



Primary resource

Caritas in Veritate, Pope Benedict XVI (also available on Amazon)

http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html

Prayer (from the USCCB)

Father, your truth is made known through your living Word, Jesus Christ. Guide us to seek the truth of the human person. Teach us the way to love because you are love.

Jesus, you embody love and truth, help us to recognize your face in the poor. Enable us to live out our vocation to bring love and justice to your people.

Holy Spirit, you inspire us to transform our world. Empower us to seek the common good for all persons. Give us a spirit of solidarity and make us one human family.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Session one: Essential frameworks for charity in truth as the mission of the Church

Readings in *Caritas in Veritate*

Introduction

Chapter One: The Message of *Populorum Progressio*

Scripture

John 13.34-35, 16.7-15

James 2.1-17

Questions for reflection (numbers in parentheses refer to section numbers in the encyclical)

1. What is charity? How is it intrinsically related to truth? What happens to charity without its pursuit in truth? (1-5)
2. How is charity related to justice? What does it mean for charity to go beyond justice? (6)
3. How is charity related to the common good? How does charity in truth go beyond secular and political approaches to the common good? (6)
4. What is the challenge for the church as it relates to charity in truth? How does that challenge relate to the mission of each of us? (9)
5. What two essential truths from *Populorum Progressio* define authentic human development? What are the dangers to human development? (11, 14)
6. Why are the links between human development and evangelism, faith, individual ethics, and social ethics important? (15)
7. Why is the notion of human development as vocation essential? What four insights about human development does the concept of vocation demonstrate? (16-19)

Questions for group discussion

1. Why are charity and truth both important to hold together as a framework for working for justice and human development in the world?
2. What are some of the ways we see injustice in the world?
3. What are some of the ways people, cultures, and governments try to address injustice?
4. Why should those ways be carefully examined and perhaps even challenged by Christians in light of charity in truth?

Session two: Human development and the basis for civil society

Readings in *Caritas in Veritate*

Chapter Two: Human Development in Our Time

Chapter Three: Fraternity, Economic Development, and Civil Society

Scripture

Mark 12.28-31

Matthew 25.31-40

Questions for reflection (numbers in parentheses refer to section numbers in the encyclical)

1. What is the current crisis Pope Benedict describes and the nature of the opportunity he sees for a response? (21-24)
2. What are the factors in human development that should be explored if we are to respond well as the Church? (25-29)
3. What does the dimension of wisdom in the response of the Church call for in terms of addressing the crisis of human development and its primary factors? (30-32)
4. What is the great force that presents the greatest challenge for the Church's social action through charity in truth? What is the risk presented by this force if it is not guided by charity in truth? (33)
5. How does gratuitousness relate to the development of true fraternity in human community? Why is that necessary when considering economic development in particular? (34-37)
6. What does an economy of gratuitousness and fraternity look like? Why is it that the state cannot establish such an economy, and what then is necessary for it to develop? (38-40)
7. What two realms need to be understood in their wide range of values in order to achieve a more just, global civil society? What is Pope Benedict's vision for globalization? (41-42)

Questions for group discussion

1. How do complexities in the nature of the problem of justice in the world indicate that the role of the State needs to be reimagined relative to the freedom and responsibility of the person?
2. Why is the danger of practical atheism, often practiced in political efforts to address injustice, a significant barrier to human development that must be addressed? How?

3. Where does culture tend to seek truth? Where does truth that fuels social action appropriately actually come from? Why is that difference critical?
4. How are gratuitousness and solidarity very different from government initiatives to address human development and economic disparity? Why is discernment of this difference important to us as Christians working for God's justice in the world?

Session three: Duty, subsidiarity, and solidarity

Readings in *Caritas in Veritate*

Chapter Four: The Development of People—Rights and Duties—The Environment

Chapter Five: The Cooperation of the Human Family

Scripture

Isaiah 10.1-4

Genesis 9.1-13

Deuteronomy 24.17-22

Jeremiah 22.13-17

Matthew 5.1-11

Questions for reflection (numbers in parentheses refer to section numbers in the encyclical)

1. What does it mean to say that rights presuppose duties? How does such a notion apply to the question of population growth and socio-economic stability? (43-44)
2. What does it mean to approach business and the economy ethically? On what foundation does Pope Benedict suggest an ethical approach to business is built? (45-46)
3. What duties form the basis for human development? (47-48)
4. How should we understand our duty to the natural environment as it relates to God's design and human development? (48-51)
5. What drives the poverty of human isolation? How should we re-evaluate the category of relation, and how would doing so better define the notion of solidarity? (53-54)
6. How is religious freedom different from religious indifferentism? Why should religion, especially the Christian religion, have a significant place in culture and human development? (55-56)
7. What is subsidiarity? Why, rather than government authority, is subsidiarity a better basis for human development and the solidarity and freedom necessary for a healthy approach to globalization? (57-58)
8. What opportunities are possible when subsidiarity and solidarity, rooted in the transcendent truth of the Christian faith, become the basis for human development within and between cultures? (59-61)
9. How does maintaining the center of integral human development apply to the problems of migration, unemployment, labor, finance, consumerism, and global political authority? (62-67)

Questions for group discussion

1. How do we approach life, culture, and social justice with the basic orientation that duties precede rights?
2. If we apply the idea of truth that guides charity to the environment, what might be different than what we see from common, secular environmentalist groups and attitudes?
3. What difference should subsidiarity and solidarity make when exploring the solution to problems of injustice and inequality?
4. What is the impact of Pope Benedict's insistence on the importance of Christian faith, even all religions, not only in public discourse but in shaping public (and cultural) life?

Session four: A truly Christian humanism

Readings in *Caritas in Veritate*

Chapter Six: The Development of Peoples and Technology

Conclusion

Scripture

Isaiah 2.1-5

Luke 4.14-19

Ezekiel 36.16-36

Romans 12.9-10

Questions for reflection (numbers in parentheses refer to section numbers in the encyclical)

1. How is development of the human person related to technological progress? (68-69)
2. What characterizes the harmful but pervasive technical worldview? How does that worldview distort human development, peace, social communication, bioethics, and psychology? What is the corrective? (70-77)
3. What is Christian humanism? How is it different from an "inhuman" humanism? (78)
4. What, ultimately, is the basis for authentic development according to Pope Benedict? (79)

Questions for group discussion

1. What is the real difference between a technical or technological worldview and a Christian worldview? Why does Pope Benedict focus on this difference?
2. "Reason always stands in need of being purified by faith..." (56). What does this mean when we consider charity in truth in contrast with political and social action in general?
3. What are some fundamental lessons we should take away from this encyclical as we begin to consider cultural issues that should be addressed by Christians (and how they should be addressed)?
4. How does the notion that charity in truth is the vocation of every Christian affect the way you see yourself as a citizen of this country and the world?

Sessions five-eight: Charity in truth meets world

In sessions five-eight we will use the framework of charity in truth summarized below to explore specific cultural issues based on feedback received in your registration forms and on recent events that highlight pressing issues both national and global. We will not restrict each week to the proposed topic should related themes and questions present themselves, so come prepared with thoughts and questions. *List is subject to change based on additional feedback (and issues that emerge in class).*

Session five: Systemic racism

Session six: Issues of life and human dignity (abortion, euthanasia)

Session seven: Prioritizing justice—social issues, economy, foreign policy/security, migration, poverty/hunger...

Session eight: Cultural grab bag—individual and social identity (gender, sexuality), pandemic, freedom of speech, cancel culture...

Summary of charity in truth to apply to real-world issues

Seek God's wisdom and mercy as we explore the issue together, especially as we may have disagreement. Ask especially for the strength to find and act on ways to address the issue with the love and truth of Christ.

The nature of the problem in light of God's truth

Define the problem with attention to the real complexity of the issue.

Look for root causes, both of the issue and perceptions about it.

Consider the issue and its root causes in the context of micro- and macro-relationships (and recognize the differences).

Consider the insights of scripture, theology, and the wisdom of the Church as they apply to the issue.

The charity of Christ and his people as it can be applied in the light of the gospel

Consider the impact of the issue on the people involved on all sides, including the impact on individuals, on society, and the world and including the impact of the real problem as well as the impact of perceptions about the problem.

Identify actions that can be taken in the context of micro-relationships that are consistent with and compelled by the love of Christ and his mission. Consider these solutions in terms of responsible freedom, solidarity, and subsidiarity.

Identify actions that can be taken in the context of macro-relationships that are consistent with and compelled by the love of Christ and his mission. Consider these solutions in terms of responsible freedom, solidarity, and subsidiarity.

Glossary

This glossary is meant to highlight those terms and concepts treated as especially important in Pope Benedict's encyclical, defined in ways he suggests they should be defined (as opposed to ways they are commonly used).

Charity—love received and given, to desire the good of the 'other' and to take effective steps to secure it; revealed and made present by Christ (5, 7)

Christian humanism—a truly authentic humanism that enkindles charity and takes its lead from truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God, giving us the courage to seek and work for the benefit of all, which includes attention to the spiritual life fostering trust in God, spiritual fellowship in Christ, and reliance upon God as father and the source of all deliverance, justice, and redemption (78-79)

Common good—the good of all people living in society (7)

Fraternity—the communion of human people that transcends every barrier, called into being by the word of God—who-is-love (34)

Globalization—the interconnection of humanity in which individuals and groups assume their responsibility for one another and the common good; a person-based and community-oriented cultural process of worldwide integration that is open to transcendence (42)

Gratuitousness—a logic of unconditional giving rooted in the responsible freedom of individuals; economically to act according to principles other than those of pure profit based on generous and free giving for the sake of social responsibility to others (37-39)

Human development—ensuring that current economic and social process evolve towards fully human (and humane) outcomes (20)

Human ecology—a duty to the human person, considered in him or herself and in relation to others (51)

Individual ethics—individual action driven by charity in truth towards authentic human development in light of God's redemptive purpose (the good of the other) (15)

Justice—giving the 'other' what is due to him or her by virtue of his or her existence and action; a recognition and respect for the legitimate rights of individuals and peoples (6)

Macrorelationships—relationships with and between social, economic, and political groups, institutions, and realms (2)

Microrelationships—personal relationship with God and neighbor, with friends, family members, and small groups of people (2)

Practical atheism—the deliberate promotion of religious indifference that obstructs or denies God as the guarantor of humankind's true development, depriving people of the moral and spiritual strength to strive to offer and receive a more generous human response to divine love (29)

Responsible freedom—the autonomous action of the person apart from and beyond the compulsion of any social, economic, or political structure or institution rooted in a commitment to charity in truth in shared responsibility (17)

Social ethics—collective action (social, economic, and political) driven by charity in truth towards authentic human development in light of God’s redemptive purpose (the common good) (15)

Solidarity—a sense of responsibility on the part of everyone with regard to everyone (38)

Subsidiarity—fraternal collaboration between believers and nonbelievers in their shared commitment to working for justice and peace for the human family facilitated in terms of the autonomy of intermediate bodies (groups that foster freedom of participation through the assumption of responsibility rather than the coercion of government legislation, economic institution, or political compulsion) (57)

Technical (technological) worldview—the idea that technology is self-sufficient such that the possibility of technical progress is equated with human potential and freedom (the possible becomes moral, truth is associated with utility and efficiency) (69-70)

Truth—the light of Christ known through reason and faith, a gift of God that supersedes subjective opinions and impressions (3-4)

Vocation—a call that requires a free and responsible answer in active pursuit of the good of the other (charity in truth) (31)

Wisdom—knowing, understanding, acknowledging, and respecting the specific competence of every level of knowledge (love and reason, faith, theology, metaphysics, and science) in service of humanity (30-31)

Additional sources for research and reflection

Papal encyclicals that form the bulk of the Church’s social teaching

Rerum Novarum (On the Condition of Labor) 1891, Pope Leo XIII

http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

Essentially the beginning of modern Catholic social teaching, truly groundbreaking, and a foundational document for many subsequent encyclicals (see below). This encyclical addresses the plight of workers in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, touching on issues that include socialism, unbridled capitalism, a living wage, workers’ rights, support for unions, and a rejection of class struggle. Pope Leo first articulated the principles that underlie the preferential option for the poor.

Quadragesimo Anno (On the Reconstruction of the Social Order) 1931, Pope Pius XI

http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html

Commemorating the 40th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, this encyclical offers an update on the state of labor and industrialization, and strong critiques of communism, unrestrained capitalism, class conflict, and inequalities. Pope Pius denounces the concentration of wealth and economic power, and calls for the reconstruction of the social order based on subsidiarity.

Mater et Magistra (Christianity and Social Progress) 1961, Pope John XXIII

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html

Issued 70 years after *Rerum Novarum*, this encyclical looks to the Church as the “Mother and Teacher,” calling the world to salvation and better social relationships. It looks at science and technology, noting their power to improve the human condition, but also to limit human freedoms, and calling on governments to safeguard human rights. Pope John expressed concerns for the growing gap between rich and poor nations, for the plight of farmers and rural areas, and for the arms race. The encyclical calls on wealthier nations to help poorer ones.

Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth) 1963, Pope John XXIII

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html

Issued only two months before the pope's death, this encyclical is the first to be directed to “all men of good will,” instead of just to Catholics. In a response to the Cold War, the encyclical outlines necessary conditions for lasting world peace, looking at respect for human rights and disarmament. Pope John calls for the development of a world authority to protect the universal common good, condemns the arms race, and supports efforts to build peace.

Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples) 1967, Pope Paul VI

http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html

This encyclical, which Pope Benedict's new encyclical commemorates, examines the economy on a global level, and addresses the rights of workers to decent work, just wages, decent working conditions, and to form and join unions. Pope Paul VI calls development the new name for peace, criticizes unjust economic structures that lead to inequality, and supports new international and social relationships.

Laborem Exercens (On Human Work) 1981, Pope John Paul II

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html

Issued to mark the 90th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, this encyclical once again emphasizes the dignity of work and the rights of workers, and the priority of labor over capital. Pope John Paul also addresses disabled workers, emigration, materialism, and the spirituality of work.

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (On Social Concern) 1987, Pope John Paul II

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html

This encyclical honored *Populorum Progressio* on its 20th anniversary, offering solidarity as a central requirement of our faith and times. Pope John Paul critiques East-West blocs and other “structures of sin” that compromise the progress of poor nations, and calls for solidarity between rich and poor nations.

Centesimus Annus (The Hundredth Year) 1991, Pope John Paul II

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html

On the 100th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, John Paul II reflected on the current state of issues that Leo XIII had addressed in his day. It focuses on the moral dimensions of economic life, the advantages and limitations of the market, the role of business, and the responsibilities and limitations of government.

Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life) 1995, Pope John Paul II

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html

An affirmation of the gift of human life and the need to protect it, this encyclical explored many threats to human life, including the evils of abortion, euthanasia, and the use of the death penalty. It called the Church to be “a people of life and for life.”

Deus Caritas Est (God is Love) 2005, Pope Benedict XVI

http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html

Benedict's first encyclical emphasized the connections between love of God and love of neighbor. Pope Benedict said the Church could no more neglect charity than it could scripture or the sacraments. He located love of the poor at the center of Catholic life.

Caritas In Veritate (Charity in Truth) 2009, Pope Benedict XVI

http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html

Anticipated since 2007, this encyclical follows up on the themes of Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, calling it the *Rerum Novarum* of the present age. It deals with the ethics of contemporary economics; poverty and development; global solidarity; charity, justice, and the common good; rights and duties; and care for creation, among other topics.

Online sites for research and action

USCCB's Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development

www.usccb.org/sdwp/takeaction.shtml

Catholics Confront Global Poverty sponsored by USCCB and Catholic Relief Services

www.usccb.org/globalpoverty/

www.crs.org/globalpoverty/

Diocesan director for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development

www.usccb.org/cchd

www.povertyusa.org/

Catholic Teaching on Economic Life

www.usccb.org/jphd/economiclife/

USCCB Faithful Citizenship to advocate for human life and dignity year-round

www.faithfulcitizenship.org

USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities

www.usccb.org/prolife/

USCCB Migration and Refugee Services

www.usccb.org/mrs/

Campaign to End Poverty in America with Catholic Charities USA

www.catholiccharitiesusa.org