

Poverty and Development: A Catholic Perspective  
CAPP-USA and Fordham University  
Rapporteur Summary  
Mr. Brian A. Strassburger, S.J.  
September 26-27, 2014

We came here with a great task at hand. The conference focused on three key themes of Pope Francis:

- 1- The world's response to immediate emergencies
- 2- Economic independence among people leading towards total integral development
- 3- Spirit of solidarity and fraternity

The speakers and participants of the conference arrived here infused with a sense of hope and optimism. Let us recall the image of Mary at the Annunciation. After the angel's greeting, Mary was distressed. The angel spoke to her, "Do not be afraid." With those words close to heart, we have not come here in fear nor despair, but as people of hope.

His Excellency, Archbishop Silvano Maria Tomasi, spoke on issues of immediate relief, lasting development and the need for solidarity. He called for a response to an economy of exclusion and inequality that is rooted in natural selfishness. He spoke of the primacy of the human person. He encouraged a movement toward less exclusion and wider consultation with attention to local realities and issues.

He encouraged us to rediscover how creative and effective multi-level, multi-stakeholder approaches can be. He called us to be attentive to the way the common good allows persons to become fully themselves through relationships with others, which is the space where creativity takes root.

Archbishop Tomasi recommended that a new framework must be developed, a process through which the Church has an important moral voice. The new framework must increase the ability of all people to actively participate in the conversation. It must demand accountability and transparency from institutions. Economic life demands that individual players and international players be guided by the principle of dignity of all human persons.

His Eminence, Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, shared on responding to immediate emergencies. He offered many stories from his extensive personal experience, and he focused on our obligation to respond and the urgency demanded. He called us to respond with generosity, and also with intelligence, asking questions without presuming the answers. We must ask, "What are the needs of the community?" He commented on the universality of human dignity among peoples of diverse backgrounds and faith traditions. Defense of human dignity unites us.

General Roméo Dallaire spoke passionately on our obligation to intervene. He challenged our perspective on intervention by questioning when and why we intervene. Based on his extensive experience, the will to intervene is exclusively self-interest dominated.

He recommended that we reform our idea of sovereignty from the sovereignty of the state to the sovereignty of the human being. This entails a responsibility to protect. He looked in particular at child soldiers and the conditions of just war. General Dallaire commented on the challenging evaluation of the politics behind preventative

intervention. He concluded by emphasizing that development and the elimination of poverty are intimately tied to an environment of security

His Eminence, Chibly Cardinal Langlois, gave a Haitian perspective of relief and development efforts. He offered the Haitian context in terms of challenges facing its development. Amid many positive signs, he also noted serious challenges regarding energy, water, sanitation, unemployment, and poverty.

He spoke of the answers offered by the local church of Haiti in regard to these challenges. These primarily involve the three areas of education, agriculture, and health. Cardinal Langlois made a call for international and national solidarity. This solidarity must be new, sustainable, participatory and cooperative, and continued.

Metropolitan Jean Clément Jeanbart gave a moving account of the suffering of his terrorized community in Syria. He painted a picture of the reality in Syria and a persecuted people. He spoke of the need for truth, particularly in the media. He was critical of acts done in the name of God, especially acts of violence, destruction and terror. He expressed sadness over the tragedies endured by Christians, and the general loss of history and culture, so much of which is now in ruins. The crisis in Syria is not just a destruction of people, but a destruction of a civilization.

Metropolitan Jeanbart also offered hope. He rested hope in education, in efforts to meet immediate needs, in integral human development, a global call to prayer, and the process of dialogue. He expressed his heartfelt hope for peace.

At dinner, His Eminence, Pietro Cardinal Parolin, offered remarks on peace and the protection of peoples and how this relates to human and economic development. He expressed the need for new norms built on consensus that lends to its credibility and contributes to human development.

Leading off the second day, Fr. Richard Ryscavage, S.J. spoke on immigration. He turned our attention away from the negative effects of immigration to the gifts of migrants: family values, religious faith, cultural diversity. He dispelled the assumption that migration comes from an escape of poverty. Rather, there are complexities to the decision to migrate, which are not just economic, but mixed and often family-oriented.

Fr. Ryscavage elaborated on remittances and deportation, including the motivations but also the dangers and threats to the common good created by them. He pushed us to look at the root issues of migration, such as the employment opportunities in home countries of migrants.

He identified the issue of unaccompanied minors as a humanitarian emergency. He called for regional-based responses. The remedy must begin with the human person. He encouraged reflection on the “best interest” of the child and prioritized the unity of families. He called us to look not merely for a “just solution” but also a “loving solution.”

Professor Paolo Carozza looked at structural issues, redefining the term and offering cautions on the most popular trends in development in light of Catholic Social Teaching. We cannot depend on structures alone, and so Professor Carozza turned to the structure of the human person.

He commented on five trends in development and offered corresponding cautions. First, we must expand what we mean by development. Our understanding must go beyond economic terms to the human level. Citing Pope John Paul II, he identified the

apex of development as a person's ability to respond to his or her personal vocation. He encouraged our efforts to focus on integral, not fragmented, human development.

Second, he expressed skepticism over dependence on quantitative analysis and measurement. Not all elements of integral human development are measurable. Human beings are, in many ways, beyond measure. Third, he commented on sustainable or resilient development. He cautioned that this cannot be generated by structures. Rather, it must come from human beings, who become "protagonists" of development. People must be given the opportunity to be "artisans of their own destiny."

Fourth, Professor Carozza looked at the financing of development. He paid particular attention to the role of civil society, so often ignored. He emphasized the role of religious communities and the family. Finally, he reflected on the limitations of the language of human rights and the role of law. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of education and the freedom of religion.

Dr. Henry Schwalbenberg took us through Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" in outlining the insights of economics on development, with focuses on the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity. He introduced many of the major debates and scholarship in the area of developmental economics today. He highlighted the work being done across the world by graduates from Fordham's Masters program in International Political Economy and Development.

Professor Melissa Labonte moderated the panel and offered some summary remarks about the conversation of the conference. She identified four common themes. First, Catholic Social Teaching has a role in challenging the orthodoxy of wicked problems. She defined "wicked problems" as those that are difficult to define and those which tend to be the symptoms of other problems. While there are often explanations for wicked problems, the appropriateness of the solution is based on who defines the problem. There is a normative dimension to solving wicked problems: solutions are never just true and false, but also good or bad. The authors of solutions to wicked problems thus need to take responsibility for their solutions.

The second theme she identified was the underlying urgency behind these wicked problems. There is an urgent call for a radical revolution of values, particularly a shift from thing-oriented culture to person-oriented culture. The third theme was the need for participatory approaches which bring legitimacy and authenticity. For the final theme, Professor Labonte identified the value-added from Catholic Social Teaching as the critical yeast. It is not about the mass or the overwhelming numbers, but rather the critical placement of actors that grows into long-term change. Catholic Social Teaching can be the critical yeast for developing solutions to wicked problems.

The panel focused primarily on the question of reconciling Catholic Social Teaching with what really happens on the ground, with particular attention to the people and organizations with whom the Church collaborates. Fr. Ryscavage lamented the lack of education over what the Church teaches. He noted a shocking degree of ignorance about the Church, its social doctrine and its services and ministries, which he has particularly observed among Catholic politicians. General Dallaire reflected on the ethical and spiritual dilemma in the field between those searching for solutions and the populations actually living in the conditions. Cardinal McCarrick commented on the political split in the United States over issues the Catholic Church supports and how divisive this can be.

Metropolitan Jeanbart called for a greater faithfulness to Jesus and the commandment to love. Professor Carozza, reflecting on Pope Francis, commented on the movement to poverty as a theological, and even Christological, category. He noted a paradox coming from Pope Francis who is pressing a moral exhortation to go out and minister to the poor and marginalized, while also promoting movement back to the center through an encounter with Jesus. Archbishop Tomasi concluded the panel by encouraging all Christians to start with the foundation of Jesus. If you accept Jesus, then you can build the consequences of your life from there. In a pluralistic world, he called for a greater understanding of the world in which we live. He invited us to identify what we have in common with other human beings and build from that foundation.

Following the panel, Mr. Robert Nalewajek, President of CAPP-USA, offered a closing meditation on solidarity and fraternity, which must be rooted in God. He placed Church teaching in contrast with Social Contract Theory. The latter of which emphasizes human autonomy. He suggested that Church teaching offers the response that we are inherently social in reflection of the trinitarian God. Fraternity and solidarity are for our own good and based on the unitary commandment of love: the inseparable call of love of God and love of neighbor. He commented that the problems of development are found in the self-centeredness and materiality of the will. Mr. Nalewajek pointed to the radical charge from Jesus in the Gospel of John: "love one another as I have loved you."

He encouraged us to change our own lives first and then the world. He challenged us to implement Catholic Social Teaching on a practical and immediate level. He exhorted us to resist the tendency to treat religion as a private matter. Rather, it must permeate every aspect of a Christian's life. The challenge of this conference and the work of the Foundation is to develop a strong, committed group of lay and religious Catholic leaders to recapture the Catholic vision of the world.

As we conclude the conference, it is time for us to go out. To return to the image of Mary at the Annunciation, shared with us by His Eminence, Cardinal McCarrick, we recall that after encountering the angel, Mary departed "cum festinatione," translated from Latin to, "in haste." We must go from here with a sense of urgency, in haste. The going out: that is the greatest task of all. This conference, much like the Church, is not a place that we "come to." It is a place we "go from."

As we conclude, it is about where we go from here. As the founder of the Society of Jesus, St. Ignatius, wrote in the Spiritual Exercises, "love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than words." Many great words were spoken at the conference. It is time for us to go out and bring those words into action.