



March 19, 2013
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(GSN) Pope Benedict XVI: A Good
Steward of the Good News

The Cry of the Poor



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FERGUSON,
WHELAN,
AND CONWAY

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The Cry of the Poor

By Robert Chronowski

"The Lord hears the cry of the poor; blessed be the Lord" is a response to Psalm 34 as used in the Mass readings often enough that we all recognize the words. We say or sing those words and the Lord certainly hears the cry of the poor, but do we really hear that cry and what do we as individuals or collectively do about it? For decades now the United Nations, the foreign aid arms of the industrialized country governments, and the multilateral development banks have all been pouring aid and loans into the least developed countries and the result is startling. While one can find a few successes, even more poverty has been the definitive answer in these least developed countries, especially in many countries of Africa. There are now many secular publications detailing this conundrum and pointing the fingers in many directions. The Church, knowing its responsibility, has historically operated safety net organizations to respond where and when needed primarily to natural and other disasters, but the poor we seem to always have with us. Pope Benedict XVI in Caritas in Veritate points to the way of the full development of each human individual that can break the poverty cycle, and he is clear that it is not aid based. Aid and charity are not the same; aid can and too many times does carry with it an agenda such as population control, or as we see today affronts to God's natural law. Charity, being love of God and love of neighbor based, is something good and needed, but what is that step beyond charity that helps people lift themselves out of poverty. One can accurately stereotype the situation in the least developed countries as that of governments not having the large enough tax base of individuals and companies to cover the cost of providing the essential government services. The governments accept the overseas aid to supplement local tax revenues to the degree of becoming dependent on that aid flow, but adequate development progress is not achieved. More and more of the aid givers fiendishly attach anti-God agendas onto the aid packages to these countries. The aid

receiving countries look at the Godlessness overtaking Europe and the United States and fear they are headed down the same path, but they are essentially trapped by the poverty cycle that doesn't provide adequate economic growth to allow control of their own destiny.

In the USA the notion of "wealth transfer" has been a recent controversial political topic with those that have the wealth being forced to give up to those that don't have the wealth. Being forced takes this out of the realm of a *caritas* or love-based action. There is a better direction that has been used by the Church for centuries based on voluntary "wealth sharing" driven by love of God and love of neighbor. There is an obligation to share wealth in that way that, when recognized through proper teaching and being mobilized effectively, can lead to positive societal transformation and associated economic progress. For this to occur requires that virtue as recognized through the ages be a stalwart and living pillar of the people and society. One should find virtue being taught throughout the Church and more importantly in all schools, and not just some Church schools. Sadly virtue is either given a new insidious definition under the guise of diversity or not taught at all in the majority of schools, and society now suffers and the poor are still with us in very large number. We have not really heard the cry of the poor and acted on it.

The O'Meara Ferguson staff has the mission of helping the Church better use its assets of people and money to accomplish transformation, both of parishes and the Church, and it does this very well. Pat O'Meara, the President and Founder, in digging into Caritas in Veritate and giving teachings on it, recognized that he and the company were able to and needed to do much more. The Church/lay partnership approach used by the company to assist the Church in the USA is adaptable in the international arena in the pursuit of the human development goals of Caritas in Veritate. Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga, the Archbishop of Kampala and primate of



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Uganda, already has the Church/lay partnership structured and in limited operation, but with great success. The government of Uganda, as with the other sub-Saharan countries, is under great pressure to abandon Godly principles by the aid givers. However, the Church in Uganda is like the government of Uganda in terms of being capital starved. The Church there is essentially still in its missionary stage having been well-evangelized by missionaries, but now having its own indigenous priests to evangelize God's people and knowing what needs to be done. The company has the unique opportunity to start working with the Ugandan Church focusing on the temporal affairs of development while assisting the Church in the spiritual affairs of the faith. After 3 missions to Uganda a complete structure for this was jointly designed with the Ugandan Church, and it now boils down to aggregating the financial resources to demonstrate true human development in a pilot phase before expanding to other African countries and then elsewhere to meet the truly global need.

So just what is it that is to be done? O'Meara Ferguson is taking the need for help in terms of development capital to those of the US and potentially international Catholic entities that have the financial resources, and demonstrating how to invest a portion of those resources in commercial activities. This will start with activities in Uganda and later expand elsewhere, but only after carefully vetting each by the Church and by

O'Meara Ferguson. This will provide jobs and income to many individuals, will strengthen the economy of the country, and will pay back a fair return to the investor. The tax base in the country will progressively increase and this will help wean the government off the need for the destructive foreign aid inflows. At the root of each investment is the development of the individual human person that provides each with the dignity that comes from being a contributor to society instead of a taker. Obviously this is a more complex process than described herein, but the process from beginning to end is based on biblical principles, ties together the Church and the laity in a way that is constructive, and fills the pews and does not empty them. The proper formal business plan and other associated documents are either already prepared or under preparation such that they can be reviewed from a strictly commercial standpoint to confirm viability. The commercial business approach is tried and proven, even in Africa. When one visits the African countries one finds that God's people there are as smart as we are, are as motivated as we are, are true believers in the faith, and are open to a partnership that has mutual benefits and does not evolve in another one-way flow of resources out of the country. These are truly our brothers and sisters and we have a duty to walk together with them in faith. It isn't about a handout; it is all about honoring the 2 great commandments as given by Our Lord. If we listen for the cry of the poor we will hear it. If we hear it we have no choice but to act.