



CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES

TO: WBC AND MICAH PARTICIPANTS
SUBJECT: PAPAL CORRESPONDENCE: CHARITY IN TRUTH
DATE: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2010

AGENDA

- Welcome
- Opening Prayer
- WBC Mission Statement
- Scripture: Matthew 6: 19-26
- Silent Meditation
- Sharing insights on Scripture
- Reading: **Papal Correspondence: Charity in Truth (Continued)**
- Discussion and Reflection
- Closing Prayer

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Woodstock Business Conference is to establish and lead a network of business leaders to explore their respective religious traditions in order to ask the individual executives:

- To integrate faith, family, and professional life,
- To develop a corporate culture that is reflective of their religious faith and values,
- To exercise a beneficial influence upon society at large.

The Conference, grounded in Roman Catholic tradition, welcomes believers who are open to and respectful of one another's religious traditions. It is committed to the conviction that ethics and values grow out of one's religious heritage.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:19-23

*Do not lay up for yourselves an earthly treasure.
Moths and thieves break in and steal.
Make it your practice instead to store up heavenly treasure,
which neither moths can corrode nor thieves break in and steal.
Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart is also.*

*The eye is the body's lamp.
If your eyes are good, your body will be filled with light;
If your eyes are bad, your body will be in darkness.
And if your light is darkness, how deep will the darkness be!*

No man can serve two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other, or be attentive to one and despise the other.

*You cannot give yourself to God and money.
I tell you then: do not worry about your livelihood, what you are to eat or drink or what you are to use for clothing.*

*Is not life more than food? Is not the body more valuable than clothes?
Look at the birds in the sky.
They do not sow or reap yet your heavenly father feeds them.
Are you not more important than they?*

Reflection:

These passages are full of contradictions. How do you explain “earthly treasures” “two masters”?

When Jesus asks us not worry about “your livelihood” what does he mean?

How would you explain these passages to a friend with whom you do business?

Papal Correspondence: Charity in Truth

The following two articles are from America Magazine, November 30, 2009, and continue the commentary on Pope Benedict's "Caritas in Veritate."

Climate Check

By Aileen A. O'Donoghue

The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole (No. 48).

The Arctic is melting. In this young century, the summer Arctic ice cap has shrunk to its smallest size in recorded history. In Alaska and Siberia expanding melt-water lakes over onetime bogs bubble with methane, a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, which escapes from the re-awakened biological decay of the thawing permafrost. In the tropics, where millions of people depend on alpine ice melt for drinking water, crop irrigation and hydroelectric power, the glaciers are shrinking at an alarming pace, recently revealing a plant hidden for 50,000 years in Peruvian ice.

I have taught about climate change for over a decade, so I read "Caritas in Veritate" with these developments in mind. I was heartened to read Pope Benedict's arguments that our care for the environment and use of technology are matters not only of personal virtue but of justice. In particular, Pope Benedict makes the point that ***it is "incumbent upon the competent authorities to make every effort to ensure that the economic and social costs of using up shared environmental resources are recognized with transparency and fully borne by those who incur them, not by other peoples or future generations" (No. 50).***

The developed world has made extensive use of natural resources and in so doing has sought to reduce poverty and human suffering and has had some success. Famine, for example, does not sweep through populations as it did in the past, except when warring factions get in the way. But economic development also produces unintended consequences, like the melting ice cap, that threaten both the poor of the world and future generations in the industrialized West. ***Though many in the United States are still skeptical of the idea of climate change, data revealing how humans contribute to climate change and the serious impact of these climate distortions continue to pile up. The rest of the developed world already has recognized the threat and begun the work of reducing carbon emissions. It is time for the United States to join these efforts.***

Throughout the 20th century, the United States and Western Europe developed into industrial and economic engines aided greatly by their unrestrained use of the world's environmental "commons." This development, we now realize, has nearly exhausted the earth's capacity for dissipation and absorption of carbon dioxide. Though the annual carbon contributions of China and India are catching up—indeed now surpassing—those of the United States, we are the ones

who filled the atmospheric trash bin nearly to capacity. It is primarily our responsibility, therefore, to make the serious review of our lifestyle called for by “Caritas in Veritate” and to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions for the common good of the entire human family. Adding to our moral burden is the fact that we who have contributed most to the problem will be the least affected by it.

According to the World Health Organization: “Overall, the effects of global climate change are predicted to be heavily concentrated in poorer populations at low latitudes, where the most important climate-sensitive health outcomes (malnutrition, diarrhea and malaria) are already common, and where vulnerability to climate effects is greatest. These diseases mainly affect younger age groups, so that the total burden of disease due to climate change appears to be borne mainly by children in developing countries.

Pope Benedict insists that the world “must not be bequeathed to future generations depleted of its resources” (No. 50). The decisions and actions we take this year and this decade will significantly affect the world our grandchildren inherit. As the primary contributors to this problem and as followers of Christ, we Catholics must make every effort to reduce our nonrenewable energy consumption.

The Catholic community is now challenged to demonstrate boldly its commitment to international and intergenerational justice in practical ways—by abstaining from driving two days each month, for example. Families might consider pairing up to carpool to Mass and errands on Sundays. For 60 million Catholics in the United States driving an average 25 miles per day in cars that average 20 miles per gallon, each day of not driving would be the equivalent of removing 150,000 cars from the road for a year. A single year of two such driving abstentions per month would be the equivalent of taking 3.6 million cars from the road. ***This small effort, “inspired and sustained by charity,” would make a difference, contributing “to the building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family” (No. 7).***

Aileen A. O’Donoghue is the Priest Associate Professor of Physics at St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y., and the author of *The Sky Is Not a*

What’s the Business Plan?

By Kirk O. Hanson

There is...a growing conviction that business management cannot concern itself only with the interests of the proprietors, but must also assume responsibility for all the other stakeholders who contribute to the life of the business: the workers, the clients, the suppliers of various elements of production, the community of reference (No. 40).

For a business ethicist, “Caritas in Veritate” demonstrates both the promise and the limitations of papal and church pronouncements on economic ethics. The promise is that Pope Benedict XVI explicitly mentions business ethics and goes beyond previous statements to address it. Whatever the pope says about business ethics will be heard around the world, a voice of ethical

reason desperately needed amid the secular and self-interested concerns of our global economy.

The limitation is that while the Vatican could have access to the best advice in the world regarding practical economic and business affairs, it rarely takes advantage of it. This encyclical, like other church statements on economic matters—including the 1986 U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter, “Economic Justice for All”—reflects only the most limited insight into the practical moral problems of people in large and small businesses.

Business ethicists are concerned about practical moral questions that arise at three levels: the systemic level of government and public policy; the organizational level of corporate decisions and policy; and the individual level of managers and business people working in economic organizations and of consumers making decisions regarding what products and services to purchase in the economy. ***At the systemic level, the pope calls for a global regulatory structure, even a “world political authority,” as a counterforce to market incentives that can induce businesses to take on excessive financial risk, to weaken the rights and employment stability of workers or to abuse the environment.***

The pope speaks to and about the leaders of global businesses, commenting critically on the business elite that the global regulation is designed to control. He laments the emergence of a business elite in both rich and poor countries who consider their wealth a “right.” He argues instead for a principle of gratuitousness or giftedness, ***whereby all who have wealth understand it as a free gift from God that must be put to work for the welfare of all people.*** While this message is an important one, it lacks a more compelling and practical vision of what constitutes ethical behavior for business enterprises of all sizes and for managers and employees in those businesses.

In “Caritas in Veritate,” Pope Benedict takes positive note of for-profit and nonprofit institutions that demonstrate “hybrid forms of commercial behavior” operated for specifically social purposes. He mentions, for example, institutions engaged in ***microlending.*** ***While he hopes these will have a role in “civilizing the economy,” he tacitly acknowledges these will never be the most important economic institutions of today’s global society.*** The pope also gives a brief endorsement of “stakeholder theory,” the important but ill-defined notion that a business must be responsible to more than its shareholders’ interests; it must be accountable to other stakeholders, like its employees or the communities where it operates.

Beyond this, the Catholic business leader—or any business person of good will—is left with little guidance from the pope. Benedict reiterates recurring themes from Catholic social teaching on the rights of workers but offers no further counsel on how to resolve the difficult employment, sourcing, safety and environmental challenges business executives face.

At the individual level, Benedict calls on consumers to understand that ***“purchasing is always a moral—and not simply economic—act.”*** ***By every purchase decision, the consumer rewards a firm for its environmental, labor and safety record and creates incentives for responsible behavior.*** However, the pope acknowledges that the power of ethical purchasing will always be limited by “the intrinsic economic rationality” of purchasing decisions (that is,

consumers will always be drawn to the cheapest goods).

Kirk O. Hanson is executive director of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University and professor of organizations and society.

Discussion Questions

How much have questions regarding the environment, and general climate concerns become a part of your spiritual life?

Is there a spiritual aspect to our purchasing practices?

Do you think it is possible ever to have a global regulatory structure or as the Pope calls it a “world political authority” as a means of harnessing excessive greed?

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