



NEWS ARCHIVE:

## Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Speaker Bert Pitzel described Pope Benedict's call for an economy of justice and solidarity as outlined in the 2009 papal encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*

## Pope Benedict's prophetic call for transformation of the economic system described by speaker

By Kiply Lukan Yaworski

Pope Benedict's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* was on the menu at a justice and peace supper gathering Oct. 5, 2010 in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

Some 70 people representing 15 parishes, both urban and rural, gathered for the second annual "Be Doers of the Word" justice and peace gathering at St. Paul's Cathedral hall in Saskatoon, which included a discussion of local justice and peace issues, as well as a reflection by Bishop Don Bolen (*see related article Page 4*).

Guest speaker Bert Pitzel, social justice coordinator for the Archdiocese of Regina, presented an overview of the 2009 document "Charity in Truth" in which Pope Benedict XVI reflects on the gospel call to live in love and truth, which leads to a "courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace," with potential to transform the world.

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Delving into an encyclical like *Caritas in Veritate* is a bit like “going to Niagara Falls with a cup to get a drink,” said Pitzel, describing the depth and layers of the papal encyclical, which builds on all the social teachings that have gone before it, to present insights that are particularly relevant in this time of worldwide economic crisis.

Pitzel echoed a suggestion by Rev. Bill Ryan, SJ, a Harvard-educated economist, that this is a document that should be read and reflected upon in small groups in order to lead to a prophetic, grassroots renewal of our society and our world.

“How do we come to grasp the depths of a needed document that wraps itself around the current situation after what occurred in 2008 with the economic crisis?”

Pitzel suggested small groups might meet weekly over a number of months to take short portions of the letter to reflect upon, digest and ultimately implement in their lives. “I think the pope is saying: ‘I’m giving you this document, and the ball is now in your court,’ Pitzel noted. “As the world is now, we won’t survive. Transformation is needed.”

Globalization is one of the economic trends tackled in the document. “The kind of globalization that has been occurring over the past 20 or 30 years has been a ‘revolt of the rich,’” Pitzel suggested. After a “golden age of capitalism” in which social programs developed, and wealth was shared across a broader spectrum of the population, wealthy elites set out to regain a more dominant position, he said. “After the crisis and bailouts, it has been estimated that the upper wealthy elites again now own 17 per cent of the world’s wealth.”

Strategies in globalization, in which markets are supposed to be open in every part of the world, include shareholders raking in benefits, outsourcing, and a cheap labour force, Pitzel noted.

“When Pope Benedict looks across the globe he sees a form of globalization that has resulted in separation and disengagement. He also sees cultures which have ossified in practices that fail to respect the individual person,” Pitzel said.

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In the face of this, the Holy Father calls for development – but it is not the development that most of today’s economists are talking about. “Pope Benedict says that you know authentic and integral development by its completeness. He says this kind of development must involve the whole person in their body and soul, in their personal and social life, in their historical and transcendent life – and it also has to involve everyone.”

The document affirms that what is needed today is a globalization that is managed according to a principle of subsidiarity – which involves the empowerment of the individual at the most basic and most local level possible. “It is never power over, it is power for,” said Pitzel.

The document also explores the concept of “human ecology,” which like environmental ecology, has to do with connections and relationships, but reflecting human dimensions. “Who are we as human beings is the question,” Pitzel said, addressing the document’s idea of “transcendent humanism.”

“We are always oriented to be more – the question is: more what?” said Pitzel,

“Who are we as human beings? Pope Benedict implies that if you looked inside a human being, you will see seeds that God has planted: seeds of truth, seeds of charity.”

The way we authentically “become more” is by engaging that dynamic of charity and truth, said Pitzel. “We need an encounter with God for that to happen. Because what God does is open up the gift to you: and if God opens up that gift, and you see the value of it, then you are willing to live that gift.”

Through an encounter with God we begin to see our own value, which leads to seeing the value of other persons as well, he related. “Then you are willing to defend that person, to show concern for that person, to connect with that person.”

This then leads to the question of how we come to encounter God. “Pope Benedict says whenever you see somebody who is acting in charity and in truth you meet the face of God, you meet Christ crucified and risen.”

To illustrate what that looks like, Pitzel shared stories of human encounters characterized by love, dignity, empowerment and friendship. “It brings health and hope to other people. This is the heart of development,” he said. “Where there is acceptance and reciprocity, we now have a connection and development.”

Economics sees human beings in a certain way. “But what the pope is saying is ‘don’t get caught,’ because if we only live up to a narrow economic view, we are living below who we really are as human beings. That’s the heart of *Caritas in Veritate*. It isn’t even about making the world a better place. That should come. But fundamentally, it’s about acting according to what we have been created to be – and in that, the encounter with God becomes extremely important.”

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Ultimately, hope will be born in that encounter with God, in which we see the value of ourselves and begin to think we can give of ourselves to others in a life-giving way, Pitzel maintained. “The minute that you see there is that possibility of being a life-giver, that encourages the mind and strengthens it, to direct the will, to take action.”

A system that focuses solely on material gain, where the goal is for money to earn more money, will inevitably fall short of realizing human potential. “What the pope says is we need an economic system where everybody has something to give, and something to receive,” Pitzel said.

The values of the culture have become individualism, consumerism and utilitarianism, which do not fit in with human ecology. Instead, Pope Benedict calls for a culture of fraternity, reciprocity and solidarity, Pitzel described. “This is where he puts his hope: that people will realize the emptiness of the messages of the system, of the culture and will buy into the liberating dimensions of fraternity and reciprocity.”

Other elements of the document tackle technology and science, the media, education, tourism, migration, human rights, and the environment, listed Pitzel. “What we need is ethical practice in every one of these arenas.”

The document also looks into reason and faith, which are fundamentals of Catholic social teachings. A strong dialogue between the two can provide a framework in which believers and non-believers can discourse, he added. “He is saying enter into dialogue.”

Ultimately love and truth are what will liberate human beings, Pitzel concluded, again encouraging his listeners to delve deeper into *Caritas in Veritate* in their own faith communities and small groups.

“This is a document worth probing,” he said. “It’s a prophetic call to be involved in the transformation of the world.”

## ***Justice and peace issues addressed at ‘Be Doers of the Word’ gathering Oct. 5, 2010 in Saskatoon***

**BY KIPLY LUKAN YAWORSKI**

A number of justice and peace issues were raised and discussed during a public forum held as part of a “Be Doers of the Word” gathering Oct. 5, 2010 in Saskatoon.

The pressing need for affordable housing, the ongoing problem of homelessness, environmental issues, and the status of the Station 20 West project in the core neighbourhood of Saskatoon were among the issues raised during the discussion period that was part of the “Be Doers of the Word” justice and peace gathering. The second annual event attracted some 75 participants representing 15 parishes, both urban and rural.

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Organized by Tony Haynes, director of the diocesan Office for Justice and Peace, the gathering began with supper and an address by Bishop Donald Bolen at Bishop Mahoney Hall in St Paul's Cathedral. Guest speaker was Bert Pitzel, who reflected on the papal encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* or "Charity in Truth".

The event's title comes from a passage of scripture calling on Christians to "be doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22), which resonates with the Episcopal motto of Saskatoon's bishop: *Verbum Vitae* or "Word of Life." It was one of the scriptural texts highlighted during an ecumenical service on the eve of the Episcopal ordination, noted Bishop Bolen.

"The Word that the prophets speak is above all a Word of justice," he said. "When as John says, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, that Word, the all powerful God, comes to us in Jesus: comes to us first of all in poverty and simplicity, as one that suffers injustice."

The people that Jesus highlights in his ministry – the poor, the blind, the lame, the needy, the marginalized, the outcasts, the least of all – are also whom he identifies himself with: "whatever you do for the least of these sisters and brothers, you do for me." (Matthew 25:40)

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**Tony Haynes, Bishop Don Bolen, Bert Pitzel and Carol Zubiak at the diocesan justice and peace gathering Oct. 5 at St. Paul's Cathedral hall.**



“Justice and peace are not marginal to the gospel. The office of justice and peace is not a peripheral office,” stressed Bolen. “Our integrity as a people is shown forth in our living out the gospel, our living out the vision of justice and peace, by being doers of the Word, not just preachers of the Word.”

During his address, Bolen described heroes who have helped to fashion his own understanding of social justice. “By embodying the vision of justice and peace, these are figures of hope for us,” he said, listing Martin Luther King, Ghandi and Dorothy Day.

Bolen quoted King’s statement that “any religion which professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them, is a dry-as-dust religion.”

King believed that the whole civil rights movement needed to be dynamized by love, and that love needed to channel itself into non-violent resistance, as lived by Jesus Christ, he described.

“Martin Luther King’s deep sense of God’s presence at the heart of every effort to seek justice and peace is one that I think we need to lay hold of,” said Bolen.

“If you are involved in justice work, you better be ready to be involved for the long haul. It’s not a short struggle. It’s a lot like the search for Christian unity.” In both these areas, deep foundations of hope are needed to sustain us in the long journey, he said.

“Sometimes it seems like one step forward and two steps back, but by the mathematics of God, somehow that’s still moving towards bringing about the kingdom.”

The bishop also reflected on Dorothy Day who helped to establish the Catholic Worker Movement, whose hope was grounded in God, in the gospel, in the Eucharist and in the community as she worked for justice and for the poor.

“Sometimes it does feel like we are ‘just sitting here talking,’ but if we are sitting here, and you are sitting in your parishes, and you are listening to the people around you, and you are listening to the voices of those in need, and you are finding creative ways to respond – then the Spirit is flowing through that,” Bolen assured his listeners.

“You are not only reaching out and touching Christ, you are also sharing in his mission, which is a blessing for and strengthening of your parish community, allowing them to be transformed and engaged in this difficult work of justice.”