



# The Holy See

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BENEDICT XVI

## **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Paul VI Audience Hall  
Wednesday, 8 July 2009*

### *Caritas in veritate*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

My new Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* was officially presented yesterday. Its fundamental vision is inspired from a passage of the Letter of St Paul to the Ephesians, in which the Apostle speaks of acting *in accordance with truth in love*: "Speaking the truth in love", as we have just heard, "we are to grow up in every way into him who is the Head, into Christ" (4: 15). Charity in truth is therefore the principal force behind the true development of every person and of all humanity. For this reason the entire social doctrine of the Church revolves around the principle *caritas in veritate*. Only with charity, illumined by reason and by faith, is it possible to achieve goals of development endowed with humane and humanizing values. 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" (n. 6). In the introduction the Encyclical immediately mentions two fundamental criteria: justice and the common good. Justice is an integral part of that love "in deed and in truth" (1 Jn 3: 18), to which the Apostle John exhorts us (cf. n. 6). And "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 more we strive to obtain a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them" (n. 6). Hence there are two operative criteria, justice and the common good. Thanks to the latter, charity acquires a social dimension. Every Christian, the Encyclical says, is called to practise this charity, and it adds: "This is the institutional path... of charity" (n. 7).

Like other Magisterial documents this Encyclical too takes up, continues and deepens the Church's analysis and reflection on social themes of vital interest for mankind in our century. It is

linked in a special way to what Paul VI wrote more than 40 years ago in *Populorum Progressio* a milestone in the Church's social teaching in which the great Pontiff outlines certain crucial guidelines, which continue to be timely, for the integral development of man and of the modern world. The world situation, as the news in recent months amply demonstrates, continues to present serious problems and the "scandal" of glaring inequalities which have endured despite past efforts. On the one hand, there are signs of grave social and economic imbalances; on the other, reforms are being called for on various sides which can no longer be postponed in order to narrow the gap in the development of peoples. To this end, the phenomenon of globalization can constitute a real opportunity, but for this reason it is important to initiate a profound moral and cultural renewal as well as responsible discernment concerning decisions leading to the common good. A better future for all is possible, if it is founded on the rediscovery of fundamental ethical values. What is needed, then, is new financial planning in order to redesign development globally, based on the ethical foundation of responsibility before God and to the human being as God's creature.

The Encyclical does not of course aim to offer technical solutions to the vast social problems of the contemporary world. This lies outside the competence of the Magisterium of the Church (cf. n. 9). Yet, it recalls the great principles that prove indispensable to building human development in the years to come. Among them, in the first place, is attention to human life, considered to be the core of all true progress; respect for the right to religious freedom that is always closely linked to human development; the rejection of a Promethean vision of the human being which maintains that he is the absolute author of his own destiny. An unlimited trust in the potential of technology ultimately shows itself to be illusory. We need upright people both in politics and in the economy who sincerely have the common good at heart. In particular, looking at the global emergencies, it is urgent to focus public opinion on the tragedy of hunger and food security which affects a considerable part of humanity. A tragedy of such proportions calls our consciences into question: it must be tackled with determination by eliminating the structural causes that give rise to it and encouraging agricultural development in the poorest countries. I am sure that this path of solidarity towards the development of the poorer countries will certainly help to find a solution to the current global crisis. Without doubt, the role and political power of States must be carefully reassessed, in an epoch in which limitations to their sovereignty de facto exist because of the new international economic, commercial and financial context. On the other hand, there must be no lack in the responsible participation of citizens in national and international politics thanks in part to a renewed commitment of the trade unions called to establish new synergies at the local and international levels. In this field too, a lead role is played by the means of social communication in the strengthening of the dialogue between diverse cultures and traditions.

Therefore, seeking to plan a development that is not marred by the dysfunctions and distortions that are widespread today, a serious reflection on the very meaning of the economy and on its purposes is obligatory for all. The state of the ecological health of the planet requires it; the cultural and moral crisis of man which is visibly emerging in every part of the globe demands it. If it is to

function properly, the economy needs ethics; it needs to recover the important contribution of the principle of gratuitousness and the "logic of gift" in the market economy, where the rule cannot be profit alone. However this is only possible with the commitment of all economists, and politicians, producers and consumers and it presupposes a formation of consciences that gives strength to moral criteria in the elaboration of political and economic projects. On various sides an appeal is rightly being made for rights to presuppose corresponding duties, without which they risk becoming arbitrary. As must always be reiterated, a different lifestyle for the whole of humanity is necessary in which the duties of everyone towards the environment are linked to those towards the individual, considered in himself and in relation to others. Humanity is one family and fruitful dialogue between faith and reason cannot but enrich it, making charitable work in social life more effective and providing the appropriate framework in which to encourage collaboration between believers and non-believers, in the shared prospective of working for justice and peace in the world. As criteria and guidelines for this fraternal interaction, I indicate in the Encyclical the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, which are closely connected. Lastly, in the face of the problems of today's world that are so immense and profound, I point out the need for a world political authority, regulated by law, which would abide by the above-mentioned principles of subsidiarity and solidarity and would be firmly oriented to the realization of the common good with respect for humanity's great moral and religious traditions.

The Gospel reminds us that man does not live on bread alone: it is impossible to satisfy the profound thirst of the human heart solely with material goods. The human horizon is undoubtedly higher and broader; for this reason every development programme must consider alongside the material the spiritual growth of the human person, who is endowed with both a body and a soul. This is the integral development to which the Church's social doctrine constantly refers. The criterion that orients it is the driving force of "charity in truth". Dear brothers and sisters, let us pray that this [Encyclical](#) may also help humanity to feel that it is one family committed to bringing about a world of justice and peace. Let us pray that believers who work in the financial and political sectors may realize how important their consistent Gospel witness is in the service they render to society. In particular, I invite you to pray for the Heads of State and Government of the G8 who are meeting in these days at L'Aquila. May this important World Summit result in decisions and approaches that will serve the true progress of all peoples, especially the poorest. Let us entrust these intentions to the maternal intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church and of mankind.

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## To special groups

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I welcome all the English-speaking visitors present today, including the university and school groups from America, Canada and England. May your visit to Rome be a time of deep spiritual renewal. Upon you all I invoke God's Blessings of joy and peace.

As usual, my last thoughts are addressed to the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds* present here today. Dear *young people*, I know that many of you make the most of the summer season to have an important experience of spirituality and service: I encourage you in this and I point out to you the example of one of your peers, Bl. Piergiorgio Frassati. I hope that you, dear *sick people*, will find comfort in the words of the Apostle Paul, whom the liturgy presented to us again last Sunday: "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor 12: 9). And you, dear *newlyweds*, may you always be able to cultivate, with prayer and mutual love, the conjugal relationship which you sealed with the Sacrament of Marriage.

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