

Catechesis and Theology: Common Tasks of Bishops and Theologians

Daniel E. Flores, STD

Bishop of Brownsville, in Texas

14 September 2013

Theology asks questions; that is one of its chief characteristics. It has always done this. The medieval genre of the disputed question formalized what had been a part of theology since Irenaeus, whose *Adversus Haereses* is really the opening salvo in the theological tradition's ongoing response to the question "Who is Jesus and why did he come?". Catechesis teaches the content of the faith. It aims to form the mind of the believer with the truths of faith so that she might willingly form and mold her life according to dynamic implications of the love revealed there.

Of course, a believer being catechized asks questions also; and even a catechist teaching has questions. I suspect most of us, at one time or another, have taught catechism to either adults or children. The questions we get in those sessions are quite important; though very often not at all what we expect or want at the time. I remember exasperating a nice elderly catechist with the question "Why did God let the dinosaurs go extinct?". This was important to me because I was a nine year old going through what my Father called my "dinosaur phase". I wanted to know how that world I was reading about in books my Father bought me connected to the world that the catechist was talking about. I am sure the patient charity with which she tried to answer my question merited for her a place closer to Saint Bernard in Dante's ringed heaven.

Recently, I was having a dialogue session with a group of young adults. I had opened the discussion with a brief, and I thought fairly animated, discourse on how Pope Francis in Brazil was calling on young people to take their faith out into the world and to reach out to the marginalized. I had hoped those remarks would set the course of the discussion. Hmm. Guess not. A young man, carrying his young daughter in his arms, while his wife was thumbing through the bible, immediately raised his hand and asked me if I thought the person with the mark of the beast was somewhere in the world living right now.

It does no good to answer questions that nobody is really asking. On the other hand, it is good to ask questions that nobody else seems to be asking, or that we think people ought to be asking. There is also a need to ask well formulated questions, since as anyone who has thumbed the *Summa* knows, how you ask the question informs the quality and character of the response.

Catechists dwell in the environs of the first dynamic: trying to respond to questions that people are asking, as they seek to put what is rolling around in their heads into living contact with the content of what the Church believes, hopes for and loves. Theologians, I think, most often live in the environs of the second dynamic: trying to formulate good

questions that the mind of a well formed believer should be asking, questions that maybe nobody else is asking, questions that are hidden in some way from plain view.

The questioning environs of the catechist and those of the theologian are related yet distinct. Too often, I fear, this distinction is an abyss. I rather think the relationship is a fluid one. The premise of my talk today is that the two questioning environs, that of the catechist and that of the theologian, must inform each other. Specifically, the questions you and I ask as recipients of an intellectual formation in the theological tradition must be saturated with an awareness of questions our people are asking when they present themselves to be formed in and by the faith of the Church.

Our common task is to discern the question beneath the questions. Already, in this, we are at another level of reflection concerning the experience of the Church. And it seems to me this is a reflection proper to a theologian and a bishop in as much as we are both at the service of the word, and are set on a watchtower, so to speak, to see further into the horizon.¹ And in the Church this is not simply a matter of erudition, it is a participation in the prophetic grace of Christ the Lord. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 14, 25 where Saint Paul says *the secrets of his heart are disclosed*, Gregory the Great notes that prophecy is not necessarily aimed at announcing in advance what is to come, but rather quite often seeks simply to show forth **what is**: *non praedicit quod futurum est, sed ostendit quod est.*² And thus rightly prophecy is said to be primarily about manifesting what is hidden.

PART ONE: *Lord, he whom you love is ill*

I talk to groups of 8 and 9 year olds on occasion. More often than not they are all smiles and ask me questions like “what is your favorite vegetable?”, and “do you ever go to the beach?” They are thinking about simple and happy things. Their biggest worry may very well be why their Mom makes them eat squash. I also visit detention centers for juveniles who are in some kind of rehabilitation. Ranging mostly from 14 to 18, their questions are different. Often, they do not have any at all. They just stare and listen in some way to what you are talking about. Sometimes they ask if it is a sin to cheat on your girl-friend. Or if I think God will destroy the world because it has gotten so bad.

If these youth detention centers are immigration detention centers, with teenagers from Guatemala, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and other places in Latin America, then the experience informing their questions quickly shows itself. These are 13 and 14 year olds who have probably seen some of their traveling companions kidnapped, raped or shot, by human traffickers who promised them security and a safe way into the United States. Their experiences lead to questions like “Why are there so many mean people?” and “Has God given up us?”

I recently spoke to, and looked into the eyes of an 8 year old little girl who by some miracle of providence survived a trek with a small band of Hondurans through central Mexico to the United States. Some strangers, she has learned, will help you with food and water along the way; some will kill you for the fun of it. “Is life a journey to

something better, or is it a constant escape from people who want to hurt you?" This is the question in her eyes even before any word is on her lips.

Somewhere between 7 and 15, a lot of kids stop asking about vegetables, or as in my case, dinosaurs, and start wondering if life makes any sense. The experience of betrayal, distrust, and a real sense of how wicked things can be surrounds them at an early age. The questions that their parents and grandparents are asking are perhaps more sanguine, but no less stark. Most commonly, parents ask what the Church can do to keep their kids involved in the Church. And what can we do to stop the drug problem and gang-violence. Less common, but by no means infrequent, I get requests for investigation into possible diabolical influences in the home. Requests for prayers of deliverance, or even full scale exorcisms, are not rare in my diocese.

This is a lecture and not a seminar, so I cannot walk you through all the many particular questions I get and how they lead me to think in terms of an underlying commonality. Obviously, this movement from the particular to the more universal is based on my pastoral experience meditated in the light of the faith of the Church. The pastoral experience of others may be different, or may lead to a different formulation. That is as it should be; my talk today is intended to be paradigmatic not prescriptive; it is more a pilgrimage in thought than a programmatic proposal.

Along the way, I will introduce you to some of my literary companions. I have read enough Von Balthasar to be convinced that the theologian and the bishop deny themselves important discussion partners if they ignore the story-teller. But that conviction is not the main reason I read fiction. Flannery O'Connor gives me permission to hear a good story just because I enjoy it.³

I will synthesize my perception into three basic questions: What is it that we are facing?, why be good?, and, is anybody out there able and willing to help me? I will briefly sketch the perimeters of these questions, and then move on to some remarks about what these things might mean for catechesis and theology.

1. What are we up against?

I will not go into what I think about whether the mark of the beast adorns the forehead of anyone living today. I will say something though about what that question implies. People are afraid. Something in their gut is telling them that not everything can be resolved through recourse to technology and medicine. People have a sense that there is a ferocious wildness in life, and to the extent it threatens what they hold dear, they name it evil.

Fear is not new to human history. But folks are less able to put it into perspective today than in previous generations. Carlos Fuentes once remarked that one of the marks of American and Western European Culture was its optimistic faith in progress, a perspective, he said, that was brutally taken apart by the experience of the 20th Century. The cultural disillusion in the West after the Second World War is still with us, all the more potent for not being recognized. Latin America was not quite so affected by the catastrophic experience, simply because culturally Latin America has always kept alive

a place for the tragic in the contour of life. In short the expectation that things in this world could be fixed was not so great, so the disillusionment was not so severe.⁴

I mention this as an aside simply because I think that if we want to do theology in the United States and if we want to catechize, we have to be much more serious about the dimensions, complexities, subtleties and depth of the cultures present within our culture, and more attentive to Latin American culture in particular. I recommend Mario Vargas Llosa's great novel "La Guerra del fin del mundo" for anyone who wants a literary exposure to the complex currents of Latin American life and history.⁵

In any case, the Western dream of optimism and progress is quite battered. People feel it but they cannot always name it. Enter Harry Dresden, a literary creation of author Jim Butcher; Harry is a wizard, and a part-time detective in the city of Chicago. He has been bouncing around for something like 14 or more novels, fighting vampires, werewolves, and evil spirits, not to mention fellow wizards who are inclined to the darker arts. He is a good guy.

Harry is a kind of hero because he struggles to do right by the innocent, using his gift wizardry to stave off all manner of things that announce an advancing darkness. Now, before you roll your eyes at the prospect of me spending time today on the world of supernaturalism in contemporary popular culture, a culture that moves from vampires to werewolves to zombies with the speed of galloping wargs, let me point out a couple of things going on in the Dresden Files.

First of all, the novels are enormously entertaining, and popular. Their underlying premise includes a sense that there are things in heaven and earth that we human beings only vaguely perceive. And not everything in this life can be fixed by muscle, sweat and brains. At one point early in *Storm Front*, the opening novel of the Dresden Files, Harry muses to himself about why people are interested in the paranormal.

Harry Dresden—Wizard” : You’d be surprised how many people call just to ask me if I’m serious. But then, if you’d seen the things I’d seen, if you knew half of what I knew, you’d wonder how anyone could think I was not serious.

The end of the twentieth century and the dawn of the new millennium had seen something of a renaissance in the public awareness of the paranormal. Psychics, haunts, vampires—you name it. People still didn’t take them seriously, but all the things Science had promised us hadn’t come to pass. Disease was still a problem. Starvation was still a problem. Violence and crime and war were still problems. In spite of the advance of technology, things just hadn’t changed the way everyone had hoped and thought they would.

Science, the largest religion of the twentieth century, had become somewhat tarnished by images of exploding space shuttles, crack babies and a generation of complacent Americans who had allowed the television to raise their children. People were looking for something—I

think they just didn't know what. And even though they were once again starting to open their eyes to the world of magic and the arcane that had been with them all the while, they still thought I must be some kind of joke.⁶

Actually, I think this is a pretty good summary of some of the salient features of our culture. There is disillusionment; there is searching, and there is a sense that there are things going on in the world beyond what we see on the surface, what we can measure and quantify. Pope Benedict's Regensburg Address touches on things not too distant from Harry's description. In the *Dresden Files*, though, the idea of an advancing darkness comes out quite strongly in each successive volume. Harry is not a believer, though often he says he wishes he could be, because he admires the strength of believers, especially believing Catholics, in the battle against evil. The Church attracts him in some way, but her faith is beyond his reach. This is quite significant for us to think about.

The philosophical and theological problem of evil is an ancient one, and probably we in this room could recount with historical accuracy the various ways it has been addressed, from Plato through Augustine to Hegel to Sartre. Still, it is for our people first of all an experiential reality marked by fear, wariness and a feeling of impotence. Something is out there, its dimensions are poorly perceived, and it is not very nice.

2. Why be Good?

There has ever existed in the human frame of mind a weak but real hope that life aims toward a happy ending. The ancients-- by whom I mean the bearers of culture prior to the announcement of the Gospel-- struggled to express this attitude. And although the tales of Homer, the legends of the ancient Norse sea-faring men, or even the pre-Colombian tales of the tribes that inhabited the environs of what is now Mexico City, all had their dark streaks denoting the inevitability of tragic suffering and loss in life, they nonetheless held out a glimmer of hope that the suffering would be denied a final power to eclipse the good, and a resolution, even if tenuous, in keeping with a nobler hope for life would prevail-- in the end.

Odysseus got much aid from Athena in order to find his way home. He loses most of his men along the way, and home is never how you left it, but the resolution is satisfying on a deep level. Balder the Good, from the Norse literature preserved in the *Prose Edda*, seems to prevail as a figure in mythology precisely because the envy and jealousy of the other gods do not penetrate finally to destroy him. Anthropologists note that the Aztecs assumed into their mythologies a host of deities and heroes present in the religious forms of the peoples they conquered. We know that the god of human blood-sacrifice, Tezcatlipoca, defeated Quetzalcoatl and banished him away. The banished deity did not desire human sacrifice, and the persistent legend circulated that he would return and reign over human affairs in some hoped-for future.

I mention the heritage of mythic narrative to make the point that pre-Christian cultures vividly perceived a darkness surrounding the human condition. Nevertheless, they

often anticipated, however weakly, the vindication of goodness. Darkness is not supposed to prevail. The stories themselves indicate a stubborn anticipation of something better than simply a trail of much misery. These tales narrate an ambivalence marked by real, if melancholy hopes that in the end the good cannot vanish: I would at least say this is present in the ancient record. No doubt, lots of other things are also present there, competing for attention in the ancient imaginal mind.

All this leads me to propose that we all need to think more deeply about what is happening to our culture. The Christian announcement fortified and rendered culturally robust a sense of the final triumph of life over death (Christ is risen), truth over lies (the conspirators of the Passion do not triumph), and mercy over vengeance (the Christ forgives). I fear that among the manifestations of the uncharted territory our modern culture is traversing, the slowly fading hope in goodness is by far the most ominous. The ancients witness to the fact that this hope, like marriage, “was not forfeited by original sin nor washed away in the flood.” I think we need to ask how this slow dying of human faith in the triumph of good over evil has happened, and what relation it bears to the life and mission of the Church.

Wait a moment, you say, are you perhaps overstating the loss of hope?

A brief excursion on the loss of hope:

Let me start with realities closest to me, the ones I hear about in whispers after Mass, and in the harried reports of our catechists and youth directors. I have already mentioned to you the stories of young people in immigration detention centers. The fact is that in the Rio Grande Valley at least, 11 or 12 year olds kids are deciding whether it is worth it to risk being beaten up if they choose to live an honest kid’s life and go to Church and catechism classes. They are making decisions about whether or not to sign on with a gang that is in some way connected to a larger drug organization. They are choosing between whether to make money quick and easy, or not. The cartels, and the gangs associated to them start by offering an 11- or 12-year-old 50 bucks to take the drugs across to the other side of the bridge, or to bring something back. If they do well, they will get more money the next time. They can rise in the ranks and make more money. We have all known this for some time, and law enforcement has been raising this concern. The offer is what the Church rightly calls the “glamour of evil.”⁷

How can a 14-year-old hold a gun in the direction of a man in a car, a man who happens to be going to visit his family in northern Mexico? And it is not sufficient to say “well, that happens in Mexico.” Do we think that that 14-year-old does not have a twin somewhere in Pharr, Texas, or Los Angeles, or in Detroit, Michigan, for that matter? How can this happen? We might as easily ask when hope in the goodness of life was driven from him, and then when the conscience lost its voice. If a twelve year old does not believe that in the end, love and life wins, then the options open to him or her are fairly obvious. If in the end, death triumphs, then nothing really matters.

Confidence in the goodness of life is rooted in the natural law, and conveys a sense that life is better than death, truth is better than lies, justice is better than injustice. But, this

confidence is tenuous and not ineffaceable in particular cases; and, I think, the loss of this confidence has become a cultural phenomenon. Euthanasia, abortion and the contraceptive mentality are as much about a fear of life, life viewed as a threat, as they are about a post-modern contortion of what freedom is.

Without a robust sense of the final victory of life and goodness, sooner or later, people just stop trying. Life becomes a game. The kids are the first ones to show us what it looks like to no longer think that life is worthwhile. And I see it in adults who are listless and uncommitted to anything worthwhile beyond themselves. When disaster looms, the Spanish saying is *Cada quien por su lado: Every man for himself*. Radical individualism is not just an anthropological option that emerges with the buffered self. It can also be an instinctive response to the loss of confidence in the goodness of life and in its purposefulness.

Let me point to a more general cultural phenomenon. Progress in science and technology has perhaps dispelled from the contemporary mind the sense of ominous fear before the forces the ancients saw at play in our world, yet I would argue that the fear and insecurity people experience today is reaching mythic proportions. People fear those things which are beyond their control. Among these feared powers, suffering and death ever loom as the most frightening and enigmatic. Modern medicine, with its frightening capacities to either prolong life unnaturally, or shorten it surreptitiously, has become a mythic power in peoples' lives. A hospital chaplain tries heroically to put the whole experience of engagement with hospital technology into human terms. People are often less afraid of death than they are of the technical ordeal that might precede it.

Similarly, people look at the human tragedies unfolding in the current economic condition of our country, and in the rest of the world. Hardships fall brutally on families, on children and on the elderly. Our people are afraid that the whole thing is beyond anyone's control, that the power structures are incapable of being humanized. Adam Smith's invisible hand has become in the minds of many a mythic power beyond human power to tame. And if we speak of the governmental sphere taming the economic cyclone, people fear this will only make matters worse. Poverty and violence and helplessness in the face of global structures and powers seem like cosmic forces no less intimidating to us than the god of human sacrifice did to the tribes subjugated by the Aztecs.

And, I might add, not everyone who calls my office asking for a priest to help them because they fear there are evil spirits in the house is projecting a mythic structure on a purely human dynamic. There are too many statues celebrating the cult to *la santa muerte* in our neighborhoods for me naively to think that this evil we face is simply a political and economic and social problem. The ancient enemy of the human race is drawn by the smell of death, and he disseminates it. He is not a bystander in the tragedy unfolding along the River in my diocese and beyond. The evil one traffics in despair; it is his end-game as he purveys the cynical "nothing really matters anyway" attitude that can infect a young soul or an old one at any time.

3. Can Anybody Out There Help Me?

Harry Dresden is on to something when he suggests people have lost confidence in their own resources, or in the help ordinarily offered by others. The hearts of many waver with doubt, as Theoden's did at Helms Deep.

'It is said that the Hornburg has never fallen to assault,' said Théoden [to Aragorn]; 'but now my heart is doubtful. The world changes, and all that once was strong now proves unsure. How shall any tower withstand such numbers and such reckless hate? Had I known that the strength of Isengard was grown so great, maybe I should not so rashly have ridden forth to meet it, for all the arts of Gandalf. His counsel seems not now so good as it did under the morning sun.'⁸

Compared to the ancient world, our world looks very different, but beneath the surface, deep common currents can be identified. Among these, the most important for us to notice is the human proclivity to feel out of place in the cosmos, and to experience life as filled with hostile forces. The announcement of the Gospel, and the catechetical tradition that flows from it, never made light of the problem of evil. The Gospel was announced as a kind of liberating rescue to an ancient world that had an often oppressive sense of the darkness not too far off. The ancient world welcomed the proclamation precisely as a liberating intervention, a vindication of their stubborn human hope in the victory of life over death, truth over lies, and goodness over evil.

Saint Paul announced that Christ "has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."⁹ He further announced that God has "disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him."¹⁰ This did sound like a rescue from the elemental fear that bound ancient peoples.

And let us not forget that the Gospel Saint Paul preached arrived in a world where competitive solutions to the human dilemma were on sale at the local forum. Most of them, like the religious forms of neo-Platonism, were hybridizations of philosophical and ritualistic traditions, more or less influenced by the dominant mythic structures of the local cultures. In this context the Gospel was experienced as a cohesive announcement of liberation, a repositioning of the human being in the cosmos, with Christ at the head, and with us in his body, freed from both sin and from whatever spooky things might have the power to do us ill.

The Gospel was persuasive first to the unlettered. Later, intellectuals like Irenaeus or Origen saw in this a sign of its divine origin, and mocked the neo-platonic ritualists, as well as their Gnostic cousins, for teaching a path to rescue which was inaccessible to the majority of the human race. It is good to recall the words of Irenaeus, as he writes about the faith of the unlettered. It is this kind of faith that precedes, both in the order of generation and in the order of being, the work of the theologian:

Many barbarian peoples who believe in Christ follow this rule [of the Gospel], having [the message of their] salvation written in their hearts by

the Spirit without paper and ink. [...] Those who believe in this faith without written documents are barbarians in our speech, but in their convictions, habits, and behavior they are, because of their faith, most wise, and are pleasing to God, living in all righteousness and purity and wisdom.¹¹

Gnosticism was of course for Irenaeus a complex mix of intellectual hubris wedded to useless mythic structures. Gnosticism is an ever-present option for people looking for a way out of the frightening face of the world. The Gospel triumphs because it offers to all the grace of the Spirit as a freeing and capacitating grace. Early Christians felt in their bones that they were no longer subject to whatever cosmic forces had held them bound. The Gospel offered something different: Faith in Christ as an offer of love that brings to us a freedom to love in return. This is what I would like to turn to next.

PART TWO: *This illness is not unto death.*

In different ways our people are asking the questions I have just outlined. And in some way all of us must think about what they are saying, and how we-- all of us in the Church-- can respond. For my part I would argue that we must in some way articulate a stronger sense of the Gospel as rescue from our fears, and as the only source of firm hope in both the goodness and the victory of life. I think we are unfocused in our sense of the urgency of the Gospel, and at the root of this is an anemic sense of the Gospel as divine rescue.¹²

If life is pretty good, and evil is not a real problem, then the Lord Jesus gets reduced to a kind of ice-cream salesman whose wares can make a warm but otherwise pleasant afternoon noticeably better. Bishops and theologians both have to be attentive to the announcement of Christ as the response to men and women, young people and old, who know something is deeply wrong with the world, and who wonder first of all, what is it that is wrong, and secondly, wonder if anybody can help us. Because if the response they perceive from us is "no, not really," then sooner or later, people just stop trying. And that is when the question "why be good?" multiplies exponentially on a societal scale. So, now let me offer some thoughts about what I think we need to be talking about with our people.

1. Faith, Hope and Love

Let us listen for a moment to Saint Augustine, who toward the end of his catechetical treatise on faith, hope and love, sometimes known as his *Enchiridion*, says the following:

"When the question is asked whether a man is good, one is not interested in what he believes or what are his hopes, but only what he loves. For beyond any doubt, a man with a right love also has the right faith and hope. But one who has no love, believes in vain, even though what he believes may be true. (...) And as to the true faith of Christ, it is that which the Apostle praises, faith that *worketh by charity*; and what its love does not

yet embrace, it asks that it may receive it, seeks that it may find, and knocks that it may be opened to it. It is this faith that obtains what the law ordains, For without the Gift of God, that is without the Holy Spirit, through whom charity is diffused in our hearts, the law can command, but cannot help; and besides, it can make a man a transgressor, since he cannot excuse himself on the plea of ignorance.”¹³

A couple of comments: First of all, Augustine echoes Ireneaus (who was echoing Saint Paul’s teaching in Romans) about the Spirit written on our hearts. This is central, and I shall return to it. But before this, recall that in this catechetical work, Augustine explicates right faith at length, and rather more summarily attends to the questions of hope and love toward the end. He preserves the normative Scriptural ordering of the three theological virtues and affirms some basic aspects about how the three relate. Goodness is about what one loves. And right love is rooted in what one believes and in what one hopes for. The modern reader, I suggest, is most perplexed by the way Augustine ties love to hope and faith. “For beyond any doubt”, Augustine says, “a man with a right love also has the right faith and hope.” It is the “beyond any doubt” part that our world and our own Catholic people do not quite catch.

I am sure most of you have read the *Moviegoer*, Walker Percy’s 1961 prize winning novel. If you have not, I highly recommend it. I would like to evoke a scene in the novel wherein the main character, Binx Bolling, a young adult born and raised in New Orleans, lies under a cot, somewhat unable to move, and has the following conversation with himself:

My mother’s family think I have lost my faith and they pray for me to recover it. I don’t know what they’re talking about. Other people, so I have read, are pious as children and later become skeptical [...] Not I. My unbelief was invincible from the beginning. I could never make head or tail of God. The proofs of God’s existence may have been true for all I know, but it didn’t make the slightest difference. If God himself had appeared to me, it would have changed nothing. In fact, I have only to hear the word God and a curtain comes down in my head.

My father’s family think that the world makes sense without God and that anyone but an idiot knows what the good life is and anyone but a scoundrel can lead it.

I don’t really know what either of them are talking about. Really I can’t make head or tail of it. The best I can do is lie rigid as a stick under the cot, locked in a death grip with everydayness, sworn not to move a muscle until I advance another inch in my search. The swamp exhales beneath me and across the bayou a night bittern pumps away like a diesel.¹⁴

The interior dialogue is exquisitely Augustinian. It is all about Binx being unable to move, that is to say, love, exactly because he does not know what to hope for; his is a paralysis rooted in not knowing what to believe anymore. For this Louisiana character,

the options before him are faith or noble stoicism. The dynamic is reflective of what Augustine says, only viewed from the perspective of the negation. Augustine talks of love and goodness being rooted in faith and hope; Walker Percy talks of faith and hope being unable anymore to guide him to know how and what to love. In short, he does not know how or why to be good. Augustine would say Binx is not a good man – yet.

Walker Percy saw things in 1961 that many did not see. The problem facing the post World War world was the profound sense of disconnect between what we believe and what we love. In Binx the symptom of the disconnect was paralysis. In the generations that follow, the symptoms become more dire. We are seeing them in our neighborhoods, and on the evening news.

Pope Benedict XVI, I think, perceived this to be the intellectual and cultural challenge of our time: to recast the theological path to faith precisely by beginning not with the issue of truth, but with the experience of love. At the outset of his papacy he first responded to his sense of the question of our times with an encyclical about Christian Love. *Deus Caritas Est* should be read and meditated frequently for years to come. In it he offers the following lucid plea:

Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working.¹⁵

Our contemporary drama is ensconced within those lines. Love has to be shown in order for “a world grown dim” to engage life with courage. And without this courage, the will to live and work is precariously set. But this is precisely what I refer to when I say that the will to be good is confused and anemic in our cultural environs. Benedict followed the opening encyclical with an equally profound letter about Christian Hope, and here again he propounds the theme that hope is possible, finally, when the full truth about Love is known. Only this can sustain life.

In this sense it is true that anyone who does not know God, even though he may entertain all kinds of hopes, is ultimately without hope, without the great hope that sustains the whole of life (cf Eph 2:12). Man’s great, true hope which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God – God who has loved us and who continues to love us “to the end”, until all “is accomplished” (cf Jn 13:1, and 19:30).¹⁶

Pope Francis, as you know, took up the challenge of completing the trilogy with the anticipated encyclical on faith. With exemplary humility he made no attempt to minimize Pope Benedict’s influence on *Lumen Fidei*.

The word which God speaks to us in Jesus is not simply one word among many, but his eternal Word (cf. *Heb* 1:1-2). God can give no greater guarantee of his love, as Saint Paul reminds us (cf. *Rom* 8:31-39). Christian faith is thus faith in a perfect love, in its decisive power, in its ability to transform the world and to unfold its history. "We know and believe the

love that God has for us" (1 Jn 4:16). In the love of God revealed in Jesus, faith perceives the foundation on which all reality and its final destiny rest.¹⁷

The trilogy explicates the three theological virtues not according to the traditional scriptural order traced by Augustine, but rather in reverse. Instead of Faith, Hope and Charity, we are asked to contemplate Charity, Hope and Faith. The Scriptural order is the order of generation, to use one of Saint Thomas' favored distinctions; the reverse order is the order of being, for as Thomas and the Fathers before him insist, especially Augustine (whose text I just cited), the virtues are dead without the vivid form of charity.

The order of being is oriented precisely to evangelization and catechesis in the modern era. Only love convinces, and only hope in the triumph of love sustains the gift that love offers. The current challenge for bishop, catechist and theologian alike is to show how neither charity nor hope is possible without faith. Our question, then, is the following: what it is about faith that opens up the human person to hope and love in a way that is truly distinct?

2. Faith unto Love

Saint Thomas has a beautiful passage in which he speaks of the WORD coming to us with the specific mission to inspire love within us.

Thus Augustine says (De Trin. ix 10): "*The Word we speak of is knowledge with love.*" Thus the Son is sent not in accordance with every and any kind of intellectual perfection, but according to the intellectual illumination, which breaks forth into the affection of love, as is said (John 6:45): "*Everyone that hath heard from the Father and hath learned, cometh to Me,*" and (Psalm 38:4): "*In my meditation a fire shall flame forth.*"¹⁸

This is the mission of the WORD, to breathe love. It is the person of Christ Jesus that enters into the circumstance of life and offers-- breathes-- love in every gesture and word and in every suffering he bore. The Christ breathes the Spirit. The challenge is to see him precisely as gift-bearing, and to perceive the gift. Remember, of course, that "Love" is one of the names proper to the Holy Spirit. So also is the name "Gift". Hence the Trinitarian context of what I am discussing.

Elsewhere, in the Treatise on the Passion, Question 46, Article 3 of the *Tertia Pars* Thomas asks whether there was any more suitable way of delivering the human race than by means of the Cross. He responds with a number of reasons of theological convenience, drawn from the tradition of Scriptural interpretation, synthesizing them admirably. But I want to focus upon the first reason he gives, which reads as follows:

In the first place, man knows thereby how much God loves him, and is thereby stirred to love Him in return, and herein lies the perfection of human salvation; hence the Apostle says in Romans 5:8: "*God commendeth His charity towards us; for when as yet we were sinners . . . Christ died for us*"¹⁹

If we look at Thomas's commentary on Romans 5:8, the text he cites in the article, we find that Thomas reads Saint Paul's teaching in this particular passage to signal that the death of Christ on the Cross was a great showing, a singularly effective manifestation to us of his great love. The showing, however, specifically establishes the possibility that we might grasp something we did not know before, namely the extent of God's love. The prompting or "stirring" of charity in us comes by way of the graced amazement that flows from the new awareness. This is what it means to receive the Word that has been sent. It means that we have perceived the gift (in faith) and respond in love. Faith touches the Word in the flesh, precisely because the Word in the flesh first reaches to touch us. Faith here is in the love he gives, enabling us to love him-- and others in him-- in return. This signals the Christological and Pneumatological context of what I am discussing. This is the great re-positioning of the human person in the cosmos. And we as teachers of the faith are stewards of this doorway to the gift of love.

In Saint Thomas, and I would argue, in Augustine and Irenaeus, the response in love to the gift of Christ is equivalent to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It is the manner of his writing on our hearts. It's all about the Gift: How we perceive it, how we understand it, and how we respond to it. And it is about the Giver, how we perceive him --on the Cross and on the pilgrimage of life-- and how we respond to him in Love. And so our teaching must always be about seeking the grace to perceive the gift. Because once it is seen, the response can be given. And this is what Thomas calls "the fullness of salvation"; this is the grace that rescues.

PART THREE: Give them something to eat yourselves.

Walker Percy seems to have been particularly interested in showing us that the road that leads from the stagnant rut of life to faith in the living God is most usually a road that passes through recognition of our link to other people. Put another way, faith in Christ, in our time, begins to be credibly perceived *as something that makes a difference* when love touches the vulnerable condition of another human being. At the novel's conclusion, we are left with a story still in progress, but one in which the particular suffering of persons around Binx has begun to draw him out of a myopic self-preoccupation. Through the perception of love for other people, the paralyzed man seems to move into an awareness of faith in Christ as a choice that makes a difference in what he hopes for and in how he loves. His is really a case of a human encounter as the graceful catalyst for a conversion to Christ. The truth about Christ is not a truth that moves Binx until it breaks forth in a kind of committed affection. The breaking forth seems to be simultaneously a movement to the Lord and to the people around him. He is free, free to love. Binx does not receive a direct Divine appearance to resolve his paralysis; he receives the grace of communion.

Communion is a distinctly Christian word, and the sense it carries, the experience it names, is precisely what Charles Taylor identifies as the only aspiration of the Christian cosmos that modernity was unable to translate into the reduced social horizon. Call it

the rise of the buffered self, as Taylor does, or the effect of human individualism on steroids, either way, modernity seems not able to fit into itself a social equivalent to Christian communion.²⁰

1. Communion and Solidarity

If we read closely what the papal magisterium has been saying since before *Populorum Progressio*, and which has been vividly moved forward by both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis, we will note that this issue of solidarity and communion is at the forefront of our social justice teaching. In *Gaudium et Spes*, and in the contemporary papal magisterium the favored word for communion is *brotherly communion* or *fraternity*.²¹ In this context, let us listen to what Pope Benedict asks early in *Caritas in Veritate*:

“Will it ever be possible to obtain this brotherhood by human effort alone? As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers. Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity. This originates in a transcendent vocation from God the Father, who loved us first, teaching us through the Son what fraternal charity is. Paul VI, presenting the various levels in the process of human development, placed at the summit, after mentioning faith, “unity in the charity of Christ who calls us all to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all” .²²

From this Gospel premise, that the wound of the world slashes precisely at the point of human relations, and that our efforts alone cannot fix the problem, Benedict lays out a contribution to the social doctrine of the Church that emphasizes the primacy of charity both on the level of macro-economics and on the level of personal responsibility. He proposes that we cannot get at the heart of our contemporary afflictions without addressing human responsibility and conversion as the only real way of humanizing the inhumane aspects of our own industrious economic and social activity. This humanization is equivalent to the generous enacting of *caritas* on a personal level and a deliberate insertion of *caritas* on a global scale. This the Church can do, but only if there are Christians in positions of responsibility who can hear the call of their Christian conscience respond in a more humane way than what the reduced horizon of human relations offers. On the level of macro-economics the Church’s social doctrine re-introduces the importance of the principle of gratuity in human relations. In other words, the dynamic of gift given, and gift responded to. The economic horizon that only allows room for the contractual obligation represents a reduction of the human social horizon with devastating consequences, certainly for the developing world, and for the economically developed world.²³

Caritas in veritate emphasizes that we are responsible and powerful as human beings to alter the course of economic decision making in ways that take into account the truth about our human solidarity.

Far from a mythic power beyond our control, the global economy and social order is a human production, and it is within the power of human beings to redirect its energies in a more humane way. In this sense, Benedict champions the anthropological positioning of the human person that echoes the robust anthropology of the Fathers, and which we find, for example, in the prologue to the Second Part of the Summa:

Since, as Damascene states (*De Fide Orthod.* ii. 12), man is said to be made to God's image, in so far as the image implies *an intelligent being endowed with free-will and self-movement*: now that we have treated of the exemplar, *i.e.*, God, and of those things which came forth from the power of God in accordance with His will; it remains for us to treat of His image, *i.e.*, man, inasmuch as he too is the principle of his actions, as having free-will and control of his actions.

The point being that the Christian repositioning of human beings in the cosmos is rightly conceived of as a liberating humanism insofar as it represents an affirmation of self-movement as within human power, and as capable of receiving a kind of splendor in the grace of Christ, who as God made man both exemplifies and supplies the gift by which we move ourselves in accord with the call of love in truth. The offer of self is the one thing that brings hope, but it requires the discipline of the encounter with the other person: *We are dealing with human beings*, Pope Benedict said, *and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity.*²⁴

If all we as bishops and theologians can do is talk about reforming structures and changing policies, we are not delving deeply enough into what ails us, and what our people fear, and what both Benedict proposed, and Francis now proposes.

2. The Encounter

Benedict proposed this with great clarity in *Deus Caritas Est*.

Practical activity will always be insufficient unless it visibly expresses a love for man, a love nourished by an encounter with Christ. My deep personal sharing in the needs and sufferings of others becomes a sharing of my very self with them: if my gift is not to prove a source of humiliation, I must give to others not only something that is my own, but my very self; I must be personally present in my gift.²⁵

Pope Francis teaches the same, only in his more concrete and dramatic style. Speaking via video conference to pilgrims on the way to the shrine of San Cayetano in Argentina he offers the following lively dialogue:

Sometimes I ask someone: Do you give alms?

And they say "Yes, Father."

And when you give alms, do you look at the eyes of the people you give alms to?

Well, I don't know, I don't really notice.

And so (I say) you did not encounter him. You threw a coin and you went on your way. When you give alms, do you touch his hand, or do you just throw a coin?

No, I throw a coin.

And so you did not touch him, and if you did not touch him, you did not have an encounter with him. What Jesus teaches us is first to encounter one another, and in the encounter, to help. We need to know how to encounter one another. We need to build, to create, to construct a culture of the encounter. So many non-encounters and disagreements among us, so many troubles in the family, always, troubles in the barrio, troubles at work, troubles on all sides. And the failed encounters do not help. (Let us speak of) the culture of the encounter. Let us go out to encounter one another.²⁶

There are a couple of things I would like to point out initially about what Pope Francis says here, and in many other places. First of all, he is speaking to pilgrims on their way to a shrine of popular devotion in Argentina. You really have to have a picture of that in your mind. Pilgrims walking, sometimes great distances, and people are sitting by the side of the road, sitting, sleeping, begging, praying. Secondly, the word "encuentro" is only partially translated by the English word "encounter". The Spanish more strongly connotes a deliberate engagement of the other, a personal exchange with attention and respect. It is a word Pope Francis uses constantly.

People sometimes say to me that they cannot find Jesus in their lives. I sometimes respond by saying that they need to get out more. American Catholicism could benefit from appreciating the importance of the pilgrimage, the procession and the fiesta as spaces of encounter that only the Church can provide, and which we have a duty to foster. Obviously, Latin America and Europe have a traditionally vivid sense of the pilgrimage as part of Christian life. If you have not gone to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and prayed there with persons you would never otherwise have met, perhaps you should consider it. Yes, it will enhance your theological education, but that is comparatively insignificant compared to how it can occasion a profound encounter with Christ in the Church.

At this point I would add that if we sometimes look with private disdain on popular devotion—the earthier side of Catholicism—, we need to get over that. Things like touching statues, making the pilgrimage to a shrine, and walking the way of the Cross are a deep part of faith in the fleshiness of the Word. A little intellectual humility in the presence of the faith of the “unlettered” (to hearken back to what Irenaeus said), is necessary for us.

Francis in this message invites the pilgrims to share in what I would call a “Saint Francis moment”, that is to say, a moment when the encounter with the proverbial leper occasions the grace of a deeper encounter with Christ. But you have to look at the person you are serving, the person whom God puts in your path. American life is too

often about getting their faster, and first. Christian life is about who you are going with, and who you meet along the way. That is the difference between the culture of the commercial relation and the culture of the pilgrimage.

In short, I am suggesting that our catechetical and theological efforts are prone to be too cerebral. People do need to get out more. If we want to learn what Jesus means when he says we have to lose ourselves in order to find ourselves, it is necessary that we invite people to the experience of this losing and finding. Because Christ comes in the flesh, the whole announcement of the faith is about a truth that erupts into love that must express itself in the flesh.

But for our young people and adults to experience this, they must look for Christ in the places he said he would be, namely in the fellow pilgrim, and in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The two go hand in hand. To teach the meaning of the Eucharistic gift is to teach the form of the self-emptying that is the Word coming to us in flesh and blood, breathing love. And to receive this gift is to be offered the grace to respond and thus become a word breathing love, that is to say, a disciple willing to risk encounter with the Christ in my sister and brother. This is why there are limits to what we can expect the internet to do to help in evangelization and catechesis. Technology can facilitate these encounters, but it cannot substitute for it.

Pope Francis goes on to say in this video message:

And the motto says, let us go out to encounter those most in need, that is to say, with those who need more than I do. With those who are passing through a bad time, worse than I am. There is always someone who is going through a worse time than I am. Right? Always! Always there is someone.

And so, (you say to yourself), I think, well, I am passing through a bad time, and so I go out to encounter San Cayetano, and to encounter Jesus, and afterwards I go out to encounter others, because there is always someone who is passing through a worse time than I am. It is those whom we ought to go out to encounter.

Thanks for listening to me, thanks for coming here today, thanks for all that you carry in your hearts! Jesus loves you very much! San Cayetano loves you very much! I only ask you one thing: That you encounter one another! That you go and look, and encounter the one who needs more! But not alone. With Jesus, with San Cayetano! Am I going to convince another to become Catholic (you ask)? No, no no! You go to encounter the other person, he is your brother! That is enough! And you will help him, Jesus does the rest, the Holy Spirit does it.²⁷

The Holy Father has great faith in the efficacy of the gift that is given in the human encounter, as the vessel in time for the movement of grace.

3. Where is God?

I have had a couple of discussions with friends of mine about how commensurate *The Hunger Games* trilogy is with a Catholic anthropology.²⁸ In the novels by Suzanne Collins, God is absolutely absent from the mind and speech of the characters. Young people are subjected to cruelties simply because those in power can so subject them. Death has become the supreme sport and mechanism for political control.

And so a Catholic reads the novels and asks: whence comes the will to make the gift of self? The political/economic/social matrix is mighty indeed in the novels, but not so powerful as to be able to render extinct the impulse to self-gift. Rue, the little girl in the trees who helps Katniss, and who asks her to sing a song to her before she dies, is the clearest manifestation in the novels of the self-less gift. The story punches tensely around the difference between a favor that requires a repayment, and a gift that is simply given. And as if in imitation of the mockingjays that echo the last song, the rest of the tale tries to mount a kind of response to the presence of gift in the narrative. Katniss cannot make a repayment, but she can give a gift in return.

I suspect a lot of young people, and older folks like me, like these novels for reasons not entirely clear. That they resonate is theologically significant. For a Catholic, it is important to ask if God is truly absent from the *Hunger Games*, or if perhaps the only face he could show in that desolate environ was in the spark that lit when Katniss took her sister's place, and when Rue gave all to help Katniss. People still can experience graced amazement at the display of the gift of self. But they do not know whether it is enough to change things, or if it can last, or prevail in the end. And they do not know where to go to be nourished in it.

I am inclined to think that the story opens up for us the horizon of post-Christian human hope, tenuous and choked, yet not washed away by the flood. The situation is analogous in some way to the pagan world just prior to the announcement of the Gospel. The announcement of Christ can resonate in this environment if we focus upon the witness of charity as gift of self freely given. But we must follow this with the announcement that this gift can and does prevail because of the firmness of our faith in the love that lies at the foundation of the universe. This faith in love is what Jesus offers in the gift of himself; the faith of the Church, and her hope, are rooted in the acceptance of his gift. We announce the rescue from the fear that in the end nothing really matters.

Is God far away? This is the question that lies beneath most of the questions people outside the Church ask us, and questions our own people so often ask us. No, we say, he is very close. He is in the poor, he is on the Cross, he is in the gift renewed at the Eucharist. You just have to know where to look and how to see. The first part -- where to look-- is mostly our job. The second part-- how to see-- well, that has ever been the work of the Lord Jesus. But it cannot stop there; he is in the response we give to the gift of his presence, in the writing of the Spirit upon our hearts.

Thank you for your kind attention.

¹ Gregory the Great, *Homilia in Hiezechihalem*, (Gregorii Magni Opera, III/1, Citta Nuova Editrice: 1992): I, XI, 4: Speculator quipped semper in altitudine stat, ut quicquid venturum est longe prospiciat.

² Gregory the Great, *Homilia in Hiezechihalem*, I, I, 1: Ibid.

³ Flannery O'Connor, "On Her Own Work," in *Mystery and Manners* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970), 108: Properly, you analyze to enjoy, but it's equally true that to analyze with any discrimination, you have to have enjoyed already, and I think that the best reason to hear a story read is that it should stimulate primary enjoyment.

⁴ Carlos Fuentes, *El espejo enterrado* (Taurus, 1998), 528-530.

⁵ Mario Vargas Llosa, *La Guerra del fin del mundo* (Alfaguara, 1998). Other texts that might serve as good introductions, Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad* (Penguin, 1997), and Victor Villaseñor, *Lluvia de oro* (Dell, 1991). All three are readily available in English.

⁶ Jim Butcher, *Storm Front*, (RoC, 2000), 3-4.

⁷ Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steve C. McCraw, as reported by Reuters, October 17, 2011: Cartels would pay kids \$50 just for them to move a vehicle from one position to another position, which allows the cartel to keep it under surveillance to see if law enforcement has it under surveillance," he said. "Of course, once you're hooked up with them, there's consequences." McCraw said 25 minors have been arrested in one Texas border county alone in the past year for running drugs, acting as lookouts, or doing other work for organized Mexican drug gangs. The cartels are now fanning out, he said, and have operations in all major Texas cities. This month, "we made an arrest of a 12-year-old boy who was in a stolen pickup truck with 800 pounds of marijuana," he said. "So they do recruit our kids."

⁸ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (Houghton Mifflin, 1987), The Two Towers, Helms Deep, 144.

⁹ Colossians 1:13-14.

¹⁰ Colossians 2:15.

¹¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, 4,2. This translation from Cyril Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, (Library of Christian Classics, 1995).

¹² See Tolkien, "On Fairy Stories," also known as "Tree and Leaf", especially the epilogue, for a sense of what I am referring to here.

¹³ Saint Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity*. This translation by Louis A. Arand, (Ancient Christian Writers no. 3, Newman Press, 1947), ch. 31, no. 117.

¹⁴ Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer*, (Vintage, 1998), 145-146.

¹⁵ Deus caritas est, no. 39: Fides, quae Dei amoris sibi fit conscia revelati usque ad Iesu cor in cruce perfossum, amorem vicissim concitat. Lux est — unica tandem — quae renovato usque modo obscurum orbem illuminat animumque ad vivendum et operandum addit.

¹⁶ Spe salvi, no. 27: Hoc sensu verum est illum qui Deum ignorat, quamvis multiplicem spem habeat, in intimo sine spe esse, sine illa magna spe quae totam sustinet vitam (cfr *Eph* 2,12). Vera, magna hominis spes, quae omnes praeter deceptiones perstat, potest esse solummodo Deus — Deus qui nos dilexit et nos usque diligit « in finem », « usque ad plenam consummationem » (cfr *Io* 13,1 et 19,30).

¹⁷ Lumen fidei no 15: Quod in Iesu nobis dicit Deus, id non est verbum tot aliis additum, sed eius aeternum Verbum (cfr *Heb* 1,1-2). Nullam cautionem maiorem praestare potest Deus, ut de suo amore nos certiores faciat, sicut memorat sanctus Paulus (*Rom* 8,31-39). Fides ideo christiana fides est in Amore pleno, in eius efficaci virtute, in eius potestate mundi mutandi illuminandique temporis. « Et nos, qui credidimus, novimus caritatem, quam habet Deus in nobis » (*1 Io* 4,16). Fides in Dei amore qui in Iesu manifestatur fundamentum percipit in quo natura et eius postrema destinatio nituntur.

¹⁸ Translations of the Summa Theologiae are taken from the edition made by the Dominicans of the English Dominican Province (Benzinger, 1948 and Christian Classics, 1981): I, 43, 5, ad 2: Ad secundum dicendum quod anima per gratiam conformatur Deo. Unde ad hoc quod aliqua persona divina mittatur ad aliquem per gratiam, oportet quod fiat assimilatio illius ad divinam personam quae mittitur per

aliquod gratiae donum. Et quia spiritus sanctus est amor, per donum caritatis anima spiritui sancto assimilatur, unde secundum donum caritatis attenditur missio spiritus sancti. Filius autem est verbum, non quaecumque, sed spirans amorem, unde Augustinus dicit, in IX libro de Trin., *verbum quod insinuare intendimus, cum amore notitia est*. Non igitur secundum quamlibet perfectionem intellectus mittitur filius, sed secundum talem instructionem intellectus, qua prorumpat in affectum amoris, ut dicitur Ioan. VI, *omnis qui audivit a patre, et didicit, venit ad me*; et in Psalm., *in meditatione mea exardescet ignis*.

¹⁹ III, 46, 3, c.: [...] Primo enim, per hoc homo cognoscit quantum Deus hominem diligat, et per hoc provocatur ad eum diligendum, in quo perfectio humanae salutis consistit. Unde apostolus dicit, Rom. V, *commendat suam caritatem Deus in nobis, quoniam, cum inimici essemus, Christus pro nobis mortuus est*. [...].

²⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Belknap, 2007). See 279-283. See also, 744-751.

²¹ For example, Gaudium et spes, no. 39: Bona enim humanae dignitatis, communionis fraternae et libertatis, hos omnes scilicet bonos naturae ac industriae nostrae fructus, postquam in Spiritu Domini et iuxta Eius mandatum in terris propagaverimus, postea denuo inveniemus, mundata tamen ab omni sorde, illuminata ac transfigurata, cum Christus Patri reddet regnum aeternum et universale: "regnum veritatis et vitae, regnum sanctitatis et gratiae, regnum iustitiae, amoris et pacis" (80). His in terris Regnum iam in mysterio adest; adveniente autem Domino consummabitur.

²² Caritas in veritate, no. 19: Num hanc fraternitatem per se ipsi homines invenire possunt? Societas magis usque universaliter conglobata nos proximos efficit, sed nos non reddit fratres. Ratio una aequalitatem inter homines percipere atque civilem inter eos convictum statuere potest, sed fraternitatem condere nequit. Initium ex transcendentem Dei Patris vocatione haec sumit, qui primus nos dilexit explanavitque suum per Filium quid esset fraterna caritas. A Paulo VI, hominis progressionis varios ordines exhibente, fide memorata, sublime effertur « coniunctio in caritate Christi, qui nos advocat, ut non secus atque filii vitam Dei viventis, omnium hominum Patris, participemus ».

²³ See Caritas in veritate, no. 36.

²⁴ Deus caritas est, no. 31: Facultas professionalis prima est fundamentalis necessitas, sed sola non sufficit. Agitur, revera, de personis humanis et illae personae humanae semper pluribus rebus egent quam cura simpliciter technice apta. Egent humanitate. Egent cordis attentione.

²⁵ Deus caritas est, no. 34: Actuositas executiva non sufficit si in ipsa amor in hominem non redditur comprehensibilis, amor qui occurso cum Christo alitur. Intima personalis participatio necessitatum et dolorum proximi hoc modo fit ut ego me cum eo participem: ne donum proximum humiliet, ei dandum est non tantummodo aliquid mei, sed ipsemet ego, adstare debeo in dono veluti persona.

²⁶ Videomensaje del Santo Padre Francisco en la fiesta de San Cayetano, Argentina (7 de agosto de 2013): A veces yo le pregunto a alguna persona: - ¿Usted da limosnas? Me dicen: "Sí, padre". - Y cuando da limosnas, ¿mira a los ojos de la gente que le da las limosnas? - "Ah, no sé, no me di cuenta". - "Entonces no lo encontré. Le tiró la limosna y se fue. Cuando usted da limosna, ¿toca la mano o le tira la moneda?" - "No, le tiro la moneda" Y no lo tocaste, y si no lo tocaste, no te encontraste con él". Lo que Jesús nos enseña es primero a encontrarnos, y en el encuentro, ayudar. Necesitamos saber encontrarnos. Necesitamos edificar, crear, construir, una cultura del encuentro. Tantos desencuentros, líos en la familia, ¡siempre! Líos en el barrio, líos en el trabajo, líos en todos lados. Y los desencuentros no ayudan. La cultura del encuentro. Salir a encontrarnos.

²⁷ Videomensaje del Santo Padre Francisco en la fiesta de San Cayetano, Argentina (7 de agosto de 2013): [...] Y el lema dice, encontrarnos con los más necesitados, es decir, con aquellos que necesitan más que yo. Con aquellos que están pasando un mal momento, peor que el que estoy pasando yo. Siempre hay alguien que la pasa peor, ¿eh? ¡Siempre! Siempre hay alguien. Entonces yo pienso, estoy pasando un mal momento, vengo a la cola para encontrarme con San Cayetano y con Jesús, y después

salgo a encontrarme con los demás, porque siempre hay alguien que la pasa peor. Con esos, es con quienes nos debemos encontrar. Gracias por escucharme, gracias por venir aquí hoy, gracias por todo lo que llevan en el corazón. ¡Jesús los quiere mucho! ¡San Cayetano los quiere mucho! Solamente les pide una cosa: ¡Que se encuentren! ¡Que vayan y busquen y encuentren al que más necesita! Pero solos no. ¡Con Jesús, con San Cayetano! ¿Voy a convencer a otro que se haga católico? ¡No, no, no! ¡Vas a encontrarlo, es tu hermano! ¡Eso basta! Y lo vas a ayudar, lo demás lo hace Jesús, lo hace el Espíritu Santo.

²⁸ Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic Press, 2008).