

Encyclical Offers New Vision of Social Issues

Caritas Director Says Text Came Just in Time

ROME, JULY 7, 2009 (Zenit.org).- Benedict XVI offers a timely, new take on economics, politics and society in his encyclical "Caritas in Veritate" (Charity in Truth), according to the secretary-general of Caritas Internationalis.

Lesley-Anne Knight said in a press statement that the encyclical, which reflects on Pope Paul VI's encyclical "Populorum Progressio" (The Development of Peoples), "highlights how a blind pursuit of profits over ethics had become detrimental to people and the planet."

"The encyclical comes at a key moment for development with decades of progress at risk," she added. "The number of people going hungry has increased by 100 million to over a billion last year."

Knight continued: "The crisis exposed systemic failures generated by careless speculation for the benefit of a handful of people and at the expense of millions of poor families. But the crisis offers a unique chance to refashion globalization to work for the majority.

"The encyclical offers concrete steps that policy makers should explore to put us back on the path to true development. The encyclical reminds us that finance and business can work for all of humanity not just the share-holder.

"The return to a more equitable model based on collective duty is crucial in closing the gap between the haves and have-nots."

The secretary-general noted that "Caritas welcomes Benedict XVI's focus on improving aid," and added that the Pontiff's "challenge to reform the United Nations and economic institutions is timely. The UN, IMF and the World Bank need to ensure greater participation of poor countries in decision making."

"Pope Benedict speaks of our 'grave duty' to protecting the environment," Knight said. "We hope world leaders are listening to his calls for an international consensus and that the polluters must pay the costs as they meet for talks in Copenhagen in December.

"As the Pope says, individuals in rich countries must change lifestyles and their consumption without responsibility if we are to protect resources."

"The message to humanitarian and development workers worldwide is that in our love of humankind we strive for justice and the common good," she concluded. "Caritas welcomes the affirmation that true charity looks at the causes of poverty and the means to overcome it."

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