

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D
Hope and Love Through the Eyes of Benedict XVI
(28.II.08)



First of all, I would like to thank Archbishop Wuerl for his kind invitation to participate in this catechesis in preparation for the up-coming visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. His arrival among us is indeed a moment of grace, for which we must prepare, enjoy, and then savor in the consideration of his message.

At the same time, I appreciate the kind words of presentation by Msgr. Vaghi, a long-time friend. He has also been very helpful in introducing me to life in the Nation's capital and re-introducing me to life in the United States.

About two weeks ago, my secretary mentioned that a reporter wanted to interview me as an expert on Pope Benedict XVI. I was perplexed. It is true that I was in Rome when he returned to assume his responsibilities as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is also true that I spent eleven years in the Secretariat of State and had some contacts with him. From the beginning of his Pontificate until last 20 January, I was his personal representative to the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, but I do not claim to be an expert. Like most people I continue to be amazed at the versatility of this Church man who has demonstrated his capacity as a theologian, a professor, an Archbishop, and now as Pastor of the universal Church.

I will confess, however, that when I first went forward to greet him in June of 2005, he took my hand in both of his, looked me in the eye, and said "ci conosciamo. You gave so many years of service in the Secretariat of State." His words touched me deeply and continue to inspire my ministry to the Church.

This evening we have an opportunity to grow in our knowledge of Benedict through the two most important documents of his Magisterium *Deus Caritas Est* and *Spe Salvi*. It is a singular witness to depth of His Holiness' pastoral sense, that he has entrusted to us teachings on two of the theological virtues. I would imagine that the third on faith cannot be far behind. I propose to divide my presentation in half:

offering a vision of the first encyclical during the first 15 minutes and of the second during the final half of this conference.

I presume that it is common knowledge that the idea of an encyclical on love predates the pontificate of Pope Benedict. A manuscript was already in preparation before the death of the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II. However, I have little doubt that Pope Benedict impressed his own stamp on the text of *Deus Caritas Est*.

In this Encyclical the Holy Father offers us a “christian image of God and the resulting image of the human person and his path through life” (nº 1).

At the outset it is useful to observe that the present Pontiff in his first teachings, just as in the first documents of his predecessor, the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II, continues to assert that you cannot speak about God without speaking about the human person and you cannot speak about humanity without speaking about God.

As you know, the Encyclical has two distinct parts: the first speaks to us about the “Unity of Love in the creation and in the history of salvation” and the Second: “Charity, the exercise of love by the Church as a Community of love.”

FIRST PART

The Holy Father himself admits that the first part of his work is rather abstract and speculative. To quote his intervention published in the Italian magazine *Famiglia Cristiana* (1.II.2006): “at the beginning, in fact, the text can seem a bit difficult and theoretical. When, however, you continue reading it becomes evident that I only wanted to respond to a few very concrete questions for Christian life”.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF LOVE

The Holy Father speaks to us about a problem of language (n. 2). Semantics will tell us that love has a variety of meanings and uses, e.g. love of country, love for your profession or job, love among friends, between parents and children, among brothers and sisters, family members, love of neighbor, love of God. “Amid this multiplicity of meanings, however, one in particular stands out: love between man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness. This would seem to be the very epitome of love; all other kinds of love immediately seem to fade in comparison. So we need to ask: are all these forms of love basically one, so that love, in its many

and varied manifestations, is ultimately a single reality, or are we merely using the same word to designate totally different realities?" (n.2) His Holiness wants to emphasize the love which God in a mysterious way offers to humanity, and, at the same time, the intrinsic relation of this love with the reality of human love.

Greek culture prefers the word *eros* to designate the love between a man and a woman. It is a love born of human nature. It is a love in which one expects a response from the other. The Old Testament uses the word *eros* only twice. The New Testament, on the other hand, chooses among three Greek words referring to love: *eros*, *philia*, and *agapé*. The last mentioned is a love which gives of itself without expecting a response from the other.

It is not a mystery that the Church has been attacked, because some people claim that her teaching has destroyed the concept of erotic love. Has the Church with her commandments and her prohibitions made bitter for us the joy of *eros*, of being loved, which pushes toward the other and desires to create a union?

The reasoning is false. From the time of the Old Testament Biblical teaching has tried to purify that which counterfeits love. The *Canticle of Canticles* and the prophets (e.g. Hosea and Ezechiel) use the terminology of marital love to express the love of God for man. The *eros* of God for humanity is at the same time *agapé*. The philosophers speak of God as Creator, origin of love, but He could not love if to love would include receiving something from the creature. That would be contrary to His absolute and infinite essence. However, biblical faith presents us with a God who saves this abyss and loves humanity without expecting anything, only because He is love itself. This same revelation presents us with a God who hands over His Son for our salvation. Jesus is the incarnation of the love of God. He gives without expecting anything. We are not dealing with abstract ideas; He is the shepherd who seeks out the lost sheep, the woman who looks for the drachma, or the father who runs out to greet the prodigal son.

Commenting on the encyclical, Jaroslaw Merecki observed: "Love between a man and a woman includes all levels of the human person: corporeal, emotive, and spiritual. It is seen as a prototype of love, that helps us to understand its essence and its other forms, including the love of God for man."

Let us consider now the questions posed by the Holy Father and his responses as cited in *Famiglia Cristiana*:

"Is it truly possible to love God? Can love be imposed? Is it not a sentiment that either we have or do not?"

The Holy Father already offered a partial response in the introduction to his document. “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

It is important for us to remember that for us faith and reason do not contradict each other. Faith enlightens reason and purifies it from the effects due to our nature—substantially good, but weakened by original sin. Yes, we can love God, because He has not remained at an unreachable distance, but rather has entered and enters into our life. He comes to us, to each one of us in the sacraments through which He works in our existence; with the faith of the Church through which He speaks to us, making us interact with others, who are touched by Him and transmit His light. [With His decisions He intervenes in our life and with the signs of creation which He has given us.]

Once God has revealed to us that it is He who “has first loved us (cf. 1 Jn 4:10), love is now no longer a mere “command”; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.” (n. 1). Almighty God has not only offered us love, but He has lived it and calls out to our heart in various ways to bring forth our love in response.

The second question posed by our Holy Father in the aforementioned article is can we truly love our neighbor, who is estranged from us and even unpleasant?

The response is simple. If you really love God, there is no other option than to love those whom He loves. If we are friends of God we must be friends of all. God loves us and continues to love us despite our failings and sins. Our love is not something packaged and perfect. Rather we must continue to grow and to mature.

THE SECOND PART

Here love is presented as the essential task of the “Community of Love.” Love of neighbor is an obligation both of each Christian and of the ecclesial community. God is Trinity; the Holy Spirit who descended upon Jesus continues to be present in His Church and transforms the heart of the community.

With a rapid, but profound summary of history, the Holy Father recalls the charitable action of the early ecclesial community as transmitted in the word and prayer of the Apostles, the breaking of the bread and the communion (koinonía) (cf. Acts 2, 42). They distributed what they had among the needy.

The primitive community saw the need to organize this communion and so established the deacons as ministers of it. The typical example is that of St. Lawrence, who administered the goods received for the poor. When he was obliged to turn over the wealth of the Church, tradition has it that he gathered the poor and presented them as her wealth.

The organization of this charitable task has been accomplished in various ways. Examples include the diaconia or service through the Monasteries. It is certain that from the first Christians to Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, there is an uninterrupted chain of members and organizations of the Church which have been the incarnation of this spirit of charity. "The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could be just as easily left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being." (n. 25).

An objection could be raised, as the Marxists have done offering the theory that with the advent of the industrial revolution in the XIX century, the Church's charitable action is superfluous. Social justice must construct an earthly paradise where charity makes no sense. The State is enough. It is obvious that the dream of the paradise promised by Marxism with the revolution and the collectivization of the means of production vanished.

It can be admitted that at first the Church only gradually understood this historical social change and the problem of an asocial structure which the relationship between owners and workers required. However, there were some pioneers such as Bishop Ketteler of Mainz (+1877). Ecclesial movements arose and religious congregations were formed to attend to the new needs created in society. Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) addressed social teachings directly and opened the door to a process culminating in the publication of *Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church* published after much tribulation and many drafts in 2004 by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

Starting with n. 28 of the document, the Holy Father defines the relationship existing between the necessary commitment to justice and the ministry of charity.

"The just ordering of society and the State is the role of politics." (n. 28) The Church neither has that task as a central purpose nor does she possess the means to

realize it. Inspired by the Gospel, the Church must shed light on the way to proceed and help the State.

Fundamental to Christianity is the distinction between what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God (cf. Mt 22:21), in other words, the distinction between Church and State, or, as the Second Vatican Council puts it, the autonomy of the temporal sphere. The State may not impose religion, yet it must guarantee religious freedom and harmony between the followers of different religions. For her part, the Church, as the social expression of Christian faith, has a proper independence and is structured on the basis of her faith as a community which the State must recognize. The two spheres are distinct, yet always interrelated.

[“Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now. But this presupposes an even more radical question: what is justice? The problem is one of practical reason; but if reason is to be exercised properly, it must undergo constant purification, since it can never be completely free of the danger of a certain ethical blindness caused by the dazzling effect of power and special interests.” (Ibid.)]

Here politics and faith meet. The Church presents her position based on reason and natural law, that is, what is consonant with the nature of being human. Love, caritas, will always be necessary, even in the most just of societies. There is no system of government, no matter how just, which will make the ministry of love superfluous. The one who tries to have nothing to do with love is preparing to have nothing to do with humanity as such. There will always be needs and afflictions, to which we must attend.

The multiple structures of charitable service in today's social context

In our time, a positive collateral effect of globalization is evident in the concern for our neighbors which surpasses national borders and tends to raise the horizons of the whole world. [State agencies and humanitarian associations work to promote this awareness and therefore many charitable and philanthropic organizations have been formed. In both the Catholic Church and other ecclesial Communities new forms of charitable activities have arisen. Obviously there is an earnest hope that their collaboration will be fruitful.] It is imperative that the charitable activity of the Church does not lose its own identity, lest it be subsumed into the sea of ordinary assistance and being converted into a mere variation on a

common theme. It must maintain all the splendor of the essence of ecclesial Christian charity.

Christian charitable activity, beyond its professional competence, must be based in the experience of a personal encounter with Christ, whose love has touched the believer's heart, and inspired the love of neighbor. It must be independent of parties and ideologies. The program of the Christian, of the Good Samaritan, of Jesus, is a heart which sees where there is need for love and responds accordingly.

Moreover, christian charitable activity must not be exploited by proselytism. Love is gratuitous. Albeit inseparable from God and Christ, it is not practiced to accomplish other goals. The Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and it is best to maintain silence. The hymn to charity in St. Paul (1 Cor.13) must be the Magna Carta of the whole ecclesial service to protect it from being reduced to mere activism. Christian charity is the expression of deep love of Almighty God.

In this context, and considering the secularism which can also condition many Catholics engaged in charitable work, the Pope reminds us of the importance of prayer. Living contact with Christ prevents the disproportion of the needs and the limits of our own efforts, which could push the charitable agent to the presumption that he can accomplish what God apparently does not or, on the other hand, to the temptation to give into inertia and resignation.

Prayer is not a waste of time, even when the situation seems to demand immediate action. One who prays does not pretend to change or correct the plans of God, but rather with the example of Mary and the Saints to reach in God the light and the power of love which overcomes all obscurity and selfishness present in the world.

SPE SALVI: Encyclical about the virtue of Hope

The second Encyclical of His Holiness considers Christian hope and is definitely more difficult to understand and savor. I suggest that there is a fundamental question raised by the Holy Father: Can the contemporary human person really hope and, secondly, does he hope in the future, which is eternal life? What do we really want? What in fact is life? (n. 11)

The text opens with a passage from Romans: "Spe salvi facti sumus" (in hope we were saved) (Rm 8,24) and after an introduction consists in eight chapters:

- Faith is hope,
- The concept of hope based on the faith of the NT and the Early Church,

- Eternal life,
- Is Christian hope individualistic?,
- The transformation of Christian faith-hope in the modern age,
- The true shape of Christian hope,
- "Settings" for learning and practicing hope,
- Mary, the star of hope.

In the introduction, the Holy Father affirms that with salvation we have been given hope, in which we can trust. It allows us to face the present, which although laborious, we can live and accept if it takes us to a goal, if we can be certain that this goal is so great that it justifies the effort expended on the way. But, what kind of hope are we talking about?

Faith is Hope. Hope is central to biblical faith. The first Christians, coming from paganism, had gods, but were without God. They lived in darkness. Christians "have a future, they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness. the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known—it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing. The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life." (n.2). The Holy Father offers us the example of the African saint, Josefina Bakhita, a slave of many masters, who met, as the slave of an Italian, the true Master, the Lord, to whom all the rest are subordinated. With that discovery, she also recognized her dignity as a daughter of God. At the end, she was an apostle of authentic liberation, offering through her witness, true liberty to others.

The concept of hope based on the faith of the NT and the Early Church

Christian hope begins with an experience of God in Christ. The Pope surveys many biblical passages and confirms them with data from the primitive Church. Christianity does not deliver a socio-revolutionary message such as that of Sparta or one of the struggle for a political liberation. Christ with His life and His submission to the Cross brings us the message of a living God the Father, who transforms our lives, even if the external structures continue without change. He helps us overcome suffering and slaveries; He changes society from within. (nº 4).

Hope and faith go together. Even in the NT they are sometimes identical. For the believer, there is a future which is already reality. The fact that this future exists, changes the present. Future realities have their effect in the present ones and vice-versa. (nn.6-7).

A clear example of this principle and a proof for us is the example of the martyrs and those Saints who left everything and took up a life of self-denial and asceticism. (n.9).

What is eternal life?

“Baptism is not only a social act within the community, nor only the welcome of the Church. In the baptismal rite parents ask the Church for faith for their children. To the subsequent question, what does faith give you? They respond: eternal life. “Perhaps many people reject the faith today simply because they do not find the prospect of eternal life attractive. What they desire is not eternal life at all, but this present life, for which faith in eternal life seems something of an impediment.” The reality of life here makes many doubt the desirability of this life continued into all eternity. However, our hope is for eternal life, the fullness of joy, which the human person desires and longs for. This longing for fullness is present in the hearts of all. Eternity revealed by faith is authentic life. (nn. 10-12)

Is Christian hope individualistic?

Christianity has been criticized as individualistic: you seek your own salvation; forget about the rest. We are unconcerned about the earthly world in which we live. We separate ourselves from others and some even shut themselves into monasteries. Already the Old Testament taught that salvation is communal. Many texts from the Fathers of the Church illustrate the same truth. The Christian notion of salvation is ecclesial, communal, and of the whole people of God. Eternal salvation presumes a commitment with the manifestation of the Kingdom of God here below. (13-15).

The transformation of Christian faith-hope in the modern age

The conception that christian salvation is individualistic is the fruit of XVIII Century rationalism. With the discovery of America and the new technological accomplishments, knowledge of the laws of nature permitted the domination of creation. Here His Holiness, beginning with Bacon, analyzes the hope that science and advancement would lead to the realization of paradise lost through original sin. Relegating religious faith to exclusively private and other worldly, faith in progress is born. “Progress is the overcoming of all forms of dependency—it is progress towards perfect freedom. Likewise freedom is seen purely as a promise, in which

man becomes more and more fully himself... Reason and freedom seem to guarantee by themselves, by virtue of their intrinsic goodness, a new and perfect human community. The two key concepts of “reason” and “freedom”, however, were tacitly interpreted as being in conflict with the shackles of faith and of the Church as well as those of the political structures of the period. Both concepts therefore contain a revolutionary potential of enormous explosive force.”. (nº 18).

The results of the French and industrial Revolutions introduced social changes which led to an intolerable situation. Karl Marx makes his own the change desired by Engels “Progress towards the better, towards the definitively good world, no longer comes simply from science but from politics—from a scientifically conceived politics that recognizes the structure of history and society and thus points out the road towards revolution, towards all-encompassing change.” (nº 20).

Describing the fundamental error of Marxism as being its materialism, the Pope observes: Marx forgot that man always remains man. He forgot man and he forgot man's freedom... man, in fact, is not merely the product of economic conditions, and it is not possible to redeem him purely from the outside by creating a favorable economic environment.” (n 21).

Christianity must dialogue with the contemporary world. It must learn what it can offer and what it cannot. Reason is a great gift from God and must overcome irrationality. However, the domination of reason becomes blind if it forgets God. Human freedom demands that several freedoms are concurrent.

“Man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope...Reason therefore needs faith if it is to be completely itself: reason and faith need one another in order to fulfill their true nature and their mission.”

The true shape of Christian hope

The Holy Father notes the progression in our capacity to master nature. “Yet in the field of ethical awareness and moral decision-making, there is no similar possibility of accumulation for the simple reason that man's freedom is always new and he must always make his decisions anew.” The weaknesses and temptations are always the same. (n 24):

a) “The right state of human affairs, the moral well-being of the world can never be guaranteed simply through structures alone, however good they are.

b) “Since man always remains free and since his freedom is always fragile, the kingdom of good will never be definitively established in this world.(n. 24)” “Freedom must be constantly won over for the cause of good.”

Faced with the progress in the organization of the world, Christians have tended to focus a bit more on the individual and his salvation, even though they have continued to be concerned with the formation of the human person and helping those who suffer and are excluded. (n 25).

Love not science redeems man. One who experiences love in his life, senses a moment of redemption, which reveals a new meaning. However, given that all human love is fragile and will end one day (with death), we feel the need for a love which continues, is unconditional and is God manifested in Christ. (Rom. 8, 38-39) The one who does not know God, despite all the little hopes he has, lacks the hope that sustains his whole life. Christ came so that we might have life and life in abundance. (Jn 10,10). (nn. 26-27).

If this hope were concentrated in the individual and all others were forgotten, it would not be authentic hope. The Scriptures and the Fathers teach us that He who loves God, loves all. “To live for Him means allowing oneself to be drawn into His being for others.”(nn.28-30).

“Settings” for learning and practicing hope

Prayer is a setting for hope, because even when no one will listen to me, God always listens. The Holy Father’s reflections here are very tender and he recalls the example of Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan who survived 13 years of imprisonment and torture, because of his strong prayer life.

Action and suffering as settings for learning hope

[All our activity must be hope, hoping for our good and for a better world.] If we do not want to be frustrated we must place our hope in God’s action. As His collaborators, we strive to improve structures to promote human progress, but definitively hope in the promise of God is what orients everything. (n 35).

“Like action, suffering is a part of our human existence.” Despite all of the progress in medicine, physical and psychological illnesses are increasing. With some splendid paragraphs the Holy Father speaks to us about the existence of suffering in

our world. Our limitations and sin make us aware that suffering will always exist. Obviously, we try to diminish and avoid suffering, but definitively we must accept what comes and mature in our understanding of Scripture and the lives of the saints. (nn. 36-37)

“The true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer. This holds true both for the individual and for society.”. Com-*passion* for another is necessary. All suffering on the part of another must also be mine. (n.38). “To suffer with the other and for others; to suffer for the sake of truth and justice; to suffer out of love and in order to become a person who truly loves—these are fundamental elements of humanity, and to abandon them would destroy man himself. Yet once again the question arises: are we capable of this?” (39)

The history of Christianity demonstrates this possibility confirmed by the example of many martyrs and saints. God made man teaches us that God, being ontologically incapable of suffering, shared our suffering. Henceforth we can suffer with Christ. (nº 39). The Christian people understood that it could “offer” its small daily crosses and thereby insert itself into the great compassion of Christ.” (nº 40).

Judgment as a setting for learning and practicing hope (nn.41-48)

Every Sunday in the creed we profess our faith in Jesus Christ who will come at the end of time to judge the living and the dead. From the beginning, faith in this mystery determined daily life. In churches both aspects of the mystery were depicted: resurrection of Christ and the last judgment. As time went on, the second aspect attracted attention and was frequently used almost as a threat. I know myself that in dealing with certain questions in my last assignment I often reminded myself and others of the basis of the final judgment as a fulcrum for living the Gospel.

In the modern world the horror of widespread injustice and universal suffering, many concluded that a good and just God would not permit so much evil. Many thought that progress and human knowledge would eliminate these situations, yet the events in human history show us how far man’s inhumanity can go. To await justice from human society alone is impossible.

“A world which has to create its own justice is a world without hope.” Even if it were possible to attain world justice, all the evil caused in the past would remain without reparation. It is necessary to accept the “resurrection of the body”. The only other solution would be an authority that can execute justice now and repair the

injustices of the past. The only one with this power is Jesus Christ. When and how will it come about?

The Church responded with her faith in the second coming of the Risen Lord. There will be justice for all. In this context the Holy Father presents the different possibilities which theology offers, respecting revelation and the Magisterium.

Everyone will have a meeting with the Risen Lord at death. There will be those who because of their conduct during life on earth will be incapable of change and will continue to resist even the presence of the Risen Lord. They will not be able to share eternal joy. Others, who despite a good life, will find themselves affected by human misery; in the meeting with Christ, who is light and fire, they will feel their deformity and with the sadness that it bears, they will be purified “as if by fire” in the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Recalling the prayers for the dead in the Old Testament, we cultivate solidarity with them and they can experience consolation and relief by means of the Eucharist, prayer, and alms. The suffering and the good works of each person, have an effect in the rest. “Our hope is always essentially also hope for others; only thus is it truly hope for me too. As Christians we should never limit ourselves to asking: how can I save myself? We should also ask: what can I do in order that others may be saved..? Then I will have done my utmost for my own personal salvation as well.”

Mary, Star of Hope

For sailors the stars serve as directional indicators Mary is the star who guides us in the turbulent sea of life. So the Church sings in a hymn from the VIII/IX centuries: Ave maris stella.

The Holy Father concludes his encyclical with a conversation-canticle to Mary, model of hope. From the Annunciation to the Resurrection she trod in hope the path which was hers as Mother of the Messiah. On the cross she was designated as Mother of the Apostles of her Son and with them waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

“Holy Mary, Mother of God, our Mother, teach us to believe, to hope, to love with you. Show us the way to his Kingdom! Star of the Sea, shine upon us and guide us on our way!”

By way of a conclusion, let us listen to the Holy Father's words last Sunday at the Angelus:

"Christ's thirst is an entranceway to the mystery of God, who became thirsty to satisfy our thirst, just as He became poor to make us rich (cf. II Cor 8: 9). Yes, God thirsts for our faith and our love. As a good and merciful Father, He wants our total, possible good, and this good is He Himself. The Samaritan woman, on the other hand, represents the existential dissatisfaction of one who does not find what he seeks. She had "five husbands" and now she lives with another man; her going to and from the well to draw water expresses a repetitive and resigned life. However, everything changes for her that day, thanks to the conversation with the Lord Jesus, who upsets her to the point that she leaves her pitcher of water and runs to tell the villagers: "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (Jn 4: 29). (24.II.08).

Essentially, my friends, Pope Benedict XVI has shared with us this doctrine on love and hope, because he wants us to grow in our experience of God. His visit in April to this noble Nation is a manifestation of his desire to confirm our faith in the Christ, the Savior of the World.