

# GRIST

Diocese of New Ulm

Social Concerns Office

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from} **CHARITY IN TRUTH**

[On Integral Human Development in Charity & Truth]

An Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI

[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/index\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/index_en.htm)

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... 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... 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. #1

Charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law. It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbor; it is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones). #2

Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity. That light is both the light of reason and the light of faith... It grasps [charity's] meaning as gift, acceptance, and communion. Without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality. #3

If [knowledge] aspires to be wisdom capable of directing man in the light of his first beginnings and his final ends, it must be "seasoned" with the "salt" of charity. Deeds without knowledge are blind, and knowledge without love is sterile. #30

The truth of ourselves, of our personal conscience, is first of all *given* to us. In every cognitive process, truth is not something that we produce, it is always found, or better, received. #34

In every truth there is something more than we would have expected, in the love that we receive there is always an element that surprises us. We should never cease to marvel at these things. In all knowledge and in every act of love the human soul experiences something "over and above," which seems very much like a gift that we receive, or a height to which we are raised. #77

Charity is love received and given. It is "grace" (*ch aris*). Its source is the wellspring of the Father's love for the Son, in the Holy Spirit... As the objects of God's love, men and women become subjects of charity, they are called to make themselves instruments of grace, so as to pour forth God's charity and to weave networks of charity. This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church's social teaching, which is... the proclamation of the truth of Christ's love in society. #5

**Charity goes beyond justice...** but it never lacks justice... If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them... On the one hand, charity demands justice:

recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples... On the other hand, charity transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving. #6

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 common good**. It is the good of "all of us," made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. It is a good that is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it. To desire the *common good* and strive towards it *is a requirement of justice and charity*... The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more we love them. #7

*The whole Church, in all her being and acting – when she proclaims, when she celebrates, when she performs works of charity – is engaged in promoting **integral human development**. Authentic human development concerns the whole of the person in every single dimension...* Integral human development is primarily a vocation, and therefore it involves a free assumption of responsibility in solidarity on the part of everyone. #11

*The development of peoples depends, above all, on a recognition that the human race is a single family working together in true communion...* As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically he or she lives these relations [with others and with God], the more his or her own personal identity matures. #53

Development requires attention to the spiritual life, a serious consideration of the experiences of trust in God, spiritual fellowship in Christ, reliance upon God's providence and mercy, love and forgiveness, self-denial, acceptance of others, justice and peace. #79

Many people today would claim that they owe nothing to anyone, except to themselves. They are concerned only with their rights, and they often have great difficulty in taking responsibility for their own and other people's integral development. Hence it is important to call for a renewed reflection on how **rights presuppose duties**, if they are not to become mere license... Individual rights, when detached from a framework of duties which grants them their full meaning, can run wild, leading to an escalation of demands which is effectively unlimited and indiscriminate... *The sharing of reciprocal duties is a more powerful incentive to action than the mere assertion of rights.* #43

*The principle of **subsidiarity** must remain closely linked to the principle of **solidarity** and vice versa*, since the former without the latter gives way to social privatism, while the latter without the former gives way to paternalist social assistance that is demeaning to those in need. #58

It is... necessary to cultivate a public conscience that considers **food and access to water as universal rights of all human beings, without distinction or discrimination.** #27

*Openness to life is at the centre of true development.* When a society moves towards the denial or suppression of life, it ends up no longer finding the necessary motivation and energy to strive for man's true good. #28

*In vitro* fertilization, embryo research, the possibility of manufacturing clones and human hybrids: all this is now emerging and being promoted in today's highly disillusioned culture, which believes it has mastered every mystery, because the origin of life is now within our grasp...To the tragic and widespread scourge of abortion we may well have to add in the future – indeed it is already surreptitiously present – the systematic eugenic programming of births. At the other end of the spectrum, a pro-euthanasia mindset is making inroads as an equally damaging assertion of control over life that under certain circumstances is deemed no longer worth living. #75

**Marriage** and the **family**...correspond to the deepest needs and dignity of the person. In view of this, States are called to *enact policies promoting the centrality and the integrity of the family* founded on marriage between a man and a woman, the primary vital cell of society, and to assume responsibility for its economic and fiscal needs, while respecting its essentially relational character. #44

Economic activity...needs to be *directed towards the pursuit of the common good*, for which the political community in particular must also take responsibility. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that grave imbalances are produced when **economic action**, conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation, is detached from **political action**, conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution...Economy and finance, as instruments, can be used badly when those at the helm are motivated by purely selfish ends. Instruments that are good in themselves can thereby be transformed into harmful ones...The economic sphere is neither ethically neutral, nor inherently inhuman and opposed to society. It is part and parcel of human activity and precisely because it is human, it must be structured and governed in an ethical manner. #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. #21

Being out of work or dependent on public or private assistance for a prolonged period undermines the freedom and creativity of the person and his family and social relationships, causing great psychological and spiritual suffering. I would like to remind everyone, especially governments engaged in boosting the world's economic and social assets, that the *primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is...the human person in his or her integrity*. "Man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life." #25

*Without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfill its proper economic function.* And today it is this trust which has ceased to exist, and the loss of trust is a grave loss. #35

*Business management cannot concern itself only with the interests of the proprietors, but must also assume responsibility for all the other stakeholders who contribute to the life of the business:* the workers, the clients, the suppliers of various elements of production, the community of reference. #40

"Decency" in regard to **work**...means work that expresses the essential dignity of every man and woman in the context of their particular society: work that is freely chosen, effectively associating workers, both men and women, in the development of their community; work that enables the worker to be respected and free from any form of discrimination; work that makes it possible for families to meet their needs and provide schooling for their children, without the children themselves being forced into labor; work that permits the workers to organize themselves freely, and to make their voices heard; work that leaves enough room for rediscovering one's roots at a personal, familial and spiritual level; work that guarantees those who have retired a decent standard of living. #63

**[Migration]** is a striking phenomenon because of the sheer numbers of people involved, the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises, and the dramatic challenges it poses to nations and the international community...No country can be expected to address today's problems of migration by itself. We are all witnesses of the burden of suffering, the dislocation and the aspirations that accompany the flow of migrants...Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance. #62

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. #42

*To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority.* #67

Given the **media's** fundamental importance in engineering changes in attitude towards reality and the human person, we must reflect carefully on their influence, especially in regard to the ethical-cultural dimension of globalization and the development of peoples in solidarity. #73

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...The natural environment is more than raw material to be manipulated at our pleasure; it is a wondrous work of the Creator containing a "grammar" which sets forth ends and criteria for its wise use, not its reckless exploitation. #48

The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations, [i.e.] integral human development. #51

It is true that **peace-building** requires the constant interplay of diplomatic contacts, economic, technological and cultural exchanges, agreements on common projects, as well as joint strategies to curb the threat of military conflict and to root out the underlying causes of terrorism. Nevertheless, if such efforts are to have lasting effects, they must be based on values rooted in the truth of human life. That is, the voice of the peoples affected must be heard and their situation must be taken into consideration, if their expectations are to be correctly interpreted. #72