

“Charity in Truth.”: Pope Benedict XVI on Economics

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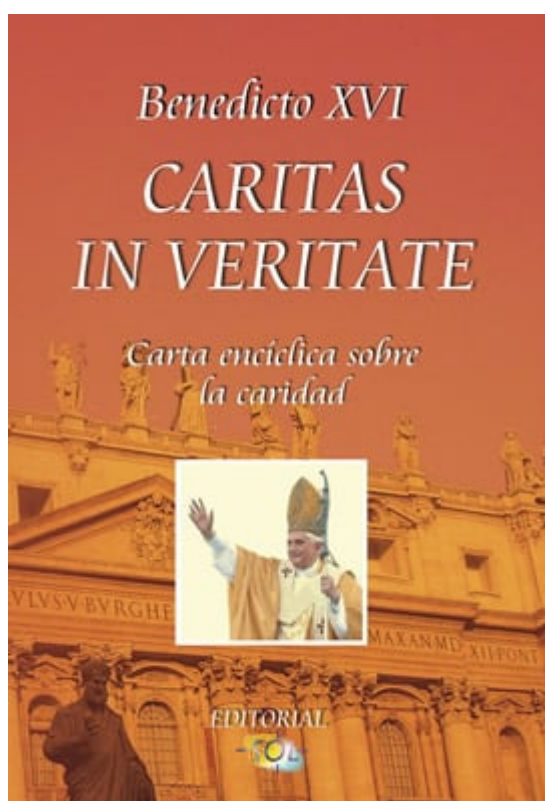
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Life is a gift bestowed by God upon man.

Therefore each of us must adopt an attitude of giving in relation to all other men. This attitude must include activities involving the economic life of individuals, nations, and the world. Economics is not just a search for efficiency or profits. Such are among the lessons to be derived from Pope Benedict XVI's recent encyclical, Caritas In Veritate, "Charity in Truth."



The Pope writes, “Charity in truth places man before the astonishing experience of gift. Gratuitousness is present in our lives in many different forms, which often go unrecognized because of a purely consumerist and utilitarian view of life. The human being is made for gift, which expresses and makes present his transcendent dimension.”

This remarkable document, which should be studied by every caring person, was published in June 2009. It has not been reviewed nearly as widely as it should, no doubt because most commentators regard it as a Catholic document of interest only to those within the Catholic Church. This is a profound mistake. In recent decades, the Catholic Popes, especially Pope John (1958-1963) and Pope John Paul II (1978-2005), have boldly taken on the role of providing spiritual guidance to the entire world that includes matters pertaining to economics. True, the Catholic Church has often not taken a sufficient stand for economic

and social justice to satisfy many critics, but the fact is that the Church's position has generally been one in favor of economic democracy, fairer distribution of the earth's bounty, and an ethical dimension to political and economic decisions. This is in stark contrast to the wantonness whereby the world's richest people, institutions, and nations have increasingly lorded it over everyone else as the reach of globalism has accelerated.

Pope Benedict's *Caritas In Veritate* is in the modern tradition of Catholic social commentary. It is long—about 30,000 words. It must be read slowly and carefully. It lacks specifics about the reforms the Pope says are needed. But it contains truth. It points out that man does not live by bread alone—that economic imperatives must take second place to what the Pope calls “integral human development.” Returning to the concept of life as a gift, the Pope writes that, “Truth, and the love which it reveals, cannot be produced: they can only be received as a gift.” Thus to become fully human requires man to be cognizant of his relationship to the source of Truth. This is the Absolute-God. This realization must be reflected in the world through a deep and abiding sense of responsibility of human beings toward each other. It leads to what the Pope calls “solidarity” among people, including relations between developed and underdeveloped nations and among social groupings within particular nations. Pope Benedict also points out that where globalization has shattered the ability and will power of nations to regulate economic life for the common good, a resurgence of such efforts at the level of the nation-state can and must be made. He does not view globalization as replacing nations or eliminating democracy, a word he uses favorably numerous times.

Caritas In Veritate is a vitally important contribution to making the world in the technological age a fit vehicle for human development, with technology being more than just a toy which disguises its ability to be abused as a weapon for further economic exploitation. Here is another excerpt:

“Love in truth — *caritas in veritate* — is a great challenge for the Church in a world that is becoming progressively and pervasively globalized. The risk for our time is that the *de facto* interdependence of people and nations is not matched by ethical interaction of consciences and minds that would give rise to truly human development. Only in charity, illumined by the light of reason and faith, is it possible to pursue development goals that possess a more humane and humanizing value. The sharing of goods and resources, from which authentic development proceeds, is not guaranteed by merely technical progress and relationships of utility, but by the potential of love that overcomes evil with good (cf. Rom 12:21), opening up the path towards reciprocity of consciences and liberties.”

The Pope speaks of the Church, but what he is saying contains a message for all of mankind. If taken seriously, the encyclical is potentially revolutionary. Its message is diametrically opposite to that of the “New World Order” espoused by the international financial elite as their primary method of enslaving mankind to a secular ideology of materialism. The Pope implies, by stating that “the environment is God's gift to everyone,” that the materialistic ideology is rooted in the evil of the privatization of resources that really should belong to the public commons. He also mentions the traditional Catholic position on debt by stating that, “The weakest members of society should be helped to defend themselves against usury,” though he does not get specific enough to question the fact that the world monetary system is collapsing because it is based on the creation of money through bank lending.

Some conservative Catholic commentators in the U.S. are very upset about the publication of the encyclical due to its progressive tenor. For them, as well as many Protestant fundamentalists, religion seems almost an excuse for the ongoing Western military crusade for world conquest so evident in the Middle East. Some go so far as to ridicule the encyclical as really being a product of a liberal faction in Rome's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and therefore subject to dismissal in its entirety as a fantasy of dreamers.

After all, Pope Benedict, formerly head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the successor organization to the Inquisition, was himself supposed to be a theological conservative. On the other hand, perhaps theological conservatism and economic justice really are interrelated. Perhaps theological conservatism is not the same thing as Western militaristic ethno-centrism.

Perhaps Pope Benedict means what he says, and that he and the Church intend to be separating themselves as clearly as the encyclical seems to do from the prevailing trends of world events in the age of globalism. Could the encyclical even be a sign that "Old Europe" is decisively separating itself from the face the Anglo-American military-financial-intelligence colossus has presented to the world over the past decade with its wars, invasions, and threats against such nations as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and even Russia?

Only time will tell. As it reads, Caritas In Veritate sounds a lot like Jesus chasing the money changers from the temple.

To read [Caritas In Veritate on the Vatican's website click here](#):

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