

**The encyclical, *Charity in Truth*, will be released, perhaps as early as Monday. The following message from The Center of Concern suggests some background reading in order to understand the Catholic social teaching implications of the document and it provides an easy way to obtain this material. Please support The Center of Concern.**

A Vatican spokesman reported recently that Pope Benedict XVI's forthcoming encyclical on globalization and the poor is expected to be released June 29, 2009, the feast of St. Peter and Paul. Benedict has been working on *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth) since 2007 but recently said he had held back on releasing it in order to incorporate and address the related implications of the global financial crisis.

The Center of Concern's book, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*, is foundational background reading in order to understand this forthcoming document in the scope of the longer, broader tradition. Order your copy now and take advantage of this excellent resource that will give you a better understanding of the encyclical and its context. To purchase this book, click on the link below to go to our online bookstore, or call Ana at 202-635-2757, ext. 111.

This best-selling text explores the Catholic Church's teaching on social issues. Part One gives the historical background of Catholic Social Teaching; Part Two outlines the major documents, including encyclicals and pastoral letters; and Part Three provides a study guide.

**To link to the Center of Concern bookstore: [CST: Our Best Kept Secret](#)**

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**The following editorial is from America magazine. It appeared on June 22. In it, the editors suggest a different approach for the American Church's engagement with the present administration – and, in the process, hopefully regain some credibility.**

### **Community of Disciples**

St. Ignatius Loyola suggests that in any exchange, "it is necessary to suppose that every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another's statement than to condemn it as false." To this call for charity, St. Ignatius added that if correction is necessary, it ought to be delivered with respect and kindness. Those qualities of respect and kindness have at times been hard to find in many of the heated arguments in which American Catholics have found themselves embroiled over the past 12 tumultuous months.

Can a Catholic in good conscience vote for Barack Obama? For John McCain? May pro-choice politicians be given Communion? Should the legal fight to overturn Roe v. Wade bear the full weight of Catholic political energy; or are there other, more effective strategies for combating the culture of death? Should the University of Notre Dame award an honorary degree to President Obama, or even invite him at all? Should there be more frequent celebrations of the liturgy in Latin; and if so, what version of the Mass texts should be used? Issues like these

have always sparked much discussion in the Catholic community, but they are now often dominated by a tone that is decidedly dangerous—harsh and often lacking in respect or courtesy.

This rhetoric has threatened the credibility of the church, as the Catholic tradition of trust and toleration has been de-emphasized. Even a few bishops have made statements like “We are at war” and “Tolerance is not a Christian virtue,” suggesting that any notion of the common good has given way to a sharply defined “us versus them” mentality. Such rhetoric also subtly undermines the Catholic principle of subsidiarity first put forth by Pope Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*, according to which a pluralistic social structure allows and encourages constructive input from a variety of groups on the grass-roots level.

This polarization must stop; otherwise our identity as a faith community will be torn asunder and Catholicism will cease to be an elevating force for change. How can we decrease the polarization? A vital first step is to seek out our common ground in the major civic areas where almost all Catholics agree: religious liberty; the sacredness of all human life; the goal of reducing and eventually eliminating abortion; support for social programs that provide a safety net for the poor; the elimination of segregation, racism and discrimination; and respect for differing religious and social traditions and diverse cultures. Few are the Catholics who do not share these principles, which provide a ready-made common ground.

We also need to find a way to foster civil debate and dialogue on how to incorporate and share our values in a pluralistic society. Recognizing the distinction between moral principles and their application, we can disagree in good conscience on the way such principles are prudentially applied in the public sphere. Even when disagreeing over the concrete applications of moral principles, we also must respect the good will of those with whom we disagree. Tolerance, charity and respect are not “weasel words,” nor are they excuses to paper over legitimate differences among Catholics. Rather, they are essential elements for a church in which members work together toward common goals, by supposing, as St. Ignatius wrote, that everyone is striving to act for the greater good.

Our bishops must take the lead in this conversation in the Catholic community. As the Second Vatican Council noted: “Bishops should make it their special care to approach men and initiate and promote dialogue with them. These discussions on religious matters should be marked by charity of expression as well as by humility and courtesy, so that truth may be combined with charity, and understanding with love.” As many have noted, our bishops also need to be careful that they do not overstep their bounds when they prescribe specific policy recommendations, lest they sacrifice their spiritual authority by appearing to be partisan political figures.

In his book *Models of the Church*, the late Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., highlighted the image of the church as a “community of disciples.” This image from the early church (Acts 6:1-2) sees every Christian united in learning from and following Christ. Here the church is always a learning church led by the Spirit, not yet in full possession of the truth. A disciple is by definition one who

has not yet arrived, but is on the way to full conversion. This more humble view of a pilgrim church always in need of purification and improvement may help to tone down the rhetoric and encourage Catholics to work together in addressing the great issues of our day, especially those involving the culture of life. True dialogue, as Cardinal Dulles noted, enables the church “to understand its teaching better, to present it more persuasively and to implement it in a pastoral way.”

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### **Prayer – Bromide or Tonic?**

**by Daniel O’Rourke, from *The Observer*, Dunkirk, NY, 06/25/09.**

The American theologian and political activist, Robert McAfee Brown wrote, “Prayer for many is like a foreign land. When we go there, we go as tourists. Like most tourists, we feel uncomfortable and out of place. Like most tourists, we therefore move on before too long and go somewhere else.”

I write about prayer because many of us are like those tourists. We have tried it, found it uncomfortable, and have left it behind. I say that knowing well that our society speaks often of prayer – at least of prayers of petition. It’s the instinctive response when something turns painful or when somebody needs help. Preachers intone, “Let us pray;” politicians (sometimes hypocritically) request prayers for this or that tragedy. Some tell friends who have just confided their concerns or troubles, “I’ll pray for you.” But that should not be the end of it. Prayer is not a pious charm to sooth and bless things; it should be a promise – from preachers, politicians and from us to do something concrete and real.

If there is no follow-through to these prayers, they are stillborn. Preachers should nudge the complacent in their congregations to action. Politicians should reach out to address tragedies practically with the power of government. Our cards, calls or casseroles for the sick or bereaved are prayers incarnate; that is prayers that have put human flesh on spiritual bones. Otherwise, our words to others -- and to God are merely sounding brass or tinkling cymbals (1 Cor. 13:1).

Mary Harris “Mother” Jones, the prominent labor organizer, once famously said, “Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living!” She was only partially right. We should pray for the living too, for the sick, for the victims of terror, famine and war -- and also work like hell for them.

Recently, there’s been talk in England of making their late, beloved cardinal, Basil Humne a saint. It’s the ten-year anniversary of his death. He once said of prayer, which he viewed much more broadly than petitions. “If you want to know if your prayer is going well, ask yourself these questions. “Am I becoming more generous? Am I growing in charity? Kinder? More considerate? More tolerant and understanding? Less self-opinionated?” That’s Jesus’ criteria too, isn’t it? “By their fruits you will know them” (Mt. 7:16). Hume’s questions are valid for all who pray, and many of us, myself included, would not always pass his test.

Prayer, however, can grow. Caroline Myss tells us in her latest book, *Entering the Castle*, “We mature in the manner in which we pray. Most in some way begin their prayer life as ‘stuffologists’ -- God, give me stuff, bless my stuff, where is my stuff? Can I

have more stuff? Don't take my stuff." Real prayer, however, moves beyond the personal, the selfish and material onto a more spiritual plane -- and evolves from mere petition.

Prayer is not just, "give me." It is also "thank you." It is gratitude -- gratitude for family, work, nature and the beauty of them all. Neither is prayer restricted to places and times apart. Thich Nhat Hahn, the Zen Buddhist monk and teacher writes of a walking meditation. The mystics often speak of "living in the presence of God." We can be prayerful and mindful in the midst of family, work, and nature. The clatter and din of living do not have to disturb our peaceful center. It is precisely that center which motivates many of us to work for a cleaner environment, a more peaceful world, a more honest church, and a more just society.

At a 1999 Prayer Breakfast, President Bill Clinton reported that someone once asked Mother Teresa, "When you pray to God, what do you say?" She replied, "I don't say anything, I listen." The interviewer persisted, "Well, what does He say to you?" she answered, "God doesn't say anything. He listens." He listens patiently, waiting for us to do something. Mother Teresa of course did much. The entire world acknowledges her as the servant of the poor, the sick and the dying.

Lon Roy Call, a Unitarian minister says, "Prayer does not change things. Prayer changes people, and people change things." The Reverend Call is on to something. If we really prayed more frequently, reflectively, and practically like Mother Teresa and Mother Jones (strange sisters those two!) the world would be much more just and compassionate.

For the true believer prayer is never a bromide; it is a commitment. It's not a pious excuse; it's an energizing tonic. It's not an escape. On the contrary, it leads to enthusiastic participation in life. Otherwise, we haven't got a prayer.

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### **Tony Blair to U.S. Catholic leaders: Go forward 'undaunted'**

Jun 25, 2009, *USA Today*/Faith & Reason

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who survived a tumultuous decade in the post, had a message today for another major global institution under constant pressure and criticism -- the Catholic Church.

Go forward, "unafraid, or if afraid, undaunted" and do the work of the Catholic Church, "to demonstrate God's love and compassion and to be in the service of others. That is what this church is about at its best. Always has been and always will be."

But does battle-tested Blair have advice on how the U.S church could deal with, say, restructuring/shrinking parishes, overburdened priests rushing from Mass to Mass?

What about potential blow-back from the deeply troubling report on decades of clergy sexual abuse of minors in Irish Catholic institutions? Or the sharp dissonance between the Church and Catholic politicians who don't follow its doctrine in their votes?

If Blair does, his ideas on the nitty-gritty specifics weren't shared publicly on Thursday morning when he was the keynote speaker at the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management annual meeting in Philadelphia.

Although the theme of the two-day event is "Clarity, Candor and Conviction: Effective Communications in the Modern World," media were kicked out for the Q & A. Organizers thought Blair and the bishops, business leaders, philanthropists, academics and volunteers who belong to the Council would be more candid in private.

The Council was launched after the 2002 child sexual abuse scandal revealed that U.S. bishops -- chosen with the charge to teach, preach and govern their dioceses -- were ill-prepared for management. Chairman and founder Geoffrey Boisi said the aim was to bring the expertise of the secular world to strengthen the U.S. church, a \$105 billion enterprise involving 69 million faithful, thousands of clergy and lay leaders.

Boisi invited Blair for his 10 Downing Street experience, his interfaith efforts (Blair has a new interfaith foundation focused on health, poverty and justice), and Blair's "most meaningful and impressive act," said Boisi, his very public conversion to Catholicism last year.

"People are nicer to you once you've left office," said Blair, who spoke briefly of his "sense of personal happiness and pride," in his new religion.

Then he offered lessons from his decade in office, beginning with a joke about how he still has a sense of dread when the clock reaches three minutes before noon on a Wednesday -- the time he would head down the halls to take a battery of questions shouted out by members of Parliament, something he likened to being stretched on a rack. "Even now a chill comes upon me."

Still he said that to face the brutal beating you can take, both in leadership and communication, you must know, "This is where I'm going" and remain focused on the central purpose of the church. "The spirit of love and compassion and a sense of service to others is what draws people to God's path."

Forget hiding away in hard moments. "We have to be out there, unafraid or if afraid, undaunted. We still have to be out there."

The world's worst troubles -- disease, ignorance, injustice, hunger -- like sin, will never be eliminated but the people of the Church must strive to balance these "with tremendous mercy, compassion and human solidarity."

As globalization pushes people together, willingly or not, obliterating boundaries of country and culture, he said, religions can work together to humanize globalization, "give it values and root it in the shared purpose of benefiting humanity."

And lastly, Blair said, you must be hopeful. "People need to hear that there is such a thing as progress and that, through God, progress will be made ... I don't think there is going to be a message that people will hold dear without hope."

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