

## THE NEW SOCIAL ENCYCLICAL, CARITAS IN VERITATE, AND VALUE ORIENTATION IN DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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At the end of June this year, Pope Benedikt XVI published his new social encyclical, "Caritas in veritate". Appearing in the age of globalization forty years after "Populorum progressio", it marks the Vatican's return to the social question. Guided by the Catholic social doctrine, the document is intended to provide orientation in the face of the changes induced by globalization in the state, the markets, and civil society.

Like "Populorum progressio", "Caritas in veritate" focusses on the developing countries: although the economies of some formerly poor countries had revived to an astonishing degree in the last four decades, there were others in which the rule of misery continued unbroken. In these countries, hunger and insecurity were as much part of everyday life as the denial of fundamental rights and the lack of water, education, and basic medical care.

In the Pope's view, the causes include new forms of colonialism and dependence on hegemonial countries as well as massive deficits in the developing countries themselves. The encyclical especially pillories the logic of a capitalist market that is seen as unrelated to values. According to the Pope, it is axiomatic that human relations should be of relevance in business activity. For the market to fulfil its functions in their entirety, its internal workings should be governed by solidarity and mutual trust. The debate between ordoliberalism and the Catholic social doctrine that had begun half a century ago, especially in Germany, remained unsettled. In the view of the first-named philosophy, the market was the best system to ensure economic efficiency strictly on the principle of performance-based competition. The only industries that should be exempted from this principle were monopolies which secured the supply of public goods. Catholic social doctrine, on the other hand, challenged this proposition, denied the existence of a pure market, and questioned the value of those institutions that guaranteed compliance with the above-mentioned targets.

The leading lights of social market economy resolutely defended a policy which, guided by values, aimed to serve the common good while permitting the market to exercise its control functions largely undisturbed. To be sure, social market economy required a strong state, exactly the reason why hardly any developing country had conditions to offer that supported the transfer of this economic model. Lawlessness, anarchy, and civil war were as useless to social market economy as governments who destroyed their own institutional foundations because of some ideology or faulty thinking. There were far too many countries which, having embraced the neoliberal market

model, obstructed equal opportunities and the equitable distribution of income through governmental interference, patronage, clientelism, and corruption.

The encyclical hardly mentions such political failures, but it does talk of general misdirected developments on a global scale. Globalization was not bad in itself; everything depended on what people did with it. After all, the process had its own positive aspects and, given sound planning and implementation, it might even facilitate a redistribution of wealth on a hitherto unknown scale. In material terms, the chances of helping the population of the developing countries to leave poverty behind were better today than they used to be. Therefore, globalization should be shaped on the principle of solidary humanitarianism.

To be sure, "Caritas in veritate" calls for a redistribution of wealth, but this demand should be seen in the overall context. The encyclical lays stress on the responsibility of the countries concerned because nations are 'builders of their own progress'. The prime duty of the donors was to provide funds to support the endeavours of the developing countries themselves. Further tasks of importance included designing flexible development programmes, involving the recipients in these programmes, and providing support geared to individual stages of project planning.

But what if the state itself is weak? The encyclical has no answer to this question, saying that, after all, the church did not meddle with governmental affairs. Nevertheless, it stresses the duty of the powers-that-be to respect people as human beings and protect the rule of law, human rights, and participative structures.

Further demands include implementing the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. Personality, solidarity, and subsidiarity had been addressed before in "Quadragesimo anno" (1931) and "Populorum progressio" (1967). These principles might even serve as a basis for development-policy cooperation between Christians and non-Christians; after all, these were universal values common to all religions. In concrete terms, subsidiarity meant that assistance should be provided only to the extent it complemented the recipients' own endeavours and did not serve to keep them in a permanent state of dependence. There was a need not only for large-scale but also for small-scale projects that called for commitment on the part of civil society. It was important to provide assistance for individuals and families with the aid of civil-society groups and organizations. According to the encyclical, it is the individual who is responsible first and foremost for his or her own development. The aim was to improve the living situation of individuals in a given region, involving them in project planning and even making them play the leading part.

Solidarity and subsidiarity were mutually dependent; a system that featured solidarity without subsidiarity was apt to humble those in need. In the view of "Caritas in veritate", conventional development assistance constantly neglected the principle of subsidiarity. This was the reason why the document gave priority to the human person which could only unfold its capabilities if both principles were observed.

There are those who criticize the new encyclical because it hardly contained anything new and overrated the influence of the church on the order of the world. To be sure, the church was a global player, being represented everywhere in the world, but its claim to ethical design superiority would not necessarily be understood everywhere. However, social principles are a different matter altogether because they are not Catholic but universally valid and, consequently, capable of rational substantiation. Providing development assistance and building a peaceful world are dictates not only of morality but of reason. And when these dictates are put into practice, "Caritas in veritate" with its emphasis on proven social principles may be helpful indeed.

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