

**The Church, the Economy, and Social Justice:
Reflections on *Caritas in Veritate***

Opening remarks by Erik Owens

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We are here today to reflect on Pope Benedict XVI's recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, a treatise on the nature of the person and on the structures of society—including the market economy—that promote or hinder the authentic development of human relations. Its title phrase is translated once in the document as “love in truth,” but otherwise it is consistently—including in its titular first passage—rendered as “charity in truth.” Released at the end of June amidst a deep global recession and a vigorous international debate over the merits and demerits of market capitalism, the document couldn’t be more timely. A relatively long encyclical at more than 30,000 words, *Caritas in Veritate* is also a complex document that, like the rest of Catholic social thought, confounds easy categorization as liberal or conservative. Not that this has kept commentators from trying, of course. Our panelists today are here to set the record straight while sharing insights from their various specialties about the encyclical’s importance and impact.

I am pleased to introduce our panelists in the order in which they will speak:

DANIEL FINN is Professor of Theology and the William E. and Virginia Clemens Professor of Economics and the Liberal Arts at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota. He writes extensively on theological ethics and economics, among other topics; his books include *The Moral Ecology of Markets* (2006) and *Just Trading: On the Ethics and Economics of International Trade*. He is the current president of the Society

of Christian Ethics and past president of both the Catholic Theological Society of America and the Association for Social Economics. He received his M.A. in economics and a Ph.D. in religious ethics from the University of Chicago.

ROBERT IMBELLINI is Associate Professor of theology at Boston College and a priest of the Archdiocese of New York. Father Imbelli completed his S.T.L. at the Gregorian University in Rome and his Ph.D. at Yale University. He writes on systematic theology, Christology, Trinitarian theology, and Christian spirituality; he is the editor of *Handing on the Faith: the Church's Mission and Challenge*. The former director of BC's Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry (IREPM), he has served on the board of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

STEPHEN POPE is Professor of Theology at Boston College, where he writes and teaches on a wide range of issues in theological and social ethics, drawing upon fundamental themes of justice, love, virtue, forgiveness, reconciliation and the natural law in Catholic Social Thought. The social and natural sciences have been a consistent topic of his work, through numerous articles and two books, including *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* and most recently, *Human Evolution and Christian Ethics*. He is also the editor of four books on theological or social ethics, and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

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We are delighted to host these three distinguished panelists for a discussion on the Church, the economy, and social justice. We have asked Professor Finn to speak for about 20 minutes on the encyclical and its implications for theological ethics and economics; professors Imbelli and Pope will then each have 10 minutes for their remarks. The remaining 45 minutes will be open for discussion with the audience. So let's get started with Prof. Finn.

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