

*Populorum Progressio*A NEW DICASTERY AND
SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Pope Francis used the 50th anniversary of the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* to give us a beautiful framework for understanding integral human development, how it evolves and what it should look like today. To understand what integral human development means, we begin with how Pope Paul VI defined it in 1967: “The development we speak of here cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man.”¹



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In other words, integral human development involves the advancement of each person and humanity as a whole. The church and the ministries of the church, like health care, participate in this dynamic when we help individuals and communities realize their full potential — their human dignity. Francis reminds us that

we need to continuously look at the “signs of the times” and apply the church’s tradition to the changing needs of people and our world.

The pope spoke during an April 2017 conference organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development to study the theological, anthropological and pastoral perspectives of *Populorum Progressio* and to formulate guidelines for the dicastery’s activities in light of the “signs of the times.”

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is new. Pope Francis created it by merging four other dicasteries to form a single one which, as of Jan. 1, 2017, would deal with issues “regarding migrants, those in need, the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the imprisoned and the unemployed, as well as victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, and all forms of slavery and torture.”² He appointed Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson as its prefect.

Speaking to Catholic health care leaders in May 2017, during the Catholic Health Association’s Ecclesiology and Spiritual Renewal program, Cardinal Turkson stated, “We intend this new dicastery not to be a conglomerate, but rather see this as a moment for the church to reform its

social vision into a common vision grounded in Christian anthropology. The dignity of the human person is what has pulled all four of our offices together. Our common vision is that of the human person and how the church responds to the needs of persons who find themselves in difficult situations.”³

Pope Francis further developed this vision during his address to the new dicastery in April 2107. Integral human development, said Francis, involves five principles of integration, starting with integrating the diverse peoples of the earth.

“The duty of solidarity obliges us to seek just ways of sharing,” he said, “so there may not exist that tragic inequality between those who have too much and those who have nothing, between those who reject and those who are rejected.”⁴

A second principle is offering feasible models of social integration. “Everyone has a contribution to offer to the whole of society,” Francis said. “Everyone has a trait that can be useful in living together; no one is excluded from contributing something for the good of all.”⁵

The pope pointed out that this principle is known as subsidiarity, which states that we need everyone’s contribution in order to create a coexistence open to all. Subsidiarity means no one counts as “more” or “less.” Every person is a child of God with a unique contribution to make and which the world needs to receive in order for humanity to advance.

Integrating all types of systems is the third principle. Naming the economy, finance, work, culture, family life and religion, the pope observed, “None of them can be an absolute, and none can be excluded from the concept of integral human development which, in other words, takes



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Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, addresses participants at CHA's 2017 Ecclesiology and Spiritual Renewal Program for Health Care Leaders. Sr. Carol Keehan, DC, CHA president and chief executive officer, seen here with Cardinal Turkson, welcomed him and members of his staff to the May 4 session held at the Hotel Columbus, near Vatican City.

into account that human life is like an orchestra that performs well if the various instruments are in harmony and follow a score shared by all.”⁶

The fourth principle is integrating the individual and the community dimensions. “The ‘I’ and the community are not in competition with each other,” Pope Francis said, “but the ‘I’ can mature only in the presence of authentic interpersonal relationships, and the community is productive when each and every one of its components is such.”⁷

Humans are social by nature. We cannot realize our full potential as isolated individuals, but rather only when we are in community — just as God, in whose likeness we are created, is a communion of persons.

Lastly, the principle is about integrating the body and soul. Pope Francis recalled how his predecessor, Paul VI, did not consider development restricted to economic growth or physical well-being. “Integrating body and soul also means that no work of development can truly reach its goal if it does not respect that place in which God is present with us and speaks to our heart,” Francis said.⁸

REFLECTION FOR CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE

Catholic health care plays a role in the integral development of the human person and of humanity. It is important that the principles of integral human development be lived out not only in the boardrooms where decisions are made, but also on the units where we serve our patients and residents.

To review how well our organizations are living the five principles of integration, here is an exercise based on Pope Francis’ words. Sponsorship boards, governance and senior leadership teams and even individual departments within facilities can reflect on these questions:

How are we integrating the diverse peoples of the earth in our organization? This could take us into multiple areas ranging from the racial and ethnic composition of boards and senior leadership teams, to how we are reducing disparities of care among different minority populations, to how we celebrate the diversity of our patients or residents and staff.

How are we attentive to social integration (subsidiarity) in our organization? What

processes and structures do we have in place to ensure the voices of front-line associates, patients and residents are heard? How do our organizations ensure that communication is not only top-down, but that it brings ideas from individual units, departments and facilities?

How do we ensure all the various systems that affect individuals, organizations and society are being considered? Senior leaders may want to examine when and if they are using a values-based decision-making tool to make major decisions. These tools look at financial, political, social, ethical, spiritual and communal perspectives. Within clinical departments, this integration principle aligns with patient-centered or family-centered care. These models require that we consider the cultural, ethnic, religious, familial and other factors important to patients and residents when delivering care.

How are we caring for the individual and the community? As organizations grow larger, it is important to not lose sight of the individual and the importance of one-on-one encounters. Do we know our staff, patients and residents? What are their personal needs? How do we support them? How do we make sure we also are building community? Community implies trust, genuine caring, a common vision and shared values. How do we hold the tension between the needs of individuals and the community?

How are we integrating body and soul in our organization? The simple answer is to say we offer prayer before all meetings, have Masses in our facilities and celebrate the holy days and liturgical seasons of the Catholic Church. But this integrating principle is about making sure God is at the center of everything we do. How are we helping people connect to God? How do we attend to the souls of our staff? Are we attentive to compassion fatigue, burnout and caregiver grief? How do we help patients and residents to find God in the midst of bad news, chronic illness, death and dying? How is the care we provide revealing God to those we serve?

This reflective process should remind us that our healing mission is linked to the church's social justice tradition, which in turn is based in Scripture. Promoting integral human development is

at the root of what Catholic health care is about. Pope Francis has used the 50th anniversary of *Populorum Progressio* to remind us that we need to continuously look at the "signs of the times" and apply the church's tradition to the changing needs of people and our world.

As Pope Paul VI wrote: "Since the Church does dwell among men, she has the duty of 'scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.' Sharing the noblest aspirations of men and suffering when she sees these aspirations not satisfied, she wishes to help them attain their full realization. So she offers man her distinctive contribution: a global perspective on man and human realities."⁹

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NOTES

1. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, par. 14. https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html.
2. Francis, "Instituting the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development," Apostolic Letter issued *motu proprio*, Aug. 17, 2016. https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio_20160817_humanam-progressionem.html.
3. Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, (speech, Ecclesiology and Spiritual Renewal Program for Health Care Leaders, Rome, May 4, 2017).
4. Francis, "Address to the Participants in the Conference Offered by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Encyclical 'Populorum Progressio,'" April 4, 2017. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/april/documents/papa-francesco_20170404_convegno-populorum-progressio.html.
5. Francis, Address, April 4, 2017.
6. Francis, Address, April 4, 2017.
7. Francis, Address, April 4, 2017.
8. Francis, Address, April 4, 2017.
9. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, par. 13.

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