

**SYMPOSIUM: ON CARITAS IN VERITATE**

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**Introduction**

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Dedication to the Church's social teaching is the common thread that connects the disparate interests, schools of thought, and disciplines represented by the membership of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists. It is, therefore, an event of signal importance to the SCSS when the Bishop of Rome issues a new text in the series of documents that have come to be called the "social encyclicals." In light of this fact, it seemed appropriate to dedicate a substantial portion of this volume of the *Catholic Social Science Review* to analysis and explication of Pope Benedict XVI's first social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, promulgated June 29, 2009.

As others have noted, the distinction between "social" and other encyclicals, while useful in some ways, is ultimately artificial. Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* cannot be read in isolation from *Humanae Vitae*; John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus* should not be separated from *Redemptor Hominis*; Benedict's *Caritas* is even more obviously linked to his earlier letters *Deus Caritas Est* and *Spe Salvi*. Every encyclical should, ideally, be read in the context not merely of the long tradition of social teaching, in the context not only of all the encyclicals—social, moral, and theological—that comprise the papal teaching of the last 120 years, but indeed in the context of the entirety of Christian reflection, from Scripture to the Church fathers, from the medieval scholastics to the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

This is, of course, a formidable task and no single mind, however brilliant, can hope to achieve such full appreciation alone. Thus becomes clear the importance of collaboration of the sort envisioned by the SCSS. The historian gains understanding by reading the insights of the economist; the economist benefits by thinking about the moral dimension highlighted by the theologian; the theologian engages the world more closely by examining the findings of the sociologist.

In this spirit, scholars from various disciplines were invited to participate in the following symposium. They were asked not to supply formal academic papers but rather to reflect on *Caritas* from their own disciplinary and personal perspectives. The cumulative result, it is hoped, is a first step toward an appreciation of the multifaceted content and implications of Benedict's major contribution to the social magisterium.

Serendipitously, the *CSSR* received, for other sections of the journal, several other high-quality submissions, which also focus on, or refer to, *Caritas in Veritate*. Thus this volume provides a glimpse at a phenomenon in process: The gradual filtering of Benedict's teaching into the thought and research of Catholic social scientists. This process is one of the purposes of the SCSS, and providing a forum for such work is the privilege of the *CSSR*.