

5.1

“I Recommend to You My Beloved Poor ...”

Magdalene of Canossa

☩ ... the authentic development of every person and of all humanity.

Benedict XVI

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. **Love, *caritas***, is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous **engagement in the field of justice and peace**. It is a force that has its origin in God, Eternal Love and Absolute Truth. 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 (cf. Jn 8:32). **To defend the truth, to articulate it with humility and conviction, and to bear witness to it in life are therefore exacting and indispensable forms of charity**. Charity, in fact, “rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor 13:6).

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. The search for love and **truth is purified and liberated by Jesus Christ from the impoverishment** that our humanity brings to it, and he reveals to us in all its fullness the initiative of love and the plan for true life that God has prepared for us. In Christ, *charity in truth* becomes the Face of his Person, a vocation for us to love our brothers and sisters in the truth of his plan. Indeed, he himself is the Truth (cf. Jn 14:6).

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 (cf Mt 22:36-40). It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbour; 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). For the Church, instructed by the Gospel, charity is everything because, as Saint John teaches (cf 1 Jn 4:8,16) and as I recalled in my first Encyclical Letter, “God is love” : *everything has its origin in God's love, everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it*. **Love is God's greatest gift to humanity, it is his promise and our hope**.

Caritas in veritate” is the principle around which the Church's social doctrine turns, a principle that takes on practical form in the criteria that govern moral action. I would like to consider two of these in particular, of special relevance to the commitment to development in an increasingly globalized society: ***justice and the common good***.

First of all, **justice**. *Ubi societas, ibi ius*: every society draws up its own system of justice. **Charity goes beyond justice**, because to love is to give, to offer what is “mine” to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is “his”, what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting. I cannot “give” what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: **justice is inseparable from charity**, and intrinsic to it. **Justice is the primary way of charity** or, in Paul VI's words, “the minimum measure” of it, an integral part of the love “in deed and in truth” (1 Jn 3:18), to which Saint John exhorts us. On the one hand **charity demands justice**: recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples. It strives to build the *earthly city* according to law and justice. On the other hand, charity transcends justice and completes it in the logic of giving and forgiving. The *earthly city* is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion. **Charity always manifests God's love in human relationships as well, it gives theological and salvific value to all commitment for justice in the world.**

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First of all, **justice**. *Ubi societas, ibi ius*: every society draws up its own system of justice. **Charity goes beyond justice**, because to love is to give, to offer what is “mine” to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is “his”, what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting. **I cannot “give” what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice.** If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: **justice is inseparable from charity**, and intrinsic to it. **Justice is the primary way of charity** or, in Paul VI's words, “the minimum measure” of it, an integral part of the love “in deed and in truth” (1 Jn 3:18), to which Saint John exhorts us.

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Another important consideration is **the common good**. 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.** To take a stand for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally, making it the *pólis*, or “city”. **The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them.** Every Christian is called to practise this

charity, in a manner corresponding to his vocation and according to the degree of influence he wields in the *pólis*. This is the institutional path — we might also call it the political path — of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbour directly, outside the institutional mediation of the *pólis*.

When animated by charity, commitment to the common good has greater worth than a merely secular and political stand would have. Like all commitment to justice, it has a place within the testimony of divine charity that paves the way for eternity through temporal action. Man's earthly activity, when inspired and sustained by charity, contributes to the building of the universal *city of God*, which is the goal of the history of the human family. In an increasingly globalized society, **the common good and the effort to obtain it cannot fail to assume the dimensions of the whole human family, that is to say, the community of peoples and nations, in such a way as to shape the *earthly city* in unity and peace, rendering it to some degree an anticipation and a prefiguration of the undivided *city of God*.**

Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is. **In the face of the enormous problems surrounding the development of peoples, which almost make us yield to discouragement, we find solace in the sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches us: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5) and then encourages us: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20).** As we contemplate the vast amount of work to be done, we are sustained by our faith that God is present alongside those who come together in his name to work for justice. Paul VI recalled in *Populorum Progressio* **that man cannot bring about his own progress unaided, because by himself he cannot establish an authentic humanism.** Only if we are aware of our calling, as individuals and as a community, to be part of God's family as his sons and daughters, will we be able to generate a new vision and muster new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism.

The greatest service to development, then, is a Christian humanism that enkindles charity and takes its lead from truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God. Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity. On the other hand, ideological rejection of God and an atheism of indifference, oblivious to the Creator and at risk of becoming equally oblivious to human values, constitute some of the chief obstacles to development today. ***A humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism.*** Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life — structures, institutions, culture and *ethos* — without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment

Awareness of God's undying love sustains us in our laborious and stimulating work for justice and the development of peoples, amid successes and failures, in the ceaseless pursuit of a just ordering of human affairs. ***God's love calls us to move beyond the limited and the ephemeral, it gives us the courage to continue seeking and working for the benefit of all,*** even if this cannot be achieved immediately and if what we are able to achieve, alongside political authorities and those working in the field of economics, is always less than we might wish. God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for love of the common good, because he is our All, our greatest hope.

Development needs Christians with their arms raised towards God in prayer, Christians moved by the knowledge that truth-filled love, *caritas in veritate*, from which authentic development proceeds, is not produced by us, but given to us. For this reason, even in the most difficult and complex times, besides recognizing what is happening, we must above all else turn to God's love. 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**. All this is essential if “hearts of stone” are to be transformed into “hearts of flesh” (Ezek 36:26), rendering life on earth “divine” and thus more worthy of humanity.

All this is of man, because man is the subject of his own existence; and at the same time it is of God, because God is at the beginning and end of all that is good, all that leads to salvation: “the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's” (1 Cor 3:22-23). Christians long for the entire human family to call upon God as “Our Father!” In union with the only-begotten Son, may all people learn to pray to the Father and to ask him, in the words that Jesus himself taught us, for the grace to glorify him by living according to his will, to receive the daily bread that we need, to be understanding and generous towards our debtors, not to be tempted beyond our limits, and to be delivered from evil (cf. Mt 6:9-13).

Listen to the voices ...

“Teachers do not go to school except when it is time to receive salaries.” Nigeria

“The school was ok, but now it is in shambles, there are no teachers for weeks.... There is no safety and no hygiene.” Brazil

“If parents do not meet these payments, which are as high as Rs. 40 to 50 per month, the teachers were reported to beat the student or submit a failing grade for her/him.” Pakistan

“Where a road passes, development follows right on its heels.” Cameroon

“I repeat that we need water as badly as we need air.” The Kyrgyz Republic

“The children keep playing in the sewage.” Brazil

“Church affiliated entities represent probably the most visible and far reaching safety net presently operating in Benin.” Benin

“Even the non-government initiatives have at best provided marginal access to Gandas (tribals). There has been quite limited participation of Ganda women in the development activities promoted by NGOs.” India

The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me: for Yahweh has anointed me;
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken
To proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison,
to proclaim a year of favour from Yahweh, a day of vengeance for our God,
to comfort all those who mourn,
and to give them for ashes a garland; for mourning robe the oil of gladness,
for despondency, praise.

They are to be called “terabits of integrity”,
planted by Yahweh to glorify Him.

For their shame was twofold,
disgrace and spitting their lot.
Twofold, therefore, shall their possess in their land, everlasting joy is theirs.

For I, Yahweh, love justice,
I hate robbery and all that is wrong.

I reward them faithfully and make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their race will be famous throughout the nations, their descendants throughout the peoples.

All who see them will admit that they are a race whom Yahweh has blessed.

I exult for joy in Yahweh, my soul rejoices in my God:
He has clothed me in the garments of salvation, He has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity.
like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,
like a bride adorned in her jewels.

For as the earth makes fresh things grow, as a garden makes seeds spring up,
so will the Lord Yahweh make both integrity and praise
spring up in the sight of the nations.

Isaiah 61

*It Is Always Necessary
To Pray For Everything*

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