

Deus Caritas Est

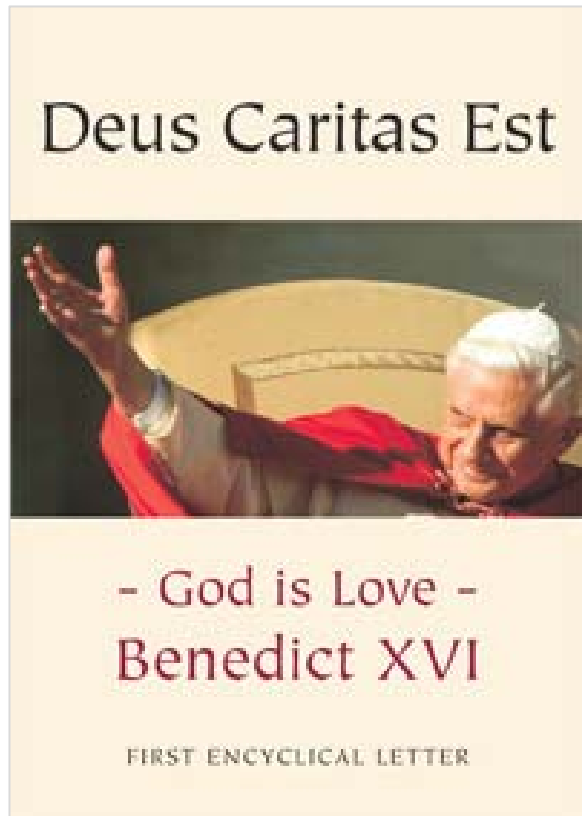


- God is Love -
Benedict XVI

FIRST ENCYCLICAL LETTER

Part II
Fr Peter Fitzsimons

Outline



- Brief outline of Part I of DCE
- An examination of Part II
 - The role of the Church in relation to the State
 - The distinctiveness of the Church's charitable activity
 - The requirements for ecclesial charity

Part I: Eros and Agape

We have come to believe in God's love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life.



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...* (para 1)

Eros and Agape

Eros:

- *divine power – fellowship with the Divine*
- *Ascending / possessive seeking (amor concupiscentiae)*
- needs to be disciplined and purified *

Eros and Agape



Agape:

- *descending*
- *oblative*
- *self-giving (amor benevolentiae)*

Unity of Eros and Agape

Eros becoming Agape**

Eros ... in drawing near to the other, ...is less and less concerned with itself, ***increasingly seeks the happiness of the other***, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and ***wants to “be there for” the other.***

Eros and agape: God and us

Eucharist:

- Jesus giving himself to us
- Communal – I become one with Jesus and I become one with the others: *many made one (1 Cor 10:17)*



Eros and agape: God and us

Love story between God and human person –
leads to communion of wills:

God's will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will (para 17)

Eros and agape: God and us

Love of God for human person:

- leads me to love my neighbour.
- I now look at others with Jesus's eyes.

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Practice of love by the Church



Charity is of the essence of the Church:

- In a certain sense, it must make the living God visible.
- In the charitable organization, ***God and Christ must not be strange words; in fact, they indicate the original source of ecclesial charity.***

Practice of love by the Church

The spectacle of suffering man touches our heart. But charitable commitment has a meaning that goes well beyond mere philanthropy.

God himself pushes us in our interior to alleviate misery. In this way, in a word, we take him to the suffering world.

The more we take him consciously and clearly as gift, the more effectively will our love change the world and awaken hope, a hope that goes beyond death.

Ben XVI, Presentation, 23 Jan 2006

Charity: The Service of the Church

The entire activity of the Church is an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of man.

It seeks his evangelization through Word and Sacrament...and it seeks to promote man in the various arenas of life and human activity.

Love is therefore the service that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's sufferings and his needs, including material needs.

Christians Changing the World

...let me merely suggest here that Christianity revitalized life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with many urgent urban problems.

To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered immediate basis for attachment. ..

Christians Changing the World

...to cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family.

To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity.

And to cities faced with epidemics, fires and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services...

Christians Changing the World

...once Christianity did appear, its superior capacity for meeting those chronic problems soon became evident and played a major role in its ultimate triumph.

Since Antioch suffered acutely from all of these urban problems, it was in acute need of solutions. No wonder the early Christian missionaries were so warmly received in this city.

For what they brought was not simply an urban movement, but ***a new culture*** capable of making life in Greco-Roman cities more tolerable.

Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 161-162

The three aspects of the Church's mission

- We see how the three fit together:
 - proclaim love of God (the Word);
 - bring Christ and His grace to people (oblation) to people through the sacraments;
 - exercise charity in a practical way (which is also to proclaim God)
- All this leads to the ***integral good of the human person***

Justice and Charity

The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics...

*Fundamental to Christianity is the distinction between what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God (cf. Mt 22:21), in other words... the autonomy of the temporal sphere.
(para 28)*

Role of the State

Role of the State: the promotion of justice
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. (para 28)

Role of the Church: an indirect role

The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State.

Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.

She has to play her part through (1) **rational argument** and she has to (2) **reawaken the spiritual energy** without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper.

Role of the Church: a direct role

Love—caritas—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society.

There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love.

Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such.

Role of the Church: a direct role

The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern...

Role of the Church: a direct role

The Church... is alive with the love enkindled by the Spirit of Christ.

This love does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support

Role of the Church

Indirectly promote justice through rational argument based on the nature of the human person (discourse in the public sphere) – but not to directly reform those structures

Indirectly re-awaken spiritual energies (not just inside the Church); re-awaken moral forces (para 29)

Directly organise charitable activity (which is always necessary)

This role enables justice to fulfil its role – animated by charity

Requirements for Christian Charity

What are the essential elements of Christian and ecclesial charity?

- It is the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations:
- Requires:
 - Resources and personnel
 - Personnel: To be professionally competent – fundamental but not sufficient

Charity: More Than Professional Competence

We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern. [2]

Charity: More Than Professional Competence

Consequently, in addition to their necessary professional training, ***these charity workers need a “formation of the heart”: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others.***

The Personnel

Consequently, more than anything, they must be persons moved by Christ's love, persons whose hearts Christ has conquered with his love, awakening within them a love of neighbour...

The consciousness that, in Christ, God has given himself for us, even unto death, must inspire us to live no longer for ourselves but for him, and, with him, for others. (para 33)

Eros to agape!

Personnel – love for Christ



We give ourselves – not just practical assistance.

Personnel – love for Christ

Encounter with Christ – prayer:
***concretely and urgently
needed***

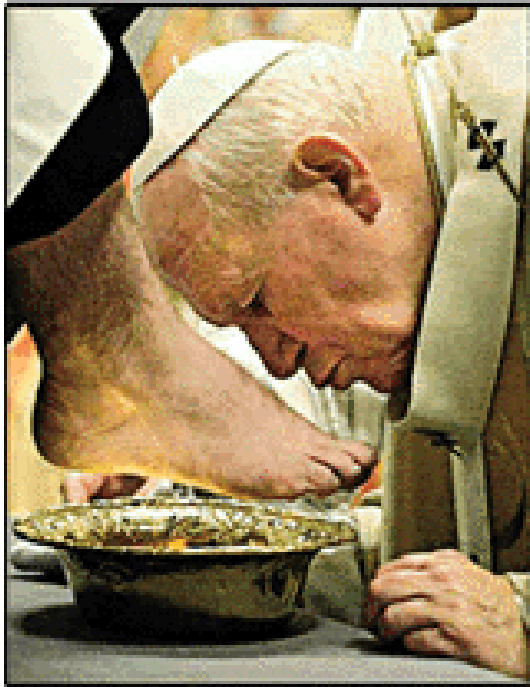
It is time to reaffirm the importance of prayer in the face of the activism and the growing secularism of many Christians engaged in charitable work...he seeks an encounter with the Father of Jesus Christ, asking God to be present with the consolation of the Spirit to him and his work.



Personnel – love for Christ

Interior dominion/freedom – exercise of virtues
and the sacraments: ***need to possess
oneself before one can give oneself***

Personnel – love for Christ



Humility so as to avoid:

- Feeling as superior to the others
- Avoid discouragement at the immense task or a tendency to ideologies to resolve problems – God governs the world not us

Another way to say this: it requires sanctity! It is not merely an external activity

Summary

The role of the Church is:

- Help civil society by purifying reason and giving spiritual energy**
- To contribute with its charitable activities to the good of the human person and society – justice alone is not enough**
- The lay people have the particular role to shape temporal society – animated and directed by charity**
- The Church's charitable activity has a distinct emphasis and aim from other charitable activities:**
 - It is feed from the love of Christ for us**
 - It is based on a personal encounter with Christ**
 - It seeks to give Christ to the others: eros becomes agape!**

Charity and proselytism

Charity – to be concerned with the whole man:

- the whole man is not just material but a spiritual being:
- made in the image and likeness of God and called to union with Him

The absence of God is often a cause of suffering.

Charity and proselytism



How does the Church's charity relieve *this* suffering?

- Respect freedom – cannot use charity as pretext for proselytism
- Bearing witness by a pure and generous love
 - ***being credible witnesses to Christ***
- But realising that there will be times when it is appropriate to speak (*of love for Christ rather than at the person*)

Role of the laity

The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is **proper to the *lay faithful***. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation “in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good.” [21]

Role of the laity

The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility.[22]

Role of the laity

Even if the specific expressions of ecclesial charity can never be confused with the activity of the State, ***it still remains true that charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as “social charity”.*** (para 29)

Blessed Virgin Mary



Our Lady – shows us the way in her service of charity to Elizabeth:
handmaid of the Lord

Mary, Virgin and Mother, shows us what love is and whence it draws its origin and its constantly renewed power.