



CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES

TO: WBC AND MICAH PARTICIPANTS
SUBJECT: PAPAL CORRESPONDENCE: CHARITY IN TRUTH
DATE: TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2010

AGENDA

- Welcome
- Opening Prayer
- WBC Mission Statement
- Scripture: 1 John 3: 11-22
- Silent Meditation
- Sharing insights on Scripture
- Reading: **Papal Correspondence: Charity in Truth**
- 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: 1 John 3:11-22

This, remember, is the message you heard from the beginning; We should love one another....

No need then, brothers and sisters, to be surprised if the world hates you.

That we have passed from death to life we know because we love our brothers and sisters...

The man who does not love is among the living dead...

The way we came to understand love was that he laid down his life for us; we too must lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

I ask you, how can God's love survive in a man who has enough of the world's goods yet closes his life to his brother when he sees him in need?

Little children, let us love in deed and in truth and not merely talk about it.

This is the way of knowing we are committed to the truth and are at peace before him no matter what our consciences may charge us with;

For God is greater than our hearts and all is known to him.

Beloved, if our consciences have nothing to charge us with we can be sure that God is with us and we will receive at his hands whatever we ask.

Reflection:

- Do Catholics see "love of neighbor: (i.e. charity) an option or a choice?
- What does "let us love in deed and in truth," mean to you?
- How can we encourage young people to know what it is to give?
- Are taxes a form of charity?

Papal Correspondence: Charity in Truth

Six experts interpret what 'Charity in Truth' says about the issues of our times.
AMERICA MAGAZINE: NOVEMBER 30, 2009

In July, Pope Benedict XVI issued his first social encyclical “*Caritas in Veritate*,” or “Charity in Truth.” It takes major leaps in articulating the pope’s social vision, moving well beyond the link between charity and service in his first encyclical “*Deus Caritas Est*,” (“God Is Love,” 2006), articulating the institutional role of Christian love across society. He placed his own social teaching in line with Paul VI’s “*Populorum Progressio*,” (“On the Development of Peoples,” 1967) and John Paul II’s “*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,” (“The Social Concerns of the Church,” 1987), high-water marks in postconciliar Catholic liberalism. ***Pope Benedict’s own teaching on “gratuity and communion” may represent the most radical Catholic economic teaching to date. It promotes a stakeholder society in which business works at one and the same time for profit and the common good.***

The letter opens and weaves throughout rich threads of theological and metaphysical reflection. In addition, it covers a wide range of issues, including globalization, the financial crisis, labor, technology and the environment. America has invited a half dozen scholars to offer their reflections on topics treated in the encyclical or required for its implementation. We hope this theme issue will serve as a sampler inviting our readers to take up the original text themselves. While some have complained about the letter’s heaviness in content and style, we believe it is very much worth reading and studying. Just take it slowly and savor each bit, one section at a time.

The Editors

Part 1: All in the Family

By Thomas Massaro

It is thus becoming a social and even economic necessity once more to hold up to future generations the beauty of marriage and the family, and the fact that these institutions correspond to the deepest needs and dignity of the person (No. 44).

Pope Benedict’s latest contribution to the social encyclical tradition situates family life in the vital web of social relations without which no human person can truly thrive.

“*Caritas in Veritate*” will be remembered for its earnest appeal for a renewed commitment to social responsibility in our age of truly global capitalism. ***The pope deliberately published the document at the height of concerns about failures of business ethics that contributed to the current disastrous economic downturn. Yet behind its exhortations for practical reforms lies an entire worldview, in which the reality of family life turns out to be surprisingly closely connected to political and economic matters.*** The deeper we probe the underlying vision of Catholic social thought, the more tenuous and artificial the distinction appears that we customarily use to separate the supposedly private world of family life and the supposedly

public world of money and power.

Both realms depend on an underlying moral order. Virtues developed in one sphere apply equally to the other. Character traits like honesty, generosity and solidarity promote harmony within households as well as in the wider social world. Thus, in one way or another, every social encyclical has taken up the task of promoting proper moral as well as social order. How may employers or public officials shape work arrangements to ensure a living wage and personal dignity for hard-pressed workers? What institutions of domestic and international society will encourage peace and social justice and discourage exploitation of the poor? What genuine ethical reforms are needed to protect the disadvantaged and to promote the human rights of all? These are the questions that have occupied social encyclicals for over a century now, and they all boil down to Gospel-based ethical concern about social order.

While the human imagination hastens to jump to the highest levels of social organization (governments, corporations, entire cultures) when sweeping questions of social order arise, Pope Benedict reminds us that family life is a basic building block that must never be neglected. In No. 44 of “*Caritas in Veritate*,” the section featuring the only sustained treatment of the topics of marriage and family life, Benedict calls family “the primary vital cell of society.” This vivid image reaffirms the family’s place in the social order as it has been portrayed in many recent church documents. Social relations on the largest of scales will not fare very well unless the basic building block of family life is healthy and well ordered.

Pope Benedict fills in only a few details regarding the shape of healthy family, but he expresses deep concern about falling birthrates in certain regions, complaining that too many families these days are “minuscule.” While emphasizing “the primary competence of the family in the area of sexuality,” he nevertheless calls upon states to “enact policies promoting the centrality and the integrity of the family founded on marriage between a man and a woman.” Veterans of legal battles over same-sex marriage need not expend too much effort reading between the lines on this point.

As ever, Pope Benedict is not afraid to be unfashionable. He spills much ink marking the achievements of Paul VI’s 1967 encyclical on economic development, “*Populorum Progressio*,” but he does not shy away from reviving the pro-life and pro-family messages of Pope Paul’s subsequent (and, notably, his last) encyclical, “*Humanae Vitae*,” of 1968. I hope that history will not repeat itself in terms of the new encyclical’s reception. A pope’s insightful encouragement of healthy family life as an indispensable part of proper order within human society ought not be eclipsed by juicier, more controversial messages in other sections of an important encyclical.

Thomas Massaro, S.J., who teaches social ethics at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Chestnut Hill, Mass., is a visiting editor at **America**.

Part 2: In the Market for Humanity

By Amy Uelmen

In recent decades a broad intermediate area has emerged between the two types of enterprise. It is made up of traditional companies which nonetheless subscribe to social aid agreements in support of underdeveloped countries, charitable foundations associated with individual companies, groups of companies oriented towards social welfare, and the diversified world of the so-called 'civil economy' and the 'economy of communion' (No. 46).

It is rare for a specific project to be given a favorable mention in a papal encyclical, but “Caritas in Veritate” seems to present an exception. When Pope Benedict XVI described the “broad intermediate area” between nonprofit and for-profit sectors with the buzz-phrase “economy of communion,” some connected the dots with the Focolare movement’s network of businesses in which profit serves as “a means for achieving human and social ends” (No. 46).

The Economy of Communion in Freedom project (edc-info.org) was launched in 1991, when Chiara Lubich, the founder of Focolare, visited the communities in Brazil. Focolare is a movement with origins in war-torn Trent, Italy, inspired by the example of the first Christians (Acts 2:44-45). Focolare communities practice a “communion of goods” aimed at meeting the basic needs of all of their participants. But as was evident from the shantytowns surrounding the large metropolis of São Paulo, Brazil, where Focolare people also lived, the needs were outweighing the shared resources.

As Ms. Lubich brainstormed with the community in light of the then-recent encyclical “Centesimus Annus,” an idea emerged: to form for-profit businesses that could generate additional jobs and voluntarily allot profits in three parts: 1) for direct aid to those in need, 2) for educational programs that foster what Lubich described as a “culture of giving” and 3) for the continued development of the business.

The response was immediate. The materially poor of the community were among the first to sell their chickens and other livestock in order to purchase shares in the initial businesses. The initiative now embraces more than 750 businesses throughout the globe, in various sectors of production and service, mostly small and medium-sized, but some with more than 100 employees. All are committed to fostering a “person-centered” life of communion in both the internal operations and external impact of the business.

Inspired by the prayer of Jesus for unity, “that they may be one even as we are one” (Jn 17:22), the Economy of Communion project gains particular strength from being embedded in a thick international network that is deeply committed to the larger cultural project of building, as Pope Benedict puts it in “Caritas in Veritate,” “the one community of the human family” (No. 54). *Within this vision, openness to the needs of others is experienced not as a call to arduous sacrifice, but as an opportunity to welcome the “astonishing experience of gift” (No. 34).*

As the pope explains, the life of the Trinity—“even as we are one”—can serve as a model for

social relationships in which “true openness does not mean loss of individual identity but profound interpenetration” (No. 54). As Chiara Lubich described the dynamic, “I am myself not when I close myself off from the other, but rather when I give myself, when out of love I lose myself in the other.”

Within this vision, distribution of direct aid to those with material needs involves not merely assessing concrete concerns and priorities, but also helping to create a dynamic that fosters a true sense of reciprocal love and the full participation of “free subjects in favor of an assumption of shared responsibility” (No. 17).

For all who participate in the project, the primary protagonist is neither the generous business owners nor those who courageously work to improve their living conditions, but God’s loving intervention in their lives. A “culture of giving” is also expressed in how the participants renounce the help they receive as soon as they are able. As soon as he secured a job, a young man from the Dominican Republic wrote: “Now I do not need the help anymore, and I am happy that someone else will be able to experience as I have the concrete love of this family.”

The Economy of Communion project extends a broader and more profound invitation to delve into all the ways in which we are “made for gift” (No. 34) in our personal, social and economic life.

Amy Uelmen is the director of the Fordham Law School Institute on Religion, Law & Lawyer’s Work and a member of the Focolare movement.

Discussion Questions:

-What does Benedict mean when he suggests that the reality of family life turns out to be surprisingly connected to political and economic matters?

-Benedict refers in *Caritas in Veritate* as “the astonishing experience of gift.” What does he mean?

-How can we develop the culture of giving within our families, communities and businesses?