



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
* Knights of Malta *

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Chancellor's Update

It Is A Radical Negation

On January 19, 2013 Pope Benedict XVI addressed the Pontifical *Council Cor Unum* and said:

"Christian love is grounded and formed in faith. Encountering God and experiencing His love, we learn "to live no longer for ourselves but for Him, and with Him, for others" (cf. enc. *Deus caritas est*, 33).

"From this dynamic relationship between faith and charity, I would like to reflect on one point that I would call the prophetic dimension that faith instills in charity. Belief in the Gospel impresses charity with a distinctively Christian form and constitutes the principle of discernment. Christians, especially those who work in charitable organizations, need to be directed by the principles of faith, by which we adhere to the "point of view of God," to His plan for us (cf. enc. *Caritas in Veritate*, 1). This new view of the world and mankind offered by faith also provides the correct criteria for evaluating expressions of charity, in the current context.

"In every age, when man failed to pursue this project, he became the victim of cultural temptations that ended up enslaving him.

"In recent centuries, the ideologies which celebrated the cult of the nation, race, social class proved to be true idolatry and the same can be said of unbridled capitalism with its cult of profit, with the resulting crisis, inequality and poverty. Today we increasingly share a common feeling regarding the inalienable dignity of every human being and our mutual co-responsibility towards it, and this is to the advantage of true civilization, the civilization of love.

"On the other hand, unfortunately, our time is experiencing shadows that obscure God's plan. I refer in particular to a tragic anthropological reduction that re-proposes the ancient hedonistic materialism, added to which, however, is a "technological prometheanism." (In Greek mythology - a demigod who surpassed mankind in cunning.)

"From the union between a materialistic view of man and the great development of technology an anthropology that is essentially atheist has emerged.

"It presupposes that the man is reduced to autonomous functions, the mind to the brain, human history to a destiny of self-realization. Everything is detached from God, the spiritual dimension and eternal horizon.

"In the perspective of a man deprived of his soul and therefore of a personal relationship with the Creator, what is technically possible, becomes licit, each experiment is acceptable, any population policy permitted, any manipulation legitimized.

"The most dangerous pitfall of this line of thinking is in fact the absolute good of man: man wants to be **ab-solutus**, freed from every bond and every natural constitution. He claims to be independent and

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thinks his happiness lies only in his self-assertion. "Man calls his nature into question... From now on there is only the abstract human being, who chooses for himself what his nature is to be" (Address to the Roman Curia, 21 December 2012).

"It is a radical negation of man's created and filial being, which results in a dramatic solitude.

"Faith and a healthy Christian discernment lead us therefore to pay prophetic attention to this ethical problem and its underlying mentality.

"In a just collaboration with international bodies in the field of development and human promotion, we must never close our eyes to these serious ideologies, and the pastors of the Church - who are "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (2 Timothy 5:15) - have a duty to warn both Catholic faithful and all people of good will and right reason against these pitfalls.

"It is in fact a negative pitfall for man, even if disguised by good sentiment in the name of an alleged progress, or alleged rights, or an alleged humanism.

"Faced with this anthropological reduction, what is the task of every Christian, and especially those of you who are engaged in charitable activities, and therefore in a direct relationship with so many other social actors?

"Of course, we have to exercise a critical vigilance and, at times, refuse funding and partnerships that directly or indirectly promote actions or projects in contrast with Christian anthropology. But positively the Church has always been committed to promoting man according to God's plan, in his integral dignity, in accordance with his dual vertical and horizontal dimensions. The development of ecclesial bodies also tends in this direction.

"The Christian vision of man is a great yes to the dignity of the person called to intimate communion with God, a filial, humble and confident communion. The human being is neither a stand-alone individual nor a separate anonymous element in a collectivity, but a singular and unique person, intrinsically ordered as a relational and social being.

"Therefore, the Church reaffirms its great yes to the dignity and beauty of marriage as an expression of the faithful and fruitful alliance between man and woman, and its no to philosophies, such as that of gender, is motivated by the fact that the reciprocity between men and women is an expression of natural beauty of the Creator.

"Dear friends, thank you for your commitment in favor of man, faithful to his true dignity. Faced with these epochal challenges, we know that the answer is the encounter with Christ. In him, man can fully realize his personal good and the common good. I encourage you to continue with a joyful and generous soul, and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing."

What a remarkable difference between Pope Benedict XVI and his successor Pope Francis.

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