



## Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation

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I thought for this issue I'd write a one page synopsis of Pope Benedict's latest encyclical. WOW!! Did I ever bite off more than I could handle! So, here is another approach to it.

Deacon Tom Bello sent a copy of Pope Benedict's recent encyclical letter, "Caritas in Veritate." I've read excerpts from it in various publications and sat with it for some time. It is not difficult reading, but does go slowly as one must truly ponder along the way. After days, I'm really only part way through the first chapter. (There is an introduction, 6 chapters, and a conclusion.) I recommend this to all SFO, not only those directly involved with social justice issues. I also recommend study groups, as this letter has far reaching implications and will be understood more easily via discussion.

In the opening lines of the introduction, Pope Benedict reminds the faithful, "Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity. Love — caritas — is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace. It is a force that has its origin in God, Eternal Love and Absolute Truth. Each person finds his good by adherence to God's plan for him, in order to realize it fully: in this plan, he finds his truth, and through adherence to this truth he becomes free (cf. Jn 8:22). To defend the truth, to articulate it with humility and conviction, and to bear witness to it in life are therefore exacting and indispensable forms of charity. Charity, in fact, "rejoices in the truth" (1 Cor 13:6). All people feel the interior impulse to love authentically: love and truth never abandon them completely, because these are the vocation planted by God in the heart and mind of every human person."

He goes on to say in Paragraph #6, "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."... 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,<sup>1</sup> and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI's words, "the minimum measure" of it,<sup>2</sup> an integral part of the love 'in deed and in truth' (1 John 3:18), to which Saint John exhorts us."

What I have read so far is so full of food for mediation that only these few excerpts will have to suffice on whetting your appetite. I did "fast forward" to the conclusion and found these gems: "Only if we are aware of our calling, as individuals and as a community, to be part of God's family as his sons and daughters, will we be able to generate a new vision and muster new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism. The greatest service to development, then, is a Christian humanism<sup>3</sup> that enkindles charity and takes its lead from truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God..." "Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life — structures, institutions, culture and ethos — without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment..." God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for love of the common good, because he is our All, our greatest hope."

May we all spend the time required to pray and meditate on this timely encyclical and then move out into the world as the Spirit is already inspiring us.

### Logistics:

In reviewing the documents approved by the regional ministers October 2008, JPIC is moving in the planned direction. All of the regional contact persons are on the SFOPJNet. The website is under construction with the input of former apostolic commission chairs and members. These are the concrete externals of JPIC. I hope that the deeper meaning and source of our actions is becoming clearer.

### Being and Doing:

Our entire Rule gives signposts for Gospel living. We find our Rule being further elaborated to us in this new encyclical. In what ways are you enlightened and inspired?

Do you have a clearer vision of the Church's social teaching? If so, what does it mean for how you live your life? If not, what is foggy to you?

How are you specifically called today to work for the common good; to work for another's human development; to work for solidarity of your community (family, work place, civic area, etc)?

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas et Veritas*, Footnote 1

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Footnote 2

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Footnote 157