CHAPTER 6

The Concept of community development in relation to the concept of development according to the church

In this chapter we make a comparison between the important features of the concept of community development and the concept of development according to the Church, as there is striking similarity between these two. Such a study can further highlight a concept of development according to the Church. From the survey of literature on community development and important Church documents on the social teachings of the Church, we find the following areas in which both of these concepts converge.

1. Communitarian Character

Most Important character of community development is its communitarian character. Development should reach to all people and all aspects of the life of people. The Church considers itself as a communion. According to, the leading catholic theologian Y.Congar Church is not an institution or structure, but a communion. For a proper understanding of the Church, one should understand the communitarian character of the Church.¹⁵⁴

George Panikulam a noted Biblical scholar and theologian put this in clear terms. After a thorough analysis of the New Testament he declares, "Communion is the very essence of the Christianity".\textsuperscript{155}

The Communitarian aspect of the Christian life is emphasised in the early Christian community and in the writings of St. Paul and other apostle. Life for a Christian is life with his brother.\textsuperscript{156}

The life and activities of the first Christian community very vividly show the communitarian life of the first Christian community. The Acts of the Apostles describes it clearly. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which possessed was his own: but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold. And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (Acts, 4/32-35).

\textsuperscript{156} Gerhard Lohnfink \textit{Jesus and Community}, Paulist Press, New York, 1968, p.1-10
The second Vatican council document *Gaudium et Spes*, brings out the social nature of man with an authentic and deep analysis of the Holy Scripture. "God, Who has fatherly concern for everyone, has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood. For having been created in the image of God, Who "from one man has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26), all men are called to one and the same goal, namely God Himself. For this reason, love for God and neighbour is the first and greatest commandment. Sacred Scripture, however, teaches us that the love of God cannot be separated from the love of neighbour: "If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.... Love therefore is the fulfillment of the Law" (Rom 13:9-10; cf. I Jn 4:20). To men growing daily more dependent on one another, and to a world becoming more unified every day, this truth proves to be of paramount importance. Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, "that all may be one ... as we are one" (Jn 17:21-22), opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God's sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth that God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through
a sincere gift of himself. Man's social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on one another. For the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person that for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life. Since this social life is not something added on to man, through his dealings with others, through reciprocal duties, and through fraternal dialogue he develops all his gifts and is able to rise to his destiny.’’

This communitarian character of the Church states itself present and very emphatically in its approach to development. The catechism of Catholic Church underlines the need of voluntary associations and groups in order to achieve objectives that exceed individual capacities. The documents advocate encouragements of such associations for the overall development. “To promote the participation of the greatest number in the life of a society, the creation of voluntary associations and institutions must be encouraged "on both national and international levels, which relate to economic and social goals, to cultural and recreational activities, to sport, to various professions, and to political affairs" (MM, n. 60). This 'socialization' also expresses the natural tendency for human beings to associate with one

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157 Gaudium et spes, nn, 24-25
another for the sake of attaining objectives that exceed individual capacities. It develops the qualities of the person, especially the sense of initiative and responsibility, and helps guarantee his rights. 

*Populorum progressio* While speaking about the reality of human solidarity underlines the communitarian nature of development.

"But each man is a member of society. He is part of the whole of mankind. It is not just certain individuals, but also all men who are called to this fullness of development. Civilizations are born, develop, and die. But humanity is advancing along the path of history like the waves of a rising tide encroaching gradually on the shore. We have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries: for this reason we have obligations toward all, and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us to enlarge the human family. The reality of human solidarity, which is a benefit for us, also imposes a duty."  

While emphasizing the social and communitarian character of development church is very careful not to sacrifice individual interest at the expense of the community. In encyclical *Pacem in*

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158 *Catechism of Catholic church, n, 1882.*

159 *Populorum Progressio, n, 17*
Terris Pop John XXIII put this in categorical terms. "Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person, he has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature. And as these rights and obligations are universal and inviolable, so they cannot in any way be surrendered."

2. Abiding faith in the capacity of the Individual

The concept of community development believes in the tremendous capacity of the individual to develop him. External agency can accelerate this development by providing assistance technical and otherwise. Populorum progressio shares exactly the same view. According to this church document God has implanted in every individual the aptitudes and qualities to develop himself. "In the design of God, every man is called to develop himself, for every life is a vocation. At birth, everyone is granted, in germ, a set of aptitudes and qualities for him to bring to fusion. Their coming to maturity, which will be the result of education received from the environment and personal efforts, will allow each man to direct himself toward the destiny intended for him by the Creator.

\[160\] Pacem in terris n, 9.
Endowed with intelligence and freedom, he is responsible for his fulfilment as he is for his salvation. He is aided, or sometimes impeded, by those who educate him and those with whom he lives, but each one remains, whatever these influences affecting him might be, the principal agent of his own success or failure. By the unaided effort of his own intelligence and his will, each man can grow in humanity, can enhance his personal worth, can become more a person.\(^{161}\)

However the documents wants that individual initiative alone cannot ensure successful development. Proper development is possible only when the public authority guide and control the activities of the individuals, without disowning the spirit of private initiative. "Individual initiative alone and the mere free play of competition could never assure successful development. One must avoid the risk of increasing still more the wealth of the rich and the dominion of the strong, whilst leaving the poor in their misery and adding to the servitude of the oppressed. Hence programs are necessary in order "to encourage, stimulate, coordinate, supplement and integrate" (MM, n. 44) the activity of individuals and of intermediary bodies. It pertains to the public authorities to choose, even to lay down the objectives to be pursued, the ends to be achieved, and the means for attaining

\(^{161}\) Populorum Progressio, n. 15.
these, and it is for them to stimulate all the forces engaged in this common activity. But let them take care to associate private initiative and intermediary bodies with this work. They will thus avoid the danger of complete collectivisation or of arbitrary planning, which, by denying liberty, would prevent the exercise of the fundamental rights of the human person."\textsuperscript{162} However "Excessive intervention by the state can threaten the personal initiative"\textsuperscript{163}. The intervention of the Government Authorities should support the individual initiative and co-ordinates its activities. The teaching of the church has elaborated the principle of subsidiarity "a community of a higher order shouldn’t interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinates its activity with the activities of the rest of the society, always with a view to the common good."\textsuperscript{164}

3. Voluntary Participation

Voluntary participation of the people is an important feature of community development. Programmes of community development should be planed in such a way that all the members of the community participate in the planning, decision

\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Ibid}, n, 33.
\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Catechism of Catholic church}, n, 1887.
\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Centesimus annus}, n, 48.
making, execution and evaluation of the developmental activities. The church has always upheld the rights of the individuals in matters that determine his destiny. According to the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* by Pope John XXIII. "The human individual far from being an object and as it were, a merely passive element in the social order, is, in fact, must be, and must continue to be, its subject, its foundation and its end."\(^{165}\)

The encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens* by Pope Paul VI hold the same view "while scientific and technological progress continues to overturn man's surrounding, his patterns of knowledge, work, consumption and relationships, two aspirations persistently make themselves felt in these new contexts, and they grow stronger to the extent that he becomes better informed and better educated: the aspiration to equality and the aspiration to participation, two forms of man's dignity and freedom."\(^{166}\) In his world day of peace message Pope John Paul II also emphasizes the need of participation "It is essential for every human being to have a sense of participating, of being a part of the decisions and endeavors that shape the destiny of the world. Violence and injustice have often in the past found their root causes in people's sense of being deprived of the right to shape their own lives. Future violence and injustice cannot be avoided

\(^{165}\) *Pacem in terris* n, 26.
\(^{166}\) *Octogesima adveniens* n, 22
when the basic right to participate in the choices of society is denied."^167

4 Integral Development

Development should cover all individual and all possible aspect of human life. It is not confined to economic growth alone. So community development advocates for multi-purpose programmes. The church advocates for integral development of the entire humanity. "If in recent times the Church's Magisterium has insisted more and more upon the need to promote the authentic and integral development of the person, this is in response to the real situation of the world’s peoples, as well as to an increased consciousness that not just the actions of individuals but also structures of social, political and economic life are often inimical to human well-being. The imbalances entrenched in the increasing gap between those who benefit from the world's growing capacity to produce wealth and those who are left at the margin of progress call for a radical change of both mentality and structures in favour of the human person. The great moral challenge facing nations and the international community in relation to development is to have the courage of a new solidarity, capable of taking imaginative and effective steps to

overcome both dehumanizing underdevelopment and the "over development" which tends to reduce the person to an economic unit in an ever more oppressive consumer network" 168

Pope John Paul II in tune with Populorum Progressio further clarifies the idea in his encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis. "In brief, modern underdevelopment is not only economic but also cultural, political and simply human, as was indicated twenty years ago by the Encyclical Populorum Progressio. Hence at this point we have to ask ourselves if the sad reality of today might not be, at least in part, the result of a too narrow idea of development, that is, a mainly economic one." 169 The document continues "In fact, therefore a better understanding today that the mere accumulation of goods and services, even for the benefit of the majority, is not enough for the realization of human happiness. Nor, in consequence, does the availability of the many real benefits provided in recent times by science and technology, including the computer sciences, bring freedom from slavery. On the contrary, the experience of recent years shows that unless all the considerable body of resources and potential at man's disposal is guided by a moral understanding and by an orientation

168 Ecclesia in Asia, No.32
169 Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, n,15.
towards the true good of the human race, it easily turns against man to oppress him."

The church holds that economic growth is useful only when the whole man and entire human community take advantage of it. "The development of economic activity and growth in production are meant to provide for the needs of human beings. Economic life is not meant solely to multiply goods produced and increase profit or power; it is ordered first of all to the service of persons, of the whole man, and of the entire human community. Economic activity, conducted according to its own proper methods, is to be exercised within the limits of the moral order, in keeping with social justice so as to correspond to God's plan for man." So Pope John Paul II requests the economists and political authority to form policies to suit the good of every person and the whole person. "I would like to invite economists and financial professionals, as well as political leader to recognize the evidence of the need to ensure than economic practices and related political policies have as their aim the good of every person and of the whole person. This is not only a demand of ethics but also a sound economy."  

170 Ibid, n, 28.
171 Catechism of Catholic Church, n, 2426.
172 Word Day of Peace Message, 2000, n, 16
We can summarize the concept of development according to church in the apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II. *Ecclesia in Africa* "Integral human development – the development of every person and of the whole person especially of the poorest and most neglected in the community is the very heart of evangelization."\(^{173}\)

5 **Value Based Development**

Community development is a value-laden process. According to it the fundamental aim of development is strengthening human dignity. The church is more eloquent on this. *Populorum Progressio* demands that development should ensure a new humanism, embracing the higher values like law, and friendship, prayer and contemplation.

"If further development calls for the work of more and more technicians, even more necessary is the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism which will enable modern man to find himself anew by embracing the higher values of love and friendship, of prayer and contemplation. This is what will permit the fullness of authentic development, a development which is for each and all the transition from less..."

\(^{173}\) *Ecclesia in Africa*, n, 68
human conditions to those which are more human.\textsuperscript{174} The encyclical \textit{Redemptor Hominis} further develop the same idea in a comprehensive manner. The development of technology and the development of contemporary civilization, which is marked by the ascendancy of technology, demand a proportional development of morals and ethics. For the present this last development seems unfortunately to be always left behind. Accordingly, in spite of the marvel of this progress, in which it is difficult not to see also authentic signs of man's greatness, signs that in their creative seeds were revealed to us in the pages of the book of Genesis, as early as where it describes man's creation, this progress cannot fail to give rise to disquiet on many counts. The first reason for disquiet concerns the essential and fundamental question: Does this progress, which has man for its author and promoter, make human life on earth more human\textsuperscript{'} in every aspect of that life? Does it make it more 'worthy of man'? There can be no doubt that in various aspects it does. But the question keeps coming back with regard to what is most essential — whether in the context of this progress, man, as man, is becoming truly better, that is to say, more mature spiritually, more aware of the dignity of his humanity, more responsible, more open to others,

\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Populorum Progressio}, n. 20.
especially the neediest and the weakest, and readier to give and to aid all."\textsuperscript{175}

In short for the church development should be 'spiritual' in the true sense of the term. Development should embrace all values, which will promote fundamental human dignity. The apostolic exhortation in Ecclesia in Asia puts this in nutshell. "In the service of the human family, the Church reaches out to all men and women without distinction, striving to build with them a civilization of love, founded upon the universal values of peace, justice, solidarity and freedom, which find their fulfillment in Christ.\textsuperscript{176}

6 Social Justice

According to community development, development should reach to all classes of people. But due to social and economic inequality all sections of society cannot enjoy the benefit of development. So community development is for paying special attention to the weaker sections of the society. The church document \textit{Gaudium et Spes} calls for eradication of economic inequality as a primary demand of justice "To satisfy the demands of justice and equity, strenuous efforts must be made, without disregarding the rights of persons or the natural qualities

\textsuperscript{175} Redemptor Hominis, n, 15.
\textsuperscript{176} Ecclesia in Asia, No.32
of each country, to remove as quickly as possible the immense economic inequalities, which now exist and in many cases are growing and which are connected with individual and social discrimination. Justice and equity likewise require that the mobility, which is necessary in a developing economy, be regulated in such a way as to keep the life of individuals and their families from becoming insecure and precarious. According to *Populorum Progressio* genuine development is possible only with the upliftment of the needy and the down trodden. "All of you who have heard the cry of the needy and are trying to meet their needs are persons we consider promoters and, so to speak the apostles of beneficial and genuine development which, far from consisting in wealth which looks to individual advantage or is sought for its own sake, is rather to be found in an economy adjusted to the welfare of the human person and in daily sustenance provided for all, the source, as it were, of fraternal charity and a clear sign of the help of divine Providence."  

The church considers the upliftment of weaker section of the society as its primary duty. The apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* speaks about the preferential love for the poor. "In seeking to promote human dignity, the Church shows a preferential love of the poor and voiceless, because the Lord has

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177 *Gaudium et spes*, n. 66.  
178 *Populorum Progressio*, n.44.
identified himself with them in a special way (cf. Mt 25:40). This love excludes no one, but simply embodies a priority of service to which the whole Christian tradition bears witness. This love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and, above all, those without hope of a better future. The encyclical Populorum Progressio is very emphatic in this regard. "If a brother or a sister be naked," says Saint James, "if they lack their daily nourishment, and one of you says to them: Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' without giving them what is necessary for the body, what good does it do? (Jas 2:15-16) Today no one can be ignorant any longer of the fact that in whole continents countless men and women are ravished by hunger, countless numbers of children are undernourished, so that many of them die in infancy, while the physical growth and mental development of many others are retarded and, as a result, whole regions are condemned to the most depressing despondency."

7 Democratic Method

Community development advocates for democratic method in executing developmental programme. This is to ensure

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179 Ecclesia in Asia n, 34
180 Populorum Progressio, n, 45.
people's participation. The church advocate the democracy because only it can ensure participation of the people in the decision making process which forms their destiny. "The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate. Thus she cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for individual interests or for ideological ends."

The church believes that, among the available types of government only democracy can ensure equality and people's participation. "The two aspirations, to equality and to participation, seek to promote a democratic type of society. Various models are proposed, some are tried out, none of them gives complete satisfaction, and the search goes on between ideological and pragmatic tendencies. The Christian has the duty to take part in this search and in the organization and life of political society. As a social being, man builds his destiny within a series of particular groupings, which demand, as their completion and as a necessary condition for their development, a vaster

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181 Centesimus annus, no.75
society, one of a universal character, the political society. All particular activity must be placed within that wider society, and thereby it takes on the dimension of the common good."\textsuperscript{162}

8 Development of Leadership

Only those leaders emerge from the people themselves can inspire the people and instill in them the spirit of hard work and the desire to change. So community development programmes encourage the local leadership to come up. Programmes are chalked out to develop the leadership quality of the people. In the apostolic letter, \textit{Ecclesia in America} Pope John Paul II states "Thus the church needs to pay greater attention to the formation of consciences which will prepare the leaders of society for public at all levels, promote civic education, respect for law and for human rights, and inspire greater efforts in the ethical training of political leaders"\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Populorum Progressio} is also very emphatic in developing laity leadership as the church hierarchy cannot intervene in the temporal matters. "Laymen should take up as their own proper task the renewal of the temporal order. If the role of the hierarchy is to teach and to interpret authentically the norms or morality to be followed in this matter, it belongs to the laity, without waiting passively for orders and directives to take

\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Gaudium et spes}, n, 75.
\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Ecclesia in America}, n, 56.
the initiatives freely and to infuse a Christian spirit in to mentality customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live."\textsuperscript{184}

CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, it becomes evident that the teachings of the church and the concept of development according to church agree with major characteristics of the concept of community development. Church, being a pastor and moral teacher does not propose any concrete sets of action or any specific developmental paradigm. She is not a technical expert to suggest. Concrete programmes for genuine and authentic development. However development is a genuine concern of the church as part of its pastoral ministry. Being a pastor, the Church cannot close her eyes towards poverty, underdevelopment, exploitation etc. So church has a clear vision of what development should be, which it has highlighted through different documents. It is the duty of the concerned authority to translate these ideas in to concrete action. Community development is a developmental paradigm, which is very close to the concept of development according to church.

\textsuperscript{184} Populorum Progressio, n, 47.