

Integral Human Development and Christian Mission

Reginald Alva

Abstract

Imago Dei (image of God) and the incarnation of Jesus form the basis of the Christian understanding about human dignity. All humans have equal dignity and therefore, have both the right and duty to promote authentic integral human development. The contemporary world too supports human development. However, economic, social and political situations differ from place to place; there is no yardstick to define authentic human development. Moreover, depravity of moral values, rapid secularization, rampant industrialization and civil disruptions are degrading and depriving some people of their basic right to life, dignity and development as a person. The Catholic Church has championed the cause of integral human development, as it forms an essential part of its mission and social teachings. However, at times the church authorities have miserably failed to protect the weakest in the society. Further, the church authorities' response to the various scandals plaguing within the church is inadequate. In this paper, I shall examine these inadequacies and propose concrete steps, which the authorities need to take in order to promote integral human development, which is a part of the church's mission. The resources for this paper are the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, documents related to Church's social teachings and inter-disciplinary materials on human development by various scholars.