

CARITAS IN VERITATE
Benedict XVI's Encyclical On Integral Human
Development in Charity & Truth:
Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

In his first encyclical to focus exclusively on social justice matters, Pope Benedict XVI explores the challenges of integral human development today.

Caritas in Veritate commemorates Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio (On the Progress of Peoples)* and applies its insights to the current situation.

After examining the relationship between truth and charity, the encyclical recalls the message of *Populorum Progressio*, noting its continuing relevance as well as areas of change. It then looks at the challenges of human development in our time, and explores the moral dimension of the economy and the call to more fraternal relations within it, introducing the ideas of gratuity and gift. The relationship of rights and duties within development, including our duties towards the environment, are explored together with the need for the cooperation of the human family, and the impact and potential of technology. The encyclical concludes with a call to Christian action.

The full text is at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html

CHARITY & TRUTH

It is charity, or love, that leads us to work with courage and generosity for justice, peace and development. We all feel this impulse because it was placed in our hearts and minds by God (n 1).

Love is at the heart of all church teaching on justice and society. The truth of our origin in God's love and our unity as one human family guides our 'micro' relationships with friends, family and small

groups, as well as our 'macro' relationships in the social, economic and political spheres (n 1 -2).

Charity, or love, is to be understood and practised in the light of truth. Truth brings the light of reason, and of faith, to the exercise of love. In an age when truth is often considered to be relative, the demands of love in the social, juridical, political and economic spheres can easily be overlooked (n 2-3).

“As the objects of God's love, men and women become subjects of charity, they are called to make themselves instruments of grace, so as to pour forth God's charity and to weave networks of charity.

This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church's social teaching, which is *caritas in veritate in re sociali*: the proclamation of the truth of Christ's love in society. This doctrine is a service to charity, but its locus is truth. Truth preserves and expresses charity's power to liberate in the ever-changing events of history.” (n 5)

Rather than simply giving others their due, recognising and respecting their legitimate rights, love goes beyond justice by giving what is one's own - it also forgives. It is marked by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion (n 6). Building up the common good through the institutions that structure the life of society juridically, civilly, politically and culturally (n 7) is an institutional or political expression of charity. Today, efforts towards the common good must embrace the whole human family.

FOR REFLECTION

- What motivates your efforts for social justice or development?
- Benedict XVI uses the words charity and love interchangeably. Which word do you prefer? Why?
- Giving, forgiving, mercy, communion - are these words you usually associate with development questions? How might the truth of God's love for us call us to bring these qualities to development questions?
- How might you 'weave networks of charity' in your life?

REVISITING POPULORUM PROGRESSIO

Benedict emphasises that Catholic Social Teaching makes up a corpus or body – each document is to be understood in the context of its place within this coherent but evolving body of teaching. The teachings shed the same light on new and constantly emerging problems.

Benedict considers *Populorum Progressio* to be a very important document - ‘the *Rerum Novarum* of the present age’. He situates it within the tradition, noting especially its continuity with the thinking of the Second Vatican Council on the role of the Church in the world, and on the Church's concern for the whole person in every dimension. He also situates it within the overall teaching of Paul VI.

Some of the key insights of Paul VI which continue to guide us when we consider human development today include:

- true development addresses the whole person in every dimension and is for every person and all peoples
- growing interconnectedness makes development an issue of global importance requiring the solidarity of the whole human family
- people do not develop solely through their own efforts – true development needs to be open to the transcendent and to understand ourselves and creation as gift of God
- institutions alone cannot bring about development because development is a vocation that calls for the free assumption of responsibility in solidarity by everyone – we cannot build structures so perfect that human responsibility is not needed
- development cannot be entrusted to a technocratic ideology – technology needs moral direction
- utopian visions of a rejection of technology and development and a return to a natural state do not promote human progress
- the causes of underdevelopment are not only in the material order – a lack of will, of thought and of solidarity are involved (n 11 - 20).

Benedict XVI also links the message of *Populorum Progressio* to Paul VI's teaching on life issues and on evangelisation.

Caritas in Veritate draws on existing teachings to address new situations at a time of crisis rather than introducing many new ideas. A distinctive note is the emphasis on the spirituality and Christian anthropology of development.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN OUR TIMES

Paul VI's vision of development focused on rescuing people from hunger, deprivation, endemic diseases and illiteracy through active participation in international economic processes, the evolution into educated societies marked by solidarity, and the consolidation of democratic regimes that could ensure peace and freedom (n 21).

Benedict identifies a number of problems facing the quest for integral human development today:

- damaging effects on the real economy of badly managed largely speculative financial dealing (n 21)
- large scale migrations of people which are given insufficient attention (n 21)
- the unregulated exploitation of the earth's resources (n 21)
- new groups in rich countries experiencing poverty while others enjoy a wasteful, consumerist 'superabundance' (n 22)
- corruption and illegality are evident in the economic and political classes of both rich and poor countries (n 22)
- large multinational companies sometimes fail to respect the human rights of workers (n 22)
- international aid is often “diverted from its proper ends, through irresponsible actions both within the chain of donors and within that of beneficiaries” (n 22)
- rich countries are excessively zealous in protecting intellectual property, especially in the field of health care (n 22)
- in some poor countries cultural norms of behaviour persist which hinder development (n 22).

The current crisis is seen as complex, grave, and calling for a profound cultural renewal – a rediscovery of fundamental values upon which to build a better future. It is an “opportunity for discernment in which to shape a new vision for the future” (n 21).

While *Populorum Progressio* saw an important, even central, role for public authorities, today the sovereignty and political power of States has been reduced by the new context of international trade and finance (n 24). On the other hand, we see a resurgence of involvement by public authorities in the economy in response to the current crisis. Benedict calls for a re-evaluation of the role and powers of public authorities and a remodelling to enable them to engage in new ways to face the challenges of today (n 24).

Social welfare systems are struggling to cope in the current climate. This is partly due to new forms of competition between States seeking to attract foreign investment and production through favourable fiscal regimes and labour market deregulation. The impact on people is increased by the lack of effective action by workers associations (n 25).

While increased labour mobility has positive aspects, uncertainty over working conditions is also creating “new forms of psychological instability, giving rise to difficulty in forging coherent life-plans, including that of marriage.” (n 25)

Unemployment entails new forms of marginalisation today – it undermines the freedom and creativity of people, familial and social relationships, and causes great psychological and spiritual suffering (n 25).

Cultures were previously more separate and distinct, but today the commercialisation of cultural exchange leads to a two dangers:

- *cultural eclecticism*, which simply places cultures alongside each other and presumes they are equivalent and interchangeable, thus they coexist but remain separate and no real dialogue takes place, and
- *cultural levelling* with indiscriminate acceptance of different types of conduct and lifestyles (n 26).

Turning to the persistence of hunger in poor countries, Benedict stresses the ethical imperative to respond, and its importance for ensuring the peace and stability of the planet. He points to the importance of effective institutions (n 27) and a long term approach with investment in rural infrastructure, irrigation systems, transport, organization of markets, and the dissemination of agricultural technology. The involvement of local communities in decisions is crucial.

The right to food and water need to be recognised as rights of all human beings without distinction or discrimination along with other rights, especially the right to life itself.

Poverty still leads to high infant mortality in some parts of the world, and the response of some governments to poverty includes demographic controls. Non government organisations and development aid are also at times linked to healthcare policies that impose strong birth control measures.

“Openness to life is at the centre of true development ... If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of a new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away.” (n 28)

The denial of religious freedom also hinders development. Violence motivated by fundamentalism diverts resources from peaceful uses but the promotion of religious indifference or practical atheism also obstructs development by depriving peoples of spiritual and human resources for the effort to address poverty (n 29).

Integral human development is not just a technical question or an economic question, it has a spiritual and a moral dimension, and so an interdisciplinary approach is needed. Moral evaluation and scientific research must go hand in hand (n 31).

In prioritising access to steady work for all as a solution, Benedict notes that “Human costs always include economic costs, and economic dysfunctions always involve human costs” (n 32). He argues for a shift away from short term thinking and calls for a “profound and far-sighted revision of the current model of development” (n 32). The state of the earth’s health and the cultural and moral crisis of the moment demand it.

The most significant new feature of the development question is the explosion of worldwide interdependence known as globalisation (n 33). Paul VI had foreseen increasing interdependence, but not the ferocious pace of it. Globalisation has contributed to development but it entails risks as well as opportunities. The challenge is to bring globalisation under the guidance of charity in truth (n 33).

FOR REFLECTION

- How would you describe the main challenges for integral human development today?
- What are some of the factors that hinder development?
- How have things changed since Paul VI addressed the issue of development in 1967?

COMMUNION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & CIVIL SOCIETY

The unity of the human race, a communion transcending every barrier, is called into being by the word of God-who-is-Love.

We often fail to recognise how the experience of gift is present in our lives in many ways. When human beings believe that they are self-sufficient, they can confuse happiness and salvation with material prosperity and social action. Economic, social and political development, if it is to be truly human, has to make room for gratuitousness and the expression of brotherhood and sisterhood (n 34).

Markets must go beyond commutative justice, which regulates the exchange between parties to a transaction, to address distributive justice and social justice. This is so not only because markets function in a broader social and political context, but also because of the network of relationships within which markets function (n 35). We have seen how markets need trust to function, and how serious the loss of this trust is today.

Economic activity alone cannot solve social problems, it needs to be directed towards the common good by the political community (n 36). Tools like the economy and finance can be used well or badly, they are always shaped by cultures and run by people. It is people who need to be called to account (n 36).

Benedict holds that friendship, solidarity and reciprocity can have a place within economic activity itself. Gratuitousness and the logic of gift, together with traditional principles of social ethics such as transparency, honesty and responsibility must “find their place within normal economic activity” (n 36).

“Every economic decision has a moral consequence” (n 37).

It is not simply a matter of the economy creating wealth and the political system then redistributing it. Space must be made within the market for actions according to principles other than pure profit. We know this is possible because of the many economic entities initiated by religious and lay Catholics (n 37). Along with the logic of exchange, the economy needs political logic (just laws and redistribution), and the logic of the unconditional gift.

In *Centesimus Annus* John Paul II saw civil society as a natural setting for an economy of gratuitousness, but this is not to say that there isn't a

place for it in the market itself and in the State (n 38):

“Alongside profit-oriented private enterprise and the various types of public enterprise, there must be room for commercial entities based on mutualist principles and pursuing social ends to take root and express themselves. It is from their reciprocal encounter in the market place that one may expect hybrid forms of commercial behaviour to emerge ...” (n 38)

We need to move beyond thinking only of the market plus the state, private and public.

We also need to look to new forms of political authority on different levels (n 41). To be effective, governments will need to cooperate with one another more.

International aid should help to consolidate constitutional, juridical and administrative systems and help to support the rule of law (n 41).

“The articulation of political authority at the local, national and international levels is one of the best ways of giving direction to the process of economic globalisation. It is also the way to ensure that it does not actually undermine the foundations of democracy.” (n 41)

Globalisation is neither good nor bad in itself – it will be what we make of it. Benedict encourages us to promote a “person-based and community-oriented cultural process of world-wide integration that is open to transcendence” (n 42).

FOR REFLECTION

- What forms of enterprise can you think of that are not purely motivated by profit?
- Do you know of any examples of social enterprises?
- How is gratuitousness or the logic of gift already present and active in the economy? How else might it be?
- Where in your life do you experience gratuity rather than the logic of exchange?

RIGHTS, DUTIES & THE ENVIRONMENT

Rights and duties always go together. Duties place limits on rights, preventing them from becoming licence; they also reinforce rights by calling for their defence and promotion.

Sometimes people in affluent countries assert as rights things which are not essential while others lack the basic necessities. This cheapens the language of rights by detaching it from the ethical framework of which rights are a part (n 43).

Integral human development requires that those most in need are assisted to become the artisans of their own destiny and take up their own duties.

Rights language is sometimes used in conflicting ways in relation to problems concerning population growth. Morally responsible openness to life is a rich social and economic resource and should be defended against restrictive State policies (n 44).

Benedict notes an increasing interest in business ethics but that the word 'ethical' is used in many ways and can be abused. He calls for a people-centred ethics to guide economic activity (n 45).

It is not enough to create ethical sectors or segments of the economy – the whole economy needs to be ethical (n 45). Again Benedict points to the development of new forms of companies:

“... 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’. This is not merely a matter of a ‘third sector’, but of a broad new composite reality embracing the private and public spheres, one which does not exclude profit, but instead considers it a means for achieving human and social ends.” (n 46).

The centrality of the person as the subject of development must be preserved in development programs, and those who are to benefit ought to be directly involved in their planning and implementation (n 47). Those who receive aid should not become subordinate to the aid-givers and care should be taken that expensive bureaucracies which consume a high percentage of funds intended for development are avoided.

Development is also related to duties arising from our relationship with the environment, which is God’s gift to everyone. We may use the environment responsibly to satisfy our needs, but we must respect its intrinsic balance. We must also be responsible towards the poor, towards future generations, and towards humanity as a whole in our relationship with the environment (n 48).

Creation is at our disposal as a gift and as the setting for our life – it is not an untouchable taboo. It is a gift to be respected, shared and used responsibly.

The energy problem is a pressing concern for integral human development. The international community has an urgent duty to find equitable ways of regulating the use of non-renewable resources, involving poor countries in the process (n 49). Richer countries are called on to lower their energy consumption, to improve energy efficiency and to encourage research into renewable energy sources. Poor countries have a right to access energy resources.

Benedict goes on to stress intergenerational justice in the stewardship of creation and the importance of transparency in acknowledging and bearing the social and economic costs of using up shared environmental resources (n 50). Other peoples and future generations should not bear the costs of our actions.

International cooperation in solidarity with the poorest and with future generations is urgently needed.

“The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa” (n 51).

FOR REFLECTION

- In what ways are environmental and development questions linked?
- Make a list of the most important rights you believe everyone everywhere ought to be able to enjoy.
- How might the whole economy become more ethical?

THE COOPERATION OF THE HUMAN FAMILY

Isolation is one of the deepest forms of poverty. Development depends on the recognition that the human race is a single family working together in true communion.

A number of religions teach that we are all sisters and brothers, and promote peace – they are a resource in promoting integral human development - but Benedict notes that some religious cultures do not do this.

Both the exclusion of faith from the public square and fundamentalism are barriers to integral human development (n 56).

All people of goodwill are called to cooperate for development and the principle of subsidiarity can help this collaboration by calling on the assistance of organisations in appropriate ways:

“Such assistance is offered when individuals or groups are unable to accomplish something on their own, and it is always designed to achieve their emancipation, because it fosters freedom and participation through the assumption of responsibility. Subsidiarity respects personal dignity by recognising in the person a subject who is always capable of giving something to others. By considering reciprocity as the heart of what it is to be a human being, subsidiarity is the most effective antidote against any form of all-encompassing welfare state.” (n 57)

To avoid tyranny, globalisation must be governed by several layers of subsidiarity.

The principles of subsidiarity and solidarity go together. Solidarity points to the importance of intention – economic aid shouldn’t pursue secondary objectives. Nor should our solidarity become paternalistic and demeaning assistance (n 58). A key form of assistance needed is access to participation in international markets.

Nor should cooperation for development be exclusively focussed on the economic – it offers opportunities for cultural encounter (n 59). Every culture “has burdens from which it must be freed and shadows from which it must emerge”, so we can learn from one another but should not accept another culture uncritically or impose our own on others (n 59).

Benedict suggests that development aid for poor countries can generate wealth for all (n 60) and that more funds could be freed for this purpose by rich

countries “reviewing their internal social assistance and welfare policies, applying the principle of subsidiarity and creating better integrated welfare systems, with active participation of private individuals and civil society ... eliminating waste and rejecting fraudulent claims” (n 60). Another suggestion is ‘fiscal subsidiarity’ in which citizens are allowed to decide how some of their taxes are allocated.

The importance of education, in the sense of the complete formation of the person, is stressed as a way of enabling effective international cooperation for development (n 61).

International tourism has the potential to promote economic development and cultural growth, but may also be exploitative and morally degrading (n 61). The same is true of migration (n 62). Benedict reminds us that migrants are not just a workforce but human persons whose fundamental rights must be respected by everyone in all circumstances (n 62).

Returning to the theme of work and unemployment, Benedict calls for decent work for all:

“It means work that expresses the essential dignity of every man and woman in the context of their particular society: work that is freely chosen, effectively associating workers, both men and women, with the development of their community; work that enables the worker to be respected and free from any form of discrimination; work that makes it possible for families to meet their needs and provide schooling for their children, without the children themselves being forced into labour; work that permits the workers to organise themselves freely, and to make their voices heard; work that leaves enough room for rediscovering one’s roots at a personal, familial and spiritual level; work that guarantees those who have retired a decent standard of living.” (n 63)

The important role that labour unions have played is noted and it is suggested that globalisation requires them to look beyond the interests of their own membership to that of workers in developing countries. It is suggested that they become more engaged in civil society (n 64).

The misuse of finance has wreaked havoc on the real economy – it needs renewed structures and operating methods to return to being an instrument for wealth creation and development:

“Financiers must rediscover the genuinely ethical foundation of their activity, so as not to abuse the sophisticated instruments which

can serve to betray the interests of savers. Right intention, transparency, and the search for positive results are mutually compatible and must never be detached from one another.” (n 65)

Regulation of the financial sector, micro-finance and micro-credit are encouraged highlighting the responsibility of the investor (n 65) but the responsibility of consumers is also affirmed:

“Purchasing is always a moral - and not simply economic – act.” (n 66).

Cooperatives and new ways of marketing products from poorer countries are encouraged, but it is noted that such efforts need to be transparent, involve formation in skills and use of technologies, and not be hostage to partisan ideologies (n 66).

Benedict also calls for the reform of the United Nations organisation, economic institutions and international finance “so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth” (n67).

The responsibility to protect (rather than staying out of the ‘internal’ affairs of other countries) needs to be implemented in new ways and the poor countries need to have an effective voice in shared decision making so that the juridical and economic order can give direction to international cooperation for the development of all peoples in solidarity (n 67).

Pope John XXIII foresaw this, and we still need an effective international authority which can ensure compliance and effectively coordinate international cooperation.

FOR REFLECTION

- How does subsidiarity guide the work of Catholic development agencies?
- What is needed to ensure ‘decent work’ for all in this country?
- How might the United Nations become more effective?
- In what ways can you exercise moral responsibility as a consumer or investor?

DEVELOPMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Technology is good but we should be wary of giving too much attention to the 'how' questions and not enough attention to the 'why' questions.

Technology is a human product and a response to our vocation to develop and grow – it is a participation in God's creativity. We mustn't make an absolute or an ideology of something of our own creation. Truth is not the same as the possible (n 70 - 71).

Moral reflection is needed and not simply technological know how.

The new means of social communications are particularly important. They have great potential for good, increasing interconnection and the dissemination of ideas, but they can also serve political and ideological agendas and do not automatically promote the dignity of persons and peoples (n 73). Social communications need to be inspired by charity and at the service of truth.

Bioethics is another key area where the possibility of integral human development is called into question: are we the product of our own labours or do we depend on God? (n 74) What is the truth of being human?

Another aspect of the technological mindset is "the tendency to consider the problems and emotions of the interior life from a purely psychological point of view, even to the point of neurological reductionism" (n 76).

Development is an anthropological and spiritual question too. Our soul's health and our spiritual growth are something more than emotional well being:

"A prosperous society, highly developed in material terms but weighing heavily on the soul, is not of itself conducive to authentic development" (n 76).

The dominance of technology discourages us from recognising things that can't be explained in terms of matter, but we all experience immaterial and spiritual dimensions of life. Love is real.

FOR REFLECTION

- Can you think of examples where technology serves integral human development? And where people become the servants of technology?
- Are there ways in which technology might serve the interior life, giving proper recognition to the soul?
- How might we encourage more emphasis on 'why' questions compared with 'how' questions?

CONCLUSION

Without God we don't know who we are or what to do. Knowing that we, as persons and communities, are part of God's family gives us a vision and energy to serve a truly integral human development (n 78).

"Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity." (n 78)

"God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for the love of the common good, because He is our All, our greatest hope." (n 78)