

Pope says moral value must be part of economic recovery, development

VATICAN CITY – Ethical values are needed to overcome the current global economic crisis as well as to eradicate hunger and promote the real development of all the world's peoples, Pope Benedict XVI said in his new encyclical.

The document, "Caritas in Veritate" ("Charity in Truth") was dated June 29 and released at the Vatican July 7.

The truth that God is the creator of human life, that every life is sacred, that the earth was given to humanity to use and protect and that God has a plan for each person must be respected in development programs and in economic recovery efforts if they are to have real and lasting benefits, the pope said.

Charity, or love, is not an option for Christians, he said, and "practicing charity in truth helps people understand that adhering to the values of Christianity is not merely useful, but essential for building a good society and for true integral development," he wrote.

In addressing the global economic crisis and the enduring poverty of the world's poorest countries, he said, "the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man, the human person in his or her integrity."

The global dimension of the financial crisis is an expression of the moral failure of greedy financiers and investors, of the lack of oversight by national governments and of a lack of understanding that the global economy required internationally recognized global control, Pope Benedict said.

"In the face of the unrelenting growth 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, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth," the pope wrote.

"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," he said.

Pope Benedict insisted that the idea of the world's richest nations scaling back development aid while focusing on their own economic recovery overlooked the long-term economic benefits of solidarity and not simply the human and Christian moral obligation to help the poor.

"In the search for solutions to the current economic crisis, development aid for poor countries must be considered a valid means of creating wealth for all," the pope said.

The economic growth of poorer countries and their citizens' demands for consumer goods actually benefit producers in the world's wealthier nations, he said.

The pope said that "more economically developed nations should do all they can to allocate larger portions of their gross domestic product to development aid," respecting the obligations they made to the U.N. Millennium Development Goals aimed at significantly reducing poverty by 2015.

Pope Benedict said food and water are the "universal rights of all human beings without distinction or discrimination" and are part of the basic right to life.

He also said that being pro-life means being pro-development, especially given the connection between poverty and infant mortality, and that the only way to promote the true development of people is to promote a culture in which every human life is welcomed and valued.

"The acceptance of life strengthens moral fiber and makes people capable of mutual help," he said.

Development programs and offers of aid that encourage coercive population-control methods and the promotion of abortion do not have the good of people at heart and limit the recipients' motivation to become actors in their own development and progress, the pope said.

In addition, he said, an anti-life mentality in the world's richest countries is related to the lack of concern for the poor.

"How can we be surprised by the indifference shown toward situations of human degradation when such indifference extends even to our attitude toward what is and is not human?" the pope asked.

"While the poor of the world continue knocking on the doors of the rich, the world of affluence runs the risk of no longer hearing those knocks on account of a conscience that can no longer distinguish what is human," he said.

Pope Benedict also emphasized church teaching that making money and being wealthy are not sins, but that the way the money is made and the way it is used can be.

The encyclical condemned corruption, the exploitation of workers, the destruction of the environment, the continuing practice of wealthy nations imposing such high tariffs on imports that they shut poor countries out of the international marketplace and, especially, an "excessive zeal" for enforcing patents, especially on medications that could save the lives of thousands of poor people if they were available at a reasonable cost.

Pope Benedict called for "a profoundly new way of understanding business," which recognizes that investors are not a company's only stakeholders, no matter how the business is structured and financed.

Employees, those who produce the raw materials, people who live in the communities where the company is based, where its products originate and where its products are sold all have a stake in the business, the pope said.

He also said that investing always has a moral as well as an economic significance.

"What should be avoided is a speculative use of financial resources that yields to the temptation of seeking only short-term profit without regard for the long-term sustainability of the enterprise, its benefit to the real economy and attention to the advancement – in suitable and appropriate ways – of further economic initiatives in countries in need of development," he said.