

From His Excellency Salvatore R. Matano  
Ninth Bishop of Burlington

***CARITAS IN VERITATE***  
***ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS,***  
***POPE BENEDICT XVI***  
***JUNE 29, 2009, SOLEMNITY OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL***

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
Recalling the Church's rich tradition and instruction on justice and the social interactions of peoples for the welfare of the common good and the advancement of humanity, His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, has written his most recent encyclical letter entitled "Caritas in Veritate" ("Charity in Truth"). We are like those citizens in Corinth, whom Saint Paul reminded that though we may be "many parts" we are in need of each other. "If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it" (I Corinthians 12:26). As members of the human family, God's family, we are called to work in concert, called to relate to each other with love and understanding, called to work together in pursuit of the well being of all our sisters and brothers in the family of God. The realization of this cooperative spirit, this collaboration among peoples, requires an honest relationship among peoples in order to share with them what we believe and Who it is that motivates our practice of the faith.

We understand that when we speak of relationships, we are dealing with a very complex human reality. Relationships can only succeed when they are founded upon honesty, truth and respect. Whether in marriage, or in the family, or in the workplace, or in the ecclesial community, truth is the essential and fundamental element, which nurtures these relationships. Without truth, any relationship is subject to fail. In accordance with the words of Saint Mark's Gospel (cf. Mark 7:31-37), we must open our ears to the truth, Who is Jesus, and we must loosen our tongues to speak His truth.

Throughout our lives, we come to realize a fundamental reality: that we show concern and love for another person when we speak the truth to that person, when we respect the other to the extent that we are honest. Can a husband and wife profess love for each other while not being honest with one another? That lack of trust would certainly corrode the marriage!

And so it is in our common efforts locally, nationally and on the global scale, truth must pervade all our initiatives and endeavors. Pope Benedict XVI underlines the preeminent need to know the Truth, which gives birth to charity. Our Holy Father clearly demonstrates that the Absolute Truth, God, sent His Son Jesus into the world to become the visible incarnation of the love that lives within the Trinity and to have this love shared with all humanity. In Christ, we humans become wedded to Him Who is Divine: the human person is raised to a new and higher plateau of existence. We realize in Christ our true dignity and worth as the children of God. This respect and reverence for the human person create that ambient where charity and justice toward all become inherent in the very fabric of society. When the Ultimate Truth is acknowledged, "all people feel the

interior impulse to love authentically: love and truth never abandon them completely, because these are the vocation planted by God in the heart and mind of every human person” (“Caritas in Veritate”, No. 1).

We must acknowledge in truth what we believe. We must honestly share our faith in Him Who tells us: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). We must allow our dialogue to be substantial because we share with others the deepest part of ourselves—our belief in God lived out in our faith. And then we must listen as others speak to us of their faith. Such honesty in dialogue avoids indifference which professes nothing and actually accomplishes nothing. “No legacy is so rich as honesty” (William Shakespeare, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, 1603). We know “falsehood is easy, truth so difficult” (George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 1859). At the same time, the greatest gift we can give to others is the truth, the truth about what we believe, Whom we worship, Who is the One we call God.

In his encyclical letter, Benedict XVI provides the foundation for the city of man to become the city of God where justice and peace, charity and selflessness meet in the discovery of the Truth: “...charity in its turn needs to be understood, confirmed and practiced in the light of truth” (Ibid., No. 2). Divisions which rupture unity and wound the family of God must be reconciled in Truth. In this endeavor, the Christian community looks to Jesus, “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14:6). We lovingly embrace the challenge to seek the Truth by taking comfort in the words of Jesus: “I am with you always; yes, to the end of time” (Matthew 28:20).

Our Holy Father, acknowledging the great technological advancements of our age and the extraordinary accomplishments of scientific research and discovery, also notes the great discrepancies in the human family between those who have so very much and those who have nothing. His Holiness courageously places before our eyes the reality that some seek personal gratification at the expense of the dignity of their fellow citizens, who, no longer viewed through the eyes of faith fixed upon Absolute Truth become subject “to cold pragmatic calculations of utility which render the person little more than a pawn on some ideological chess-board.” (Address of Pope Benedict XVI, Catholic University of America, April 17, 2008). “Reason tells us that, if we are to find the source of the love that is in this world, we must go out to a love that is not mingled with its shadow, hate or death, but must go out to Pure Love, and that is the definition of God” (From the Angel’s Blackboard, *The Best of Fulton J. Sheen*, c. 1995, p. 108).

In meditating upon the words of our Holy Father, we, too, pray for the courage to work together to help our sisters and brothers rediscover in all our lives the importance of faith and religion, which speak the Truth, and locate the essence of charity. The meeting of Truth and Charity, both centered in God, “gives rise to the Church’s social teaching, which is *caritas in veritate in re sociali*: the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love in society. This doctrine is a service to charity, but its locus is truth. Truth preserves and expresses charity’s power to liberate in the ever-changing events of history” (Op. Cit., No. 5).

In his essay, "The Christian Vision in T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism," Michael M. Jordan in commenting upon Eliot's "The Idea of a Christian Society" writes: "Eliot's essay has essentially one subject and theme: religion should be the basis of culture and community. In other words, a healthy culture must have a religious base, and the religion must be based in a community" ("The Christian Vision in T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism," Michael M. Jordan, *Star*, May/June, 2005).

Society needs to know the Truth about God and we have the responsibility to work together to share that Truth. The great question to be asked today in the moral order of our society is not Can we do it? But Should we do it? We know some of the possibilities today of the scientific world, but at the same time the morality of these possibilities must be questioned, challenged and even refuted when they undermine the Truth that the Creator has put before us. Without this Truth we become heirs to a society where the powerful dominate the weak and the godless become gods. We have been called to serve the weakest and the strongest among us and all those in between: the defenseless child, the women suffering domestic violence, the hardened criminal on death row, the terminally ill, the pregnant teenager in crisis, the victims of war and poverty, the person at war with himself or herself struggling with inner turmoil and personal pain — these, our sisters and brothers, all need to hear the words of Jesus and rediscover how very precious is His gift of life and His undying love for everyone. In Him we find our true hope! And the rich and talented, the learned and the successful ones must be invited to hear God's word asking them to share their gifts with our brothers and sisters in need.

In this "Year of the Priest," proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI, our Holy Father's encyclical letter has special meaning for us who serve "in persona Christi." Acting "in the person of Christ," the Eternal High Priest, we are asked to proclaim and to create a culture of life which upholds and defends the dignity of all human life from the very moment life is conceived until that time when God, in His will, calls us home. While we cannot create a new economic regime where today's poor become tomorrow's wealthy, we can make known Jesus Christ, Who alone creates and makes each person a child of God, marking out that person as one worthy of esteem, respect and familial love. At each celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the priest transforms bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ to be given in Communion to the children of God. Each communicant becomes a living tabernacle housing the Incarnate Christ and these human bodies of ours reflect the glory of God. Unless we realize this fundamental truth, namely that our human dignity is related absolutely to our union with God, our Creator, society runs the risk that: "While the poor of the world continue knocking on the doors of the rich, the world of affluence runs the risk of no longer hearing those knocks, on account of a conscience that can no longer distinguish what is human" (Op. Cit., No. 75). Pope Benedict XVI, through this encyclical teaching, places before priests the challenge to awaken in the faithful a renewed appreciation for the union between heaven and earth, a renewed understanding of the pilgrim nature of this life, a pilgrimage where all those pilgrims support and care for each other along the journey, realizing that this life is only the threshold to eternal life. "Without the perspective of eternal life, human progress in this world is denied breathing-space. Enclosed within history, it runs the risk of being reduced to the mere accumulation of wealth; humanity thus loses the courage to be at the

service of higher goods, at the service of the great and disinterested initiatives called forth by universal charity” (Ibid., No. 11). And the perfection of this charity is God!

In sum, Pope Benedict is calling upon all persons of goodwill to work together; the Holy Father is appealing to persons of faith to allow that faith to be our guide in meeting the social, cultural economic, anthropological and spiritual needs of our age. We are being challenged by that voice once again crying out in the desert, beseeching us to listen to the voice of God rather than to the rabble; to follow the only path that frees the spirit and gives peace, the path of Truth.

Invoking the intercession of Mary, Our Mother and Patroness of our Diocese under the title of the Immaculate Conception, I remain,

Devotedly yours in Christ,

✠ The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano  
Bishop of Burlington

Given at the Chancery Office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington on the Eighth Day of July in the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand and Nine.