

READ REFLECT AND REVIEW

SESSION 3

LETTERS, ENCYCLICALS AND LIVES OF SAINTS

CARITAS IN VERITATE AND *LUMEN FIDEI*

READ

POPE BENEDICT'S LAST GREAT ENCYCLICAL, *CARITAS IN VERITATE* (CHARITY IN TRUTH) WAS RELEASED IN JUNE 2009. IT FOCUSED ON THE PROBLEMS OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS TOWARDS THE COMMON GOOD.

FOR EVERYDAY CATHOLICS, THE PUBLICATION OF A NEW ENCYCLICAL, OR TEACHING DOCUMENT, BY THE HOLY FATHER, IS A SIGNIFICANT EVENT! THESE TEACHING DOCUMENTS ARE RARE, HIGH IN AUTHORITY, AND DEAL WITH IMPORTANT CHALLENGES FACING THE CHURCH AND WORLD. THE ENCYCLICAL, *CARITAS IN VERITATE*, OR *CHARITY IN TRUTH*, PROVIDES A SPECIAL INVITATION TO CATHOLICS TO ENTER INTO PRAYER AND REFLECTION ABOUT HOW THESE IMPORTANT PAPAL TEACHINGS TOUCH OUR OWN LIVES.

A "SOCIAL ENCYCLICAL" APPLIES THE CONSISTENT, TRADITIONAL MORAL TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES OF THE CURRENT DAY. *CARITAS IN VERITATE* IS SEEN AS A SOCIAL , TEACHING LETTER WRITTEN TO ADDRESS THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS. IT DEALS WITH MORAL ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC LIFE, POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DUTIES, ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND OTHER MORAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES.

BOTH LOVE AND TRUTH, POPE BENEDICT ARGUED, ARE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE. BUT HE OUTLINED THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO MANY ISSUES: THE ECONOMY, HUNGER, THE ENVIRONMENT, MIGRATION, SEXUAL TOURISM, BIOETHICS, CULTURAL RELATIVISM, SOCIAL SOLIDARITY, ENERGY, AND POPULATION ISSUES.

THOUGH *CARITAS IN VERITATE* IS TOUTED AS A RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS OF THAT TIME, IT IS MUCH MORE THAN THAT. A DEFENCE OF FAMILY, THE SANCTITY OF LIFE, A CAUTION TO NOT UNDERMINE THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN DIGNITY: THE HOLY FATHER PRUDENTLY EXPLORES EACH AREA, DISSECTING EACH TOPIC ON ITS OWN, AS WELL AS RELATING IT TO ECONOMICS. REGARDLESS OF ANY ECONOMIC ASPECT, THE WISDOM SHARED CONCERNING THESE AREAS STANDS ON ITS OWN. IT SERVES US WELL TO TAKE NOTE OF THIS AS WE STRIVE FOR AUTHENTIC HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

POPE BENEDICT'S RESIGNATION GAVE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE COMBINED WISDOM OF TWO POPES WHO WORKED TO PRESENT *LUMEN FIDEI*, (THE LIGHT OF FAITH) WHICH IS THE FIRST ENCYCLICAL OF POPE FRANCIS' TENURE AND THE LAST OF POPE BENEDICT'S. POPE FRANCIS TOOK ELEMENTS FROM BENEDICT'S DRAFT AND MADE THEM HIS OWN. THE ENCYCLICAL FOCUSES ON FAITH AND COMPLETES WHAT HIS PREDECESSOR POPE BENEDICT XVI HAD PREVIOUSLY WRITTEN ABOUT CHARITY AND HOPE, THE OTHER TWO THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES, IN HIS ENCYCLICALS *DEUS CARITAS EST* AND *SPE SALVI*.

LUMEN FIDEI (THE LIGHT OF FAITH) IS THE FIRST ENCYCLICAL OF POPE FRANCIS, ISSUED ON 29 JUNE 2013, THE SOLEMNITY OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, LESS THAN FOUR MONTHS AFTER HIS ELECTION TO THE PAPACY. IT WAS ISSUED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE YEAR OF FAITH PROCLAIMED BY POPE BENEDICT XVI TO BE OBSERVED FROM OCTOBER 2012 TO NOVEMBER 2013. IT WAS THE FIRST ENCYCLICAL IN THE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WRITTEN BY TWO POPES.

THIS ENCYCLICAL TRACES THE HISTORY OF THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH (FROM THE CALL OF GOD TO ABRAHAM AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, TO THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS). IT DISCUSSES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REASON AND FAITH, THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN THE TRANSMISSION OF THE FAITH, AND THE ROLE FAITH PLAYS IN THE BUILDING OF SOCIETIES IN SEARCH OF THE COMMON GOOD. THE TEXT CONCLUDES WITH A PRAYER TO **THE VIRGIN MARY**, WHO IS PRESENTED AS A MODEL OF FAITH.

IN **LUMEN FIDEI**, THE POPE OBSERVES THAT FAITH WAS FORMERLY VIEWED AS A LIGHT THAT DISPELS THE DARKNESS AND ILLUMINATES THE WAY, BUT LATER CAME TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER AS 'A LEAP IN THE DARK', TO BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF LIGHT, DRIVEN BY BLIND EMOTION, OR AS A SUBJECTIVE LIGHT, CAPABLE PERHAPS OF WARMING THE HEART AND BRINGING PERSONAL CONSOLATION, BUT NOT SOMETHING WHICH COULD BE PROPOSED TO OTHERS AS AN OBJECTIVE AND SHARED LIGHT WHICH POINTS THE WAY. PART OF THE PURPOSE OF THE ENCYCLICAL IS TO RESTORE THE LIGHT OF FAITH TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF ITS PLACE IN THE COMMON JOURNEY OF MANKIND.

REFLECT

HAVE YOU EVER HAD THE EXPERIENCE THAT SOLVING A PROBLEM WAS EASIER IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS, RATHER THAN BY YOURSELF? WHY DO YOU THINK THE HOLY FATHER ENCOURAGES COUNTRIES TO ADDRESS GLOBAL ISSUES TOGETHER, RATHER THAN ON THEIR OWN?

IS FAITH 'A LEAP IN THE DARK'?

REVIEW

- 1 DO ANY OF THE TOPICS COVERED BY THESE ENCYCLICALS CATCH YOUR ATTENTION IN PARTICULAR? WHY?
- 2 WHY DO YOU THINK THE CHURCH SPEAKS OUT ON SOCIAL ISSUES? WHAT CAN THE CHURCH AND ITS TEACHING OFFER OUR SOCIETY AND WORLD?
- 3 HOW CAN WE AS KNIGHTS HELP TO RESTORE THE LIGHT OF FAITH TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF ITS PLACE IN OUR WORLD?