
SESSION THREE

Human Development in Our Time

In every truth there is something more than we would have expected; in the love that we receive, there is always an element that surprises us.

— BENEDICT XVI

INTRODUCTION

- ▶ The leader welcomes participants and then invites one person to read aloud the following Scripture passage:

Scripture:

But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each man will have to bear his own load.

Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches.

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

— GALATIANS 6:4-10

- ▶ Allow a few moments of quiet reflection on the words of the Scripture. Then the leader asks participants to pray together the "Prayer Before Study" by St. Thomas Aquinas (5-10 minutes).

Prayer:

*Creator of all things,
true source of light and wisdom,
lofty origin of all being,
graciously let a ray of your brilliance
penetrate into the darkness of my understanding*

*and take from me the double darkness in which I have been born,
an obscurity of both sin and ignorance.
Give me a sharp sense of understanding,
a retentive memory,
and the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally.
Grant me the talent of being exact in my explanations,
and the ability to express myself with thoroughness and charm.
Point out the beginning,
direct the progress,
and help in completion; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

CATECHESIS

- ▶ The leader offers an introduction of the chapter based on the following brief overview (10-15 minutes).

For Pope Paul VI, development meant rescuing people from hunger, deprivation, disease, and illiteracy. While those are still valid, a succession of crises has forced us to look at what has happened to development over the past forty years.

The Church is concerned, rightly, about the ability of a purely technological society to set goals and use the instruments such as profit at its disposal. For instance, profit is useful as a means to an end; however, once it becomes an exclusive goal, is produced by improper means, or does not have the common good as an ultimate end, it can destroy wealth and create poverty.

Economic growth, while it has “lifted billions out of misery . . . has been and continues to be weighed down by malfunctions and dramatic problems.” This has led us to the point where we must make choices that concern “nothing less than the destiny of man.” The crisis facing us today requires “new efforts of holistic understanding and new humanistic synthesis” because we live in a world that needs cultural renewal as well as to “rediscover fundamental values on which to build a better future.” Thus, the crisis is an “opportunity for discernment” to be approached with confidence, not resignation.

One of the issues we must examine is the blurring of the demarcation line between rich and poor countries. As the world’s wealth increases, so do its inequalities. Corrup-

IN A NUTSHELL

While Pope Paul VI had a vision of what authentic human “development” meant, in the forty years since the publication of his encyclical, numerous crises he could not have foreseen have enveloped the world. Because these malfunctions and problems effect the entire world population, the Church has renewed reason to examine, through the lens of Catholic social doctrine, how human and societal development has progressed, the roots of the problems that have been created and the challenges the world currently faces, while always bearing in mind that God has planted the seeds of a “civilization of love” in every people of every culture.

tion, illegality, lack of respect for human rights and the diversion of human aid from its proper ends, among other ills, can be found in rich as well as poor countries, old as well as new.

Clearly, “progress of a merely economic and technological kind is insufficient. Development needs above all to be true and integral,” especially in today’s global economy. The role of public authorities must be reevaluated and their powers reexamined to address the challenges of today.

Moreover as economic competition exists on a global scale, instead of just within national boundaries, social security systems in many countries are being downscaled in order to create a “greater competitive advantage in the global market.” This leaves citizens “powerless in the face of old and new risks.”

The whole issue of labor, labor unions, the mobility of labor, and unemployment has been deeply affected by current crises. Pope Benedict stresses that “the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man, the human person in his or her integrity.”

On a cultural level, too, our current situation is markedly different from the one that Pope Paul VI addressed. Today cultures interact with greater frequency, which leads to a twofold danger: First, cultures may simply exist alongside each other and be viewed as essentially the same and therefore interchangeable. “This yields to a relativism that does not service true intercultural dialogue.” Second, cultures can be “leveled” with resulting “indiscriminate acceptance of types of conduct and life-styles.” When that happens, “cultures can no longer define themselves within a nature that transcends them and man ends up being reduced to a mere cultural statistic.”

One of the gravest problems facing the world is that of access to adequate food and clean water. Until we consider the right to food and water as a universal right of all human beings, we cannot achieve lasting peace and stability on the planet. Likewise, respect for life, from conception to natural death, “cannot in any way be detached from questions concerning the development of peoples” for “openness to life is at the center of true development.”

Yet another critical issue threatening authentic human development is the denial of the right to religious freedom. “God is the guarantor of man’s true development,” and without the freedom to worship God, we are deprived of “the moral and spiritual strength that is indispensable for attaining integral human development.”

Pope Benedict stresses that: “The significant new elements in the picture of the development of peoples today . . . demand new solutions” that must be found “through a lens purified by charity.” Without the guidance afforded by charity in truth, globalization “could cause unprecedented damage and create new division within the human family.”

FROM THE SAINTS

You may dazzle the mind with a thousand brilliant discoveries of natural science; you may open new worlds of knowledge which were never dreamed of before; yet, if you have not developed in the soul of the pupil strong habits of virtue which will sustain her in the struggle of life, you have not educated her, but only put in her hand a powerful instrument of self-destruction.

— ST. ROSE PHILIPPINE DUCHESNE

HELPFUL TERMS

- **Cultural eclecticism:** The practice of arbitrarily combining various elements from a variety of cultures without reference to cultural development or background.
- **Intellectual property:** Legal rights over non-tangible creations that are the result of artistic or commercial endeavors, for example, a chemical formula for a new medicine.
- **Profit:** The difference between total revenue (income) and operating cost. Non-profit organizations do not return their profits to owners or shareholders, but use them to further their ideological goals.
- **Relativism:** The belief that that no ideas or beliefs are universally true but that “truth” and “validity” depend on circumstances.
- **Rerum Novarum:** *Of New Things*, the 1891 encyclical written by Pope Leo XII that discusses the condition of working classes.
- **Res publica:** Latin for “public matter,” it generally refers to an organized group under a single government.

REFLECTION

- The following questions are intended to help deepen your understanding of *Caritas in Veritate*. Individuals may want to read and answer all the questions at their own pace. If the study is taking place in a group, the leader should choose one of the quotations and ask participants to share their personal insights and ideas based on that quote (15 minutes).

Man is not a lost atom in a random universe: he is God’s creature, whom God chose to endow with an immortal soul and whom he has always loved. If man were merely the fruit of either chance or necessity, or if he had to lower his aspirations to the limited horizon of the world in which he lives, if all reality were merely history and culture, and man did not possess a nature destined to transcend itself in a supernatural life, then one could speak of growth, or evolution, but not development.

1. What does it mean to you to have always been loved by God?
2. In what ways does our culture attempt to lower our “aspirations to the limited horizon of the world”?
3. What is the difference, in your mind, between growth or evolution and development?

NOTES:

... uncertainty over working conditions caused by mobility and deregulation, when it becomes endemic, tends to create new forms of psychological instability, giving rise to difficulty in forging coherent life-plans, including that of marriage.

1. What are some life plans you have put on hold because of uncertainty?
2. Do you think that the current economic uncertainty is changing our view of relationships including the permanence of marriages?
3. How can your faith help overcome these “new forms of psychological instability”?

NOTES:

Knowledge is never purely the work of the intellect. It can certainly be reduced to calculation and experiment, but if it aspires to be wisdom capable of directing man in the light of his first beginnings and his final ends, it must be “seasoned” with the “salt” of charity. Deeds without knowledge are blind, and knowledge without love is sterile.

1. What is the difference between “knowledge” and “wisdom”?
2. How does charity (love) transform knowledge into wisdom?
3. In what ways have you experienced blind deeds and sterile love in your own life?

NOTES:

- The leader invites members of the group to share from their personal reflections (20 minutes).

DISCUSSION

- The leader asks participants to discuss the following questions, either as a whole or in small groups (20 minutes).

1. Which of the four problems Pope Benedict lists as having profound effect on both the present and the future — global interrelations, improper financial dealing,

migration, and the exploitation of the environment — has had the greatest impact on your life?

2. Pope Benedict states that “openness to life is at the center of true development.” How do you relate an anti-birth mentality, abortion, sterilization, and euthanasia to the suppression of true human development?
3. While world hunger is caused by a lack of material things, Pope Benedict says “a shortage of social resources, the most important of which are institutional,” is also a major factor. Do you agree that world hunger is caused mostly by a “shortage of social resources”? How can institutions help eliminate hunger without making people dependent on those institutions?

ACTION

Living Caritas in Veritate

As an individual: As Catholics, the admonition to do penance on Friday is still part of our devotional practice. Even if it isn’t Lent, fasting one day a week helps you to be in solidarity with those around the world who never have enough to eat.

As a parish: Most parishes collect canned goods and supplies around the holidays. Would it be possible to set up a regular donation area the rest of the year?

KEY POINTS

- Once profit becomes an exclusive goal, it risks destroying wealth and creating poverty.
- The world needs to rediscover fundamental Christian values if we are to build a better future.
- The demarcation line between rich and poor countries is no longer clear, as great poverty now exists in so-called “rich” countries and great wealth in so-called “poor” ones.
- Local producers as well as multinational corporations can fail to respect human rights. Injustice comes in all countries and at all levels of society.
- Mere economic and technological progress is insufficient if we want authentic human development.
- The downsizing of social security systems in order to fund competitive advantages in the global marketplace impedes authentic development.
- The mobility of labor, while positive in some ways, also can have tremendous negative psychological effects on individuals as well as cultures.
- Unemployment undermines human creativity and freedom.
- A real danger exists in viewing all cultures as equivalent and interchangeable.
- Elimination of world hunger is a requirement for world peace and stability.
- Food and water are universal human rights, as is religious freedom.
- The respect for life is at the center of true human development.
- Meeting the challenges created by globalization requires the guidance of charity, in truth.

CONCLUSION

- ▶ The leader summarizes main points from the group discussion and reminds participants to read the next section of *Caritas in Veritate* in preparation for Session Four.
- ▶ Conclude session by praying the Our Father as a group.