

Our third and final session of “Charity In Truth” *Caritas In Veritate* covered the last 3 chapters and conclusion of this encyclical. We began by revisiting one of the last quotes from the previous session: “Today the subject of development is also closely related to the duties arising from *our relationship to the natural environment*. 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. . . Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other” (48, 51). This related to our question of what are our duties, as an individual Catholic, toward the environment and how do those relate to the rights of the human person? It became clear that it was a complex societal response that was needed, but that came from the stewardship exerted by individuals that became the norm for the community. Example: Farmers(the individuals) and water quality (part of the natural environment and a human need/right) are closely related. The runoff from farm fields (herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, and topsoil) can negatively impact water quality for use by humans and habitat for other creatures who depend on that water and habitat. Farmers are then asked to leave a buffer of natural vegetation between cultivated fields and streams/rivers/ponds/lakes to filter the pollutants before they reach the water source. This could be seen as an imposition of control which negatively impacts the farmer’s production/income, or it can be viewed as a normal cooperative effort for the common good and the good of future generations. What may seem an affront to our freedom is, in reality, what is to be expected of our relationship with all our brothers and sisters as well as the natural environment. It is again, a response of loving care (charity) toward all the gifts God has given us to share (gratuitousness). “What is needed is an effective shift in mentality which can lead to the adoption of new lifestyles “in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments”. Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment, just as environmental deterioration in turn upsets relations in society” (51). Our responsibility is to provide the voice of faith to public dialogue about these concerns of human and environmental rights.

This led also to discussion of the use of technology to advance the development of people. It was not seen as duly appreciated what has been accomplished, especially in medicine, due to technological advances. But the question was more about how it makes our human relations better rather than isolating us or giving us cause to see our salvation in technology. It also relates to how technology has made us increasingly globalized. “As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbors but does not make us brothers.” This relationship of peoples as brothers/sisters is a result of the infusion of charity(love) in all our dealings, economic, political, social and religious, in seeking the common good of humanity and all creation. This encyclical parallels and expands upon the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ “Catholic Framework for Economic Life” related to the dignity of work, trade, agriculture and natural resources. It also refers to “fair trade” and cooperatives where people have collective power to enter the global market and receive a fair wage for their work/product.

Also, in relation to peacebuilding, Pope Benedict reiterates the call of Pope John Paul II for a true world political authority: *“To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some years ago. Such an authority would need to be regulated by law, to observe consistently the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, to seek to establish the common good¹, and to make a commitment to securing authentic integral human development inspired by the values of charity in truth”* (67).

We ended with an Action Guide that would spur further reflection and response to this teaching and the broader Catholic Social teachings that have been integral to our faith beginning with Scripture, Jesus witness, Catholic tradition and documents and our faith response to issues of justice related especially to the poor and vulnerable. We are encouraged to reflect, pray and act on these words to transform our world. What follows are some suggestions for seeking ways to act:

Responding to Caritas in Veritate

Read Luke 4:14 - 19

Read the Action Guide (following).

Read the quote : “The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them. Every Christian is called to practice this charity, in a manner corresponding to his vocation.”

Reflect:How would you describe your “vocation”? How do you think that you might be called to practice charity in your own life?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1) In which role (family member, worker, owner/manager/investor, consumer, or citizen) do you find action in response to your faith the most challenging? Why?

2) Visit some of the Web sites listed in the **Citizens** section. As you visit, note or bookmark pages with information you want to learn more about or share with others. Everyday Catholics have an important role to play in living as witnesses of charity and truth. For inspiration and encouragement in the days and months ahead, pray and reflect on two messages from the Catholic bishops of the United States, found at:

http://www.usccb.org/jphd/caritasinveritate/caritas_in_veritate-individual-guide.pdf

(reprinted at the end of this online document)

Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice

Excerpts from *A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children*

These messages, directed toward everyday Catholics, can help you to discern your response to *Caritas in Veritate* in your family, community, and world.

3) The suggestions for action for people in various roles are followed by references to paragraphs in *Caritas in Veritate* for further reflection. Make a plan to continue your reflection on the encyclical by reading and reflecting on some of the paragraphs referenced charity and truth.

Prayer for Charity in Truth

Father, your truth is made known in your Word.
Guide us to seek the truth of the human person.
Teach us the way to love because you are Love.
Jesus, you embody Love and Truth.
Help us to recognize your face in the poor.
Enable us to live out our vocation to bring love and
justice to your people.
Holy Spirit, you inspire us to transform our world.
Empower us to seek the common good for all persons.
Give us a spirit of solidarity and make us one human
family.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Action Guide Families

Take time to **consider**: How well are we practicing charity toward others in our family and local community? What changes might we make in how we spend time and money to engage regularly in charity and action for justice?

As a family, **explore** some of the **resources** listed in the **Citizens** section below, to learn how Catholics can respond to issues affecting our world.

Reflect on these sections of *Caritas in Veritate*: 6-7, 15, 18, 43-44, 48-51, 53, 68, and 78-79.

Workers

In Catholic teaching, work is a way to support one's family, express one's dignity, and promote the common good. Take time to **consider**: Does my work allow me to use the gifts God has given me for the good of others? How can I apply the values of my Catholic faith and promote justice and charity in the work place?

Reflect on these sections of *Caritas in Veritate*: 18, 25, 32, 40-42, 62-64, and 69.

Owners, managers, and investors

Business and investment decisions have moral implications. Take time to **consider** ways that your position offers you the opportunity to influence treatment of workers, protect the environment, share knowledge and technology; protect human life and dignity; and promote the common good of local and global communities.

Reflect on these sections: 22, 25, 32, 35-42, 45-46, 48-51, 58, 62-63, 65, 69, 71, and 73.

Consumers

Consumers have social and moral responsibilities (66). Take time to **consider**: As a consumer, how am I called to live more simply? How can I change my purchasing choices to support companies that defend

human life, treat workers fairly, protect creation, and reflect the values of Catholic moral and social teaching?

Reflect on these sections of *Caritas in Veritate*: 22, 25, 43, 45-46, 48-51, 61, and 66.

Citizens

Take some time to explore the following Web sites, each of which offer opportunities to learn about, and respond to, issues that the Holy Father highlighted in *Caritas in Veritate*.

- Visit USCCB's **Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development** to learn about issues mentioned in the encyclical and to respond: www.usccb.org/sdwp/takeaction.shtml.
- Become one of a million Catholics who are part of **Catholics Confront Global Poverty** sponsored by USCCB and Catholic Relief Services: www.usccb.org/globalpoverty/ and www.crs.org/globalpoverty/.
- Contact the diocesan director for the **Catholic Campaign for Human Development** to learn how you can join the efforts of local groups working to address issues affecting those living in poverty: www.usccb.org/cchd and www.povertyusa.org/.
- Explore **Catholic Teaching on Economic Life** at the USCCB Web page www.usccb.org/jphd/economiclife/.
- Visit the USCCB **Faithful Citizenship** Web page for ideas on how you can advocate for human life and dignity year-round: www.faithfulcitizenship.org.
- Learn about the work of the USCCB **Secretariat for Pro - Life Activities**: www.usccb.org/prolife/.
- Consider the issues facing immigrants and refugees. Visit USCCB **Migration and Refugee Services**: www.usccb.org/mrs/.
- Campaign to End Poverty in America with **Catholic Charities USA**: www.catholiccharitiesusa.org.
- For more ideas on how *Caritas in Veritate* calls citizens to respond, **reflect** on these sections: 6-7, 20, 25, 28, 32, 35-45, 48-51, 53, 58, 60, 65, 67, 71, 75, and 78-79.

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