



OPENING REMARKS

“Caritas in Veritate and the United States”

A Symposium organized by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and
The Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies of the University of Southern California
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Dear friends,

In my own name, and on behalf of Bishop Mario Toso, Dr. Flaminia Giovanelli, and the entire staff of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, it is a pleasure to welcome all of you here to Rome for this Symposium on “*Caritas in Veritate* and the United States,” which has been organized in collaboration with the Institute of Advanced Catholic Studies. It is a special joy to welcome and to thank Father Jim Heft, Professor Dan Finn, and all those who have worked so hard to prepare for this two-day gathering; and indeed to all of you who have come to participate, and who have prepared papers for our reflection in these days. I must say that I am edified by your written contributions and I look forward to being with you as much as I can. Unfortunately, I cannot remain with you for the entire Symposium, as I must also participate in the Synod of Bishops taking place in these weeks on the Church in the Middle East. Nevertheless, I am delighted that you are all here and I am confident that our discussions will be very fruitful and enriching. Before I offer some brief reflections, allow me to read to you the Message we have received from the Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who conveys the greetings of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI as we gather in these days [**Message from Cardinal Bertone is read**].

INTRODUCTION:

The Chinese character for “crisis” appears to be written by joining two symbols: *danger* and *opportunity*. The financial crisis that started as a *mortgage debt related default in the USA*, (the result of the greed of a few), ignited a credit crisis in the global financial system and pushed the world economy into a recession in the last quarter of 2008. We are still dealing with its resulting economic crisis. The economic data from the USA seem to suggest that after 18 months of social hardships, the economy seems to have climbed out of recession. The combined financial and

economic crises have been fraught with danger and adverse social consequences in the form of unemployment. An estimated 15 – 26 million Americans are out of job. Public finances around the globe have been severely challenged with unprecedented deficits and a push for austerity programmes with adverse social consequences for all. For the marginalized and voiceless in society, these have been a matter of life and death. In terms of policy prescription and guidelines for action, we all seem to be in uncharted waters as to how to engineer/steer ourselves out of recession and come out with new global financial architecture. We need a huge dose of professional humility.

I have read somewhere that “*the greed is good*” or “*virtue of selfishness*” approach to ethics that underpinned the longest boom in history was fueled by the Reagan – Thatcher revolution and triumphalism of the market. The prevailing approach to the market was minimal regulation. All these have been brought into question. In the period between the 1990s and 2007, we all lived in a financial and economic bubble driven by individual greed, on the fallacy that *individual quest for gain/profit* (selfishness/greed) in the management of our financial and economic affairs is capable of creating a rising tide that lifts all yachts. Unfortunately, most of us have no yachts and some people, especially the marginalized in society, drowned in the tide; nor did people on the whole benefit from the expected trickle-down effect that prosperity is supposed to bring.

Thus, there are serious social consequences to the financial crisis, which would make us want to sit down to analyze the genesis and anatomy of it, discover the institutional and human failures which generated it, and find ways of muting some of the developments in the world of finance that are tending to destabilize the global economy. It is in this that the Social Doctrine of the Church, especially, the last encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, can hopefully help us interrogate our professional ideas and attitudes to ensure that future crises are minimized, as you have done in your various contributions. You have articulated in your written contributions not only the challenges that we face as a human family, but also the hope offered by a more fulsome integration of sound Christian, and indeed human, principles capable of guiding humanity toward a better future, particularly in the U.S. context.

“CARITAS IN VERITATE”, A PAPAL TEACHING

Caritas in veritate, as you know, was originally conceived as an “*anniversary document*”. Announced in 2007, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the encyclical letter: *Populorum Progressio*, of Pope Paul VI (1967) and the 20th anniversary of the encyclical letter: *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, of Pope John Paul II (1987), *Caritas in Veritate* was meant to celebrate the memory of

these two encyclicals, especially for their treatment of the question of *development (human)*. It originally intended to take up the issue of *development* in the new and changed situation of a *globalized world*. For, what was once a simple “*social issue*” in the days of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II has now become a “*global issue*”.

The incidence of the economic crisis of 2008-2009 invited the Pope to treat the issue and the ethics of *economics in the context of human development* in greater details. This delayed the completion of the encyclical letter somewhat; but on 29th June 2009 (feast of Sts. Peter and Paul), the Pope signed the new social encyclical and promulgated it on 7th July 2009 (month of St. Benedict), just before the meeting of the G-8 in L’Aquila, Italy.

“*Caritas in Veritate*” is a social encyclical like very many others before it, beginning with Pope Leo XIII’s “*Rerum Novarum*” (1891).¹ In it the insights of theology, philosophy, economics, ecology and politics have been harnessed coherently to formulate a social teaching² that places the human person (his total and integral development) at the centre of all world systems of thought and activity. The human person (his salvation) was at the centre of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ: as the *revelation of the love of the Father* (Jn.3:16) and the *truth of man’s creation in God’s image and of his transcendent vocation to holiness and to happiness with God*. This is the setting of

¹ Counting the letter of the *Sacred Congregation of the Council* to Mons. Liénart, Bishop of Lille, on 5 June 1929, two documents of Vatican Council II: “*Gaudium et Spes*” and “*Dignitatis Humanae*”, the second half of the encyclical letter, “*Deus caritas est*”, and the Instruction: *Dignitas Personae, on certain bioethical questions*, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Dec. 8 2008), one may reckon with twenty two (22) official documents on the social teaching of the church (cfr. *Le Discours social de l’Église Catholique: De Léon XIII à Benoît XVI*, Bayard Montrouge 2009).

On the various use of “*Encyclicals*” by the Popes, *Wikipedia*’s entry on the matter (**Papal use of Encyclicals**) is useful. “*Encyclicals indicate a high Papal priority for an issue at a given time. Pontiffs define when, and under which circumstances encyclicals should be issued. They may choose to issue an apostolic constitution, bull, encyclical, apostolic letter or give a papal speech. Popes have differed on the use of encyclicals: on the issue of birth control and contraception, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical Casti Connubii, while Pope Pius XII gave a speech to midwives the medical profession, clarifying the position of the Church on the issue. Pope Paul VI published an encyclical Humanae Vitae on the same topic. On matters of war and peace, Pope Pius XII issued ten encyclicals, mostly after 1945, three of them protesting protesting the Soviet invasion of Hungary in order to crack down on the Hungarian revolution in 1956: Datis Nuperrime, Sertum Laetitiae, Luctuosissimi Eventus. Pope Paul VI spoke about the war in Vietnam and Pope John Paul II, issued a protest against the war in Iraq using the medium of speeches. On Social issues, Pope Leo XIII promulgated Rerum Novarum (1891), which was followed by the Quadragesimo Anno (1931) of Pius XI, and the Centesimus Annus (1991) of John Paul II. Pius XII spoke on the same topic to a consistory of cardinals, in his Christmas messages and to numerous academic and professional associations*”.

² A true understanding of the nature of the Church’s Social Doctrine starts with the faith experience of the ecclesial community itself. Following their response to God’s revelation of his love and truth in Jesus, the Word-made-flesh, people are transformed, re-socialized by the power of God’s word and love. This new social reality, the ecclesial community, celebrates and announces the love and truth of the Trinitarian life which surrounds and embraces it (*Caritas in Veritate*, n.54). From this experience, people become subjects of love and of truth, subjects of new freedom and new way of thinking, called to become instruments of grace and communion, spreading the Goodnews of God’s love and weaving networks of love and of truth (CV., n.5). This *baptismal* experience of life of the ecclesial community does not close in on itself; but it interacts at every level with the world. It is in living in Jesus, the Supreme Truth and Good, that the faithful discover anew an appropriate order of goods, an authentic scale of values and a new set of ethical criteria which honours the profound change to which they seek to witness.

the two concepts: **love** and **truth**, which drive the encyclical. **Love** and **truth** do not only lie at the heart of the mission and ministry of Jesus; they also correspond to and describe the essential character of the life of the human person on earth, namely, as a *gift and love of God to become gift and love too*.

In specifying **love** and **truth** as the premise and scope of human development, the encyclical may appear to be idealistic; but “this is a method the Social Teachings of the Church constantly follow, namely: to take the high road, not to distance us from reality, but to draw our attention to the essential point. It is then up to individuals, in their countries, in their profession, in their personal life, to follow through with concrete practice.”³ This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church’s Social Teaching, which is *Caritas in Veritate in re sociale*.⁴

Human society, the reference of the Church’s Social Teaching, has changed over the years: from the misery of workers in the days after the industrial revolution and the emergence of Marxism (Pope Leo XIII), the crisis (economic recession) of 1929 (Pope Pius XI), decolonization and appearance of third worldism (Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI), the fall of the wall of Berlin and political changes in Eastern Europe (Pope John Paul II) to globalization, under-development, financial, economic, moral and anthropological crisis⁵ of Pope Benedict XVI. In these changing situations, the social encyclicals of the Popes have fulfilled the need to actualize the same principles of the Church’s Social Teaching. “The Church’s social doctrine illuminates with an unchanging light the new problems that are constantly emerging”.⁶ From illuminating merely social problems and challenges in the past, the Church’s social doctrine, in *Caritas in veritate*, illuminates **social, global, economic, entrepreneurial, political, anthropological** and **ecological** problems and challenges of our world-society.

In view of the financial crisis, however, let us quickly note that *Caritas in Veritate* is not, an economic policy paper with the primary intention of advocating any particular institutional program. In fact, the Pope goes to great lengths to stress from the beginning that its central concern is not economic development *per se*, but “integral human development,” or the understanding of true human progress as a “vocation.” For Benedict, a proper understanding of the challenges to our

³ « C’est une method constant de la doctrine social de l’Eglise: prendre de la hauteur, non pour nous éloigner de réel, mais pour nous rapprocher de l’essentiel. Ensuite, à chacun, dans son pays, dans son métier, dans sa vie personnelle, d’en tirer les consequences pratiques. » (J.-Y. Naudet, “Caritas in veritate. La doctrine sociale de l’Eglise: un unique enseignement, », *Annales de Vendée* n°5 [2009] 140.)

⁴ *Caritas in Veritate*, no.5

⁵ Cfr. *ibid.* no.75.

⁶ Cfr. *ibid.* no.12; *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no.3.

moral development requires further and deeper reflection on the economy and its goals, to be sure, but this is only a first step towards bringing about a “profound cultural renewal” that cannot fully be captured by the technical language or categories of academic economics.⁷

The Centrality of the Human Person, the Continuity of Catholic Social Doctrine:

For Pope Benedict, the phenomenon of globalization, with its positive and negative consequences, is not the result of blind and impersonal historical forces, but rather the organic outgrowth of our deep longing for spiritual unity.⁸ While the family, and by extension the local community, are the most natural stages for moral flourishing, we are “constitutionally oriented towards ‘being more,’”⁹ always striving to further approximate the image of God in which we are made. This basic inclination towards transcendence expresses itself in the technological inventiveness of our freedom as well as is evidenced by our ceaseless attempts to conquer and control the forces of nature by our own efforts. And yet, as the Holy Father points out, the “cultural and moral crisis of man,” which comes about by “idealizing” either economic or technological progress as the ultimate human goals, leads to a detachment of these goals from moral evaluation and responsibility. Both of these idealizations produce the intoxicating sensation of our own self-sufficient “autonomy,” and a misguided notion of “absolute freedom.” Our gravitational pull towards “being more” should never be confused with the possibility of “being *anything*” or having everything.

Catholic reflection upon what it means to be authentically human in history and culture goes back to the Fathers of the Church in the second and third centuries. Throughout the course of history, the Church has never failed, in the words of Pope Leo XIII, to speak “the words that are hers” with regard to questions concerning life in society. The proclamation of Jesus Christ, the “Good News” of salvation, love, justice and peace, is not readily received in today’s world, which is devastated by wars, poverty and injustices. For this very reason, people everywhere have a greater need than ever of the Gospel: of the faith that saves, the hope that enlightens, of the charity that loves.¹⁰ When the Bishops of Africa gathered in synod last October, they expressed the same need of their continent for Christ, saying: “We are therefore committed to pursuing vigorously the proclamation of the Gospel to the people of Africa, for ‘life in Christ is the first and principal factor of development’, as Pope Benedict XVI says in *Caritas in Veritate* (CV, 8). For a commitment to

⁷ Cfr. *ibid.*, no. 8, 9.

⁸ Cfr. *ibid.*, no. 42.

⁹ Cfr. *ibid.*, no. 18.

¹⁰ Cfr. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004), xx-xxv.

development comes from a change of heart, and a change of heart comes from conversion to the Gospel”.¹¹

It has often been said that the Church is an *expert* in humanity, and the Church’s expertise is rooted in its active engagement in human affairs, ceaselessly looking towards the ‘new heavens’ and the ‘new earth’ (2 Peter 3:13), which she indicates to every person, in order to help people live their lives in the dimension of authentic meaning. *Gloria Dei vivens homo: The glory of God is man and woman alive!* This sentiment is the reason why the Church teaches, not only Catholics but people of good will everywhere, about the things that truly matter in life. “Testimony to Christ’s charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of *evangelization*, because Jesus Christ, who loves us, is concerned with the whole person. These important teachings form the basis for the missionary aspect of the Church’s social doctrine, which is an essential element of evangelization. The Church’s social doctrine proclaims and bears witness to faith. It is an instrument and an indispensable setting for formation in faith”.¹² In the context of faith, the social doctrine of the Church is an instrument of evangelization, because it places the human person and society in relationship with the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.¹³ In short, Catholic social doctrine, offers a sound approach to thinking about economic and financial realities based on fundamental moral and spiritual principles that speak to the truth of the human person and the centrality of the human family in world affairs.¹⁴

SOME STRIKING FEATURES¹⁵ OF ‘CARITAS IN VERITATE’:

The effort, as observed above, to address *social, global, economic, financial, entrepreneurial, political, anthropological and ecological* issues as they impact on the human person and his total and integral development is certainly a striking feature of *caritas in veritate*. The challenging task of presenting a synthetic vision of all the problems of human society, full of tensions, contradictions, pitfalls, but also with positive signs of hope, in the light of faith and in the light of natural ethics and reason is certainly new.

¹¹ *Message to the People of God on the occasion of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops* (October 23, 2009) no. 15.

¹² *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 15.

¹³ *Ibid.* See also, nos. 63 and 64.

¹⁴ Cfr. *Compendium*, xx-xxv.

¹⁵ Fr. Gianpaolo Salvini S.J. prefers to describe these striking features of the encyclical as “*Le novità dell’ enciclica* [“L’Enciclica ‘Caritas in Veritate’”], in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, (#3822, 19 Sept.2009), 469-470], and the ideas expressed here are taken from him.

It is equally striking how *benignly* and *pastorally sympathetic* the encyclical treats even those issues which are considered problematic, unethical and unfavourable to humanity's growth and development. There is no demonization of *economics, market, technology, globalization, trade* and *other economic activities* etc.: the structures and activities of man and society which impact negatively on the dignity and vocation to development of the person. There is rather a commendation for development, entrepreneurship, market, technology etc., as expressions of the human spirit and *per se* not evil. It is their abuse in the hands of sinful humanity against humanity's good that the encyclical cautions against.

It is also noteworthy how the encyclical enriches the deposit of the Social Teaching of the Church with a series of notions and realities, hitherto unknown in the Magisterium of the Church, such as, notions about *finance, voluntarism, ethics in economics (economia etica), reasonable use of natural resources, responsible procreation, gratuitousness* and the *logic of gift in economics* (where until now the overriding concern has been *profit-making*), etc. These are ideas which are gaining currency in discussions among economists, believers and non-believers alike. The encyclical also invites the State and Politics to promote economic freedom and initiative, and not to suppress them. It calls for the recognition of the role of *intermediate bodies and groups*, guided by a principle of *fiscal subsidiarity*, to give voice to people in the determination of the life and conduct of the economy.

Another discernible thrust of the encyclical is the *evangelization of reason* and of *social, economic, financial, political and technological structures* with view to making them more human and open to transcendence. The appeal to the reality of the *brotherhood* of the human family, and the consequent sense of *solidarity* and *reciprocity* aims at restoring hope to humanity's sense of being a family.

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, it is fundamentally the issue of the ultimate goals of humanity, and the fact that man, with his activity, should build an earthly city which is in anticipation of the heavenly city. This outlook should underline the concern of governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals alike. Faced with the choices involved in finance and in economics at every level, there can be no purely financial and economic response. We must look higher!

If, in the end, our goal is to reach “the integral development of man and of all men,” according to Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and now Benedict XVI, the response to these challenges from a Christian standpoint must go beyond the simple question of management, however efficient this may be. Since social relations also have a spiritual dimension, the true response must be both moral and spiritual. It must pass through a conversion implying renewed fidelity to the Gospel and an unshakeable determination to do nothing which could undermine the divine calling of humanity.

To respect this openness to conversion, political action and financial advisors should be both more modest—since they can never replace the discernment of each conscience—and more ambitious for what is right and just. They should propose some markers in the field of action and of speech. Individuals, financial specialists, managers of companies, politicians and administrators are each in very different situations. But each one has a necessary moral commitment to make in economic life. The development of the financial sector has made this more complicated, but since it also helps to produce economic development, it can create new possibilities for justice and for personal security. To make a reality of these positive possibilities, Christians, and indeed all people of good will, must be active and not passive, seeking to give meaning to their economic action.¹⁶ I am confident that our conversations will help us to explore the challenges of creativity and innovativeness which the economic crisis place before us.

Thank you again for being here with us, and *buon lavoro*!

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¹⁶ Cfr. *ibid.*, no. 37.