

Integral Human Development in *Caritas in Veritate* Some Pastoral Implications

*Dr. Charles I., CBCI Commission for Justice,
Peace and Development, Ashok Place, New Delhi*

The new social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (*Charity in Truth*) of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, is the latest in a long line of papal social encyclicals dating back to Pope Leo XIII's "*Rerum Novarum*" in 1891. In general the encyclicals tend to be lengthy and dense, but they are worth reading because they convey the principles, which, if implemented, go a long way toward preparing the way for the coming of the promised reign of justice, love and peace. *Caritas in Veritate* is the inverse of "*Veritas in Caritate*" (Truth in Charity) that we find in Ephesians 4:15. It was released on 29th June 2009, on the eve of the G 8 Summit in Italy by Pope Benedict XVI.

This encyclical provides a new interpretation and practical understanding of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Vatican II document regarding the role of the Church in the modern world. It covers varied topics namely, economy, politics, culture, religion, ecology, sex, family, tourism, migration, micro-credits, intellectual property, etc. At the same time we notice some striking omissions in this encyclical such as communism and private property, which do have a considerable impact in the present society. This looks strange because in today's society individuals are very much preoccupied

with the hoarding of their own private property to the extent of neglecting the common good, which is the key element that substantiates this encyclical. Though this encyclical can easily be understood unlike some other Church documents, it does not use inclusive language with regard to gender equality. Therefore scholars like Catherine Cowley, the author of "*The Value of Money: Ethics and the World Finance*", criticises this document for its non-inclusive language.

Introduction

Through this first social encyclical the Pope emerges as the exact opposite of conservative Catholics who draw traditionally a clear line between the Church's promotion of religion and its concern for poverty and social justice. Though Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (On the development of peoples) in 1967 has introduced the social justice dimension in Catholic social tradition. 'Preaching the Gospel' and 'working for social justice' still seem to be apart. This encyclical now brings the two halves together to make one whole through the concept of 'integral human development.' Pope Benedict XVI praises *Populorum Progressio* as the *Rerum Novarum* of the present age (no. 8). Pope Leo XIII's masterpiece *Rerum Novarum* of 1891 is the very foundation of the Catholic social doctrine.

"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" (no. 1). "Charity in truth" means truth-filled love. Love is the force that leads people "to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace". We can say that this encyclical is a faith-oriented meditation of two key concepts of charity and truth. Charity based on truth should

and can transform social realities and economic transactions. This is the basic theme of the document.

“Charity goes beyond justice, because to love is to give, to offer what is ‘mine’ to the other... I cannot “give” what is mine to the other, without first giving him or her what pertains to him or her in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them” (no. 6). That is why St. Gregory the Great has beautifully said, “When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice.” This same idea is repeated in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 2446 which states that what is already due in justice is not to be offered as a gift of charity.

Justice is not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity (Paul VI, *PP*, no. 22, Vatican II, *GS*, no. 69) and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity or “the minimum measure” of it. Even if we do not do charity, we are bound to do justice. But unfortunately in our Christian tradition we give more importance to charity than justice. For instance, in most of our dioceses we give due prominence to the pious associations rather than conferring proper importance to the formation of the Parish councils and forum for justice and peace. Which leads us to think our indifference towards the notion of justice in so many ways. The poor people who belong to the believing community who are also neglected from the space of governance, equality and dignity are well aware of such indifference to some extent.

In this encyclical the Pope has turned his attention to economic justice unlike the previous ones. He calls for a more *people-oriented ethic*. He calls for a new world financial order guided by ethics, with a concern for humanity and a focus on justice. He stresses the role of the Church in spreading the Gospel

and unites this role with working for social justice. Therefore he says, "*The whole Church, in all her being and acting is engaged in promoting integral human development*" (no. 11, Refer also Paul VI, *PP*, no. 14).

The Pope is of the opinion that there is no separate spiritual pathway that bypasses integral human development, for it is only that which leads us to Christ. It is the very essence of the Catholic faith. This kind of fusion of spirituality and social action under the banner of integral human development is the theological keynote of this encyclical. He insists on the need to regulate market forces through some kind of overall supervisory agency for the global economy to flourish embodied with the principle of subsidiarity. For him natural ecology and human ecology are radically the same. Hence he calls for a reform of lifestyles and re-education of consumer choices. He affirms the duty of the Church to protect humankind from self-destruction. Now let us examine the principal themes of this document.

1. 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, which is nothing but the common good. It is the good of 'all of us,' made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society" (no. 7). It is a good that is sought for the sake of people who belong to the social community.

The Pope says "to desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity" (no. 7). He makes it clear that "Development is impossible without upright men and women, without financiers and politicians whose

consciences are finely attuned to the requirements of the common good” (no. 71). Nowadays it is very much obvious that the development of economic systems that concentrate on the common good depends on a determinate ethical system. Conversely, it has also become obvious that the decline of such discipline can also cause the laws of the market to collapse. This is what we are experiencing today in the current global economic crisis.

2. Current Economic Crisis

In today’s technologically advanced world the wealth of the rich is growing in absolute terms, but poverty and inequalities are on the increase (Paul VI, *PP*, no. 9). The roots of the present crisis are in an “ethical deficit” within economic structures, especially greed. In this encyclical Pope Benedict XVI shows how the present economic crisis was born of an “ethical deficit” among individual persons, and that recovery will require a common ethical code founded on faith and reason along with specialized economic understanding. “The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones. This crisis has become an opportunity to shape a new vision for the future” (no. 21).

Corruption and illegality are unfortunately evident in the conduct of the economic and political class even in rich countries. As a result the multinational companies and local producers fail to respect the human rights of workers (no. 22). What is in the society is always reflected in the Church. Therefore the church is not completely free from these accusations. Church is holy and sinful. But we are called to strive towards holiness in our daily lives. Are we free from corruption and illegality in our administration in the parishes or wherever we are doing our ministry?

In appealing to the spiritual values and moral consciences of people, Pope closely follows John Paul II who spoke of the need for correcting the imbalances of globalization with solidarity and concern for the poor. Hence he speaks about 'hunger and poverty.'

3. Hunger and Poverty

Statistics reveal the fact that every three to six second a person dies of hunger. 75 % of them are children. Life in many poor countries is still extremely insecure as a consequence of food shortages, and the situation could become worse: *hunger* still reaps enormous numbers of victims. *Feed the hungry* (Mt 25: 35, 37, 42) is an ethical imperative for the universal Church, as she responds to the teachings of her Founder, the Lord Jesus.

This encyclical often refers to the need for eliminating world hunger, restoring peace, ensuring development that benefits the poor and the weaker sections. "The elimination of world hunger has also, in the global era, become a requirement for safeguarding the peace and stability of the planet. Hunger is not so much dependent on lack of material things as on shortage of social resources...What is missing is a network of economic institutions capable of guaranteeing regular access to sufficient food and water for nutritional needs" (no. 27).

The Pope holds that the right to food, like the right to water, has an important place within the pursuit of other rights, beginning with the fundamental right to life. It is therefore necessary to cultivate a public conscience that considers *food and access to water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination*. The problem of food needs a long-term solution eliminating structural causes that gives rise to it and

promoting agricultural development of poorer countries” (no. 27). This solution may include “investing in rural infrastructures, irrigation, transport, organization of markets, and dissemination of agricultural technology”, etc. (no. 27).

When our people are so poor, our huge buildings and structure bear false witness to the Gospel values. As we know, poverty will not go away by wishful thinking or loud demonstrations. Poverty is a pandemic (deadly disease). Therefore the world must collectively and with determination fight against it. There is a strong link between poverty and economy.

4. Economics and Moral Consequences

“The Church’s social doctrine has always maintained that *justice must be applied to every phase of economic activity*. Locating resources, financing, production, consumption and all the other phases in the economic cycle inevitably have moral implications. *Thus every economic decision has a moral consequence*” (no. 37). Pope John Paul II understood that *investment always has moral, as well as economic significance* (John Paul II, *CA*, no. 36).

“We must always remember that economic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of *commercial logic*” (no. 36). “Profit is useful if it serves as a means towards an end that provides a sense both of how to produce it and how to make good use of it. Once profit 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” (no. 21).

The Pope insists that the economy needs a people-centred ethics that involves people in planning and implementing

development programs. But in reality things are different in our parishes that mean the agendas that are being executed in the communities of the Word are just contrary to the intentions of the head of the universal church. The Pope also affirms that economic aid must involve the governments of receiving countries and civil society, including local Churches and the grassroots. But what happens in reality is different. When IMF and World Bank give money for development programmes to the developing countries, in the name of structural adjustment programme and policies they decide what we have to do and what we should not do

For the Pope, the morality that believes itself able to dispense with the technical knowledge of economic laws is not morality but moralism. As such, it is the antithesis of morality. In the same way, a scientific approach that believes itself capable of managing *without an ethos* misunderstands the reality of human. Therefore, it is not scientific.

The Pope is critical of two convictions of modern man and woman. The first conviction is that “man is self-sufficient and can successfully eliminate the evil present in history by his or her action alone has led him or her to confuse happiness and salvation with immanent forms of material prosperity and social action” (no. 34). The second conviction is that “the economy must be autonomous, that it must be shielded from “influences” of a moral character. This has led man or woman to abuse the economic process in a thoroughly destructive way. In the long term, these convictions have led to economic, social and political systems that trample upon personal and social freedom, and are therefore unable to deliver the justice that they promise” (no. 34).

The Pope also speaks of “outsourcing of production as the one that can weaken the company’s sense of responsibility towards the *stakeholders*, namely the workers, the suppliers, the consumers,

the natural environment and broader society, in favour of the *shareholders*.” When international capital market offers great freedom of action, there is also increasing awareness of the need for greater *social responsibility* on the part of business (no. 40). When outsourcing is done for the purpose of exploitation and for personal advantages, a great damage is caused to one’s home country. His words on outsourcing lead him to speak about Globalisation too.

5. Globalisation

“Globalization, *a priori*, is neither good nor bad. It will be what people make of it” (no. 42). We should not be its victims, but rather its advocates or main participants, acting in the light of reason, guided by charity and truth. Blind opposition would be a mistaken and prejudiced attitude...The processes of globalization, suitably understood and directed, open up the unprecedented possibility of large-scale redistribution of wealth on a world-wide scale; if badly directed; however, they can lead to an increase in poverty and inequality, and could even trigger a global crisis” no. 42). This is what happening in today’s economic recession period.

Even 10 years before Michael Amaladass, one of the Indian theologians has called for a right understanding of globalisation and construction of global community in the book titled “*Globalisation and its Victims*.” When the underlying anthropological and ethical spirit is suppressed by ethical and cultural considerations of an individualistic and utilitarian nature, then globalisation leads to the further impoverishment. The poor countries are obliged to follow policies set by the richer countries under the pretext of structural adjustment programmes. As a result there is an increase of rich people in poor countries and poor people in rich countries.

In short we can say “Globalization is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon which must be grasped in the diversity and unity of all its different dimensions, including the theological dimension”. Therefore the Pope invites us “to experience and to *steer the globalization of humanity in relational terms, in terms of communion and the sharing of goods*” (no. 42). That is why he is pushed further to speak about fraternity.

6. Fraternity

The Pope insists on the need of relational goods along with material goods. Fraternity only can generate these relational goods. “As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers and sisters. Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity” (no. 19). For the Pope, “charity in truth is a force that builds community, it brings all people together without imposing barriers or limits” (no. 34).

Do we build community without imposing barriers or limits in our parishes? Sometimes there may be equal opportunity for the people to participate in our parish activities and there may be civic coexistence, but *we cannot establish fraternity*, when we fail to insist on the need of having relational goods along with material goods. “The human community that we build by ourselves can never be a fully fraternal community, nor can it overcome every division and become a truly universal community. The unity of the human race, a fraternal communion transcending every barrier, is called into being by the word of God-who-is-Love” (no. 34).

Therefore the Pope insists, “economic, social and political development, if it is to be authentically human, needs to make room

for the *principle of gratuitousness* as an expression of fraternity” (no. 34). Hence we need to pay attention to our relationship with God, human and nature.

7. Environment and God's Creation

“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...In nature, the believer recognizes the wonderful result of God's creative activity, which we may use responsibly to satisfy our legitimate needs, while respecting the intrinsic balance of creation. If this vision is lost, we end up abusing it” (no. 48).

“*The Church has a responsibility towards creation* and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In fact through such commitment towards the Mother Nature she defends earth, water and air, which are the gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction” (no 51). For the Pope, natural ecology and human ecology are radically the same. “Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment, just as environmental deterioration in turn upsets relations in society” (no. 51).

“There is need for what might be called a human ecology...*When “human ecology” is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits*. Just as human virtues are interrelated so the ecological system is based on respect for a plan that affects both the health of society and its good relationship with nature” (no. 51) The decisive issue in our attempt to protect nature “*is the overall moral tenor of society*. If there is a lack of

respect for the right to life and to a natural death, if human conception, gestation (development) and birth are made artificial, if human embryos are sacrificed to research, the conscience of society ends up losing the concept of human ecology and, along with it, that of environmental ecology” (no.51).

“Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today” (no. 51). If our attitude demeans the person, then it disrupts the environment and damages society. *“The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa... What is needed is an effective shift in mentality which can lead to the adoption of new life-styles”* (no. 51). Hence the Pope invites contemporary society to *a serious review of its life-style*. How is our life-style? Does it harm the nature or not? Can we make a review of our own life-style and change it wherever and whenever it is necessary? Since our life style depends on the nature of our work or labour, we move on to the next ideal on Labour unions.

8. Labour Unions

Labour unions have always been encouraged and supported by the Church starting from the time of *Rerum Novarum*. This encyclical states that they “should be open to the new perspectives that are emerging in the world of work...Labour union organizations are called to address some of the new questions arising in our society” (no. 64). Trade unions are called to play a decisive role in development through their demonstration in a different social and labour context.

“The Church’s traditional teaching makes a valid distinction between the respective roles and functions of trade unions and

politics. This distinction allows unions to identify civil society as the proper setting for their necessary activity of defending and promoting labour, especially on behalf of exploited and unrepresented workers". The Pope has also called for new global "synergies" among labour unions in order to resist cuts in social safety nets and has called for respect for the migrants, workers and their security and well being, because everything depends on the finance.

9. Finance and Ethical Foundations

While discussing on modern finance, Pope introduces distinction between a 'market economy' and a 'capitalist economy,' which was found in *Centesimus Annus* of John Paul II in 1991. This gives an idea to the reader, especially to the economists that he is unduly sympathetic to the American model of free-market capitalism. A capitalist economy is a type of market economy. Still we must make a distinction between market economy and civil market economy. *Market economy* aims at the maximisation of wealth while *civil market economy* aims at achieving the common good. The civil market economy includes the concept of 'gift,' that is not oriented only towards profit, but it also encourages 'fraternity' and promotes integral human development.

The economy needs people-centred ethics in order to function correctly. "Today we hear much talk of ethics in the world of economy, finance and business. Research centres and seminars in business ethics are on the rise...Banks are proposing "ethical" accounts and investment funds (no.45). For the Pope, "the word '*ethical*' should not be used to make ideological distinctions...Efforts are needed – and it is essential to say this – not only to create "ethical" sectors or segments of the economy

but to ensure that the whole economy – the whole finance – is ethical, not merely by virtue of an external label, but by its respect for requirements intrinsic to its very nature” (45). He recalls Church’s social teaching in Paul VI, *PP*, no. 14, John Paul II, *CA*, no. 32 and holds that economy, in all its branches, constitutes a sector of human activity (no. 45).

“The entire economy and finance, not just certain sectors, must be used in an ethical way so as to create suitable conditions for human development and for the development of peoples” (no. 65). In short we can say that the Pope is critical of the system that downplays ethical concerns and detaches social and economic life from human decision makers. According to the Pope, what developing countries need from international markets is openness to welcome their products, thus guaranteeing their survival. This leads us to the next title sexuality and bio-ethics.

10. Sexuality and Bio-ethics

The Pope urges us to have full respect for human values. “Sexuality cannot be reduced merely to pleasure or entertainment, nor can sex education be reduced to technical instruction aimed at protecting the interested parties from possible disease or the “risk” of procreation” (no. 44). Hence he focuses on “the need to defend the primary competence of the family in the area of sexuality ... and to ensure that parents are prepared to undertake their responsibilities” (no. 44).

A crucial battleground “between the supremacy of technology and human moral responsibility is the field of *bio-ethics*, where the very possibility of integral human development is radically called into question. In this most delicate and critical area, the fundamental question asserts itself force-fully: Is man the product

of his own labours or does he depend on God?" (no. 74). Technology is not an absolute value and does not enjoy absolute freedom. It is in need of moral responsibility through bio-ethics. We are unveiling all secrets of life and our culture is leading us to have control over everything technically. Hence we hold that both professional competence and moral consistency are necessary for development.

"Scientific discoveries in this field of sexuality and the possibilities of technological intervention seem to force a choice between two types of reasoning: reason open to transcendence or reason closed within immanence... The rationality of a self-centred use of technology proves to be irrational because it implies a decisive rejection of meaning and value of life" (74). Hence Pope calls for the reform of the United Nations Organisation.

11. Reform of the United Nations Organisation

We can say that the nation state has been finished off by globalisation to larger extent. The Pope is also of the same opinion. Therefore his hopes are on the United Nations. In the face of global interdependence, "there is a strongly felt need, even in the midst of a global recession, for a reform of the *United Nations Organization*... One also senses the urgent need to find innovative ways of implementing the principle of the *responsibility to protect* and of giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making" (67).

The Pope writes that there is urgent need of a true world political authority which should work "to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace, to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration... 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 good and *to make a commitment to securing authentic integral human development inspired by the values of charity in truth.* Furthermore, such an authority would need to be universally recognized and to be vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for rights” (no. 67)

Conclusion

“*A humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism.* Only a humanism that is open to the Absolute, can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life” (no. 78). Spiritual and moral welfare has to be always taken into account in any development. “Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is... Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity” (no. 78).

“True integral human development,” as described by the Holy Father, must give attention to “spiritual life, reliance upon God’s providence and mercy, love and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace. All this is essential if “hearts of stone” are to be transformed into “hearts of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26), rendering life on earth “divine” and thus more worthy of humanity” (no. 79). Hence I wish that our “hearts of stone” be transformed into “hearts of flesh” through God’s providence and mercy.