

Sharing Gaudium et Spes through Vocation of the Business Leader

by Angela Senander

On April 20, 2015, Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, presented the Spanish translation of *Vocation of the Business Leader* at the Fourth International Colloquium on Christian Humanism in Economics and Business, held at IESE Business School in Barcelona.¹ This guide for business education, available in more than ten languages, has understandably received more attention among faculty in business schools and business leaders than among theologians and pastoral leaders. Interestingly, just a year before the 2012 publication of *Vocation of the Business Leader*, Gene Ahner, a director of human resources, noted that theological faculty hold a relatively negative view of business and that seminarians learn little about the vocation of the business leader.² A year earlier, James Stormes, SJ, provided an even broader context as he stated: “I and others have encountered a frustrating limitation: the inability of the Church and business to dialogue well together regarding the ethical implications of business activity and economic justice.”³ As the Catholic Church celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of *Gaudium et Spes*, seminary classes in Catholic social teaching would do well to include *Vocation of the Business Leader* as an application of *Gaudium et Spes* that both reflects and invites dialogical engagement with business that can inform seminarians’ future ministry.

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The fiftieth anniversary of *Gaudium et Spes* serves as an opportunity to examine the relationship between *Gaudium et Spes* and *Vocation of the Business Leader* in three ways. First, we will examine the way in which *Gaudium et Spes*’s methodology of reading the signs of the times illuminates both the origin and structure of *Vocation of the Business Leader*. Second, we will evaluate *Gaudium et Spes*’s advocacy of dialogue and its implications for engaging business leaders. Third, we will consider the contributions of the language of *Gaudium et Spes* to *Vocation of the Business Leader* in relationship both to the latter’s title and to avoiding corporate scandal.

1 For the most recent English edition, which was translated into Spanish, see Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*, 4th edition, 2014, http://www.iustitiaetpax.va/content/dam/giustiziaepace/VBL/Vocation_ENGLISH_4th%20edition.pdf.

2 Gene Ahner, “Where in the World? Business as a Vocation,” *New Theology Review* (2011): 72–73, <http://newtheologyreview.com/index.php/ntr/article/viewFile/35/62>.

3 James R. Stormes, SJ, “Pope Benedict XVI’s ‘Caritas in Veritate’: A Challenge to Business Ethics,” *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics* 1, no. 2 (2010): 1, <http://via.library.depaul.edu/jrbe/vol1/iss2/3/>.

The Significance of the Methodology of *Gaudium et Spes* for Vocation of the Business Leader

Gaudium et Spes called for the church to read the signs of the times in light of the Gospel.⁴ The origin of *Vocation of the Business Leader* lies in such a methodology. In addition, this methodology informs the structure of this guide.

Vocation of the Business Leader owes its origin to Catholic social teaching reflecting critically on the 2008 financial crisis. This financial crisis was the sign of the times that shaped Benedict's reflection on development in *Caritas in Veritate*.⁵ This encyclical generated a much-needed conversation with business, evident in a special issue of the *Journal of Business Ethics*.⁶ A meeting of church leaders from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and academics from business schools identified the need for a resource for forming students in Catholic business schools. The fruit of this dialogue was *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*, a valuable resource for guiding decision making in business. This document shares Catholic social teaching with those preparing for a career in business.

Vocation of the Business Leader shares the methodology of *Gaudium et Spes* through the use of the categories of the Cardijn method of see, judge, act. With the first step (see), the document reads the signs of the times. It highlights globalization, communication technologies, financialization, and cultural changes as signs of the times.⁷ This descriptive stage considers first the positive contributions and then the obstacles associated with these developments, in a way similar to *Gaudium et Spes*.⁸

With the second step (judge), the document provides vision, values, and principles by which to judge these developments and businesses' interactions with them. The starting point for Christians is a relationship with Christ, which shapes one's vision.⁹ This relationship of love calls one to value both individual human dignity and the common good.¹⁰ With this foundation, *Vocation of the Business Leader* brings additional themes of Catholic social teaching into dialogue with business to offer six practical principles for business. The first practical principle for business calls for an evaluation of whether the products or services truly contribute to the common good.¹¹ The second invites business decisions to be informed by solidarity with the poor.¹² The third draws attention to the dignity of work and its implications for work design. The fourth highlights subsidiarity in order to support employee initiatives contributing to the mission of the business. The fifth and sixth practical principles contribute to discussions of corporate responsibility through consideration of stewardship and just relations with stakeholders.

With the third step (act), the judgments shape business decisions. Like the second part of *Gaudium et Spes*, which focuses on problems of special urgency, this step responds to concrete situations. This step calls for prudence, the virtue of right reasoning.¹³

4 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), no. 4, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

5 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html.

6 Domènec Melé and Michael Naughton, "The Encyclical-Letter 'Caritas in Veritate': Ethical Challenges for Business," *Journal of Business Ethics* 100, Supplement 1 (2011): 1–7, DOI: 10.1007/s10551-011-1180-7.

7 *Vocation of the Business Leader*, nos. 15, 17.

8 *Vocation of the Business Leader*, nos. 17–26.

9 *Vocation of the Business Leader*, no. 28.

10 *Vocation of the Business Leader*, nos. 30–37.

11 *Vocation of the Business Leader*, no. 41.

12 *Vocation of the Business Leader*, no. 43.

13 *Vocation of the Business Leader*, no. 76.

A Spirit of Dialogue and Encounter

Vocation of the Business Leader expresses both *Gaudium et Spes*'s emphasis on dialogue and Pope Francis's emphasis on encounter. The spirit of dialogue in both *Gaudium et Spes* and *Vocation of the Business Leader* starts with an orientation of appreciation even as the identification of idolatry and injustice invites conversion. Pope Francis's emphasis on encounter provides the precondition for dialogue with business leaders, a precondition that was not evident in *Rerum Novarum* at least in part because of its intended audience.

Dialogue is a distinctive characteristic of the writing of Vatican II, as church historian John O'Malley argues while analyzing the contribution of the style of Vatican II.¹⁴ Bradford Hinze provides insight into the role that dialogue has played in the life of the church and its engagement with the world following the Second Vatican Council.¹⁵ While the drafting of the pastoral letter on the economy in the 1980s involved dialogue between church and business leaders, this exchange was not without its challenges. Three decades later this continues to be the case, as Stormes noted.¹⁶ However, *Vocation of the Business Leader* is a beneficial fruit of the dialogue between *Gaudium et Spes* and business.

True dialogue requires encounter, and Pope Francis has drawn much attention to the importance of encounter. At first glance, the first document of modern Catholic social teaching, *Rerum Novarum*, does not appear to value dialogue with business leaders through encounter for it is addressed simply to Catholic bishops. However, the document would not be what it is, were it not for prior dialogue with business leaders who were responding to the abuses of the Industrial Revolution, such as the Fribourg Union. In contrast with *Rerum Novarum*, *Vocation of the Business Leader* is not only the fruit of an encounter between church leaders and business leaders, but it is also an invitation to an encounter with God and neighbor that is addressed to a wider audience of business leaders.

Language and Inspiration for *Vocation of the Business Leader* in *Gaudium et Spes*

Vocation of the Business Leader reflects *Gaudium et Spes*'s emphasis on the call to be human. This includes working to overcome the scandal of poverty and unjust discrimination. *Gaudium et Spes* invites everyone to integrate faith into all aspects of one's life. *Vocation of the Business Leader* appreciates that this will help overcome corporate scandal rooted in human vices.

In *Gaudium et Spes* the word vocation does not refer to priesthood and religious life. Instead, the word vocation (and its literal English meaning, "calling") refers to a fundamental human calling rooted in creation and revealed most fully in Jesus Christ.¹⁷ This is a calling by God to union with God (a spiritual calling) and a calling by God to do good and avoid evil (a moral calling).¹⁸

The calling found in *Gaudium et Spes* is more inviting for those in leadership roles in business than that found in the first document of modern Catholic social teaching, *Rerum Novarum*.¹⁹ As Leo XIII expressed the Church's solidarity with workers mistreated in the Industrial Revolution, he challenged those in leadership roles in business to respect the rights of the worker by stopping unjust practices that violated the rights of workers. This articulation of the moral calling to avoid evil that oppresses the poor echoes the prophetic tradition. Vatican II broadens the moral call and includes the call to holiness. *Gaudium et Spes* invites dialogue about economic life by offering a

14 John W. O'Malley, "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?" *Theological Studies* 67 (2006): 28, <http://cdn.theologicalstudies.net/67/67.1/67.1.1.pdf>.

15 Bradford E. Hinze, *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments* (New York: Continuum, 2006).

16 Stormes, "Pope Benedict XVI's 'Caritas in Veritate'."

17 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 11.

18 *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 14–16.

19 Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

vision of the goodness of work as a participation in God's creative activity.²⁰ In its consideration of the problems of special urgency in economic life, *Gaudium et Spes* shifts the focus from avoiding sin to the call to holiness transforming one's engagement in work.²¹

While the word "vocation" appears in *Gaudium et Spes*, the term "business leader" does not. Instead, it speaks of roles within a corporation: owner, manager, and worker.²² The current management literature has moved away from identifying leadership with roles.²³ Instead, this literature emphasizes the ability of one to exercise influence in the context of relationships in order to bring about change. In this way, subsidiarity and participation in Catholic social teaching provide ways of engaging in corporate life, which are only now being identified as leadership in the management literature. Subsidiarity supports and empowers local initiative, which in turn encourages participation.

***Gaudium et Spes's* Teaching on Scandal for Business**

While a sociological definition of scandal, such as the one Ari Adut offers, does not define scandal as an obstacle to faith, the biblical meaning of the term is worth considering because it reveals the rich genealogy of the word, which informs *Gaudium et Spes's* use of the word scandal.²⁴ Two millennia ago, Greeks would have answered that σκάνδαλον, (*skandalon*) was a snare or a stumbling block. The New Testament authors of both the Gospel of Matthew and the Pauline letters used forms of this word scandal with greater frequency than was found in their culture, and they used it to talk about a stumbling block to faith, an obstacle in one's relationship with God.²⁵ The biblical use of the word was attentive to both the spiritual and social nature of the person. When Paul counsels the Christians in Corinth not to eat meat sacrificed to idols, he does this not because the consumption of meat was either illegal or immoral *per se*. Rather, love of neighbor called for being attentive to how such an action might affect recent converts to Christianity, tempting them to stumble in their faith because of other Christians' consumption of this meat (1 Cor 8:10, 1 Cor 10:23–33). Not only does Paul draw attention to instances of Christians' actions tempting others to stumble in their relationship with God, but so too does Matthew. Matthew attends to the social nature of sin when he talks about the way in which one's own stumbling in relationship with God can influence others to stumble in their relationships with God (Mt 18:6). Both Matthew and Paul also recognize that Jesus's proclamation of the reign of God in word and deed resulted in scandal, in which others stumbled in their relationship with God, though this was not reason to stop proclaiming God's reign but rather invite conversion in the other (Mt 15:12, 1 Cor 1:23).²⁶ In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council uses the biblical language of scandal to highlight three particular obstacles to faith: the scandal of poverty, the scandal of inequality and unjust discrimination, and the scandal of separating faith from the rest of one's life.²⁷

Gaudium et Spes: The Scandal of Poverty

Gaudium et Spes begins by expressing a special concern for the poor.²⁸ This reflects Jesus's mission, articulated in the Gospel of Luke as bringing good news to the poor (Lk 4:18). Attentive to the church's participation in this

20 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 35.

21 *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 63–64.

22 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 68.

23 P. G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012).

24 Ari Adut, *On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art*, Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences Series, ed. Mark Granovetter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

25 Juan Mateos, "Análisis Semántico de los Lexemas σκανδαλιζω γ σκάνδαλον," *Filología Neotestamentaria* 2, no. 1 (1989): 57–92.

26 For further development of the concept of scandal, see Angela Senander, *Scandal: The Catholic Church and Public Life* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

27 *Gaudium et Spes*, nos. 88, 29, 43.

28 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 1.

mission, the Second Vatican Council writes: “Do not let men, then, be *scandalized* because some countries with a majority of citizens who are counted as Christians have an abundance of wealth, whereas others are deprived of the necessities of life and are tormented with hunger, disease, and every kind of misery” (italics added).²⁹ More recently, Pope Francis has drawn attention to the scandal of poverty as he writes: “How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?”³⁰ Drawing on the fifth commandment, he challenges exclusion that fails to respect human dignity and results in death. His methodology reflects that of *Gaudium et Spes*, reading the signs of the times in light of the Gospel.³¹

Following the Second Vatican Council, the bishops of Latin America wrote about poverty as a sign of the times in Latin America. From the Latin American church’s reflection on poverty emerged the preferential option for the poor. The preferential option for the poor invites Christians to choose to act toward the poor as God does by expressing a preference for them because of their need.³² This is a choice to enter into solidarity with the poor through friendship. This relationship bears fruit in efforts to change the unjust situation within which they live.

The Latin American church’s pastoral practice of solidarity with the poor and protest against injustice as an expression of faith informed both theological reflection and the teaching of the Latin American bishops. Other bodies of bishops such as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops received this teaching about the preferential option for the poor. The US Bishops expressed this in their 1986 pastoral letter on the economy, “Economic Justice for All.”³³ By 1987, John Paul II had incorporated the preferential option for the poor into his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, which commemorated Paul VI’s encyclical on the development of peoples.³⁴

As businesses commit to the UN Global Compact, this understanding of the scandal of poverty can inform efforts to promote the first principle: “Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.”³⁵ Despite The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, many do not find their rights to food, clothing, housing, and medical care realized.³⁶ Corporations who make a commitment to the UN Global Compact commit themselves to attend to these stakeholders. Some choose to respond by marketing to the bottom of the pyramid so that people who are poor have increased access to the necessities of life. The preferential option for the poor calls for a response informed by encounter with poor people that leads to solidarity.

Gaudium et Spes: The Scandal of Inequality and Unjust Discrimination

As we consider the scandal of inequality and unjust discrimination, it is worth remembering that historically Christianity provided equality through baptism that challenged the hierarchical order of Roman society. In one of the earliest Pauline letters, the letter to the Galatians, Paul tells the Christian community that there is neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, because all are one in Christ (Gal 3:28). For evidence of how this informed liturgical life of the early second century, a letter that a governor in Asia Minor wrote to the emperor Trajan is worthy of consideration. In this letter, the governor Pliny says that two slave women, who were called deaconesses, led the

29 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 88.

30 Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), no. 53, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

31 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 4.

32 Daniel Hartnett, “Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutiérrez,” *America* (Feb. 3, 2003), <http://americamagazine.org/issue/420/article/remembering-poor-interview-gustavo-gutierrez>.

33 United States Catholic Bishops, “Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy” (1986), http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf.

34 John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), 42, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html.

35 United Nations, Global Compact: Ten Principles, <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles>.

36 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), 25, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

community in prayer.³⁷ Not only was there an egalitarian ethos within the early Christian community that others were invited to join, but there is a view of humanity communicated through the biblical accounts of creation that highlights the value of each human being. Genesis describes human beings as created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). While scripture scholar John Donahue highlights different ways of interpreting the passage, the dominant contemporary interpretation emphasizes intrinsic human dignity grounded in God's act of creating human beings in God's image.³⁸ The bishops of the Second Vatican Council were operating with such a theology when they stated: "For excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause *scandal*, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace" (italics added).³⁹ Two recent movements that have drawn attention to such differences are Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter. The use of the word scandal to highlight economic and social differences draws attention to such inequality as contrary to God's reign and an obstacle to its credible proclamation.

Identifying inequality and unjust discrimination as scandal can provide a theological foundation for examining these contemporary issues in terms of human rights. As corporations adopt the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact, they commit themselves to "the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining" (Principle 3) and "the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation" (Principle 6). The first of these principles has historically provided a means for lessening wage disparity within corporations, and the second informs human resource programs designed to foster a respectful work environment. The introduction of the biblical language of scandal into this conversation invites reflection on social arrangements that are contrary to God's reign. This could inform human rights efforts to address growing income inequality and white privilege. The literature on white privilege highlights the systemic effects of racial inequality on poverty.⁴⁰ This has the potential to contribute to corporations' considerations of diversity as a dimension of corporate social responsibility.

Gaudium et Spes: The Scandal of Separating Faith from Daily Practices

Speaking directly to Christians about their human activities, the Second Vatican Council highlights Christians' responsibilities in the world according to their vocations. The bishops also underscore that religion is not to be reduced to "acts of worship and the observance of a few moral obligations."⁴¹ With this as background, the bishops write: "One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives. As far back as the Old Testament the prophets vehemently denounced this *scandal*"⁴² (italics added). While this statement about human activity is by no means limited to work in corporations, it certainly includes the human activity of work in corporations.

As Michael Novak reflected on business as a vocation or calling, he highlighted Kenneth Lay, who said:

I grew up the son of a Baptist minister. From this background, I was fully exposed to not only legal behavior but moral and ethical behavior and what that means from the standpoint of leading organizations and people. I was, and am, a strong believer that one of the most satisfying things in life is to

37 Pliny, "Letters of Pliny the Younger and the Emperor Trajan," in Josephus, Flavius, *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/maps/primary/pliny.html>.

38 John Donahue, SJ, "The Bible and Catholic Social Teaching: Will This Engagement Lead to Marriage?" in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, OFM (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 16.

39 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 29.

40 Laurie M. Cassidy and Alexander Mikulich, *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).

41 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 43.

42 *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 43.

create a highly moral and ethical environment in which every individual is allowed and encouraged to realize their God-given potential.⁴³

Within five years, Lay was stepping down as CEO of Enron. Just before thousands of his workers lost their jobs and retirements, he sold his Enron stock while encouraging others to keep investing. This led to charges of fraud, and he was found guilty (though he died before sentencing and the completion of the appeals process so it does not stand).

If one were to analyze this scandal from a sociological perspective, one could point to both unethical and illegal activities that caused tremendous harm. The contrast between the company's public image of integrity and corporate social responsibility, on the one hand, and the unethical and illegal practices of its leaders, on the other, heightened negative responses. Precisely because of Lay's understanding of his work in business as a calling or a vocation, the words of the prophets challenge his practices. They name the scandal or obstacle to faith that results from engaging in practices contrary to faith, such as defrauding people. *Gaudium et Spes* speaks directly to the lack of congruence between faith and daily practices.

As Catholic business leaders have been in dialogue with *Gaudium et Spes*, the scandal of separating faith from the rest of one's life has received significant attention. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 43, serves as an invitation to integration in a business context in which many expect faith to remain private. *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection* invites reflection on integrity and on embodying Catholic social teaching through practices of corporate social responsibility.

An emphasis on integrity resulting from *Gaudium et Spes* provides a means of advancing the discussion about authentic leadership. While the purpose of the authentic leadership discussion seems to be to promote moral leadership, authenticity alone is not sufficient to reach that goal, for one could be authentic in living out of both one's virtues and one's vices. Integrity grounded in faith calls for growth in virtue.⁴⁴

Avoiding Corporate Scandal

The pursuit of a virtuous life by members of a corporation has the potential to help avoid corporate scandal. The Second Vatican Council turns to the biblical language of scandal and challenges Christians not to separate faith from their daily practices. This is a call to allow one's relationship with God to define the whole of one's life. Pedro Arrupe captures this well when he says that disciples are invited to "fall in love [with God], stay in love and it will decide everything."⁴⁵ Grounded in such a relationship, the Christian moral life will be a response to God, an expression of one's spirituality. The Second Vatican Council challenges the privatization of faith and invites its integration into one's life.

The Second Vatican Council also highlights specific unjust social structures as scandals: poverty, inequality, and unjust discrimination. These injustices are obstacles to the proclamation of God's reign. God shows a preferential love for the poor because of their need and invites others to follow this example. God creates each person in God's image with intrinsic human dignity that needs to be respected. As corporations commit to the UN Global Compact, they will be attending to such stakeholders whose human rights are not adequately respected. The Christian humanism underpinning the protest against unjust social structures identified by the Second Vatican Council as scandal provides a theological foundation to undergird actions taken in support of the UN Global Compact.

43 Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling: Work and the Examined Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 22.

44 On authentic leadership, see Bill George, *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

45 Kevin F. Burke, "Love Will Decide Everything: Pedro Arrupe Recovered the Ignatian 'Mysticism of Open Eyes,'" *America* (Nov. 12, 2007): 21.

The rich tradition of theological reflection on scandal invites business ethics to integrate various approaches to ethics (from virtue ethics to casuistry and deontological ethics). This reflection attends to an important relationship between the spiritual and the ethical that could enhance integrity in business practices. This invites ethical reflection on personal choices, interpersonal interactions and unjust social structures. Each of these levels is important for corporations' considerations of how to avoid scandal. When corporations consist of people with integrity, policies that promote respectful personal interactions, and a sense of corporate social responsibility that responds to unjust social structures, they have a strong basis for avoiding corporate scandal by embodying Catholic social teaching as expressed in *Gaudium et Spes*.