

Facing Challenges in the Post-COVID–19 Era

Insights from the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*

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Abstract

The pandemic COVID–19 havocted the lives of millions of people across the globe. It not only affected people’s health but also their social life and economy. Most of the countries registered a steep decline in their gross domestic product. This had a negative effect on business and trade. It also increased unemployment thereby pushing millions to utter poverty. Even though the world is crawling out of the pandemic, its negative effects continue to bring misery and sufferings in people’s lives. Apart from building a robust healthcare infrastructure the world community needs to work towards reviving the economy and focus on social problems, which are hurting people. Way back in 2008, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate* (CV) addressed the various problems because of the consequences of the global economic meltdown. Even though Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted he is not offering any technical solutions to tame the economic crisis, his encyclical CV could certainly give some deep insights to address the root causes of the socio-economic and political difficulties arising because of the pandemic COVID–19. In this paper, I will examine how these insights could help the world community to face the various challenges posed by the pandemic COVID–19. The main resources for this paper are the encyclical CV, the social teachings of the Catholic Church and the opinions of experts in these fields.

1. Introduction

The pandemic COVID–19 brought enormous sufferings and pain in the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported 14.9 million excess deaths associated with COVID–19 between January 2020 to December 2021¹. The actual number may differ as the data provided by some nations may be inaccurate. Apart from physical-health related issues, the pandemic COVID–19 also disturbed people’s mental-health. The number of cases of domestic violence, suicides and school dropouts also increased. There was also a rise in unemployment and other social problems. The global economy suffered a severe blow because of frequent lockdowns

¹ World Health Organization.

<https://www.who.int/news/item/05-05-2022-14.9-million-excess-deaths-were-associated-with-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-2020-and-2021> (accessed 20 June 2022).

and restrictions on people's movements. What would be the way ahead as the world community seeks to leave the pandemic behind? In 2008, the world was hard-hit because of global recession. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI addressed the various issues related to this crisis in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate* (CV)². Can these insights help the world community to respond to the various issues arising because of the pandemic? I will examine these insights and apply them to the various problems caused by the pandemic COVID-19. The main resources of this paper are the encyclical CV, social teachings of the Catholic Church and the views of experts in the fields of economy, social studies and public policy.

2. Key Insights from CV to Respond to the Various Pandemic COVID-19 Related Issues

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in his encyclical CV addressed the various problems which arose partly because of the economic recession of 2008. He addressed these problems mainly from a theological, Christian ethical and economic perspective. He noted the need to make love and justice as the basis to reform the various institutions and improve the economy. He also noted the need to promote solidarity among nations and employ the principle of subsidiarity to involve all the stakeholders in the various schemes and programs of both, the governmental and the non-governmental organizations. Even though the encyclical CV does not directly address the contemporary pandemic COVID-19 related issues, it contains several insights, which could be applied to the present situation. In the following sections I will examine each of these insights.

The pandemic COVID-19 disrupted the global economy. However, its scale and scope were different in comparison with the global economic recession of 2008. The economic recession of 2008 hit all the sectors of economy all around the world. In contrast, the pandemic COVID-19 hit certain sectors like travel, tourism, hospitality etc. Moreover, unlike the economic recession of 2008, the pandemic COVID-19 affected people's health and caused several social problems partly because of lockdowns and restrictions. In addition, wars and disputes among nations has deteriorated the situation by pushing-up inflation and increasing the misery of the people, especially the poor and the marginalized. Even though the world is facing a severe socio-economic and political crisis, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI would appeal to the world community to keep hope and work for a brighter future. He noted in his encyclical CV as follows,

The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones. The crisis thus becomes an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future. In this spirit, with

² Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Caritas in veritate* (CV).

https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html (accessed 19 May 2023)

confidence rather than resignation, it is appropriate to address the difficulties of the present time³.

2.1 Responsibilities of the Legislators & Public Authorities to Make Just Laws

In democratic nations, people elect legislators to formulate laws, which are ethical and beneficial to the whole society. Moreover, all public authorities and law enforcing agencies are obliged to execute these laws without any bias or fear. However, the rich and the powerful at times exert pressure on the legislators to draft laws, which are favourable to them and their business interests. There is a possibility of some legislators to yield to this pressure and make laws, which favor these businesspeople. In addition, some public authorities and law enforcing agencies accept bribes to turn a blind eye towards the malpractices and unethical business practices of the wealthy in the society. These corrupt deeds have an overall negative impact on the society as the poor and the marginalized become poorer and the major portion of the wealth is controlled by a few rich and powerful conglomerates⁴. It is very difficult to have genuine growth and development in this situation, as most of the population is deprived of their just share in the nation's wealth. Legislators need to be aware of their duty to frame laws, which can weed out corruption from the society and give an equal opportunity to all the people to develop their potentials.

The negative growth in the economy because of the pandemic COVID-19 disruptions has further aggrieved the disparity among people. Some sectors of the economy like the pharmaceutical companies, computer software makers, digital technology companies etc., had a windfall profit, whereas some sectors like aviation, tourism, etc., incurred huge losses⁵. Moreover, the lockdowns and restrictions on people's movements deprived the daily and seasonal laborers of their jobs and livelihood. In such a critical situation, the rich grew richer and could exert more pressure on the legislators to frame laws, which could further their business interests. Thus, there is a great need to formulate just laws and curb corruption in the society. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted in his encyclical *CV* the need to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor by formulating laws, which could help the poor and the marginalized to get their fair share of the nation's wealth. This insight could be applied even in our contemporary times. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

The world's wealth is growing in absolute terms, but inequalities are on the increase. In rich countries, new sectors of society are succumbing to poverty and new forms of poverty are emerging. In poorer areas some groups enjoy a sort of 'super development' of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation. The scandal of glaring inequalities continues. Corruption and illegality are unfortunately evident in the conduct of the economic

³ CV no. 21.

⁴ Maksym V. Korniiienk, Iaroslav V. Petrunenko, Irina V. Yena, Kseniia O. Pankratova, & Krisitina A. Vozniakovska, "Negative Effects of Corruption Offenses for the Country's Economy," *International Journal of Management* 11, no. 5 (2020): 1072–1083.

⁵ Adam Tooze, *Shutdown: How Covid Shook the World's Economy* (New York City: Viking Penguin Random House, 2021), 131–154.

and political class in rich countries, both old and new, as well as in poor ones⁶.

If the public authorities set a good role model of governance and excellence in work, then it could attract talented people to seek political leadership⁷. This could further improve the socio-economic situation of the society. Moreover, the citizens will also take more interest in political affairs and express their opinions about the policies of the State. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

Once the role of public authorities has been more clearly defined, one could foresee an increase in the new forms of political participation, nationally and internationally, that have come about through the activity of organizations operating in civil society; in this way it is to be hoped that the citizens' interest and participation in the *res publica* will become more deeply rooted⁸.

2.2 Strengthening Institutions along with Economic Development

An independent and balanced relationship between the executive, legislative and judiciary is inevitable for the functioning of a healthy democratic State. In addition, the press and the mass media also need to enjoy full freedom to serve as a watchdog of these three pillars of democracy. At times, the executive in its zeal to expand the economy rapidly tries to bulldoze the legislative and the judiciary. The executive drafts laws without consulting the legislators belonging to the opposition parties. Moreover, it also tries to silence the judiciary by tacitly threatening to cut budgetary expenses if it opposes the policies of the government. Even though such arbitrary actions on the part of the executive may lead to a provisional growth of the economy it is apparently bound to collapse in the long run. To have a sustainable economic growth it is therefore, incumbent on the executive to consult all the stakeholders before rushing legislations to merely expand the economy and serve the interest of a select few business industries⁹.

Apart from making laws to benefit the rich business enterprises, the executive also at times abdicates its role as the regulator by giving a free hand to the business enterprises. It is indeed good to have minimum government interference in matters related to private companies. However, there needs to be some regulation, especially about matters concerning the rights, safety and wages of the workers and the protection of environment. It is the duty of the State to stop any forms of exploitation of humans or the environment.

⁶ CV no. 22.

⁷ Siyka Kovacheva, "Will Youth Rejuvenate the Patterns of Political Participation?" in *Revisiting Youth Political Participation: Challenges for Research & Democratic Practice in Europe*, ed. Joerg Forbrig (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2005), 19–28.

⁸ CV no. 24.

⁹ Thomas Zittel, "Participatory Democracy & Political Participation," in *Participatory Democracy & Political Participation: Can Participatory Engineering Bring Citizens Back In?* eds. Thomas Zittel & Dieter Fuchs (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 9–28.

The pandemic COVID-19 has disrupted the global economy¹⁰. Several small and medium scale industries shut down merely because of the ill-effects of the lockdowns and the various restrictions. This has resulted in massive joblessness among the worker class. The executives of nations all around the world are working hard to revive the economy and bring back the situation to normal. However, at times the executive faces a dilemma whether to regulate the trade and businesses thereby slowing down the economy or removing all the State control to allow the rapid growth of the economy. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI advocated the need for regulating the trade and businesses to safeguard the rights of the workers and the environment. To gain wealth by circumventing the fair-trade practices would ultimately breed dissatisfaction among workers and disharmony in the society. This insight needs to be applied in the present crisis too. Against this backdrop, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

The integrated economy of the present day does not make the role of States redundant, but rather it commits governments to greater collaboration with one another. Both wisdom and prudence suggest not being too precipitous in declaring the demise of the State. In terms of the resolution of the current crisis, the State's role seems destined to grow, as it regains many of its competences. In some nations, moreover, the construction or reconstruction of the State remains a key factor in their development. The focus of international aid, within a solidarity-based plan to resolve today's economic problems, should rather be on consolidating constitutional, juridical and administrative systems in countries that do not yet fully enjoy these goods. Alongside economic aid, there needs to be aid directed towards reinforcing the guarantees proper to the State of law: a system of public order and effective imprisonment that respects human rights, truly democratic institutions¹¹.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted the need of the fine balance between the role of the State and private enterprises. The State needs to regulate the market; however, it need not stifle free trade. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted making laws alone would not bring change in the business practices. To have sound, fair and ethical business practices, both the State and the business enterprises practically need to follow the spirit of the law by seeking the good of all the stakeholders. This consequently led Pope Benedict XVI to claim that:

The exclusively binary model of market-plus-State is corrosive of society, while economic forms based on solidarity, which find their natural home in civil society without being restricted to it, build up society. The market of gratuitousness does not exist, and attitudes of gratuitousness cannot be established by law. Yet both the market and politics need individuals who are open to reciprocal gift¹².

The purpose of State regulations is to promote trade and commerce, which is fair and does not exploit the weak and the poor. Profit-making alone is not the sole criteria for promoting

¹⁰ Simon Wren-Lewis, "The Economic Effects of a Pandemic," in *Economics in the Time of Covid*, eds. Richard Baldwin & Beatrice Weder di Mauro (London: Centre for Economic Policy Research Press, 2020), 109-112.

¹¹ CV no. 41.

¹² CV no. 39.

trade and commerce. Even though profit-making is one of the key motives for doing trade and commerce, it is not the goal. The goal is progress and development of all the people involved in it¹³. In the contemporary times, as businesses are struggling with the head winds of inflation and huge monetary losses because of the pandemic restrictions, some businesspersons may try to short-cut their route for success by bending the laws and exploiting the vulnerable section of the society. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

What is needed, therefore, is a market that permits the free operation, in conditions of equal opportunity, of enterprises in pursuit of different institutional ends. Alongside profit-oriented private enterprise and the various types of public enterprise, there must be room for commercial entities based on mutualist principles and pursuing social ends to take root and express themselves. It is from their reciprocal encounter in the marketplace that one may expect hybrid forms of commercial behaviour to emerge, and hence an attentiveness to ways of civilizing the economy. Charity in truth, in this case, requires that shape and structure be given to those types of economic initiative which, without rejecting profit, aim at a higher goal than the mere logic of the exchange of equivalents, of profit as an end in itself¹⁴.

There is a need of strong will on the part of the political leaders to reform economic structures to benefit all the sections of the society. The rich and powerful business enterprises would aim to create more wealth for themselves at the cost of the poor laborers. However, it is the duty of the political leaders to do away with the economic structures, which breed inequity in the society and exploitation of the workers. They need to reform the economic structures to bring vitality in the market and at the same time, protect the rights of the laborers too. In this respect, the laborers need to get their just share of the profits, which companies make because of their hard labour. If the laborers are deprived of their just remunerations that would only increase discontent and alienation among the laborers¹⁵. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

Economic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of commercial logic. This needs to be directed towards the pursuit of the common good, for which the political community in particular must also take responsibility. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that grave imbalances are produced when economic action, conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation, is detached from political action, conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution¹⁶.

The political leaders also need to make laws to do justice to the weakest and the marginalized in the society. Workers need to be treated with dignity. Any law, which favours only the rich and the powerful needs to be repealed or amended. Every single citizen, whether

¹³ Saurabh Agarwal, *Business Ethics*, (Agra: SBPD Publishing House, 2020), 191-208.

¹⁴ CV no. 38.

¹⁵ Patrick Belser & Uma Rani, "Minimum Wages & Inequality," in *Labor Markets, Institutions & Inequality: Building Just Societies in the 21st Century*, ed. Janine Berg (Cheltenham, Northampton & Geneva: Edgar Elgar Publishing & International Labor Office, 2015), 123-146.

¹⁶ CV no. 36.

poor or rich; weak or powerful pays taxes to the government. Thus, any law, which discriminates and is disadvantageous to the poor and the weak is unjust. Justice needs to be done to all the stakeholders in the economy. The Catholic Church has consistently maintained the need to make just laws, which benefit all in the society. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted the need for making laws, which are just and protect the rights of the weak and the marginalized. He noted,

The Church's social doctrine has always maintained that justice must be applied to every phase of economic activity, because this is always concerned with man and his needs. Locating resources, financing, production, consumption and all the other phases in the economic cycle inevitably have moral implications. Thus, every economic decision has a moral consequence. The social sciences and the direction taken by the contemporary economy point to the same conclusion¹⁷.

2.3 Seeking the Welfare of the Workers

The working class forms the backbone of the economy. Yet, in part, an aggrieved working class would negatively impact the growth of the economy and derail any progress. Thus, the welfare of the workers is of utmost importance as it is their hard labor, which brings profits to the enterprises. In this way, workers need to unite to form unions and associations to negotiate with the managements to get their just remunerations. The political leadership needs to make laws, which do not muzzle the rights of the workers to form unions and associations¹⁸. On the contrary, they need to encourage dialogue between the workers and the management to do justice to all the stakeholders. In addition, they need to make laws, which make it mandatory to all the enterprises to promote transparency in bookkeeping and accounting. Further, the management needs to be accountable for all its policies, so that there is no room for misunderstanding among the workers. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

[T]he promotion of workers' associations that can defend their rights must therefore be honoured today even more than in the past, as a prompt and far-sighted response to the urgent need for new forms of cooperation at the international level, as well as the local level¹⁹.

These concerns amount to the point that the management needs to desist from making any policies, which neglects the welfare and the security of the workers. One matter is certain here; to cut the costs and make more profit, at times some managements compromise with the safety regulations, which can have disastrous consequences on workers' life. Yet, it is assumed that profit-making alone cannot be the only criteria for business enterprises. No doubt, profit is of paramount importance for the survival of any business. However, the life and the rights of

¹⁷ CV no. 37.

¹⁸ Susan Hayter, "Unions & Collective Bargaining," *Labor Markets, Institutions & Inequality: Building Just Societies in the 21st Century*, ed. Janine Berg (Cheltenham, Northampton & Geneva: Edgar Elgar Publishing & International Labor Office, 2015), 95-122.

¹⁹ CV no. 25.

the workers is of greater importance and thus, the management needs to strike a right balance so as to seek the safety of the workers and make profits²⁰. Moreover, the management needs to draft policies, which in the long run would benefit all the stakeholders. In this connection, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

Lowering the level of protection accorded to the rights of workers or abandoning mechanisms of wealth redistribution to increase the country's international competitiveness, hinder the achievement of lasting development. Moreover, the human consequences of current tendencies towards a short-term economy sometimes very short-term need to be carefully evaluated. This requires further and deeper reflection on the meaning of the economy and its goals, as well as a profound and far-sighted revision of the current model of development, to correct its dysfunctions and deviations²¹.

The State needs to regulate employment policies to dissuade the management from hiring people on temporary basis and laying them off without providing a plausible reason for the dismissal. However, if the management, hires and fires arbitrarily then it may increase the workers' anxiety and lead to lack of interest in the work. It may also cause distrust among the workers as they would look upon another as rivals and not colleagues who need to work as a team. In some respects, this may also reduce the efficiency of the workers and thus bring down the production. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI too noted the need to promote job security to reassure the workers that their future is safe. In the contemporary times there is an increase in the unemployment because of the pandemic COVID-19. Many small and medium scale enterprises shut down as they could not bear the brunt of lockdowns and restrictions. Even though, economy is recovering in some sectors, there is an atmosphere of uncertainty and gloom. Thus, to give confidence to the workers, States definitively need to regulate employment policies to stop the exploitation of the workers²². As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI rightly noted,

The mobility of labour, associated with a climate of deregulation, is an important phenomenon with certain positive aspects, because it can stimulate wealth production and cultural exchange. Nevertheless, uncertainty over working conditions caused by mobility and deregulation, when it becomes endemic, tends to create new forms of psychological instability, giving rise to difficulty in forging coherent life-plans, including that of marriage. This leads to situations of human decline, to say nothing of the waste of social resources. In comparison with the casualties of industrial society in the past, unemployment today provokes new forms of economic marginalization, and the current crisis can only make this situation worse. Being out of work or dependent on public or private assistance for a prolonged period undermines

²⁰ Brenda Barrett & Malcolm Sargeant, "The Health, Safety & Well-Being of Vulnerable Workers," in *Vulnerable Workers: Health, Safety & Well-Being*, eds. Malcolm Sargeant & Maria Giovannone (Farnham & Burlington: Gower Publishing Limited, 2011), 1-20.

²¹ CV no. 32.

²² Joseph Choonara, *Insecurity, Precarious Work & Labour Markets: Challenging the Orthodoxy*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 81-133.

the freedom and creativity of the person and his family and social relationships, causing great psychological and spiritual suffering²³.

Along with job security, workers also need to get just wages. This implies the necessity for the State to regulate employment policies and salaries to create more jobs and give incentives to private enterprises to employ full-time workers. Lack of job, unjust wages or underemployment can damage the morale of the workers. It may also lead to rise in crimes and anti-social activities in the society. Both the State and the private enterprises, therefore, need to employ workers, which befits their talents and pay them suitable remuneration so that they live a dignified life. In this regard, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

No consideration of the problems associated with development could fail to highlight the direct link between poverty and unemployment. In many cases, poverty results from a violation of the dignity of human work, either because work opportunities are limited (through unemployment or underemployment), or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family²⁴.

2.4 Strengthening the Social Security System

The pandemic COVID-19 struck a severe blow to the economy of most of the nations. During the pandemic the richer nations could give their citizens cash payments to survive the economic crisis. However, the developing nations could not afford to give such payments to their citizens simply because of lack of funds and decrease in production. As the world is slowly exiting the pandemic driven crisis, States in turn, need to strengthen the social security system and spend more on health, education and pension²⁵. In this process of reviving the economy some nations are somehow tempted to tweak the social security systems. In addition, in their efforts made to attract more investment some nations are also scaling down the safeguards related to employment and pension. In the long run, such policies are nevertheless bound to have negative effect on the nation's economy and social harmony. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted the need to strengthen the social security systems during the 2008 economic meltdown. The application of this insight is also of greatest consideration during the present crisis too. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

States as they seek to attract foreign businesses to set up production centres, by means of a variety of instruments, including favourable fiscal regimes and deregulation of the labour market. These processes have led to a downsizing of social security systems as the price to be paid for seeking greater competitive advantage in the global market, with consequent grave danger for the rights of workers, for fundamental human rights and for the solidarity associated with the traditional forms of the social State. Systems of

²³ CV no. 25.

²⁴ CV no. 63.

²⁵ Peter A. Diamond & Peter R. Orszag, *Saving Social Security: A Balanced Approach*, (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 99-115.

social security can lose the capacity to carry out their task, both in emerging countries and in those that were among the earliest to develop, as well as in poor countries. Here budgetary policies, with cuts in social spending often made under pressure from international financial institutions, can leave citizens powerless in the face of old and new risks; such powerlessness is increased by the lack of effective protection on the part of workers' associations²⁶.

One of the major concerns of the post-COVID 19 society is the scarcity of food and potable water²⁷. Increasing droughts, floods, landslides and wars is making farming difficult in several nations. Moreover, the depletion of ground water level would impact the availability of potable water. Lack of food and potable water could, therefore, trigger a massive human tragedy and migration. As a result, people may be forced to leave their homeland in search of places where they could survive. In this specific context, the developed nations need to take the lead in ensuring adequate food and potable water supplies not only for their citizens but also for all the people in the world. Moreover, all nations need to come together to find sustainable solutions for stopping environmental degradation. They need to find the root causes of food or water shortages, especially in developing nations and explore ways to tackle the situation. From this spectrum, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted the need to strengthen global food security system to ensure that no one suffers because of lack of food or water. Given that food and water are basic human needs it is the duty of every government to provide these basic needs to their citizens. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

Hunger is not so much dependent on lack of material things as on shortage of social resources, the most important of which are institutional. What is missing, in other words, is a network of economic institutions capable of guaranteeing regular access to sufficient food and water for nutritional needs, and also capable of addressing the primary needs and necessities ensuing from genuine food crises, whether due to natural causes or political irresponsibility, nationally and internationally. The problem of food insecurity needs to be addressed within a long-term perspective, eliminating the structural causes that give rise to it and promoting the agricultural development of poorer countries. This can be done by investing in rural infrastructures, irrigation systems, transport, organization of markets, and in the development and dissemination of agricultural technology that can make the best use of the human, natural and socio-economic resources that are more readily available at the local level, while guaranteeing their sustainability over the long term as well²⁸.

2.5 Sharing Knowledge as a Means of Solidarity

Since the outbreak of the pandemic COVID-19, most of the developed nations invested heavily on research to develop vaccines and medicines²⁹. In this way, it was understood that

²⁶ CV no. 25.

²⁷ Farhad Mukhtarov, Elissaios Papyrakis & Matthias Rieger, "COVID-19 & Water," in *COVID-19 & International Development*, ed. Elissaios Papyrakis (Cham: Springer, 2022), 157-173.

²⁸ CV no. 27.

²⁹ Stuart Blume & Maurizia Mezza, "States & Vaccines in the Age of Covid-19," in *Immunization & States: The Politics of*

some pharmaceutical companies in the developed nations could develop efficient vaccines to fight COVID-19 within a short span of time. Obviously, the governments of the developed nations had placed large bulk orders for these vaccines to inoculate their entire population. On the other hand, very few developing nations could indigenously manufacture vaccines. As a result, the citizens of economically weaker nations suffered. They had to wait for their share of vaccines from the WHO's quota of vaccines. As large populations remained unvaccinated, the pandemic continued as the virus eventually mutated and new variants emerged. Probably the world community could have ended the pandemic much earlier had all the vaccine producing nations pledged to make vaccines available to the entire world population by implementing a policy of equitable distribution of vaccines. Sadly, the political leadership of these nations failed miserably to rise to the occasion and show their solidarity to the developing nations, who did not have the resources to produce vaccines and medicines. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted developed nations need to share knowledge, especially in fields of medicine and technology with the developing nations to promote development of the weaker sections of the society. He noted,

On the part of rich countries there is excessive zeal for protecting knowledge through an unduly rigid assertion of the right to intellectual property, especially in the field of health care. At the same time, in some poor countries, cultural models and social norms of behaviour persist which hinder the process of development³⁰.

In a very sense, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI considered that any purpose of transferring technology to the developing nations needs to ensure the sustainable development of the local people. One thing is plain here: If business enterprises merely build production units in developing nations to get access to cheap labor, then it will not benefit the local people. On the other hand, they would be at the mercy of the multinationals for their livelihood. That is the reason why one should advocate for investments and setting up manufacturing units in developing nations³¹. In addition, all the stakeholders need to get their share of the profits made from these manufacturing units. Moreover, the owners of the business enterprise need to see that their manufacturing units do not harm the environment. In this way, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI claimed that:

What should be avoided is a speculative use of financial resources that yields to the temptation of seeking only short-term profit, without regard for the long-term sustainability of the enterprise, its benefit to the real economy and attention to the advancement, in suitable and appropriate ways, of further economic initiatives in countries in need of development. It is true that the export of investments and skills can benefit the populations of the receiving country. Labour and technical knowledge are a universal

Making Vaccines, eds. Stuart Blume & Baptiste Baylac-Paouly (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 199–217.

³⁰ CV no. 22.

³¹ Julian Cribb & Tjempaka Sari Hartomo, *Sharing Knowledge: A Guide to Effective Science Communication* (Collingwood: CSIRO Publishing, 2002), 1–15.

good. Yet it is not right to export these things merely for the sake of obtaining advantageous conditions, or worse, for purposes of exploitation, without making a real contribution to local society by helping to bring about a robust productive and social system, an essential factor for stable development³².

2.6 Welcoming Migrants

The pandemic COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions affected millions of migrants across the world. Both, the domestic and international migrant workers suffered because of loss of jobs³³. In particular, the daily wage earners suffered the most as they depended on daily wages for their survival. Moreover, as daily wage earners could not afford to pay the rents for their accommodation, they had no other choice but to become homeless wanderers. In addition, they had no access to food, water, sanitation, health, and hygiene facilities. They were vulnerable to human traffickers. Even though some governmental and non-governmental organizations tried to reach out to the poor migrants, their efforts were hampered because of COVID-19 restrictions and lack of funds. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted the need to welcome and support migrants. The host nations and regions need to treat the migrants with dignity as they too contribute to the growth of the economy. They also share their talents and gifts for the good of the society. The host nations and regions need to formulate policies to integrate migrants in their societies and give them tools to develop their skills and knowledge. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted,

Another aspect of integral human development that is worthy of attention is the phenomenon of migration. This is a striking phenomenon because of the sheer numbers of people involved, the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises, and the dramatic challenges it poses to nations and the international community. We can say that we are facing a social phenomenon of epoch-making proportions that requires bold, forward-looking policies of international cooperation if it is to be handled effectively. Such policies should set out from close collaboration between the migrants' countries of origin and their countries of destination; it should be accompanied by adequate international norms able to coordinate different legislative systems with a view to safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries. No country can be expected to address today's problems of migration by itself. We are all witnesses of the burden of suffering, the dislocation and the aspirations that accompany the flow of migrants. The phenomenon, as everyone knows, is difficult to manage; but there is no doubt that foreign workers, despite any difficulties concerning integration, make a significant contribution to the economic development of the host country through their labour, besides that which they make to their country of origin through the money they send home. Obviously, these labourers cannot be considered as a commodity or a mere workforce. They must not, therefore, be treated like any other factor of production. Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance³⁴.

³² CV no. 40.

³³ Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay, "Migrant Labor, Informal Economy & Logistics Sector in a COVID-19 World," *Borders of an Epidemic: COVID 19 & Migrant Workers*, ed. Ranabir Samaddar (Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, 2020),

³⁴ CV no. 62.

2.7 Reforming the United Nations

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI noted the need to reform the United Nations Organization (UNO) to deal with the various problems of the economic recession of 2008. He noted,

In the face of the unrelenting growth of global interdependence, there is a strongly felt need, even in the midst of a global recession, for a reform of the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth. One also senses the urgent need to find innovative ways of implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect and of giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making. This seems necessary in order to arrive at a political, juridical and economic order which can increase and give direction to international cooperation for the development of all peoples in solidarity. To manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some years ago. Such an authority would need to be regulated by law, to observe consistently the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, to seek to establish the common good, and to make a commitment to securing authentic integral human development inspired by the values of charity in truth. Furthermore, such an authority would need to be universally recognized and to be vested with the effective power to ensure security for all, regard for justice, and respect for rights. Obviously, it would have to have the authority to ensure compliance with its decisions from all parties, and also with the coordinated measures adopted in various international forums. Without this, despite the great progress accomplished in various sectors, international law would risk being conditioned by the balance of power among the strongest nations. The integral development of peoples and international cooperation require the establishment of a greater degree of international ordering, marked by subsidiarity, for the management of globalization. They also require the construction of a social order that at last conforms to the moral order, to the interconnection between moral and social spheres, and to the link between politics and the economic and civil spheres, as envisaged by the Charter of the United Nations³⁵.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's proposal to reform the UNO is still relevant even during the contemporary times. Indeed, the world suffered not only because of the pandemic COVID-19 but also because of the lack of cooperation among nations³⁶. During the initial phase of the COVID-19 outbreak, one noticed that most of the nations, especially the developed nations hoarded masks, personal protective equipment and medicines. Because of this, several developing nations did not have enough stock of masks or personal protective equipment even for their medical personnel. In the later phase of the pandemic, however, as the pharmaceutical companies developed vaccines, the developed nations again ordered vaccines to vaccinate their

³⁵ CV no. 67.

³⁶ Anne Applebaum. "When the World Stumbled: COVID-19 & the Failure of the International System," in *COVID-19 & World Order: The Future of Conflict, Competition & Cooperation*, eds. Hal Brands & Francis J. Gavin (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2020), 223-237.

entire population several times. On the other hand, the developing nations, especially nations which did not have vaccine manufacturing facilities were not able to procure vaccines for their citizens. Moreover, every nation required its own regulator to approve the vaccines. This led to a tremendous waste of time and multiplicity of work. If the WHO had taken the lead to set up a common regulator for all the vaccines across the world, then the vaccines could have been approved at a faster pace. In addition, the WHO could take the lead to manufacture, order and distribute the vaccines equitably across the world. Thus, people all around the world would have access to vaccines without any delay. This action on the part of the WHO could assuredly have helped to tame the pandemic much earlier. However, the reality is quite different. Nations did not cooperate to delegate this task to the WHO. Had there been drastic reforms in the UNO about these issues, the situation would be very different. Thus, there is a great need for reformation of the UNO and all its organs³⁷. Moreover, the UNO needs to have a say over the security, health, education and economic affairs of the world.

3. Conclusion

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in his encyclical *CV* noted, “The Church does not have technical solutions to offer and does not claim to interfere in any way in the politics of States”³⁸. However, it is the duty of every Christian to promote integral development of every person. Thus, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI addressed the various issues because of the global economic recession of 2008. His insights are relevant for the contemporary pandemic COVID-19 crisis too. The world community would truly benefit if it would implement some of these insights for the good of all.

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³⁷ Augusto Lopez-Claros, Arthur L. Dahl & Maja Groff, eds. *Global Governance & the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 81–122.

³⁸ *CV* no. 9.