

From Your Pastor

“Charity in Truth” (*Caritas in Veritate*) ~ The Introduction to the Pope’s Encyclical, Part II

Two weeks ago, Pope Benedict XVI promulgated his third Encyclical to the Church. Entitled “Charity in Truth,” the Pope’s letter addresses the Church’s commitment to the development of the human person and of society. Continuing last week’s presentation, following are excerpts from the second half of the Introduction to the Encyclical.

“*Caritas in veritate*” [“charity in truth”] is the principle around which the Church’s social doctrine turns, a principle that takes on practical form in the criteria that govern moral action. I would like to consider two of these in particular, of special relevance to the commitment to development in an increasingly globalized society: justice and the common good.

First of all, justice. *Ubi societas, ibi ius*: every society draws up its own system of justice. Charity goes beyond justice, because to love is to give, to offer what is “mine” to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is “his”, what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting. I cannot “give” what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI’s words, “the minimum measure” of it, an integral part of the love “in deed and in truth” (1 Jn 3:18), to which Saint John exhorts us. On the one hand, charity demands justice: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples. It strives to build the *earthly city* according to law and justice. On the other hand, charity transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving. The *earthly city* is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion. Charity always manifests God’s love in human relationships as well, it gives theological and salvific value to all commitment for justice in the world.

Another important consideration is the common good. To love someone is to desire that person’s good and to take effective steps to secure it. Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of “all of us”, made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. It is a good that is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it. To desire the *common good* and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity. To take a stand for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally, making it the *pólis*, or “city”. 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 and according to the degree of influence he wields in the *pólis*. This is the institutional path — we might also call it the political path — of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbor directly, outside the institutional mediation of the *pólis*. When animated by charity, commitment to the common good has greater worth than a merely secular and political stand would have. Like all commitment to justice, it has a place within the testimony of divine charity that paves the way for eternity through temporal action. Man’s earthly activity, when inspired and sustained by charity, contributes to the building of the universal *city of God*, which is the goal of the history of the human family. In an increasingly globalized society, the common good and the effort to obtain it cannot fail to assume the dimensions of the whole human family, that is to say, the community of peoples and nations, in such a way as to shape the *earthly city* in unity and peace, rendering it to some degree an anticipation and a prefiguration of the undivided *city of God*.



God bless each of you.

Mrs. Fay