

EDITORIAL

Welcoming a New Encyclical: July 2009

CARITAS IN VERITATE

After the first rush of summaries and overviews the deeper work of reflecting on the meaning of Benedict XVI's first social encyclical, Caritas in Veritate, is beginning to get under way.

Caritas in Veritate is a long, densely written document, which touches on a wide variety of topics. Its vocabulary ranges from theology and metaphysics to politics, finance and international diplomacy. While some chapters stand well on their own, a few key issues are dealt with in different ways over several chapters so that the full position on these topics can only be appreciated on a complete reading of the whole encyclical. Unpacking the meaning and significance of this encyclical will take some time and effort.

Faith Doing Justice will provide a variety of resources to help you in this process over the coming months. We have made a start with a Discussion Guide to the encyclical and a PowerPoint presentation on the theme of love and truth - and our *Tips for Reading Catholic Social Teaching Documents* remain useful. Reflections on particular themes and topics will follow.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Our Discussion Guide provides an overview of the encyclical, summarising the key points of each chapter in a couple of pages, and providing some questions for reflection.

There are plenty of references to the paragraph numbers of the encyclical to enable you to find exactly what the encyclical says on points of particular interest to you. Social justice groups could use the Discussion Guide to work their way through *Caritas in Veritate* chapter by chapter over a series of meetings.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

The introduction to the encyclical presents the theological underpinnings of the work. It grounds all that follows in the truth of what it is to be a human being: made out of God's love, shaped by it, and directed towards it.

Development then is a vocation, must be wholistic, and is worked out in community. This is very rich fare and repays slow, meditative reading and rereading. Praying with this text in the style of *Lectio Divina* may be helpful. To encourage meditation on this part of *Caritas in Veritate* we have prepared a [PowerPoint reflection](#) focusing on the theme of love and truth drawing on quotes from the introduction to the encyclical. It could be played on a loop before Mass or as a communion reflection, or used in group or personal prayer.

TEXT IN CONTEXT

Caritas in Veritate provides a powerful synthesis of Catholic teaching on human development. The second chapter situates the new encyclical within the body of Catholic Social Teaching, especially in relation to the Second Vatican Council and the overall teaching of Paul VI, upon which it relies heavily.

In this chapter Benedict XVI demonstrates to us how to go about drawing authentically on our tradition to address new issues and situations. Reading this chapter in conjunction with our [Tips for Reading Catholic Social Teaching Documents](#) may help you to notice how Benedict goes about his task, and to critically assess some of the current comment on *Caritas in Veritate*. The blogosphere is already full of proof texting and ideological interpretations!

This is a rich document of great significance beyond its moment in the news. We can take our time to understand deeply and respond thoughtfully to its call to action.

*Sandie Cornish
Editor*