

# The *Anawim* of Yahweh: Pope Francis' Perspective of Social Responsibility in Action

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## Introduction

The Hebrew word *anawim* means those who are bowed down. They are considered the vulnerable, the marginalized, and the socio-economically oppressed. In the Old Testament the *anawim* are the “poor ones” who remained faithful to God in times of difficulty. Pope Benedict XVI teaches that “the spirituality of the biblical ‘*anawim*,’ does not only recognize themselves as ‘poor’ in the detachment from all idolatry of riches and power, but also in the profound humility of a heart emptied of the temptation to pride and open to the bursting in of the divine saving grace.”<sup>1</sup>

The nature of *anawim* is seeking for deliverance. Essential in the seeking for deliverance is trust in the Lord and do good. And a promise is given to *anawim* that they will inherit the earth (Psalms 37:3,9,11). Thus, the “poor ones” showed their trust in God by being faithful to the times of prayer and sacrifice.

This trust in God by the *anawim* is rooted from the basic thought of the Torah that Yahweh is the protector and defender of the poor (Exodus 22:25). It is for this reason that God is serious and sincere in forbidding the exploitation of the poor. God even commanded to treat the poor with open hands (Deuteronomy 15:7-11). It is precisely in this light that the needs and rights of the poor are central to the rules stipulated in this Pentateuch (the five books of Moses).

It is stated in Exodus 22:22-23, “You shall not abuse any widow or orphan,” God tells the Israelites. “If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry; my wrath will burn”. In the New Testament Jesus is presented as comforter of the *anawim* who were the blind, the lame, the lepers and the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://marysanawim.wordpress.com/what-does-anawim-mean/> Nov. 5, 2015.

marginalized. Jesus himself indicated of his being anointed to preach the good news to the poor. He was sent to proclaim release to the captives and recovering sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed (Lk 4:18-19).

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19; cf Is 61:1-2).

## The *Anawim* in our Contemporary Society

In today’s generation the *anawim* can be compared to two types of poor in Greek language: *penes* and *ptochos*. *Penes* refers to a person who does manual labor or those people who need to work in shops or in the fields. They don’t have the leisure characteristic of the rich social class.

A *ptochos* refers to a person who is begging, someone who is destitute of all resources, especially farm and family. Therefore a *penes*, who has little wealth yet has “sufficiency,” is not called “poor” in the same level of *ptochos*.<sup>2</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI believed that the *ptochos anawim* are still in hunger who like Lazarus are not permitted to take their place at the rich table (Caritas in Veritate, n 27). To add insult to *ptochos anawim* on the one hand, there is no problem in food, in fact, in rich countries they pay farmers not to grow food so as to keep food prices higher.<sup>3</sup>

The *penes anawim* on the one hand has to work with minimum wages not enough to live a decent life. Historical wage figures show minimum wage levels in the country are always below the amount a family need to live decently (13). There are studies reflecting the erosion of the real value of the minimum wage not only in the Philippines since 1968. This decline of minimum wage has increased inequality (14). Inequality, both between the rich and poor countries, and between rich and poor within the rich countries can be traced to globalization and “neo-liberal policies,

<sup>2</sup>Jerome H. Neyrey. Who Is Poor in the New Testament? <http://www3.nd.edu/~jneyrey1/Attitudes.html>, Nov. 10,2014.

<sup>3</sup>Charles M.A. Clark, and Sr. Helen Alford O.P. Rich and Poor Rebalancing the Economy. (USA:The Incorporated Catholic Truth, Society. 2010), p.7.

that does not supports social welfare for penes and ptochos anawim.<sup>4</sup>

## **The *Penes Anawim*: A Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

The Catholic Church is not blind as to the plight of the penes anawim. *Rerum Novarum*, the first of papal social encyclicals and *Laborem Exercens* were explicit on the rights of the workers. It became the solid foundation of modern Catholic Social Teaching. It was an inspiration for all us to have social responsibility for the common good of all mankind. A social responsibility that dictates a responsibility to our neighbors particularly the anawim.

Emanuel Levinas has an in depth understanding of our responsibility to others. In his book “In the Face of the Other” he indicated that when we are born we are already responsible to our neighbors and even responsible to the responsibilities of our neighbors.<sup>5</sup> Even Martin Heidegger’s *Dasein*’s guilt is indicative of our sense of responsibility which according to his philosophical thinking is a call of debt: that one is to give back to the other something to which the other has a claim.<sup>6</sup>

The *penes anawim* is a significant factor in the term “capital” in business. The workers can be considered today as human capital. But human capital should not be an “it”, instead they should be the “thou” in Martin Buber’s I and Thou. Just as the “it” of Martin Buber can be a “thou” in a proper perspective of human relationship, the relationship between workers and capitalist should be seen in complementarities. That is, workers have rights and also have duties to their employers, likewise employers have rights and also have duties to their workers as articulated in *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Heart of Pope Francis**

Pope Francis criticized capitalism as “a new tyranny,” exhorting

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<sup>4</sup> Clark and Sister Alford O.P., p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Levinas. *The Face of the Other* (selections from *Totality and Infinity*) <http://dbanach.com/Levinas%20reading.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Responsibility in the Face of the Other [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Theology/Thinkers\\_and\\_Thought/Jewish\\_Philosophy/Philosophies/Modern/Emmanuel\\_Levinas/The\\_Face\\_of\\_the\\_Other.shtml?p=2](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Theology/Thinkers_and_Thought/Jewish_Philosophy/Philosophies/Modern/Emmanuel_Levinas/The_Face_of_the_Other.shtml?p=2)

global leaders to fight poverty and growing inequality in his first Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. He went further criticizing the global economic system that leads to idolatry of money. He asked politicians to secure to all citizens dignified work, education and healthcare. He also encouraged rich people to share their wealth.<sup>7</sup> Thus, corporate social responsibility should aim at sharing of wealth to workers and all human beings.

Interestingly, there have been hundreds of ethics associations claiming to know how to operate a business ethically. Business ethics and how to operate a “corporate socially responsible” business have become a profitable business reflected in the hundreds of books being sold and seminars being held worldwide to businesses, financial institutions and universities.<sup>8</sup>

This shows that our humanity is still aware and willing to cooperate in the call of our Catholic church and other churches on social responsibility towards the common good. The problem however, is its effectiveness. We often hear today a “diagnostic overload” which is not always accompanied by improved and actually applicable methods of treatment. Not even sociological analysis and clinical method is working (EG, art.50). What we really need is social responsibility in action. In spite of the issue of effectiveness and deficiency in action, such awareness and willingness to cooperate in the call for social responsibility serve as a major step in offering hope and instilling confidence among the penes anawim.

Pope Francis articulated in his *Evangelii Gaudium* that no solution will be found for the anawim’s plight if there will be no radical transformation from a covetous heart and blunted conscience to giving room for others and listening to the voice of God (art 2). Corporate Social Responsibility is the answer to voice of God in overcoming the fickleness of capitalism in which individuals and families are left to cope at bare subsistence levels, to eat poorly, ward off inevitable, nagging debt and sustain their fragile moral.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Naomi O’Leary. Reuters. Pope Francis attacks ‘tyranny’ of unfettered capitalism, ‘idolatry of money’ <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/pope-francis-attacks-tyranny-unfettered-capitalism-idolatry-money-f2D11658760>

<sup>8</sup>Christos Papoutsy. Corporate Social Responsibility/Is Moral Capitalism Possible? USA: 2000 © Hellenic Communication Service, L.L.C. <http://www.HellenicComServe.com>

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu et AL. The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society. In What’s Wrong With us. The Anthropology Thesis. Colin Feltham. (USA. John Wiley and Sons Ltd.,2007), 92

The “subjects-in-the world” of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and “The being-for-itself” of Thomas Martin speak of the nature of Corporate Social Responsibility to be concern for the welfare of others. That is, the self desiresto be for the others. The other who is the foundation of the self’s being for others.<sup>10</sup> This is rooted from our consciousness of perception which throws us back into the perceived world. Such consciousness moves us to feel the need of being for others.<sup>11</sup>

Being for others should be the aim of Corporate Social Responsibility. As Pope Francis wrote in his *Evangelii Gaudium*: “Just as the commandment ‘Thou Shalt not Kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality (art 53). As in the mind of Donal Dor, the wealthy owners of corporations should response to the cry of protest against exploitation of poor workers, instead they should respect and give dignity to their workers.<sup>12</sup>

### **Minimum Wage for *Pene Anawim***

Ferdinand Gaité commented that “Social justice dictates that those who create the nation’s wealth be granted at least their right to a minimum wage amidst the increasing profits and wealth of a handful of capitalists and bureaucrats. We have every reason to believe that capitalists and the government can grant our just demand.”<sup>13</sup>

Corporate Social Responsibility play a very important role in granting a just demand among the workers of a minimum wage proportionate to basic living standard of every family. Workers should be protected from unscrupulous employers who are the cause of economic growth that have been going less and less to workers in the form of wages.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Martin. *Oppression and The Human Condition. An Introduction to Sartrean Existentialism.* (USA: New York Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc. 2002), p.17.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Basic Writings.*(USA: Routledge, 2004),p 166

<sup>12</sup> Donal Dorr. *Option For the Poor and For the Earth. Catholic Social Teaching.* (Philippines: Claretian Publications, 2013), p. 19

<sup>13</sup> MaryaSalamat, Bulatlat.com

## Better Condition of the Working Class

*Rerum Novarum* praised some Catholics who strived for the better condition of the working class by rightful means. They have taken up the cause of the workers and made an effort to better the condition of families and individual workers. They tried to infuse a spirit of equity into mutual relations of employers and employed. To keep before the eyes of both classes the precepts of duty and the laws of the Gospel (art 55). This should be the motivating factor of the Corporate Social Responsibility in ensuring the equal respect due to employers and employee towards the common good.

This equal respect due to employers and employee towards the common good can be translated to the Social Contract of Thomas Hobbes. Social contract theory, nearly as old as philosophy itself, is the view that persons' moral and/or political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement among them to form the society in which they live (19). Thus, in Corporate Social Responsibility a contract of agreement has been entered between employers and employee which is beneficial to both.

Pope Francis concerned on the better condition of the working class has been articulated in *Evangelii Gaudium* that to be truly human, the market must be embedded in a broader communal context.<sup>14</sup> (20). Hence, the workers are given the chance to enjoy a decent life with his/her family. To have the basic food, health care, education and shelter that are ensured in Corporate Social Responsibility.

## Better Working Environment

Employees surely suffer from poor morale and working environment. Such suffering pushed the workers into low morale that eventually led to poor productivity. Therefore, Corporate Social Responsibility dictates that employers should assess the working conditions of their employee that can bring happiness about the nature of their jobs. For example, designating days in the

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<sup>14</sup>Pope Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium*: Economy and State

Posted by Matthew Shadle on Dec 9, 2013 in Classic Posts, Current Events, Pope Francis | 3 comments <http://catholicmoraltheology.com/pope-franciss-evangelii-gaudium-economy-and-state/>

month were employees can bring their kids to work, designating days when employees can work from home, or offering employees the opportunity to have flexible work schedules. Let them feel that employers are very much concern about their safety by providing precautionary measures in the work.<sup>15</sup>

For instance Pope Francis condemns 'slave labor' condition of garment workers in Bangladesh. Worst is the collapse of the building where these slave labor condition of the workers were working. About 2,500 people escaped with injuries and rescue workers have recovered 395 bodies, but they believe many more are still buried on the ground level. The owner of the building, Mohammed Sohel Rana, is under arrest. He is expected to be charged with negligence, illegal construction and forcing people to work, which is punishable by a maximum of seven years in jail. Authorities have not said whether more serious crimes will be added.<sup>16</sup>

Part of better working condition of the workers is to have communication between the employer and the employee. The Society for Human Resource Management suggested transparency in the business world. Transparency is good because it puts employees at ease, especially during hard times. Meeting regularly with your department, encouraging staff to ask questions, making yourself available to address their concerns, keeping employees informed of any organizational changes or restructuring, and eliciting employees' feedback is highly encourage among the employers.<sup>17</sup>

Pope Francis was an example of communication between employers and employee. He made a surprise visit in the Vatican's canteen for its employees. He ate his lunch at a long table alongside a group of various employees. The Pope was introduced to the staff and others there and asked them questions about themselves and their work. Afterwards, he paid them compliments on the quality of the food, gave his blessing and took part in a group photo before leaving.<sup>18</sup> What Pope Francis did is to show to every

<sup>15</sup> Ways to Improve Employee Morale by Kyra Sheahan, Demand Media <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/ways-improve-employee-morale-3091.html>

<sup>16</sup> Bangladesh building collapse kills at least 123, injures more than 1,000 <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/24/world/asia/bangladesh-building-collapse/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> Krya Sheanan.Ways to Improve Employee Morale, <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/ways-improve-employee-morale-3091.html>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-make-surprise-visit-to-vatican-canteen>

enterprise that confidence and respect can be gain through mutual communication between employers and employees.<sup>19</sup>

## ***Ptochos Anawim: A Social Responsibility***

### ***Ptocos anawim***

Charles M.A. Clark and Sister Helen Afford in their book Rich and Poor aptly writes:

*When the death of the pop star, Michael Jackson, was announced, there was a frenzy of reaction, and an estimated billion people watched his memorial celebration. On the same day an estimated 25,000 children under the age of fived died from mostly poverty-related causes(9 million a year).<sup>20</sup>*

Pope Francis has this to say also:

*If you break a computer it is a tragedy, but poverty, the needs, the dramas of so many people end up becoming the norm. If on a winter's night, here nearby in Via Ottaviano, for example, a person dies, that is not news. If in so many parts of the world there are children who nothing to eat, that's not news, it seems normal. It cannot be this way! Yet these things become the norm: that some homeless people die of cold on the streets is not news. In contrast, a ten point drop in stock markets it is a tragedy! A person dying is not news, but if the stock markets drop ten points it is a tragedy. Thus people are disposed of, as if they were trash.<sup>21</sup>*

What does this show regarding our concern for the *ptocos anawim*? Is this a manifestation of apathy or indifference? Have we forgotten that the *ptocos anawim* is one of the reasons why Jesus came in our world? Jesus said:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of*

<sup>19</sup> Bidyut Chakrabarty. Corporate Social Responsibility in India. (USA: Routledge, 2011), p.23.

<sup>20</sup> M. A. Clark and Sr Alford O.P.,p.4

<sup>21</sup> Pope Francis On World Environment Day Speaks Of Food Waste, Lack Of Attention To Needs Of Poor [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/05/pope-francis-world-environment-day\\_n\\_3390299.htm](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/05/pope-francis-world-environment-day_n_3390299.htm)



the Lord" (Lk 4:18-19; cf Is 61:1-2).

Worst than being indifferent or apathetic, is consciously or unconsciously embracing Nietzsche's death of God. Today this death of God was replaced by another agency, namely by science and another faith – the faith and belief in omnipotent technology.<sup>22</sup> Pope Benedict the XVI in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* writes: we cannot rely on technology to solve our human problem regarding poverty. In fact the problem of poverty was highlighted in technology of the Industrial Revolution which was expressed by Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (the first social encyclical of the Catholic Church),

The poor were subjected by the theory of utilitarianism. It is generally understood to justify an act that produces the most good. It is a form of consequentialism that right action is understood in terms of consequences produced.<sup>23</sup> Therefore in the name of progress at the expense of the poor. One of the ten principles of the Social Teachings of the Church is the principle of 'the dignity of the human person'. It states that every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore invaluable and worthy of respect as member of human family.

In this light then, there is no justification to use the poor in the name of progress. Worst we have forgotten the poor in our progress. Cardinal Tagle in World Economic Forum reminded leaders that their efforts to further grow the economy would be in vain if poverty is not reduced. Cardinal Tagle further commented that we all have the reason to worry because statistically our economic growth has been high but the poverty level has not dramatically gone down.<sup>24</sup>

## **The Feeding of the *Ptocos Anawim*: A Social Responsibility**

The *ptocos anawim* needs for their survival. Jesus Christ is compassionate to those who are in need of food. This was manifested in his feeding of the five thousand crowds who followed

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<sup>22</sup> Frederick, De Poortere. *The Death of God*. (USA: T & T Clark, 2007), p.123

<sup>23</sup> *The History of Utilitarianism*. First published Fri Mar 27, 2009; substantive revision Mon Sep 22, 2014. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/utilitarianism-history/>

<sup>24</sup> Manila Archbishop Luis Antonio Tagle talking to reporters on the sidelines of the WEF meeting last May 24,

Cardinal Tagle to gov't: Don't forget the poor; where is growth going?

him on foot. Realizing that this large crowd who followed him had nothing to eat he did multiply five pieces of bread and fish more than enough to feed such huge crowd. What Jesus did is a reflection to care for those in need, to feed the hungry.<sup>25</sup>

Feeding the hungry is an extension of the compassion of Jesus to those in need, particularly those who have no food to eat. It is beyond doubt that Jesus' compassion moved him to feed the five thousand people who were hungry. He did not give attention as who were the righteous and not, who were Jew and Gentile. He showed his compassion to all to feed them.

We can also feed five thousand people like what Jesus did by not wasting our food. Pope Francis commented: "our grandparents use to make a point of not throwing away left over food."<sup>26</sup> A more disturbing reality is what Charles Clark and Sr. Helen Alford O.P. observed;

*The persistence of world hunger in the face of decades of rising per capita food production creating even greater abundances at the tables of the rich, shows that the central problems is not a shortage of food production, (in fact in rich countries we often pay farmers not to grow food so as to keep food prices higher), but instead is caused by the methods and institutions used to determine who eats and who starves.<sup>27</sup>*

Pope Francis further commented that throwing away food is like stealing from the table of those who are poor and hungry. In this light Pope Francis wants that the 1.2 billion-strong Roman Catholic Church to defend the poor and to practice greater austerity itself. He also made several calls for global financial reform.<sup>28</sup>

Feeding the poor demands a simple smile, an act of kindness. A compassion that has a quality of the compassion of Jesus to those who were hungry and feed them. A compassion that brings us to see the poor, the needy, the hungry. This is the start to have the desire to meet the needs of the people around us.

In this way then, we can appreciate what is in the heart of Pope Francis, a serious concern for those are hungry. We can understand

<sup>25</sup> James A. Wallace. Preaching to The Hungers of the Heart. (Phil. Jesuit Communication Foundation Inc. 2005).p.15.

<sup>26</sup> Pope Francis On World Environment Day Speaks Of Food Waste, Lack Of Attention To Needs Of Poor

<sup>27</sup> Clark and Sr Alford O.P. Rich and Poor, p. 7

<sup>28</sup> Pope Francis On World Environment.

the concern of Pope Francis regarding the “culture of waste”. He explained that consumerist world is continuously increasing which is the root cause of hunger. The majority of waste is by consumers, who buy too much and have to throw away what they do not manage to eat.<sup>29</sup>

Feeding the poor is our Christian duty and it is an act of self preservation. Self preservation in the sense that when many of our fellow human beings are starving, they resort to predatory ways of survival. But if they are well nourished they become less predatory that can lead to living in peace with one another.<sup>30</sup> Karl Marx had in mind that the rich should really consider the welfare of the poor. Failure of doing it would lead to chaotic revolution of the poor against the rich.

Populorum Progression (Development of Peoples) states that the new name of peace is development. Peace is development and vice versa because development promotes human well-being, we are furthering man’s spiritual and moral development and therefore benefiting the whole human race. Peace is not simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power, it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day toward the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among men.<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusion

We don’t need tickets to see Pope Francis in his visit to our country. We can see his face everywhere in our country, that is where the poor are, where the needy are, where the suffering are. This is also the face of Jesus (CBCP News Post). In the mind of Emanuel Levinas this face of Pope Francis in the poor, needy and suffering is an indicator of our responsibility to others. Martin Heidegger’s Dasein’s guilt is indicative of our sense of responsibility which according to his philosophical thinking is a call of debt: that one is to give back to the other something to which the other has a claim.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, Pope Francis On World Environment

<sup>30</sup> Zensun. Feeding The Poor By Zensun. [http://www.awakeninpah.com/articles/latest\\_zensunni\\_061220\\_feeding\\_the\\_poor.htm](http://www.awakeninpah.com/articles/latest_zensunni_061220_feeding_the_poor.htm).

<sup>31</sup> Official Document of the Catholic Church. <http://circulars.blogspot.com/2009/02/development-new-name-for-peace.html>

May it be penes and ptochos anawim, one thing is for sure we have social responsibility to uplift their poor human condition. Rerum Novarum (the first social encyclical of the Catholic Church) to Lumen Fidei (First Social Encyclical of Pope Francis) remind us of a social conversion and transformation toward social responsibility.

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