

! "#\$%" &' (")\$! "#\$* (+, +- . \$/ , 0\$1 + (2/3\$4&562 (#7\$

8#93# (62+, 5\$+, \$! "#\$%" &' (\$) *#\$%"%*'

Remarks by Stephen J. Pope
Professor of Theology, Boston College

BOISI CENTER FOR RELIGION AND AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE
BOSTON COLLEGE, CHESTNUT HILL, MASSACHUSETTS
October 8, 2009

Caritas in Veritate addresses the de-moralization of our world, expressed in various kinds of dualisms and antagonisms such as the separation of charity from truth, instrumental rationality from moral purposes, economics and public policy from moral reason (#31), etc.

political decisions, and technological innovations must be subjected to moral as well as instrumental assessment.

Caritas in Veritate has a number of strengths but also certain weaknesses. Its strength lies in the theological grounding of its vision of authentic humanity. Its general weakness lies in its attempt to cover so many topics that it becomes often overly general, abstract, and even question begging. Its high level of generality allows Benedict to affirm as united together values that in concrete circumstances sometimes stand in tension or even conflict with one another. It follows the general tendency of Roman

“*only* through an encounter with God [that we] are able to see in the other something more than just another creature, to recognize the divine image in the other, thus truly coming to discover him or her and to mature in a love that ‘becomes concern and care for the other’” (#11; emphasis added).

Cardinal Ratzinger in *Dominus Iesus* acknowledged "the salvific grace of God — which is always given by means of Christ in the Spirit and has a mysterious relationship to the Church — comes to individual non-Christians." How this happens, he wrote, is accomplished by God ‘in ways known to himself.’” This seems to leave us with an ambiguity: charity in truth is rooted in explicit faith, and non-Christians cannot have authentic charity, or charity in truth is rooted in implicit faith, and non-Christians can have authentic charity. In the former case, the agent has an implicit and unknown encounter with God; in the latter, the agent has (in some sense) an explicit encounter with God. The former has the advantage of acknowledging the goodness of the secular altruist, but is hard to square with the claim that, “*only* in charity, illumined by the light of reason and faith, is it possible to pursue development goals that possess a more humane and humanizing value” (#9; emphasis added). The latter, more distinctively Christian, position has the advantage of supporting Pope Benedict’s agenda, but verges on sectarianism in suggesting that true charity is only possible for those who possess an explicit Christian faith. It is hard to see how *Caritas in Veritate* might resolve this conundrum without either dismissing the secular altruist or downgrading the need for faith.

A second ambiguity concerns the relation between charity and justice. Perhaps in
C

church, and what he called the “shameful injustices done to indigenous peoples in Oceania, especially where children were forcibly separated from their families” (<http://www.eniar.org/news/pope1.html>, accessed October 8, 2009).

Something similar could be said about the church’s practice of protecting sexually abusive priests and transferring them from one assignment to another after they had engaged in criminal misconduct. Bishops did this out of misplaced loyalty to fellow clerics and a desire to avoid public scandal, but also out of misplaced mercy for the perpetrators. The presupposition that charity is more important than justice had very palpably negative consequences for thousands of victims of clerical sexual abuse. The subsequent reforms of the church now recognize the primacy of justice as a norm of conduct, albeit one that is motivated by charity.

§

§

§