



Briefing Note

As you know the Pope has been invited to meet parliamentarians in Westminster Hall. As an introduction to his most recent letter on social matters, the Catholic Union, Britain's oldest independent Catholic lay body, offers you this short synopsis of his encyclical letter *Caritatis in Veritate* published in June. The full document can be read on line at wikipedia.org/wiki/Caritatis_in_Veritate.

Summary of the Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth by Pope Benedict XVI

Introduction

Pope recalls how "charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine". Yet, given the risk of its being "misinterpreted and detached from ethical living", he warns how "a Christianity of charity without truth would be more or less interchangeable with a pool of good sentiments, helpful for social cohesion, but of little relevance".

The need for truth

The Holy Father makes it clear that development has need of truth. In this context he dwells on two "criteria that govern moral action": "justice and the common good". The Christian faith does not rely on privilege or positions of power, but Christ. Paul VI "pointed out that the causes of underdevelopment are not primarily of the material order". They lie above all in the will, in the mind and, even more so, in "the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples".

On the good of profit

Of profit, the Pope writes, "becomes the exclusive goal, if it is produced by improper means and without the common good as its ultimate end, it risks destroying wealth and creating poverty... The world's wealth is growing in absolute terms, but inequalities are on the increase", and "new forms of poverty are coming into being".

In this context Pope Benedict also mentions the scandal of hunger and express his hope for "equitable agrarian reform in developing countries".

Respect for life

The Pontiff also dwells on the question of respect for life, "which cannot in any way be detached from questions concerning the development of peoples", affirming that "when a society moves towards the denial or suppression of life, it ends up no longer finding the necessary motivation and energy to strive for man's true good". He reaffirms that sexuality "cannot be reduced merely to pleasure or entertainment". States, he says, "are called to enact policies promoting the centrality and the integrity of the family".

Globalisation

Globalisation needs "to promote a person-based and community-oriented cultural process of world-wide integration that is open to transcendence and able to correct its own malfunctions".

Ethics and the economy

"The economy needs ethics in order to function correctly", the Holy Father goes on, and "not any ethics whatsoever, but an ethics which is people-centred."

The energy problem

The Holy Father also turns his attention to the energy problem, noting how "the fact that some States, power groups and companies hoard non-renewable energy resources represents a grave obstacle to development in poor countries. ... Technologically advanced societies can and must lower their domestic energy consumption", he says, at the same time encouraging "research into alternative forms of energy"

The wider human family

"The Co-operation of the Human Family" is the title and focus of chapter five, in which Pope Benedict highlights how "the development of peoples depends, above all, on a recognition that the human race is a single family". Hence Christianity and other religions "can offer their contribution to development only if God has a place in the public realm".

The principle of subsidiarity

The Pope also makes reference to the principle of subsidiarity, which assists the human person "via the autonomy of intermediate bodies". Subsidiarity, he explains, "is the most effective antidote against any form of all-encompassing welfare state" and is "particularly well-suited to managing globalisation and directing it towards authentic human development".

Development aid

Benedict XVI calls upon rich States "to allocate larger portions of their gross domestic product to development aid", thus respecting their obligations. He also expresses a hope for wider access to education and, even more so, for "complete formation of the person", affirming that yielding to relativism makes everyone poorer.

Migration

The Pope then goes on to consider the "epoch-making" question of migration. "Every migrant", he says, "is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance".

Technology

The sixth and final chapter is entitled "The Development of Peoples and Technology". In it the Holy Father warns against the "Promethean presumption" of humanity thinking "it can re-create itself through the 'wonders' of technology". Technology, he says, cannot have "absolute freedom".

Conclusion

In the conclusion to his Encyclical Benedict XVI highlights how "development needs Christians with their arms raised towards God in prayer", just as it needs "love and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace"