

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

- Topic: Globalization as a Sign of the Times
Convener: Margaret R. Pfeil, St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia
Moderator: Brian D. Berry, College of Notre Dame of Maryland
Presenters: Thomas Massaro, Weston Jesuit School of Theology
Mark Allman, Loyola University Chicago

Thomas Massaro ("Judging the Juggernaut: Toward an Ethical Evaluation of Globalization") undertook three tasks in addressing globalization as a sign of the times. First, in conversation with the views of Thomas Friedman and David Held, he offered a description of globalization as essentially involving various kinds of global relationships, webs of interdependence in which individual choices and actions bear consequences for distant others.

Secondly, he considered the ethical challenges posed by four particular strands of global relationship. Evolving forms of economic interdependence reveal a real tension between free market values and the danger of exploitation of labor. Technology represents a second form of global relationship that serves as a catalyst for other aspects of globalization. Transportation and communication advances fuel the process of "information arbitrage" that shapes global interdependence for better as well as for worse. Politically, subnational and transnational forces of globalization blur the conceptual boundaries of the nation-state, posing challenges to the principle of national sovereignty. The goal of serving the nation's common good may yield to the global pressures of economic competition. Finally, cross-cultural aspects of globalization bring both the possibility of fruitful interchange and the risk of homogenization.

These considerations suggest that globalization might be aptly characterized as a juggernaut, a "terrible irresistible force" that is here to stay. The proper Christian ethical response, then, is to address the manner in which globalization unfolds with a view toward fostering social responsibility and sustainability under the present circumstances. Consistent with mainstream Catholic social teaching, this approach favors engaging culture as opposed to adopting a more sectarian approach.

Finally, Massaro offered a broad comparison of thirteen papal statements and addresses on globalization with eleven miscellaneous treatments of the topic by a diverse array of Catholic sources. On the whole, the latter category of texts presented a more perceptive and incisive account of globalization. In particular, they provided a greater level of specificity in addressing particular injustices and suggesting concrete policies. A future papal encyclical on globalization would do well to shift from generalities toward this kind of empirical engagement, taking care to attend to the significance of power and its use.

Mark Allman ("Participation as a Constitutive Element for Global Social Justice") noted that while most theories of economic globalization are thin, the

"Global Economy and Cultures Project" organized under the auspices of the Woodstock Theological Center may offer an alternative model. Taking the perspective of the poor as its departure point, the project has employed a broad range of theoretical variables and analytical themes. One preliminary finding is that social, political, and economic forms of marginalization are among the main negative consequences of economic globalization.

In light of this research, the concept of justice viewed as participation may provide a valuable hermeneutical lens through which to evaluate economic globalization. The right to participate is rooted in the claims of all, especially the poor, to exercise agency in shaping social, economic, and political policies and structures that affect them.

Amartya Sen's notion of development as freedom shares some points of congruence with Catholic social thought, and taken together, the two approaches yield a fuller understanding of justice as participation. While Catholic social thought brings an explicit and mature anthropology to bear, Sen's work offers the kind of quantitative analysis that Catholic social teaching texts often lack.

Allman indicated that certain practical conclusions follow from the concept of justice viewed as participation. Social participation requires national and regional dialogues regarding the necessary conditions for human development and strong civil societies. Economic participation requires use of social and political analysis to shape equitable trade agreements. Labor issues must be addressed through the development of more democratic and transparent organizational structures within and across national borders, allowing for the free movement of labor as well as goods and capital among nations. Finally, political participation requires that the notion of state sovereignty be abandoned.

The presentations sparked a lively discussion during the remainder of the session. In particular, the group considered the relationship between the kinds of structural reform suggested by the notion of justice as participation and a global consciousness capable of holding this view of justice. In light of one participant's account of sweatshop laborers who face death threats and loss of employment when they attempt structural reform, there seems to be a certain "already but not yet" tension in balancing the ideal of justice as participation with the hard realities of power politics. On whose terms will the proposed ideal of the free flow of labor as well as capital across open borders be pursued?

These concerns about power disparities in adjudicating justice claims of economic globalization coincided with an analogous issue regarding the generation of Catholic social teaching texts. In order for these documents to read the signs of the times more concretely, they will need to attend more closely to the question of who actually participates in the reading. It was suggested that a different genre of Catholic social teaching may be required, one capable of addressing "mud and blood" issues with greater specificity.

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