

Caritas in veritate: Development in the Era of Globalization

The presentation of the new social Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* of Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican on last July still in the midst of the global financial and economic crisis has produced a strong impact due to the long wait that preceded its release, the importance of the topic to which it is devoted and the dramatic circumstances which took place during its publication. Indeed, a great social Encyclical like this one was expected for a long time; a document that would explore the issues of the economy and society in the light of the dramatic changes brought about by globalization in the last twenty years. In fact, John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus* –his last social Encyclical, published in 1991– had echoed all the lessons and transformations involving the collapse of communist totalitarianism, but had barely glimpsed at the changes that ensued in subsequent years. However, afterwards, in several speeches and messages, both the former and the current reigning Pope, had referred to the implications of the new scenario of global interdependence for the understanding and the targeting of the most serious issues of social life. With *Caritas in Veritate* we are offered an extensive and diversified document on the subject of development, entirely elaborated from the perspective of the phenomenon of globalization and presented right when the deepest crisis of capitalism since 1930 is taking place.

Benedict XVI sees both economic and social development as a part of the much deeper and wider dynamics of human development, aimed not only at the material prosperity of the individual being, but at his full emotional, intellectual and spiritual flourishing, met mainly throughout the capacity to interact and establish relations with others. According to the Pope –who follows here the main ideas of the personalist philosophers of the twentieth century– economic and social activities, if undertaken for true human development, need to be interpreted in the light of the relational structure of the person that seeks mutual recognition, dialogue and ultimately love among human beings. Moreover, the latter relational dynamics of development are understood –in Christian theological terms– as a reflection of the relational dynamics existing in God Himself who, from His intimate Trinitarian origin, manifests as self-giving love and self-donation (*caritas*), through the gift of Creation and especially through the gift of His Spirit that is given to us through the death and resurrection of His Son.

However, according to the Pope, this openness to relationality and love that genuine development implies, cannot be achieved through spiritualistic wishful thinking or by moralistic good intentions, but requires a proper and thorough understanding of the specific dynamics of social and economic life. This is where the idea that frames the entire document comes from: charity is not possible if not based on the truth of how things are and how they work. That is why the Pope inserts this philosophical-theological vision of development into a complex network of phenomena observed and interpreted by the various social sciences in recent decades, which, in his opinion, confirm the former vision from an empirical point of view. Indeed, according to Benedict XVI, the phenomenon of globalization should not be interpreted from a negative or fatalistic approach, or from a technocratic triumphalism. In the Pope's opinion, globalization is in itself “neither good nor bad”, but a new opportunity

offered to humanity to express its vocation for becoming one family of brothers. In fact, the profound changes in economic and social structures we witnessed in the last years –in the areas of the State, the market and the civil society or the corporation– have certainly generated many new and dramatic problems –especially new forms of poverty, exclusion and inequality– but also have permitted the collapse of old barriers and patterns that hindered the development of opportunities for entire peoples and regions. In this regard, *Caritas in Veritate* is a complex and sophisticated interdisciplinary text that aims to think about both the new challenges and the new opportunities for development in the context of globalization. The latter is understood not as a purely economic or technical process but as a historic call offered by Providence to the freedom and responsibility of individuals.

The aim of this special edition of *Cultura Económica* is to present some of the main concepts and perspectives offered by the new Encyclical through a set of papers written by the leading specialists from different countries. The issue opens with the article of the economist Stefano Zamagni from the University of Bologna. Zamagni, a collaborator of the Pope in the drafting of the Encyclical –and also a member of our International Board– focuses on showing how the papal document aimed at modifying the one-dimensional vision of the economy, which gives way to a relational and multifaceted way of conceiving it, closely linked to current trends in contemporary society, politics and culture. In the same line is the article by the Argentine political philosopher Joaquín Migliore, a member of our Editorial Board and researcher in the Department of Political Science at the Catholic University of Argentina, which shows how the Encyclical attempts to change the conventional interpretation of the relations between the State, the market and the civil society that had begun to operate in *Centesimus Annus* and that the author sees in *Caritas in Veritate* in a more explicit and extended way. In the same direction runs the work of the specialist in finance from the Catholic University of Milan, Simona Beretta, which provides a reading of the international financial system and its crisis in the light of the Encyclical. After an analytical and profusely documented study, Beretta tries to break conventional patterns and broaden the horizon for a more rational and also fairer financial practice. Also in this perspective, the French economist Jean-Yves Naudet shows how some of the Encyclical’s definitions on the market, corporations and profit-making are a suggestive message from the Pope oriented to the “widening of reason” of economists.

Another important subject that Benedict XVI boldly introduces in the text is also addressed in this issue –especially in the works of the Argentine academics Carlos Hoevel, director of *Cultura Económica*, and Luis Zemborain, professor at the Department of Economics at the UCA: the principle of gift as the key to understanding the functioning of the market, business and the economy in a global era. We also publish here the work of the development specialist from the University of Bath, Séverine Deneulin, in which the author shows how the vision of development presented in the Encyclical suggests a provocative challenge to the broadly accepted conception on the subject of the Nobel Prize in Economics Amartya Sen. Besides, the Argentine philosopher of economics and member of our Editorial Board, Ricardo Crespo, introduces the important topic of corporate social responsibility also following the same kind of breadth and richness of the Pope’s interpretation. Finally, closing the section of this issue devoted to the new papal document, Pedro Morandé, sociologist at the Catholic University of Chile, proposes a reinterpretation of the role of technology in globalization, by criticizing reductionist and technocratic temptations and appealing to the breadth of vision that inspires this innovative Encyclical.

C.H.