



Church Caritas Ministry in the Perspective of Caritas-Theology and Catholic Social Teaching

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Introduction

This book stems from the authors' commitment to the charitable service of the Roman Catholic Church. Each of us is engaged in this service through a direct practical activity, in addition we all bear responsibility — primarily in the academic field - - for the support, enhancement and development of the service through a theological reflection.

The term *charitable service of the (Catholic) Church* as used herein shall mean the activities of solidary help to people suffering from any need, through mitigation/removal of the need and its causes. The church-based dimension of this service is also characterised by exceeding the framework of the private moral commitment, its mission draws on the Church's mission, and as such it acts *in nomine ecclesiae* to a certain extent and thereby features a certain degree of organisational structure. The target group of the service comprises individuals, families, groups and communities suffering not only in terms of physical disabilities, material or economic needs, but on all levels of their humanity, i.e. psychologically, spiritually or even religiously. The range of activities and levels of charitable services is as diverse as the forms of human need and distress. It includes not only the volunteer projects, services or initiatives in congregations and communities (such as Community of Sant Egidio) which are, from the global perspective, the most populous in many developed countries, but also the professionalised charitable agencies (such as Catholic Charities in USA or Deutscher Caritasverband).

Probably everyone who has a chance of reading this book is certain to see that Church charitable service is of deeply social nature, somewhat interconnected with the Catholic teaching which is also called “social” — Catholic social teaching¹. Yet, the very interconnectedness is not that easily definable. This trouble has its own cause. The book published in 1985 by Michael J. Schultheis, Edward P. DeBerri & Peter J. Henriot, which introduces the readers to

¹ Hereinafter abbreviated to CST.

the topic of the Catholic social teaching, was aptly and metaphorically named by the authors: *Our best kept secret*. Thenceforth, the topic of CST has been dealt with in countless academic or popularising writings, in another three “classical” social encyclicals² and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). An observer may have come to the conclusion that since then “the best kept secret” must have become “the best revealed secret”. Nevertheless, one of the most recent treatises on the topic (Massaro, 2012) does not correspond to this conclusion. The author hereby calls upon the readers to search for the factors which makes CST so “low profile” and “the best kept secret” still (p. 16).

An answer to this question goes beyond the objective of this book. Yet it relates to this objective. The authors believe that the theological reflection of the aforementioned charitable service — one of the three essential expressions of the Church identity — has even lower “profile” within the system of Roman Catholic theology and ecclesiastical structure. It is worth mentioning that until 2005 (*Deus Caritas est*³) there was no specific Papal document issued on the topic of the Church charitable service. It was as late as in 2012 that the Bishop’s responsibility for the charitable service of the Church was sufficiently incorporated in *Codex Iurus Canonici* and his normative “lacuna” filled (*Intima Ecclesiae Natura*, Introduction). There is no globally established theological discipline which would focus on this sphere, with the exception of that in German-speaking countries, the so-called “Caritas-Theology”. The number of relevant writings is incomparable with those on the sphere of CST. In addition, unlike in CST, there is no system for the formation of the clergy or normative duty to study the topic of *caritas* theology and practice. This state of, so to speak, theological asymmetry, is even more incomprehensible if we take into account millions of volunteers and hundreds of thousands professionals taking part in various Church charitable projects, services and initiatives around the world.

² *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), *Centesimus annus* (1991), *Caritas in veritate* (2009).

³ Due to a high frequency of quotation, the two vital documents concerning Catholic *Caritas*, i.e. “*Deus caritas est*” and “*Intima ecclesiae natura*”, are abbreviated in the authors’ contributions to DCE and IEN respectively.

So, what could be the root cause or a contributing factor of this “low-profile” nature of CST and particularly of the charitable service of the Church? Without being determined to enlarge upon any systematic analysis, a possible answer was outlined by Pope Francis in his interpretation of Healing the blind near Jericho (Luke 18:35–43). Here, Pope Francis warns of the frequent temptation among Christians (“this happens frequently among us believers”) to rebuke and keep those living on the margins of society away from our Lord, the temptation to see ourselves as “the privileged” and thereby creating a certain “ecclesiastical microclimate” where “[...] ‘in looking at the Lord’ we end up’ not seeing the Lord’s needs: we don’t see the Lord who is hungry, who is thirsty, who is in prison, who is in the hospital” (Francis, 2014b). The extent to which Pope’s diagnosis is true reflects the necessity to see the cause of theological inferiority of CST and particularly of the Church charitable service in unhealthy forms of spirituality.

This is a brief outline of the issue dealt with individually by the authors in their relevant chapters of this book.

Giampietro DalToso, the secretary of the Papal Council Cor Unum, specialises in the analysis of theological inspirations and contents of the Motu Proprio “Intima Ecclesiae Natura” because it is the first canon law document that is relevant for the charitable service of the Church. He particularly points out that the canonical aspects must be interpreted against the broad horizon of theology. Incidentally, this applies to the Motu Proprio as well, which consists of a theological introduction, followed by a normative section. Hence, this law in the Church cannot be regarded as an autonomous field, but rather it must be read in the context of the experienced faith, this experience being the source of the law itself.

The anchoring of theological reflection on the charitable service of the Church in canon law, as postulated by Dal Toso, offers an important introduction to the chapter by Professor *Heinrich Pompey*, a long-time protagonist of Caritas-Theology and Caritas-Science (Caritaswissenschaft). He suggests that since the impressive expansion of the Church’s specialised charitable services over the last decades, Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have repeatedly emphasized the importance of ensuring the special Christian quality of these services and of caritas as a whole. To the benefit of suffering people, argues Pompey, this undisputedly necessary

material and psycho-social assistance must be optimized, based on ethical responsibility and through spiritual-existential support. Two practical-theological consequences result according to Pompey from the message of the Popes, especially from the encyclical “Deus caritas est” by Pope Benedict XVI: (1) the spiritual foundation of supportive personal care as well as the (2) loving provision of a spiritual home for those who are suffering. Both aspects are based on the Trinitarian truth of the love of God realized simultaneously both in personal and communal terms. The statements of Pompey aim at practical theological elaboration of this theological focus of the caritas. He attempts also to clarify the implicit spirituality of the Caritas-Theology in concrete terms and in terms of its application for aid, at the same time illustrating this practically as the basic contribution of evangelization.

Rainer Gehrig, assistant professor at International Institute of Charity and Volunteerism John Paul II. in Murcia/Spain considers charity not only as part of the Church’s nature, but underlines its theological position and comprehension as a central guide of the Christian faith, the pastoral action of the Church, and human life itself. In this interdisciplinary space reopened by Benedict XVI., the academic theology perceives an obligation and necessity to pronounce more clearly a transversal reading and a deeper understanding of love and its relevance for the different theological disciplines and the church pastoral and charitable activities, claims Gehrig. Traditionally “love” is one of the core subjects of caritas theology, but to a lesser extends, this theological concept received attention in other disciplines like CST, Pastoral, and Liturgy, Biblical studies or Systematic Theology. The recent pontifical documents *Motu Proprio* “*Intima Ecclesiae natura*” and “*Deus caritas est*” include observations about the formation of the professionals in the field of the Church’s charitable activities and invite to promote forgotten aspects of love in the training programs of our faculties. In his chapter Gehrig aims to show the importance of caritas theology with its proper theological profile as an applied science for the Church pastoral and charitable practice and its pedagogical function for the faith practice. At the same time Gehrig urges to guarantee its presence as an integral part in a renewed training and formation curricula on theology. Therefore it is necessary to differentiate and relate caritas theology to its well established sister CST. This chapter traces a line start-

ing from the theological implication of love, going further through explorations on the academic field of both disciplines and its historical settings, resumes descriptions of Caritas-Theology/Caritas-Science (Caritaswissenschaft) and CST and their interrelations, and suggests a systematic relationship. The chapter finishes with a demand to re-establish caritas theology at the faculties of theology to respond in a scientific, updated, practical formation linked with the charity organizations of the Church.

The background of CST is also essential for *Jakub Doležel*, assistant professor at the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology in Olomouc/Czech Rep. He argues, that the CST represents a doctrinal system well established at many levels of the Roman Catholic Church, in the structure of many Conferences of Bishops, educational programs and curricula for the students of theology, in the structure of study and research institutes of the Church, as well as in a long series of Papal encyclicals. On the contrary, the church charitable service — caritas (diakonia) — which is in his text referred to as “the caritas practice” seems to be a marginal topic. The first encyclical on the very topic “Deus caritas est” and the necessity to amend the Codex Iuris Canonici are just an example of the theological asymmetry of both the spheres of this single socio-pastoral mission of the Catholic Church. The objective of his text is to define the mutual relation between the caritas practice and CST. To this end, Doležel uses the “dual focus” concept taken from the theory of social work, one of the major auxiliary sciences employed in the caritas practice. Here the “dual focus” means the division of the helping intervention into the micro- and macro-level. The identical concept finds Doležel to be used in the comprehensive discourses of the caritas practice in spite of rather rare nature of these books within the framework of theology. The perspective of this concept allows interconnection between CST and the macro-level of the caritas practice. This leads to the epistemological shift in the current discourse of the relation between caritas and CST as the mutual communication of both these spheres is necessary for the sake of integrity of the caritas practice. The topics discussed by Doležel also include the inadequate model of the deductive relation between the caritas practice and CST, brief information about the formation of both the spheres in the past and the review of the published models of their interactions which put the caritas practice in the role

of the consumer as well as the ‘producer’ of CST. Unlike the other contributions in this book, Doležel does not aspire to conceptualize the caritas theory at the micro-level, referred to as Caritas-Theology (Pompey), or the consequences of this conceptualisation in the area of theological education (Gehrig).

on behalf of the authors:
Jakub Doležel

Ministry of Charity — Canon Law Rules and Theological Inspiration: The *Motu Proprio* “*Intima Ecclesiae natura*”

Giampietro Dal Toso

Signed on November 11th, 2012, by Benedict XVI and in force since December 10th, 2012, the *Motu Proprio* “*Intima Ecclesiae natura*”⁴ is a significant innovation from a canon law perspective, since for the very first time we are dealing with a body of law which takes a very close and specific look at issues connected to the ministry of charity through the Church and puts forward clear indications in this respect. This canonical document seeks — according to the words of Pope Benedict XVI in the introduction — “to provide an organic legislative framework for the better overall ordering of the various organized ecclesial forms of the service of charity, which are closely related to the diaconal nature of the Church and the episcopal ministry”. Accordingly, I would now like to explore the origins of this text, to discuss why it is necessary, examine its theological inspiration and its content, including some specific aspects thereof. It is important to note that the canonical aspects must be interpreted against the broad horizon of theology. Incidentally, this applies to the *Motu Proprio* as well, which consists of a theological introduction, followed by a normative section. Hence, this law in the Church cannot be regarded as an autonomous field, but rather it must be read in the context of the experienced faith, this experience being the source of the law itself.

This is also true of *diaconia*, the ministry of charity of the Church, which is why academic institutions where charitable activity is accompanied by theological reflection are of such particular significance. It is no coincidence that ever since 1925, there has been a professorship for *Caritas* studies at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, the very city where the *Deutscher Caritasverband* was

⁴ Hereinafter abbreviated as IEN.

founded in 1897. This model of accompanying practical activities by an approach that is inter-disciplinary, yet founded on theology, is becoming more and more inevitable in my view. The teaching of Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the necessity of deepening the theology of charity, since this is precisely how the hidden treasures of the ministry of charity by the Church can be brought to light and seen more clearly. Our Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, founded in 1971 by Paul VI and entrusted with the duty of accompanying the Church's aid agencies, was chosen to see to the dissemination and application of the document, in order to study the *Motu Proprio* and promote its application in practice. This practical work must be seen in the larger context of our task, which consists of "orienting and coordinating the organizations and charitable activities promoted by the Catholic Church". This is what was specifically written by Pope Benedict XVI in the Encyclical "*Deus caritas est*"⁵, No. 32. And it is our duty to provide practical assistance in the name of the Holy Father where there is great need, as has been the case during the past weeks in the Philippines and in Mexico. However, in this connection I must also emphasize how committed we have been to alleviating the crisis situation in Syria, by convening two important meetings for the purpose of coordinating assistance from the Catholic Church, which led to the initiative of setting up a common information office, now located in Rome, possibly the very first time anything similar has been done. The humanitarian situation in Syria and that of the refugees in the neighbouring countries are still dramatic and continue to call for the solidarity of the international community.

1 The origin of the text

The *Motu Proprio* IEN was born of an insight on the part of Pope Benedict XVI. In the Encyclical DCE, he himself wrote that the Code of Canon Law says very little indeed about the Bishop's duties with respect to *diaconia*. Whereas his competence in the areas of catechesis and liturgy is made abundantly clear, this is hardly true of the Church's mission of charity. Although the "Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops", released by the Congregation

⁵ Hereinafter abbreviated as DCE.

of Bishops in 2004, described and recommended this duty, this is not a canonically binding text. According to the intentions of Pope Benedict XVI, the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts convened a small Commission of Experts in 2008, within which this subject was discussed. From this discussion a proposal was born, which was subsequently enriched by contributions from several Episcopal Conferences, other Dicasteries and further experts, and then became the *Motu Proprio* as we now know it. It was signed by the Pope on November 11th, 2012, published on December 2nd and came into force on December 10th. We should not forget that this reflection went hand in hand with the drafting of new statutes for the confederation *Caritas Internationalis*, published on May 2nd, 2012. However, a deeper exploration of this issue and a presentation of *Caritas Internationalis*, the umbrella organization for 165 national *Caritas* organizations, would extend beyond the remit of this text.

Let us therefore turn back to IEN, because it begs the following question: was a law of this kind truly necessary? Regardless of the fact that it was opportune from the perspective of canon law, an aspect which I will deal with later on, is charitable activity in our view not something spontaneous, something that springs from the fact alone that we are human beings, and even more so since we are Christians? Is a law not something that is restrictive, something that is there to define limits rather than to give free reign to our good intentions? This is all the more relevant since we are talking about charity. Can *love* and *law* live in perfect harmony?

This legitimate question can, at least initially, be answered by explaining the purpose of laws within the Church. This is indeed because laws are created where relations between human beings exist and as such are in need of regulation. The Greek *nomos* was created as a binding system in the *polis* and thus became an instrument of justice: by protecting the equality of all citizens in the community it also guarantees their liberty as individuals. The famous definition of law by *Thomas Aquinas* underlines the substantial leaning of law toward the community: “*lex nihil aliud est quam quaedam rationis ordinatio ad bonum commune, ab eo, qui curam communitatis habet, promulgata*” (S. Th. II II, q. 90, 4). Israel came together as a people in hearing and accepting the law of God (cf. Ex 24:8). When we specifically reflect on how we experience our faith, however, we can

see this connection very clearly. The Church as a community should be seen as the place where the intimate tie between the personal faith and the word occurs, where, in short, faith becomes something we can articulate, express and convey. After all, the word is the noblest expression of being a human person. It requires a speaker and a listener. Not only does God call himself the Word in the person of Christ — “And the Word became flesh” (Jn 1:14). Rather, ever since the very first proclamation of the faith of the Church has been distilled to a conveyable Word, as clearly expressed by Saint Paul: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received” (1 Cor 15:3). And in the Epistle to the Romans, he became even more radical: “how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?” (Rm 10:14).

So is the word a connecting element also in faith. What applies to the proclamation is analogically true of the celebration of the sacraments, which are never purely personal events. In the experience of the Church, the *diaconia* too had communal character from the outset, in its very origins — “The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul” (Acts 4:32) —, as well as in its practical application, when several men, i.e. the Seven Deacons, were entrusted with this ministry (cf. Acts 6:1–7).

It is in this *communio* which characterizes the essence of the Catholic faith, that the necessity of legal protection lies, as well as of *legally guaranteed support*, in order to allow all believers to partake of the treasure that is the Catholic Church and thus protect a foundational, common character of the Church. Hence, we should not deem laws to be an element standing in the way of life and love, but rather as a framework within which life can truly flourish and from which everyone can reap benefits in a fitting way. Naturally, every law must measure itself against these features and be open to change if necessary.

The example gleaned before from the Acts of the Apostles discloses the character of the Church’s nature of *diaconia*. It has been realized in various ways and by different means throughout history. Since the Church herself is the subject of ecclesial *diaconia* (DCE, no. 32), the internal necessity to draw up a legal framework arises. However, in this context the remark by Benedict XVI (DCE, no. 20) always applies, as it is more or less the fundament for all canonical intervention:

“The love of our neighbour, anchored in the love of God, is first and foremost the duty of every believer, but it is also a task for the entire Church community, and this applies to all levels: from the local parish via the *ecclesia particularis* to the universal Church as a whole. And the Church as a community must practice love, too. And this in turn is why love requires organization as a prerequisite for rendering orderly, mutual services.”

In these words, alongside the necessity of a canonical order of the Church’s charity, we find its theological inspiration. Emphasizing this is important because it avoids taking a purely social view of the diaconal practice of the Church. What we do in our Catholic aid organizations is not simply social work, but a pastoral work, which cannot disregard the essence of the Church.

2 The theological inspiration

In his first Encyclical, Benedict XVI starts from a foundational theological statement: “God is love” (cf. 1 Jn 4:7). Thus the Pope clearly demonstrates who is the ultimate source and inspiration of the Christian discourse on love, and, consequently, on *diaconia*, the ministry of charity: God as revealed by Christ. We therefore find ourselves at the very center of a process of theological reflection, since with the concept of “love” we have arrived at the essence of God. Our recognition and acknowledgement of God’s love is a slow process. After all, man initially imagined God to be a terrifying *tremendum* (cf. Heb 10:30f.), roaring out what is virtually one of man’s most primal experiences: the fear of the unknown, including the fear of a punishing God. In his novel *Jugend ohne Gott* it is a priest, no less, to whom the author Ödön von Horváth attributes the following remark: “God is the most terrifying thing in the whole world. [...] He punishes.” And yet, we can overcome this fear only if we are willing to surrender to He who is wholly Other, but this calls for a process of inner cleansing and requires us to trust him unconditionally. The more we surrender to Him, the more our trust in Him grows. It is only in so doing that God’s love becomes a personal experience, as God showed us through his Son, Jesus Christ. Thanks to Him it is now unambiguously clear: God is love. Especially in his Son we see what love means: “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that

He loves us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn 4:10). Hence it is in Christ that love becomes visible in its most perfect form, which is the preparedness to sacrifice one’s own life. By no means does Christ deny human love, nor does He diminish its significance. On the contrary, very often he gave clear signs of the value he attached to human love. One need only remember his presence at the wedding at Cana, for example (cf. Jn 2) or the miracles with which he chose to respond to the wounds in loving human relationships (the Parable of the Prodigal Son, cf. Lk 15:11–32), when he brought a dead son back to life (cf. Lk 7:11–17) or returned Lazarus alive to his sisters Maria and Martha (cf. Jn 11). Jesus also received and accepted love, for instance if we think of the women who followed him and served him (cf. Lk 8:2–3) or of the fact that he was particularly close to his disciple John, as is reported in the Gospel (cf. Jn 13,23).

And yet the novelty of Christian love, as shown to us by the Son of God himself in the way he lived his life, becomes obvious at the very latest when one considers that the Greek culture had no expression for this type of love. The word AGAPE, used to denote this new form of love in Christ in the New Testament, is novel in terms of semantics. The Greek world was familiar with the love of EROS or that of PHILIA, but not with the utterly surrendering love of AGAPE, that is giving oneself completely, which surpasses the power of human beings and can therefore only be of divine origin. However, this also means that God’s intervention into our history through Christ also gave our love a new face. This novelty in the semantic distinctions between concepts was established in the romance languages and in English by virtue of words borrowed from the Latin expressions “*amor*” and “*caritas*”. The difference between these languages and German is that for these different concepts it has only *one* word, “*Liebe*”, which therefore to a certain extent represents a reduction of the more precise denotations just referred to.

It is important to recall the specifically Christian origins of love, in order to raise awareness of its theological dimension and the corresponding implications and possibilities linked thereto. Furthermore, the New Testament clearly states that the love of the Trinity becomes visible in Christ (cf. Jn 14:9–11; 15:26). Thus the love of Christians has this quality of bearing witness: “If you see charity,