

## **Indifference Is Sin Against Poor**

Father Cantalamessa Calls for Justice for the Hungry

VATICAN CITY, MARCH 23, 2007 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The preacher at a Lenten reflection attended by Benedict XVI and his aides invited listeners to reduce the scandalous abyss that separates the poor from the "satiated."

Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, the Pontifical Household preacher, made this appeal today in a Lenten reflection offered to the Pope and members of the Roman Curia.

In his third Lenten homily of the season, Father Cantalamessa dealt with the practical application of what the Gospel beatitudes relate about the poor and the hungry.

The homily integrated the statements about the beatitudes in the Gospels according to Luke and Matthew: "Blessed are those who hunger, for they will be satisfied," says the first beatitude; the second speaks of those who have hunger and thirst for justice.

Those who hunger are the poor "considered in the most dramatic aspect of their condition, the lack of food ... in a parallel way, the 'satiated' are the rich, who in their prosperity are able to satisfy not only the need for food but also their wants in regard to food," Father Cantalamessa emphasized.

The preacher commented on the Gospel warning to the rich: "They are not condemned simply for being rich, but for the use that they make of their riches."

Modern world

The Capuchin priest showed the contemporary application of the parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus, referring to what happens on a global scale between First and Third World countries.

"The greatest sin against the poor and the hungry is perhaps indifference," he said.

The preacher echoed Pope John Paul II's encyclical "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis," saying that to ignore "the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and, above all, those without hope of a better future ... would mean becoming like the 'rich man' who pretended not to know the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate."

We must "cast aside barriers and allow ourselves to be invaded by a healthy unease in the face of the shocking misery that exists in the world," and thus follow the example of Christ, who was filled with compassion at seeing people's

needs, Father Cantalamessa added.

"To eliminate or reduce the unjust and scandalous abyss that exists between the satiated and the hungry of the world is the most urgent and vast unresolved task that humanity has taken with it into the third millennium," he said.

And it is "a task in which, above all, religions should distinguish themselves, uniting in a way that goes beyond any type of rivalry," the Capuchin said. He noted that "an undertaking of this dimension cannot be promoted by political leaders or powers, given that they are conditioned by their own national interests, and also -- frequently -- by strong economic powers."

Benedict XVI has given an example of this effort, the preacher said, citing the Pope's invitation last January to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See. "The worsening scandal of hunger," the Pontiff said then, "is unacceptable in a world which has the resources, the knowledge, and the means available to bring it to an end."

## Justice

Father Cantalamessa also mentioned "those who hunger and thirst for justice," since to be "at the side of the hungry and the poor is to be involved in the work of justice."

"The justice that God asks of the human person is summarized in the double command of charity," he said. "It is love for one's neighbor that should push those who hunger for justice to worry about those who hunger for bread. And this is the great principle by which the Gospel acts in society.

"Jesus has left us the perfect antithesis of the rich man's banquet: the Eucharist. Therein is fulfilled the perfect 'sharing at the table' ... the same food and the same drink in the same quantity for everyone."

But the Capuchin warned of what happens -- "objectively, even if not culpably" -- even "among millions of Christians who, on the various continents, participate in Sunday Mass: ... There are those who return to their houses and have everything they could want, and others who lack what is needed to feed their children."

Father Cantalamessa recalled that Benedict XVI's recent postsynodal apostolic exhortation "Sacramentum Caritatis" forcefully asserts that "the food of truth," the Eucharist, "demands that we denounce inhumane situations in which people starve to death because of injustice and exploitation, and it gives us renewed strength and courage to work tirelessly in the service of the civilization of love."  
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