



“ASPECTS OF THE *HUMANISM* ADDRESSED IN “*CARITAS IN VERITATE*”

A READING OF *CARITAS IN VERITATE* AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE XXVI WEEK OF THE SOCIAL APOSTOLATE OF THE CHURCH OF PORTUGAL.

FATIMA PILGRIMAGE, September 12-13, 2010.

INTRODUCTION:

Your Excellencies,
Very Reverend Monsignors, Rev. Fathers, Sisters and Brothers,
Dear friends,
I bring you all Greetings and Prayerful wishes from the *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace!*

By way of introducing this year's *week of the social apostolate*, we gather at this sanctuary: at this place of grace and of divine favour, to celebrate our lives as pilgrims on earth. Under this great symbol of “*pilgrimage*”, we gather to celebrate our lives on earth as “*journeys*”; yes, but as “*directed and purposeful journeys*”. Our lives on earth are “*journeys*” and “*passages*” which begin with a call into existence at creation, and which grow in response to a call to transcendence and to communion with one another and with God. Thus our lives on earth have the character of a *vocation*: a life-journey lived in response to a call from its creator, to contribute to the “*building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family*”,¹ as Pope Benedict XVI would put it.

This “*universal city of God*” is prepared for and anticipated on earth by the “*earthly city*” of the *human family: the community of people and nations*, where man's earthly activity, inspired by a commitment to love (divine) and justice, seek the well-being of the human person, whole and entire.

At the end of this week of study of the Social Teaching of the Church, I wish briefly to invite you to consider the *drama* of *man building an earthly city of the human family, with his activity*, so that his *earthly city* can be an anticipation of the *universal city of God*. The *drama* consists in the compatibility of an *emerging sense of man (modern)* with his vocation to contribute, with his activity, to the *building of the universal city of God*. This consideration, then, will be *anthropological*; and it will attempt to look at a form of *humanism, the sense of man*, which underlies the encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*. But first, let us hurriedly consider the encyclical as a *papal teaching*.

¹¹ *Caritas in veritate*, no.7.

“CARITAS IN VERITATE”, A PAPAL TEACHING AND A TEACHING POPE:²

■ A Papal Teaching:

Announced in 2007, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the encyclical letter: *Populorum Progressio*, of Pope Paul VI (1967) and the 20th anniversary of the encyclical letter: *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, of Pope John Paul II (1987), *Caritas in Veritate* was originally intended to celebrate the memory of these two encyclicals, especially for their treatment of the question of **development: human development**. *Caritas in Veritate* originally intended to take up the issue of **development** in the new and changed situation of a *globalized world*; for the *social issues* which did beset human development in the days of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II have now become “*global*”.

The incidence of the economic crisis of 2008-2009 invited the Pope to treat the issue and the ethics of *economics in the context of human development* in greater details. This delayed the promulgation of the encyclical letter somewhat; but on 29th June 2009 (feast of Sts. Peter and Paul), the Pope signed the new social encyclical and promulgated it on 7th July 2009 (month of St. Benedict), just before the meeting of the G-8 in L’Aquila, Italy.

“*Caritas in Veritate*” is a social encyclical, like very many others before it, beginning with Pope Leo XIII’s “*Rerum Novarum*” (1891).³ In it the insights of theology, philosophy, economics, ecology and politics have been harnessed coherently to formulate a social teaching that places the human person (his total and integral development) at the centre of all world systems of thought and activity. The human person (his salvation) was at the centre of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ: as the *revelation of the love of the Father* (Jn.3:16) and the **truth** of man’s creation in God’s image and of his transcendent vocation to holiness and to happiness with God. This is the setting of the two concepts: **love** and **truth**,⁴ which drive the encyclical. **Love** and **truth** do not only lie at the heart of the mission and ministry of Jesus; they also correspond to and describe the essential character of the life and activity of the human person on earth, namely, as a *gift and love of God to become gift and love too*. And this dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church’s Social Teaching, which is *Caritas in Veritate in re sociali*.⁵

The “*res socialis*”, human society, the contextual reference of the Church’s Social Teaching, has changed over the years: from the misery of workers in the days after the industrial revolution and the emergence of Marxism (Pope Leo XIII), the crisis of 1929 (Pope Pius XI), decolonization and appearance of “*third worldism*” (Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul

² The reception of the encyclical has been great. It is a document that appears to have something for everybody to identify with. Within thirty (30) days of its publication, Vatican Radio counted about 4,300 articles on the encyclical

in English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese on the web. The *Meltwater Group*, extending its survey to other languages, counted 6,000 articles on the encyclical (cfr. Gianpaolo Salvini SJ., “Enciclica <<Caritas in Veritate>>”, in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, (#3822, 19 Sept.2009), 458.

³ Counting the letter of the *Sacred Congregation of the Council* to Mons. Liénart, Bishop of Lille, on 5 June 1929, two documents of Vatican Council II: “*Gaudium et Spes*” and “*Dignitatis Humanae*”, the second half of the encyclical letter, “*Deus caritas est*”, and the Instruction: *Dignitas Personae*, on certain bioethical questions, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Dec. 8 2008), one may reckon with twenty two (22) official documents on the social teaching of the church (cfr. *Le Discours social de l’Église Catholique: De Léon XIII à Benoît XVI*, Bayard Montrouge 2009).

⁴ The introduction to the encyclical is devoted to the senses of these two concepts: **love** and **truth**, their relatedness, their rooting in the life of the Triune God, their revelation to man through Christ, and their distortions at the hands of men and in human history. Jesus who reveals and shares them with men is also the one to liberate and free them from human distortions.

⁵ *Caritas in Veritate*, no.5

VI), the fall of the wall of Berlin and political changes in Eastern Europe (Pope John Paul II) to globalization, under-development, financial, economic, moral and anthropological crisis⁶ of Pope Benedict XVI. In these changing situations, the social encyclicals of the Popes have fulfilled the need to actualize the same principles of the Church's Social Teaching. "The Church's social doctrine illuminates with an unchanging light the new problems that are constantly emerging".⁷

In the history of the Church, this "light of social doctrine" has been shed on *res socialis*: social problems and challenges in the world and in the life of humankind in various ways and under different forms. Encyclicals indicate a high Papal priority for an issue at a given time; but they are not the only means available to Popes to teach on social issues. Pontiffs define when, and under what circumstances encyclicals should be issued.⁸

Thus *Caritas in veritate* preserves the tradition of the Pope or Church Councils presided over by the Pope, offering teachings, which reflect the prophetic and teaching office of the Pope and which are meant to guide the Church's living of the Gospel's values and message in the world (social doctrine). In this sense, Pope Pius XII is believed to have held that Papal Encyclicals, even when they are not *ex cathedra*, can nonetheless be sufficiently authoritative to end theological debate on a particular question.⁹

In *Caritas in veritate*, then, Pope Benedict XVI, in full syntony with the long tradition (200 yrs.) of the Church's social teaching about the human person, treats the conditions under which the human person develops integrally, in all its dimensions and forms under the challenging ideological conditions of our contemporary and globalized world. Thus he makes constant references to Vatican II, especially, "*Gaudium et Spes*", and the works of his predecessors: "*Populorum Progressio*" of Pope Paul VI, and "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*" of Pope John Paul II.

■ A Teaching Pope:

This long tradition of papal teaching does not only locate *Caritas in Veritate* in the living stream of Church life and practice. It also roots the figure of the "*teaching Pope*" equally deeply in the Church's life and history; and the significance of this may not be overlooked.

⁶ Cfr. *ibid.* no.75.

⁷ Cfr. *ibid.* no.12; *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no.3.

⁸ They may choose to issue an apostolic constitution, a bull, an encyclical, an apostolic letter or give a papal speech. Popes have differed in the past on the use of encyclicals. On the issue of birth control and contraception, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Casti Connubii*, while Pope Pius XII gave a speech to midwives and to medical professionals, clarifying the position of the Church on the issue. Pope Paul VI published an encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, on the same topic. On matters of war and peace, Pope Pius XII issued ten encyclicals, mostly after 1945, three of them protesting the Soviet invasion of Hungary in order to crack down on the Hungarian revolution in 1956: *Datis Nuperrime*, *Sertum Laetitiae*, *Luctuosissimi Eventus*. Pope Paul VI, however, limited himself to simply speaking about the war in Vietnam; and Pope John Paul II issued a protest against the war in Iraq, using speeches. On social issues, Pope Leo XIII promulgated *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which was followed by the *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) of Pius XI, and the *Centesimus Annus* (1991) of John Paul II. Pius XII, however, would speak on social issues to a consistory of cardinals, in his Christmas messages, and to numerous academic and professional associations (Cfr. *Wikipedia's* entry on "Encyclicals", especially, on "Papal use of Encyclicals").

⁹ "It is not to be thought that what is set down in Encyclical letters does not demand assent in itself, because in this the Popes do not exercise the supreme power of their magisterium.; usually what is forth and inculcated in Encyclical Letters, already pertains to Catholic doctrine. But if the supreme Pontiffs in their acts, after due consideration, express an opinion on a hitherto controversial matter, it is clear to all that this matter, according to the mind and will of the same Pontiffs, cannot any longer be considered a question of free discussion among theologians." (*Humani Generis*, no.20).

As the author of an encyclical, the Pope is a religious figure, constituted *pastor, leader, prophet* etc., according to the faith of the Church, by Jesus Christ, the Son of God and founder of the Church. Like the Apostle Peter, his predecessor, whom he succeeds in the pastoral care of Christ's sheep and lambs (Jn.21:15-17), the Pope shares in Christ's prayer for Peter: "*I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and youstrengthen your brothers*" (Lk.22:31-32). As the spiritual and pastoral leader of the Catholic Church, the Pope is prayed for universally by the Church. No Eucharist is celebrated without a prayer for the Pope; and he is himself a man of deep personal prayer,¹⁰ who seeks God's face and the mind of Christ (cfr. 1Cor.2:16) in prayer. Like the Church which he is *made a pastor of by Jesus* (Jn.21:16-17), the Pope is, therefore, a figure in whom heaven and earth meet, and whose mission is to form and inform the earthly with the heavenly. He is a figure who represents an *openness* to the divine and the transcendent, and who accordingly invites the world to a similar experience of openness to the transcendent and the divine. His is a leadership that is exercised in the power of the Spirit; and it is rooted in the long and ancient tradition of the exercise of religious leadership in Scriptures and in the history of the Church. Thus, like the prophets of old, the Pope cultivates an *openness* to God during which "*his ears are awakened*" (Is.50:4-5) to hear a saving message for humanity and the world, and during which "*the Lord gives (him) the tongue of a teacher to sustain the weary with a word*" (Is.50:1). He can be resisted and rejected, persecuted and disgraced, but for this, he is also given a "*flint face*" (cfr. Is.50:7; Ezek.3:9) to teach "*in and out of season*" (2Tim.4:2).

THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY WHICH "CARITAS IN VERITATE" ILLUMINATES (AS A SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH).

It may be recalled that shortly after the promulgation of the encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*, the Holy Father presided over the celebration of the African Synod. In the opening mass of that ecclesial event, the Holy Father exhorted Africa and the Church in Africa in his homily to cherish its cultural and spiritual heritage, "*which humanity needs even more than raw material*". "*From this point of view*", the Holy Father continued, "*Africa constitutes an immense spiritual 'lung' for a humanity that appears to be in crisis of faith and hope*". The Pope, who earlier on during his travels to Cameroun and Angola to deliver the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the synod, had invited the Africans not to be afraid to believe (in Christ), now, passionately appealed to them to ensure that this *spiritual "lung"* was not infected by "*two dangerous pathologies*". These were religious fundamentalism, combined with political and economic interest, and a disease that is already widespread in the Western world, namely, "*practical materialism, combined with relativist and nihilistic thought*". The Pope referred to the latter as "*sickness of the spirit*" and "*spiritual toxic refuse*" which the so-called first world was exporting and contaminating the peoples of other continents with.

Again, after the Holy Father had promulgated the encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*, the Secretary of State, Cardinal Bertone, presented it formally to the Senate of the Republic of Italy.¹¹ Referring to the economic crisis in his presentation, he drew attention to how the crisis was nurtured by a *cultural matrix which is rooted in sin* and how important and urgent it was to dismantle it.

Just last May, at its plenary assembly in the Vatican, the eminent scholars and professionals who make up the *Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences* described alongside the

¹⁰ Cfr. Eg. The prayer life of Pope John Paul II in: *Varcare la Soglia della Speranza*, Alnoldo Mondadori, Milano 1994. Pg. 20-26.

¹¹ Address of Card. Bertone, Secretary of State, on the Encyclical letter, *Caritas in veritate*, (Senate of the Republic of Italy, 28 July 2009).

technical causes of the current economic, technological and social crises, “*remote causes*”. These “*remote causes*” of the current crises, as they identified them, are *spiritual* and *moral*.¹² Though not quantifiable, this *spiritual factor* is present in every human activity, distorting it.¹³ On account of this, Pope Paul VI, recognizing that “*men very often find themselves in a sad state because they do not give enough thought and consideration to these things*”, desired that there would be “*men of deep thought and wisdom*”.¹⁴ For, indeed, this spiritual and moral decay occupies a significant place in this first crisis of the era of globalization.

The *Pontifical Academy’s* identification of *remote causes* of the current malaise, which are *spiritual* and *moral*, echoes the view of Pope John Paul II. In his examination of the obstacles which stymie and oppose development, the Pontiff recognized that the opposing factors were not only political and economic. They were also *moral*; and so he went on to observe: “*Sin and structures of sin are not categories which one applies often to the situation of the contemporary world. However, one cannot easily understand in depth the reality which stares us in the face without identifying the root of the evil which afflict us*”.¹⁵

Accordingly, addressing in these last days (27th May) the plenary assembly of the Italian Bishops, Pope Benedict XVI also referred to the seriousness of the current economic crisis and affirmed the presence of an equally serious *spiritual and cultural crisis*¹⁶ which should not be glossed over. But, for the Pope, this *spiritual* and *cultural crisis* is *human*. And so, the current crisis may be manifested in the area of economics, market, trade and business, in technology, ecology and politics; but it is ultimately anthropological in character. All the forms of the manifestation of the current crisis are actually expressions of the human spirit and are, *per se*, not evil. It is their abuse in the hands of man – man in his susceptibility to new and modern ideas - which makes them evil. They constitute man’s culture; and they reflect his state of mind and soul - his spirituality.

This, then, for the Holy Father, is ultimately where the present crisis is to be located: in man, in the “*sickness of his spirit*”, in his *culture* and *spirituality*, infected by the “*new and modern ideas*” which he calls “*spiritual toxic refuse*” and “*pathologies*”. The culture of our day, then, as the Pope affirms, “*has burdens from which it must be freed and shadows from which it must emerge*” (CIV, 59). In the incarnation of Jesus, the *love of the Father* and the transcendent Word of God (*Logos*), in *human culture*, every human culture, including that of our day, is offered the means of liberation to serve the well-being of humanity.

Caritas in veritate, then, may be seen as an offer of a social teaching, rooted in and derived from the ministry of Jesus, who sets all things free, to continue to *free man’s culture*, *his state of mind and soul from burdens*, and to help them *emerge from shadows* of the so-called “*new and modern ideas*” which diminish man’s vision of the truth. In a sense, then, *Caritas in veritate* may be considered an “*anti-virus*” for a “*virus*” (spiritual and moral) which

¹² They have to do with *greed* and ideological /theoretical *presumptions*.

¹³ Thus discourses about the human being and about his vocation lose sight of his inner being and character: *spirit* (soul) and *body*, *corporal* and *spiritual*, which is the specific nature of man (cfr. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no.29) and economics and business life are also distorted by presumption about the infallibility of false economic theories, while, out of greed, human labour is replaced at the center of the creation of wealth by *financial activity*, carried out not as a means, but as an end (Cfr. S. Zamagni, “The Lesson and Warning of a crisis foretold: a View from Social Catholic Thought”, *Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences*, Vatican City, 1May 2010).

¹⁴ *Populorum Progressio*, no.85.

¹⁵ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no.36.

¹⁶ “...una crisi culturale e spirituale, altrettanto seria di quella economica”. He went on to say: “Sarebbe illusorio - questo vorrei sottolinearlo - pensare di contestare l’una, ignorando l’altra” (Benedetto XVI, “Discorso all’Assemblea della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana”, 27 maggio 2010).

is fast infecting modern society and the globalizing world. *Caritas in veritate*, we suggest, is a social teaching of the Church, in which the Holy Father develops and offers concepts, terms and ideas to engage and to respond to new and emerging (deconstructing and reconstructing) ideas about the human person: *the new and modern ideas man is susceptible to*.

THE FALSE HUMANISM IN THE “SICKNESS OF MAN’S SPIRIT”:

- **The “Burdens”, “Shadows”, “New and Modern Ideas” (Viruses/Pathologies) of Human Culture and Spirituality:**

The occasion and the setting, sketched above for the Pope’s social teaching in *Caritas in veritate* is a crisis situation characterized by materialistic relativism, rooted in a matrix/structures of sin, and which is spiritually and morally bankrupt. In this social situation and context of man’s life, his *culture, his mind and soul* (spirituality) need to be liberated of *burdens* and *shadows*, so that “*charity in truth*” for which man was created can become his true vocation.

The “**Introductory chapter**” of *Caritas in veritate* (no.1-9) clearly presents “*charity*” and “*truth*” as the basic determining virtues of human life. It presents their rooting in the life of the Triune God and their need for each other. In the life of man, they need to be liberated in Christ to be the authentic vocation of every man.

Subsequently, *Caritas in veritate* treats the conditions under which the human person can develop integrally, in all its dimensions and forms in a globalized world. It treats the conditions under which, man’s activity, inspired by *love* and *justice* can build the *city of the human family* in such a way that it (the latter) anticipates the *universal city of God*. In so doing, it maintains fidelity with the long tradition (200 yrs.) of the Church’s social teaching about the human person, making constant references to Vatican II, especially, “*Gaudium et Spes*”, and the works of his predecessors: “*Populorum Progressio*” of Pope Paul VI, and “*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*” of Pope John Paul II. While noting the progress made in the period, “*caritas in veritate*” also notes the problems: the crises, which have mushroomed in the areas of business, economics, market, technology, environment, globalization, and with **man** himself. Yes, the Holy Father notes the crises in all of these areas (economy, market, business, technology and research and the environment); but it is not these that the Holy Father calls to account and to order. These, as he observes, are neutral expressions of the human spirit; and they are *per se* not evil. It is man, the anthropological root of the crisis, that the Holy Father calls to account in his encyclical letter; and *Caritas in veritate* is addressed basically at the “*shadows*”, the “*pathologies*” and the “*ideological viruses*” which limit and obstruct man’s vision of his true vocation to *authentic and true love, to being a gift, to unity and brotherhood, to solidarity, to transcendence* and to *communion*; so that he can *contribute, with his activity (inspired by love, truth and justice), to the building of the city of man, as a foretaste of the universal city of God*. Thus, the human dimension of the crisis, the **anthropological** question, is central to the reflection of the Holy Father in *Caritas in veritate*. It is **a crisis of the sense of man, of human existence and of human development**.¹⁷ It is ultimately a spiritual crisis rooted in man’s denial of God!

¹⁷ Not recognizing and accepting the *gift of truth* about the human person, man, in his illusory sense of self-sufficiency feels that he/she can successfully eliminate the evil present in history by his own actions alone and with the democratic laws he makes. Man tries to ignore the sense of sin and evil, which wounds man, believing that he can eradicate it with civil laws, which actually do reinforce sin sometimes. Happiness and salvation are confused with immanent forms of material prosperity and social action (Civ.34).

- ***The Face of the “Sickness of man’s Spirit” - the Sense of Man:***

The Holy Father recognizes the prevailing conception of man, that in these fifty years the various human sciences have produced. In the name of *science*, these human sciences have produced an *ideology*, according to which *man is only the product of culture; and that he evolves/fashions himself independently of human nature and any universal laws inherent in his being*. Man is the author of himself, of his life and of his society (Civ.43). Man feels self-sufficient; and not only does he “replace God”, he does away with him completely. And so, as we shall see, man thinks that he owes nothing to anyone, except to himself; and he believes that only he has rights. This *ideology* too, has a history!¹⁸

Since the 18th century, thinkers in Western Europe have been *constructing* and *deconstructing* conceptions about the human person in ways which are divergent from the religious anthropology which for years and *centuries* has been related with the meaning of man, especially in Christianity. It was Christianity that did introduce the novelty, completely original in character, of distinguishing between *political power* and *religious power*, following its understanding of man as *body* and *spirit*. *Political power* has often been distrustful and uncomfortable of the power, represented by the Church. Indeed, *political power* has often sought to either neutralize the power of the Church or even destroy it. The Church, on her part, has always maintained her ***freedom of speech*** and ***action***, and her autonomy before *political power*, which she respects and whose respect she promotes,¹⁹ especially, when it serves the *common good*, and when *civil law respects natural law*.

On the one hand, when the protestant reformation introduced the philosophy of the individual and his subjective interpretation of Scriptures, it progressively fomented a separation/disassociation of the person (subject) from the *common good* and from the universal dimension of moral law, in favour of his/her *free will*. The individual thus became the *master of the interpretation of the texts of the Word of God and of his own existence*.

Thus disconnected from the *common good* and the *universal dimension of objective moral law* (natural law engraved on the heart of man), man now sought in *majority opinion*, however unstable it may be, the basis for the determination of the morality of law. This has led to a moral and an anthropological deregulation, giving the impression that *norms are created solely by consensus*. The result of all this is the introduction of a culture of relativism and denial of all the objective guiding principles (reference points) of anthropology. There is no regard for any *transcendent norms*. Everything depends on the subject and on his free will of arbitrary interpretation (*libre arbitre de l’interprétation aléatoire*). He thinks he owes nothing to anyone, except to himself; and he believes that he *only* has rights (Civ.43). Indeed, there is in all of these a perverse dynamic at work in the continuous modern demand for more rights, the removal of every limit, and the progressive widening of the scope of man’s action, up to contemplating the idea of self-reproduction. In fact, this dynamic, while it closes up man in an egoistic self-production, it also prevents him from assuming any duties, without which all rights are sucked into a self-referential spiral which eradicates every meaning.²⁰

In a globalized world, this is particularly serious and dangerous. “*On the one hand*”, as Pope Benedict XVI observes, “*appeals are made to alleged rights, arbitrary and non-essential*

¹⁸I am indebted to Msgr. Tony Anatrella (“Caritas in Veritate, La Famille et la Theorie du genre”, SECAM 15th Plenary Assembly 26th July – 2 August, Accra. Ghana) for the analysis of the genesis of some of the *ideologies* about man.

¹⁹ The *social teaching of the Church* has always maintained the distinction between *political power* and *religious power*. Jesus Christ affirmed it. St. Paul did the same; and subsequently, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas tried to systematize it (cfr. *Evangelium vitae*, no.72).

²⁰ Cfr. Fontana, S., *Per una Politica dei doveri*, Siena, Cantagalli, 2006, pg. 12.

in nature, accompanied by the demand that they be recognized and promoted by public structures, while, on the other hand, elementary and basic rights remain unacknowledged and are violated in much of the world” (Civ.43).

On the other hand, from the separation of powers, *political power* in the Western World has developed a sense of “*self sufficiency*”. *Moral law*, the highest instance of regulation of all laws, has been secularized and replaced by *civil law*, which is ascribed a **moral value**, by reason of the fact that it has been decided upon **democratically** and **by consensus**. This has generated a lot of totalitarian points of view, positions and ideologies – *veritable intellectual viruses* – which are affecting other continents and mentalities, and which are increasingly becoming *deconstructing* and *constructing ideologies*. The human being is himself the first victim. Denied as a reality in himself, the human person is increasingly being considered **self-creating** and the **product of culture**.

- ***The Face of the “Sickness of Man’s Spirit” – the Sense of Human Development:***

False ideologies about man lead also to false and utopian ideologies about his development; and two common such ideologies about man’s development, as described by Pope Benedict XVI in *caritas in veritate*, are a *technocratic ideology* and the *utopia of a return to humanity’s original natural state* (Civ.14-15).

- The *technocratic ideology* idealizes technical progress and would entrust the entire process of development to technology alone. Now, “*if development were concerned with merely technical aspects of human life, and not with the meaning of man’s pilgrimage through history in company with his fellow human beings, nor with identifying the goal of that journey, then the Church would not be entitled to speak on it.*” (Civ.16). But, as the consideration of it in the encyclical letter of the Holy Father shows, the *technocratic ideology* creates systems and ways of understanding man and the organization of society, which are unreal and contrary to both human needs and the common good.

- The other negative ideology: the *utopia of a return to humanity’s original natural state*, detaches progress from its moral evaluation and human responsibility (Civ.14), and it reveals the will/desire to *deconstruct not only economic ties*, as a way of favouring trade, but also *the conceptions about the human person and its institutions* (man, woman, family, marriage, children and their education etc.). The truth about man would then be freed of all models and moulds. Man would not be differentiated in anyway. All would be equal and the same. This introduces us into the ante-chamber of the *gender theory*.

In both cases, the sense of man is not a “being”: a created and a given existence that has its own ontology/being. Man is rather a “being that creates and fashions itself”. He is the “*sole author of himself, his life and society*” (Civ.34). In this sense, human development, which is a *vocation* (Civ.16), and which is both *a response to a transcendent call* and *a call to transcendence*, is often presented as if it is *man’s effort to give sense to himself*. That is why Pope Benedict XVI would affirm emphatically that “*neither man nor his development is capable, on its own, of supplying its ultimate meaning*” (Civ.16). Pope Paul VI did put it slightly differently: “*There is no true humanism but that which is open to the Absolute, and is conscious of a vocation which gives human life its true meaning*”.²¹

There are, then, “*builders of illusion*” who, according to Pope John Paul II, “*always build their case on a denial of the transcendent dimension of development, in the conviction that it lies entirely at their disposal. This false security becomes a weakness, because it involves reducing man to subservience, to a mere means for development, while the humility of those who accept a vocation are transformed into true autonomy, because it sets them free*”.²² This is **truth**

²¹ *Populorum Progressio*, no.42.

²² *Centessimus Annus*, no.25; *Civ.* no. 17.

which is not constructed by man, and without which there is no social conscience and responsibility. Without **truth** social action ends up serving private interests and the logic of power, resulting in social fragmentation (Civ.5). **Truth** is given!

So, there is *falsehood* and *illusion* about man and his development; and there is *truth* about man and about his total and integral development.

First, the *false truth* and *illusion*:

For the contemporary situation (of the developed world) of *constructivism*, *de-constructivism* and *re-constructivism*, which “*Caritas in veritate*” principally seeks to bring out of the “*shadows*”, *truth* is not something which is established between reality and its expression. *Truth* depends on a system of laws which some power or authority within society produces. As some French thinkers, for example, believe, “*le savoir n’exprime pas une description relativement vraie de la réalité, mais il constitue une forme d’organisation de nos représentations et de pratiques*”.²³ And so, increasingly, civil law does not serve any longer to organize society according to the norms of common good. Civil law now serves to create *truth*: to change and to replace one system of representation (of man, his society and development) with another, and to impose it by force of law and legal instruments, if need be.

Pope Benedict XVI warned about this development right at the beginning of his encyclical letter; for “*without truth, without trust and love for what is true, there is no social conscience and responsibility, and social action ends up serving private interests and the logic of power, resulting in social fragmentation, especially in a globalized society at difficult times like the present*” (Civ.5). The lack of interest for the sense of *truth*, the absence of conscience and social responsibility, and esteeming particular interests only loosen the social bond that binds us as a human family.

By contrast, the *truth* “*Caritas in veritate*” invites us to accept is *truth* “**given and received as a gift**”. For, “*truth, which is itself gift – in the same way as charity – is greater than we are, ... Likewise, the truth of ourselves, of our personal existence, is first of all given to us.*” (Civ.34). Thus, “*love in truth*” places man before the astonishing experience of gift (Civ.34).

Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson
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²³ Cfr. Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses*, Paris Gallimard, 1966.