



The Moral Dynamics of Economic Life: An Extension and Critique of Caritas in Veritate

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Caritas in veritate (Charity in Truth) is the "social" encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, one of many papal encyclicals over the last 120 years that address economic life. This volume, based on discussions at a symposium co-sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, analyzes the situation of the Church and the theological basis for Benedict's thinking about the person, community, and the globalized economy.

The Moral Dynamics of Economic Life engages Benedict's analysis of "relation," the characteristics of contemporary social and economic relationships and the implications of a relational, Trinitarian God for daily human life. Crucial here is the Pope's notion of "reciprocity," an economic relationship characterized by help freely given, but which forms an expectation that the recipient will "reciprocate," either to the donor or, often, to someone else. This "logic of gift," Benedict argues, should influence daily economic life, especially within what he calls "hybrid" firms, which make a profit and invest a share of that profit in service to needs outside the firm. Similarly, development - whether of an individual or of a nation - must be integral, neither simply economic nor personal nor psychological nor spiritual, but a comprehensive development that engages all dimensions of a flourishing human life.

The essays, written by social scientists, theologians, policy analysts and others, engage, extend, and critique Benedict's views on these issues, as well as his call for deeper dialogue and a morally based transformation of social and economic structures.

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