

Column on time

No humanity without love and truth!

The economical crisis is a worldwide crisis. Everything and everyone is connected. Now there is the danger that the bill for the crisis is put down on the account of the poor. That is unfair and blunt. Unfair, because it impoverishes people and nations even further. It excludes people from food and access to water, which is basic for human life. Blunt, because it does not welcome the input which poor people can have and that impoverishes. Blunt too, because there will not be peace and stability if there is no righteousness.

Pope Benedict XVI writes in his recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Love in truth) that the crisis may be 'an opportunity to distinguish what matters and to develop a new vision on the future'. For this he wants to give some incentives and he develops a 'social doctrine of the church'. Of course he is not the first to do so; he even joins up explicitly with one of his predecessors, Pope Paul VI. Forty years ago he wrote his social ethics. In the mean time the world does look different. Globalisation and immigration have radically changed the face of the world.

The market

What does the church have to say about the economy? Something on the market, for example. The market is a good thing; people meet with each other and exchange their goods. You have a product, you made something, you are a bit of a creator, and with that you enrich the other. Vice versa you are enriched by what others have made. Of course such a change has to be commercially rewarding. But it needs more than just 'commercial logics'. The market also has to serve the common interest. En also words as solidarity and mutual trust belong on the market. And why not also generosity? If not, the market is detached from humanity and leads a life of its own. On the market you should not wear a mask of 'business as usual'. Of course you do business, but it is a *human* after all doing business. A human with humanity. That is not un-businesslike or soft. That is precisely emphasizing that you are not hiding behind an anonymous process.

Rights and obligations

Another important issue the pope mentions is: rights come with obligations. The world could perish because of people who stand on their rights, but do not want to hear about an obligation. Nowadays often is appealed to all kinds of private rights, while at the same time fundamental rights of other people elsewhere are set at naught. A fine sentence from the encyclical: 'The sharing of reciprocal duties is a more powerful incentive to action than the mere assertion of rights.' The world will sooner or later break down because of a growing group of people that have deleted the word responsibility from the dictionary.

A social doctrine from the church draws from the Gospel; otherwise you only say what others know for themselves. Also when economy, politics and society are involved, the Gospel is the source of inspiration. The Gospel liberates people: man goes far beyond economics and politics. Don't squeeze man into a square, because that is bad for man, but also bad for the 'square'. That will behave as a god, and that god is a Moloch, a Juggernaut: devours people. Therefore it is good when the good news of Jesus Christ is also heard in the domain of 'the town of the people'.

If you can spare the time I would suggest that you read that encyclical.

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Text of *Caritas in Veritate* in English:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html