

Is a different world possible? The Vocation to Build the Civilization of Love

Class 12:

Class Goals

- Connect the project of a Civilization of Love with the Christian Formation Course as its unifying framework and our most comprehensive vocation;
- To present the Civilization of Love in its dynamic content and as a project that we – the Church as People of God – are called to participate in, guided by the Spirit;
- To make it clear that the Civilization of Love is a fundamental part of the Mission of a Church of the Vatican Council II, directed to dialogue with the world, not to condemn it;
- To further reflect on what type of ministry and baptized person the civilization calls for.

Overview

The phrase “Civilization of Love” was first used by Pope Paul VI in 1970. Since then it has appeared in some 230 papal documents, the majority by Pope John Paul II. In his encyclical *Populorum Progresso*, Paul VI explained the profound meaning of human development as a holistic approach by the Catholic Church. He wrote that human development must integrate the spiritual and materials realms of human existence; otherwise it is not only incomplete, but inconsistent and ineffective. The Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*, took up this theme and used the metaphors salt, light and leaven to describe the Church’s mission to transform the human person and society. These changes and developments follow from the collaboration between the Church and the world where both engage in a process of mutual learning and teaching toward the common goal of discovering the common good.

A Civilization of Love would address all the necessary conditions required to promote this integral human development and attainment of the common good. Much of the Catholic Church’s ministry is devoted to accomplish those conditions needed to foster a civilization of love, whether it is in her ministry to the youth, families, poor and marginalized, unborn, or children.

The main objective of this class is to help the students to understand the concept of a civilization of love, as the Gospels proclaim it and the Popes have proposed it. When we can identify its characteristics and markers, we can begin to formulate strategies to how best incorporate this concept into our ministerial life and the ministerial life of our faith community. The vocation to build a civilization of love reveals the deepest meanings of the mission, of being a follower of Jesus and members of His Body, the Church.

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Vatican Council II (1965). *Gaudium et Spes*

Resources

CELAM (1987). *Si a la Civilización del Amor*

List of documents where CL is mentioned:

http://www.civilizationoflove.net/19751231_Summary.htm

Core Content

- 1. Review:** In the Christian Formation Program– Where we have been–the themes of Prophet, Priest, and King. The overarching message of all our classes: God is a God of love. God’s love now points us to our ultimate vocation and destiny: to build a Civilization of Love.
- 2. The Civilization of Love springs from the mission of Jesus and is carried on in and through the work of the Cosmic Christ (*totus Christus*) and His body, the Church.**
 - This enormous project is the real movement of history by which God becomes all- in -all through Christ. It points to the end-time and the fulfillment of God’s purpose for all creation.
 - The perspective of the civilization of love is evolutionary, that is, there is a real development and unfolding of this project. We are in a moment that is part of it; all of us have a contribution to make as individuals and as members of the Body of the Cosmic Christ that is “under construction.”
- 3. The orientation and attitude of the members of the Church is toward dialogue and engagement with the world.** This is a central way that Christ will become all-in-all.
 - By reading the “signs of the times,” (clues to how God is at work in the world) members of the Church and the wider society can cooperate to bring about the common good.
 - A key mission of most lay people is through their work, their everyday jobs in the world. This is an important way that Christ will become all-in-all.
- 4. God, who is Love, foundation of the Civilization of Love**
 - Who God IS NOT – the strict judge image of God
 - Who is the God that is the foundation for the civilization of love?
 - The God of Jesus Christ, in whom we believe, is Love and Communion
 - The God of Jesus Christ, in whom we believe, is Mercy and Compassion
- 5. Jesus, Son of God, foundation of the Civilization of Love**
 - **Who is the Jesus that invites us to build the civilization of love?**
 - Jesus is one with the God who is Love and whose love generates communion
 - Jesus is the incarnated God, through whom God enters human history
 - Jesus is committed (faithful) to God’s People
 - Jesus announces the Reign of God and acts accordingly:
 - He reaches out to people
 - He is a free person and set people free
 - He creates community
 - He is a consistent and transparent person (authenticity)

- He faces conflicts, not deny them
- He is forgiving
- He is prayerful
- He is full of life
- Jesus gives meaning and hope to those who suffer

6. The Civilization of Love

- **What is, then, this civilization of love whose foundations we have been describing so far?**
- **The Civilization of Love IS NOT**
 - An ideology; a political party
 - An hegemonic desire of the Church over our nation
 - A technical system prepared by the Church
 - An exclusive mission of the Church
 - An utopia for the future
- **The Civilization of Love IS**
 - The mission of the entire society in its plurality
 - The construction of a new society
 - An invitation to recognize that the Kingdom of God grows in our midst
 - A serious effort by the laity and ordained to live the Gospel beyond the personal realm into the social dimension as well
 - The belief that the lifestyle proposed by Jesus in the Beatitudes is the one that most fulfills the core of who we are as human beings and responds to our innermost needs as persons
 - Mostly a worldview and a framework of mind that is personal because it challenges us to live as renewed persons; that is social because it is the renewal of our society and culture by transforming all injustices into just relationships
 - An inspiring framework to be realized in the process of human living
 - A set of criteria on which the economic and political structures are evaluated in light of the justice, both personal and social, that these systems generate
- **The Civilization of Love is, in sum, “the set of moral, civic, economic, and political structures that permit every human being to attain better conditions of life, personal fulfillment, and a happy eternal destiny.” (Pope Paul VI)**
 - The Civilization of Love announces the great values that build and edify: Communion, Participation, Freedom, Truth, Justice, Peace, and Love.
 - The Civilization of Love denounces everything that oppresses people: Selfishness, Exploitation, Injustice, Violence, and Corruption.
- **As such, the priorities of the Civilization of Love are:**
 - **LIFE, above any other value**
 - **TRUTH, above any other strategy**
 - **The PERSON, before any other goal**
 - **ACTION, above empty words**
 - **EXPERIENCE, before any preconceived project**
 - **ETHICS, before any technical knowledge**
 - **FAITH, before any reductionisms**
 - **FULNESS of MEANING, before any empty proposals**
 - **WORK, above the market and capital**

7. The Eucharist, Christian Model for the Civilization of Love

- The Eucharist as the sign that summarizes all this theological foundation and thus reflects the civilization of love in its core
- It contains and promotes all the values and priorities of the civilization of love when lived out in its fullness by the Church, the Body of Christ, and each individual baptized, as member of this body

Questions for Discussion:

The following three discussions questions are to help the class integrate and discover how previous classes relate to the theme of the civilization of love. As such, they are an important part of the class process, and highly recommended for use.

- **What are some characteristics of the Church, the Sacrament of Jesus, if it is going to be a promoter of the civilization of love?**

Some possible responses:

The Church is the sacrament of unity with God and with each other. In this sense, the Church is the Body of Christ, and thus the sacrament of Jesus

The Church is, then, as a sign of Hope for the new creation is called to:

- be prophetic and liberator
- announce and to denounce
- be a place of communion and participation
- be committed and in solidarity with the marginalized
- celebrate Life
- The Church is thus the People and Family of God

- **What are some characteristics of the Ministry of the Church (in which each baptized person participates) in order to collaborate in the building of the Civilization of Love?**

Some possible responses:

The ministry that is going to be instrumental in building the civilization of love:

- Needs to be evangelizing,
(Because centered on the Gospel message of the Kingdom)
- Needs to be powerful and empowering
- Needs to be centered on the reality of the people
- Needs to be inclusive, participatory, and builder of community
- Needs to be planned, organized, and collaborative
- Needs to be challenging, transforming, and instrument of change

- **What are some characteristics of the human person- who has been renewed in Christ -- as builder of the Civilization of Love**

Some possible responses:

Every individual person, builder and building block of the civilization of Love, is called to be a person who:

- lives in solidarity
- acts prophetically

- helps create community
- has been set free from the fallacies of the world
- is full of life and courage
- is able to be contemplative amidst the action
- is able to have a vision and hope in it

Other possible questions for further discussion:

1. Read Jn 3:16 and comment on how do see that connected with the Civilization of love
2. How do you think that an image of God as the image presented in 'who God is not' above can block the development of a ministry that promotes the civilization of love?
3. In which concrete ways, the ministry you are involved with or would like to be part of lives out the markers of the type of ministry approach required to foster a civilization of love?
4. Where do you see signs of the jubilee tradition and the Eucharistic model of relationship present in our society here at the border?
5. Where do you signs of opposition to the jubilee tradition and the Eucharistic model of relationship in our society here at the border?
6. When (concrete examples) do you see our church (diocese-parishes) living out the markers of a Church that promotes the civilization of love? And when do you see our church not living out those markers?
7. How do you see you can begin to incorporate this concept of "civilization of love" into your ministry and the life of your community of faith?
8. What do you feel are the hardest challenges for our church/for your parish/for your ministry/ for you to put into practice this project of a civilization of love? How do you see they can be overcome?