

- Topic: Globalization and Catholic Morality
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Kenneth Weare, in his presentation, "Globalization and Catholic Morality: Evolving Ethical Reactions to the Transnational Economy," explained globalization as the process of increasing integration in world civilization. It is a continuously developing phenomenon. Some date it to ancient Egypt, others to the projection of European power since the sixteenth century, others to the creation of world institutions after World War II, and others to the more recent communication and transportation revolutions and the information revolution. More specifically, globalization can be understood as the increasing interconnection of economic and cultural life in distant corners of the globe, moving from the 1970s growth of interdependence among nations to the 1980s and 1990s dominating role of multinational corporations and financial institutions.

The convergence of prices and interest rates, the social and multinational corporate influence on the behavior of other societies, the sharing of cultural values across nations, and the global convergence of beliefs and value systems, all drive the transition from interdependence to integration, creating an economic, social, political, and cultural evolution/revolution with profound global moral challenges.

Positively, globalization has increased efficiency and production, brought a greater sense of unity among peoples and a broader distribution of resources. On the negative side, however, the consequences of globalization are staggering: widespread exploitation of children and women; destruction of the environment and natural resources; an ever-widening gap between rich and poor; a 15-year drop in per capita income for more than 100 countries; more than one billion people with unclean water and little food; 17 million dead yearly from curable diseases; high unemployment; and deterioration of social services.

In the face of globalization, Archbishop William Levada of San Francisco asked at the 1997 Synod on America if the church should call for a hemispheric conversion or even propose an alternative to economic liberalism or globalization. Subsequently, in *Ecclesia in America*, Pope John Paul II warned: "If globalization is ruled merely by the laws of the market applied to suit the powerful, the consequences cannot but be negative." He continued: "The globalized economy must be analyzed in the light of the principles of social justice."

Thus, Weare concluded, *Ecclesia in America* by its at least partial analytical critique of global capitalism has advanced the development of the Catholic social teaching of *Laborem Exercens* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.

Alejandro García-Rivera, in his presentation, "The Implications of Transnational Technology," noted that the twin impacts of the digital and the telecommunications technologies have created a situation whose theological ramifications have yet to be ascertained. This situation has been named the information revolution. Comprehending such ramifications, however, is no easy task. One approach suggested is to view the situation known as the information revolution as analogous to an environment or, better, the endangering of a previous environment. This approach suggests that future issues to be raised by the information revolution will be akin to the issues raised in environmental justice. In the information revolution, however, the environment is the human local community. Such an approach reveals two issues: the transformation or endangerment, first, of local wisdom into global information, and second, of the local community into global interconnectedness. The implications for the future of these two transformations or endangerments were then explored.

The lively discussion that followed the two presentations focused on various issues including (1) a globalization-oriented critique of *Centesimus Annus* vis-à-vis *Ecclesia in America*, and (2) the influence of Pope John Paul II on the development of Catholic social teaching, especially his critical analysis of capitalism and neoliberalism in *Laborem Exercens* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*. Among other conclusions, it was agreed that there is a pressing need for moral theologians and church leaders, working in dialogue with economists, technologists, and other social scientists, to engage in an integrated, interdisciplinary study, analysis, and moral evaluation of the globalization phenomenon.

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