

CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

Topic: Sanctity, the Saints, and Catholic Social Thought
 Convener: Christopher P. Vogt, St. John's University, Queens, New York
 Presenters: Meghan Clark, St. John's University, Queens, New York
 Matthew A. Shadle, Loras College

The session began with Matthew Shadle presenting his paper, "Sanctity as the Goal of Human Development in Recent Catholic Social Teaching." He offered an analysis of the understanding of sanctity found in *Populorum Progressio*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, and *Caritas in Veritate*, and concluded that any notion of "integral human development" drawn from Catholic Social Thought is incomplete unless it points to sanctity as the ultimate goal of human life. Some highlights of Shadle's analysis included a discussion of *PP* #21 where Paul VI develops a hierarchical understanding of what constitutes "truly human conditions" of life. Paul VI placed the goods of faith and unity with Christ at the top of that structure, leading Shadle to conclude that he saw human beings to be "ultimately aimed toward sanctity." Shadle went on to detail some of the ways in which John Paul II and Benedict XVI took a similar position when they emphasized the transcendent dimension of the human person.

Shadle then turned to the question of how human material and social well-being could be related to saintliness as the object of integral development. He drew upon recent work in moral theology about the relationship between well-being and moral goodness (e.g., by Germain Grisez and Jean Porter) to sketch how this connection should be understood. Next, he explained the relevance of twentieth century debates about nature and grace for the topic of development, focusing in particular on the issue of how some efforts at promoting development might be distinctively Christian. Finally, Shadle discussed the specific qualities of sanctity that would support the pursuit of integral development, and he outlined the implications for contemporary understandings of social sin and social grace that unfold from a careful understanding of sanctity as the ultimate goal of development.

The session continued as Meghan Clark presented her paper, "Cultivating the Virtue of Solidarity: Charity, Justice, and Organization." She began by analyzing *Deus Caritas Est* and *Caritas in Veritate* in order to sketch how Benedict XVI understands the relationship between charity and justice. Clark expressed her agreement with several other commentators who concluded that *Deus Caritas Est* frames the church's fundamental mission in terms of charity and does more to draw distinctions between charity and justice than it does to explain how and why they must be linked together.

As Clark turned to *Caritas in Veritate*, she noted that it treats the topic in a decidedly different fashion: a "commitment to justice" and the "ministry of charity" are joined to the point of inseparability. For example, *CIV* #6-7 leads to the conclusion that justice is a precondition for charity because a person cannot love her neighbor if she is unjust towards him or complacent in his oppression.

Likewise, “the more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them” (*CIV*, #7). Of course (as Clark explained further), the exact nature of that relationship—especially what constitutes the proper balance between acts of charity and justice—remains unresolved in Benedict’s thought. Nevertheless, Clark concluded the first half of her presentation by claiming that a model of cultivating solidarity through justice and charity does *begin* to emerge in *Caritas in Veritate* in what might be termed the *institutional* aspects of the Church’s ministry of charity.

In the second half of her paper, Clark sought to clarify the nature of “institutional charity” by turning to examples from the Vincentian tradition, in particular St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac (co-foundress of the Daughters of Charity), and Bl. Frederick Ozanam (a founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul). Most notably, Clark explained that, like Benedict XVI, St. Vincent de Paul placed charity at the heart of the Christian life and Christian programs for social transformation. However, the ministry of St. Vincent de Paul and those he inspired was not merely about charity but focused also on justice and the many injustices within society.

Finally, Clark explained that Vincent adds to the discussion of charity and justice by highlighting the importance of organization. Solidarity with one’s neighbor requires not only justice and charity, but also organization. Drawing from history, Clark demonstrated that St. Vincent de Paul and the Daughters of Charity were engaged in community organizing because they recognized that the poor often “suffered a great deal, more through a lack of organized assistance than from lack of charitable persons.” In the conclusion of her paper, Clark brought her Vincentian sources into dialogue with Benedict’s thought to sketch a model of Christian discipleship that cultivates solidarity through justice and charity.

The session concluded after a lengthy period of vigorous discussion.

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