on a growing sense that the Church needed to be involved in the great social issues of the day and to bring the wisdom of its tradition to bear on them. A second social encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* was issued by Pope Pius XI in 1931, on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Rerum novarum*. Its central theme is the "reconstruction of the Social Order". Thirty years later, the third encyclical in the classical series, *Mater et Magistra* (Mother and Teacher-Christianity and Social Progress) was issued by Pope John XXIII. After this, there was an explosion of social teachings, with major official statements being issued every two or three years. Subsequent social encyclicals include *Pacem in*

Terris (Peace on Earth) by John XXIII in 1963, *Populorum Progressio* (On the Progress of Peoples) by Paul VI in 1967, and *Octogesima Adveniens* (A Call to Action) by Paul VI in 1971. Pope John Paul II continued this tradition with encyclicals like *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work) in 1981, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (The Church's Social Concern) in 1987, and *Centesimus Annus* (The Centenary of *Rerum Novarum*) in 1991. The modern social encyclicals continued with Pope Benedict XVI, who issued *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) in 2005 and *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) in 2009. Pope Francis further contributed with *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) in 2013 and *Laudato Si* (On Care for Our Common Home) in 2015. These encyclicals reflect the Church's growing concern for social justice and the search for just and sustainable ways for people to live together in peace.

The heart of the Catholic Social Teaching is simple and forceful - The sacred dignity of every individual as a member of the community of creation. This grounds the full panoply of human rights and responsibilities a special option for those in poverty and on the margins of the society, the call to stewardship and global solidarity.

The *corpus* of Catholic Social Thought and Catholic Social Teaching are quite broad and indeed extensive. But it has been summarized in various ways. The U.S Catholic bishops have highlighted 7 key themes:

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
- Call to Family, Community, and Participation
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
- The Dignity of Work and the Rights of workers
- Solidarity
- Care for God's Creation (Themes of Catholic Social Teaching 2).

The contemporary social teaching of the church has always alluded to the literary ingenuity of the Fathers of the Church for the richness of their contents. You will discover that almost all the social documents that were published by the Popes have quoted from the original and of course radical patristic texts. The reason why the Popes quote the fathers is not unconnected to their conviction of the change the patristic social thought will bring when blended with contemporary theological trends.

### **The Relevance of the Catholic Social Teaching to the Nigerian Lawyer**

Catholic Social Teaching (CST), as we have seen earlier is a rich heritage rooted in the Gospel's call to love, justice, and human dignity. It challenges us to consider law not just as a tool for governance but as a means to foster human flourishing and societal well-being. CST rests on key principles as were highlighted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: the dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. These principles compel us to view law beyond mere legality – they demand that we see it as a vocation to serve justice, protect the vulnerable, and create a more equitable society.

CST offers a profound framework for understanding the ethical and moral responsibilities of lawyers. For instance, the principle of human dignity should inform

our approach to human rights law, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their status or circumstances, is treated with respect and fairness. Similarly, the principle of the common good can guide our work in public policy, urging us to draft and implement laws that benefit all members of society, particularly the marginalised.

Familiarisation with CST would without a doubt give Judges and lawyers the habitual predisposition to be those who make laws not according to their own personal measures (Pope Francis Web); but those who serve justice by placing themselves and their talents at the service of others in a way that is both prudent and courageous and both gentle and strong. It is ultimately pertinent to turn to the counsel of the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Francis, to lawyers which in this paper's view is imbued with the CST principles. He exhorted:

Your job is certainly technical and legal, and consists in proposing laws, in amending them or even repealing them. But it is also necessary to instil in them something more, a spirit. I would call it a soul, one that does not only reflect the trends and ideas of the moment, but gives them the indispensable quality that elevates and ennobles the human person (Pope Francis, *Address..*).

The Supreme Pontiff also encouraged lawyers to understand that the surest way to truly live their vocation in law is by allowing it to be infused with faith and the tenets of CST because when “the light of faith and the tenets of CST are concretely placed at the service of justice” (Pope Francis, *Encyclical...*) they give birth to a beautiful vocation of service and responsibility.

### **Integrating Catholic Social Teaching into Legal Teaching in Nigeria**

Nigeria's legal education system has a rich history that reflects the country's journey from colonial rule to independence and beyond. The first formal step towards legal education was the establishment of the Law Faculty at the University of Ibadan in 1948. As an affiliate of the University of London, this faculty followed a heavily theoretical curriculum, with little emphasis on practical skills, a point highlighted in the “History of Legal Education in Nigeria” (2008), which noted the initial lack of practical training for law students.

Post-independence, the demand for a legal education system that could produce competent legal practitioners became a priority. This led to the establishment of the Nigerian Law School in 1962, tasked with bridging the gap between university education and the practical demands of the legal profession. According to Asein, the Nigerian Law School introduced a mandatory one-year vocational training program, which became a cornerstone in the legal training process, ensuring that law graduates were adequately prepared for the challenges of legal practice (21).

A significant development occurred during the Nigerian Legal Education Reform Conference in 2006. The conference, as documented by the “Nigerian Law Reform Commission”, brought together legal educators, practitioners, and policymakers to address the inadequacies in the legal education system. Key recommendations from the conference included the need for a more practice-oriented curriculum, the introduction of clinical legal education, and the enhancement of professional ethics training (“Report on the Nigerian Legal Education Reform Conference” 31). The conference's outcomes marked a pivotal shift towards a more holistic approach to legal education in Nigeria.

The recommendations of the Legal Education Reform Conference have highlighted the need for the reformation of legal curricula in Nigeria. In what way then do we entrench the CST into law education? First, I would recommend that the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria through the office of the Church and Society should work with Legal Educators and policy makers to design a curriculum for CST which would be deployed first in Catholic Universities *ad experimentum* and will be extended later to other conventional Institutions. The Conference through the Office of Church and Society should work towards reframing legal curricula to include not only the technicalities of law but also its moral and ethical implications. The new curricula should be deployed in Catholic Universities in the first instance and will later be proposed to NUC to include it in the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) that produces 70% of the content of the Curriculum and individual Institutions are allowed to add the remaining 30%. Catholics who teach at Law schools should encourage critical reflection on how laws align with or contradict CST principles. Catholics who teach Courses on jurisprudence, for instance, could delve into the intersections between law, morality, and faith, challenging students to think deeply about how their legal practice will contribute to the common good.

Moreover, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria could present a proposal to the law schools should foster environments that encourage dialogue and debate on contemporary issues from the perspective of CST. Moot courts and mock trials can be designed around cases that require students to grapple with ethical dilemmas and moral reasoning, preparing them to navigate such complexities in real-world legal practice. Moreover, mentorship programs that pair students with Catholic legal professionals can provide invaluable guidance on how to integrate CST into their careers.

### **Applying Catholic Social Teachings in Professional Development**

Knowledge acquired during the formative stage of one's life is sufficient to offer one a platform on which one ekes a living for oneself, but to stay alive in the ever-changing, competitive and combustible workspace, one needs to constantly renew one's skills and knowledge through ongoing formation or personal development. Professional personal development refers to continuing education and career training after a person has entered the workforce in order to help him/her develop new skills to stay up-to-date on current trends and advance their career. Catholic lawyers need to be abreast with the CST because Catholics who practice law are expected to be guided by Christian anthropology which places the human person at the centre of everything and demands that the salvation of man should be the supreme law of the Church (Can. 1752). Hence, for practising catholic lawyers, entrenching CST into professional development requires a commitment to continuous reflection and growth. This can be achieved through professional ethics training, grounded in Catholic social teachings. Legal practitioners should be encouraged to consider how their work contributes to the greater good, fosters justice, and upholds the dignity of every individual.

Again, law firms and legal associations can establish guidelines that reflect CST principles, such as promoting pro bono work, advocating for policies that protect the vulnerable, and ensuring fair treatment for all clients. Lawyers should strive to be not

just legal experts but also moral leaders in their communities, using their skills and influence to advocate for justice and equity. The Catholic Lawyers Association should in collaboration with the CBCN organise annual workshops for lawyers, where legal themes that are laced with the principles of the CST are discussed.

### **The Role of Catholic Legal Professionals**

Catholic legal professionals have a unique role to play in society. We are called not only to interpret and apply the law but also to challenge unjust laws and advocate for change where needed. As Pope Francis has often reminded us, "A good Catholic meddles in politics, offering the best of themselves, so that those who govern can govern well" (Pope Francis. *Address...*). Lawyers, by virtue of their vocation, are uniquely positioned to embody this call, advocating for justice, transparency, and the protection of the rights of all individuals.

In a world where justice often seems elusive and inequality pervasive, the call to integrate CST into law teaching and professional development is more urgent than ever. By grounding our legal education and practice in the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, we can create a more just and compassionate legal system that serves not only the law but humanity itself.

### **Conclusion**

The Catholic Church has always had great interest in the development of nations and peoples. This is obvious in its concern for those who seek to escape injustice, hunger, poverty, disease, and ignorance. This is borne out of the fact that each nation needs the social and economic structure necessary to achieve growth. The growing gap between rich and poor nations and individuals as well as the increasing signs of social unrest demonstrate the severity of the situation. It has become pertinent for Catholic lawyers to commit themselves today to this noble cause. They ought to be the generation of Catholic lawyers who will not only excel in the courts and the boardrooms but also in the hearts and minds of the people they serve. They should be known not just for their legal acumen but for their moral courage, commitment to justice, and dedication to the common good.

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