

'Caritas in Veritate'

Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI

*To the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious, the Lay Faithful
and all People of Good Will,
On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth*

Remarks by Archbishop Vincent Nichols

1. Catholics in England and Wales will warmly welcome this Encyclical Letter, 'Caritas in Veritate', as a powerful and thorough application of the vision of Christian faith to the complex problems of human development. Our hope is that it will be widely read. The Letter deserves and rewards careful study. I look forward to reading it more thoroughly than I have been able to do thus far. The Encyclical stands firmly in the line of Catholic Social Teaching and most especially in the tradition of Christian humanism, expressed so clearly by Pope Paul VI in 'Populorum Progressio.'
2. This wide-ranging document addresses all the problems surrounding the project of human development and progress:
 - economic development in relation to civic and political life
 - globalisation of markets
 - immigration and the movement of labour
 - care of the environment
 - cooperation between peoples and cultures
 - relationship between duties and rights
 - advances in technology and the opportunities they bring.

Pope Benedict stresses that every one of these issues has profound ethical implications which must be addressed if development is to be genuinely human.

3. The encyclical proposes that these key ethical considerations always come back to questions of the identity and meaning of human life. If these questions are ignored or lost in ethical confusion, then development ceases to serve humanity and becomes the tool of other objectives. In responding to these fundamental questions, faith is a source of true understanding. Indeed, without God we neither know which way to go nor who we are. Yet faith also needs to be refined by reason and the demands of public discourse. Benedict states: "Development is impossible without upright men and women, without financiers and politicians whose consciences are finely tuned to the requirements of the common good." (para 71)
4. The Encyclical is a profoundly optimistic document, not in a naïve or uncritical sense, but in a principled and radical way. In contrast to the existential pessimism of our age and culture, Pope Benedict proclaims that since the instinct for love and truth remains strong in most persons and peoples, and since it is never completely extinguished, then the work of true development can push ahead. Indeed he speaks of truth and love as the 'vocation' planted in us by God. Development – human progress by which we want to 'be more' – is also a vocation. It is given by God and therefore is only fully understood in the perspective of our eternal destiny and in the light of faith, itself also a gift of God.

5. Pope Benedict points out that all social action involves a doctrine. It is important to be clear about the doctrine behind every social programme. The encyclical insists that the only reliable basis for social action, including education, the markets and uses of technology, is an appreciation of the true destiny of the human person, who cannot prescind from the ethical demands and character of human nature itself. Our human nature is made up of matter and spirit, and is endowed with transcendent meaning and aspirations (cf para 48) Basing social action on any other foundation is to fail to recognise the fundamental truth of humanity, fail to respond to that truth in love and, therefore, ultimately to undermine the very human progress being sought.
6. The encyclical insists that markets are not ethically neutral, that purchasing is always as moral act, that the use of technology always needs moral considerations,. It presents technology in a positive light, as an expression of the spiritual dimensions of human nature, seeking to fulfil the call of God “to cultivate and take care of the land.” (Gen 2.15) while also recognising that technology can lead to the view that truth simply now coincides with the possible. Globalisation, too, is presented in a positive light with the assertion that we should not see ourselves as its victims but as its protagonists, working towards greater human solidarity between people and cultures, as a sign and foretaste of the kingdom of God.
7. Care for the environment is presented in the Encyclical as vital for true development, requiring of us a review of life-style. The environment of the created world is inseparable from our ‘human ecology’, those circumstances and values in which human beings flourish. In the protection of these ecologies, the decisive issue is ‘the overall moral tenor of society’ in which a lack of respect for life, an anti-life mentality, serves to undermine true ecological concerns. The Pope remarks: “The book of nature is one and indivisible.” (para 51)
8. When speaking of the financial crisis, Pope Benedict points to a lack of fundamental moral criteria and principles. He welcomes initiatives to reform and regulate the financial markets. He insists that finance is always an instrument for wealth creation and development. He calls for more diversification in enterprise and business, going beyond the dualism of a ‘market-plus-state’ model shaping wealth creation and distribution. He looks for ways in which the ‘principle of gratuitousness’ can be expresses in business through social aid agreements, charitable foundations, orientation of companies to social welfare, the development of the so-called ‘civic economy’ and the ‘economy of communion.’ “This is not merely a matter of a ‘third sector’ but of a broad new composite reality embracing the private and public spheres, one which does not exclude profit but instead considers it a means for achieving human and social ends.” He concludes: “The very plurality of institutional forms of business gives rise to a market which is not merely more civilised but also more competitive.” (Para 46)