

# Vision of 'Populorum Progressio' not yet realized

UNITED NATIONS - If Pope Paul VI reappeared on earth to assess progress toward meeting the challenges he addressed in his 1967 social encyclical, "Populorum Progressio," he would say: "You've done a lot, but you haven't even started - and you've lost a lot of enthusiasm."

That was the conclusion of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, Ireland, in an Oct. 17 speech at a side event to the 62nd session of the U.N. General Assembly.

Titled "Development: The New Name for Peace," the event was organized by the Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations and co-sponsored by the Path to Peace Foundation.

"Our current family of nations is a dysfunctional family," said the archbishop, who was formerly Vatican nuncio to U.N. agencies in Geneva. "The existing structures (for the governance of global goods) are often inadequate, politically weighted in one direction or the other, and at times they work against one another. ... (The family members) do not have the courage to move forward."

He acknowledged the work of the United Nations and international organizations.

"Were Pope Paul VI here with us again today," Archbishop Martin said, "he would certainly be saying thanks to all of those who have given themselves in the service of humanity within the U.N. system. He would surely also remark on the slow progress of U.N. reform."

"The concept of an effective world authority is being challenged by disregard for international norms where powerful nations place their trust in force," he said.

Forty years after "Populorum Progressio" ("The Progress of Peoples") was published, the urgency in Pope Paul VI's appeal "remains undiminished and it requires then as now a coordinated response from all."

In particular, Archbishop Martin said the world needs “a new injection of ideas and not just technically correct answers.”

He said there is an international need for “a new generation of politicians inspired by ideals, but also capable of taking the risks involved in transmitting those ideals into the ‘possible’ through the optimum use of resources and talents to foster the good of all.”

“*Populorum Progressio*,” he said, envisions responsibilities for everyone to foster the development of society.

“It is not just the task of public authorities,” he said. “There is a huge range of areas in which the Catholic Church can be present and have an effect on so many areas of society. No one can do everything, but each should be allowed to do what they do best.”

Archbishop Martin said that “*Populorum Progressio*” was the only social encyclical among Pope Paul VI’s seven encyclicals. It was intended to address the needs of the poorest nations and their peoples at a historic time that was marked by Cold War tensions and actual war in the Middle East and Vietnam.

It was the first social encyclical written after the Second Vatican Council, he added.

Archbishop Martin said the encyclical was inspired by Pope Paul VI’s international travels as pope and earlier as archbishop of Milan, Italy. It was a highly personalized cry from the heart for the mobilization of those blessed with abundance to answer the plea of the hungry nations of the world, he said.

“The striking leitmotiv of ‘*Populorum Progressio*’ was ‘development is the new name for peace.’ It was a call rooted fundamentally in the biblical notion that peace is more than the absence of war,” said Archbishop Martin.

He said that the encyclical reflected “a greater awareness of the church’s mission to be a sign of the unity of humankind and to then be present as a leaven in international life through fostering the development of peoples and world peace.”

Archbishop Martin said that, in today’s language, the encyclical called for “the

fostering of social and economic rights and also for investment in human and social capital.”

The concept of authentic development is central to the encyclical, he said.

“Authentic development ... must foster the development of each person and of the whole person.

Economics are not separated from human realities, nor is development separated from the civilization or culture in which it takes place. What counts is the person,” he said.

Spiritual development and “the person’s relationship with God” are integral to human development, he added.

“Catholic social teaching is not a recipe book with all the answers. It is a body of reflection that challenges people to respond in their own constructive way,” he said.

“It would be wrong to separate social teaching from the church’s teaching on the human person, male and female; it would be wrong to limit social teaching to the merely social, political or economic,” he continued.

“The fostering of the family is essential if we are to aim at a type of development that is truly rooted in the deepest reality of what it is to be a human person,” he said.

In a response to Archbishop Martin’s presentation, Luba Racanska, chair of the government and politics department at St. John’s University in Queens, N.Y., said issues discussed in 1967 are still relevant in 2007.

As an example of progress made since “*Populorum Progressio*” was disseminated, she cited central Europe, where countries that received aid in the 1990s have become donor nations.

“They are role models and can also be sensitive to the needs of other countries in a humane, positive and respectful way,” she said.