Meeting of Bishops President of Episcopal Conferences and Caritas in Africa

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo - 20-22 November 2012

Identity and Mission of Caritas in the light of « Deus Caritas Est »

By:

His Eminence Robert Cardinal Sarah
President of Pontifical Council Cor Unum
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate
Your Grace The Apostolic Nuncio
Reverend Fathers
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

First of all, I would like to greet, with all my brotherly affection, the bishops Presidents of Episcopal conferences and the bishops in charge of Caritas meeting in Kinshasa. Through the sacrament of Holy Orders that they have received, the bishops are “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Co 4.1) and so they are those who are primarily in charge of the charitable mission of the Church.

I would also like to express my appreciation and my gratitude to all those who work, in a way or another, within Caritas in Africa: they give their time and their energy and offer their technical expertise and their competence at the service of others, often in silence and most discretely, on behalf of the charity of Christ. Such a commitment reveals a generous attitude to give, not just something, but to give oneself as Christ. This is the great evidence we have to demonstrate to the world today!

In the field of charity, the Church pastoral care is quite diversified and largely developed. From everywhere, we receive testimonies of the quality of the work done by those who, often in the shade, discretion and humility, wish to express the love of god, especially to the people having to face sufferings and misery. The recent famine
tragedy in Somalia and in the Sahel, the terrible earthquake in Haiti, the disaster of
the tsunami in Japan, the great migratory flux caused by tribal fights which last for
ever, the agricultural operational difficulties in countries where the ground, like the
financial markets, are impoverished, the devastations caused by AIDS, political
instability, but also the setting up of home care, the accompaniment to rehabilitate
people traumatized by wars and the famines, the fight against the traffic of children,
in short the daily assistance and accompaniment of so many of people in difficulty,
all this has seen the participation and mobilization of many Catholics all over the
whole world. We give thanks for all these signs of charity, compassion and
communion in hardship situations, as well as for the effective work achieved by
Christians on behalf of their faith. They do not hesitate to spend their life in the
service of the poor, from the one who suffers, fails and dies in insolation and
abandonment. Vis-a-vis this wealth of commitments, with this diversity of the
caritative activity of the Church, we have the duty to preserve it, to keep faithfully all
the identity connected with the Church, all that makes its evangelic originality.

1. **Highlights and shadows of charitable work**

1.1 *The identity crisis of the Church.*

The link of any charitable work to the Church and the Trinity is the source that
provides the understanding of the identity and purpose of the charitable mission of
the Church, says Benedict XVI in his Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. After the Second
Vatican Council, whose 50th anniversary we recently celebrated, a wind of
enthusiasm blew within the Church: the aim was to create a new world, a new
Church with new challenges and a new way to propose evangelisation.

You know that the Vatican Council II was received with difficult and still
today different interpretations on the spirit of the Council remain, leaving
ambiguities. There was much emphasis on the Church as “People of God”. Yet the
Vatican Council II was not only an Ecclesiological Council. The Vatican Council II first and foremost spoke about God and this not only within Christianity, but in speaking to the whole world. It spoke of God who is the God of all, who saves them all and who is accessible to all. “The Second Vatican Council clearly wanted to speak of the Church within the discourse on God, to subordinate the discourse on the Church to the discourse on God and to offer an ecclesiology that would be THEOLOGICAL in a true sense.”¹ “Until now, however, said Cardinal Ratzinger, “the way the Council was received has ignored this qualifying characteristic in favour of individual ecclesiological affirmations; it has highlighted single phrases that are easy to repeat, and has thus fallen away from the broad horizons of the Council Fathers.”² “In the early stages of the reception of the Council, the concept of "People of God" predominated together with the theme of collegiality; the term "people" was understood in terms of ordinary political usage; later in the context of liberation theology it was understood in terms of the Marxist use of the term people as opposed to the dominating classes, and even more widely, in the sense of the sovereignty of the people, which would now finally be applied to the Church. This in turn gave rise to broad discussions about her structures, in which People of God was interpreted, according to the situation, either in a more Western way as "democratization", or in the Eastern European way as "popular democracy.”³ The crisis of the Church, as it is reflected in the interpretation of the concept of "people of God" has become a "crisis of God," the crisis of the Church is the result of the abandonment of an essential reference to God: it is no longer a struggle for power. But can we really limit the action of the Church to an horizontal, political or worldly action? What is the real purpose of the Church? It is clear that the Church does not exist for itself, but it is an instrument of God to unite men in Christ (cf. Lumen Gentium, 1). The Church must not speak for itself primarily, but of God. In fact from the beginning, the first sentence of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church clarifies that the Council does

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¹ Intervention of cardinal J. Ratzinger on the ecclesiology of the constitution « Lumen Gentium », 27 February 2000
² Intervention of cardinal J. Ratzinger on the ecclesiology of the constitution « Lumen Gentium », 27 February 2000
³ Idem
not consider the Church as a reality closed in on itself, but sees it from Christ: “Christ is the Light of nations. Because this is so, this Sacred Synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church” (LG 1). We recognize here the picture very present in the theology of the Fathers of the Church, who see in the Church the moon: it does not its own light, but reflects the light of Christ-Sun. Without the sun, the moon has no light. It only reflects sunlight. So ecclesiology shows that it depends on Christology, it is strictly related. The Church does nothing itself. Everything she does is the demonstration, construction, extension, the actualization of the work of Christ. If the Church ignores God manifested in Christ, it is no more God's instrument to unify the men to him to prepare for the time when "God will be all in all of us" (1 Cor 15, 29). And the Church that exists only for itself does not make much sense. This leads to the socialization of the Church. It can then be asked what is its mission and does it not summed to a struggle for power?

This bad hermeneutics of ecclesial identity has led to situations of crisis. During the 70s there was in the Church a greater attention to all issues related to social issues. At the same time, Western culture has been shaken by waves of protest, I think of May 68, the sexual revolution in the United States, to the growing importance of Marxist doctrines, which challenge the models of the past. Opportunities and current abilities of men are said to be very different from those of the past. There is such a change in culture, in the organization of economic and social life that the past can give us nothing more. Why use our time to look back while our task is ahead. We are faced with a radical and systematic refusal of all that has been. Professors of philosophy began in high schools, to teach exclusively Marx, Nietzsche and Freud; as if these were the only authors to feed our thinking and help us build our future. Athist philosophies did not spare the Church. It has rather welcome these, thinking that these would make possible a new world with more human dimensions.
But in doing so, the risk was to see only the horizontal dimension, the human dimension of the mystery of the Church, absolutizing its earthly dimension. The consequences of this bad hermeneutics were really painful: the liturgical and theological drift, and what concerns us more particularly, the hope of salvation was reduced to a temporal messianism and an understanding of the Christian life as a form humanitarian commitment. Many missionaries have almost abandoned evangelization and have invested exclusively in development, human development and the struggle to "eradicate poverty". Many social activities have emerged, often inspired by dialectical which did not match the originality of the Christian message.

Another type of secularization has also appeared. In this period of globalization, the global village dream, there is a set of values, I think of justice, peace and the preservation of the planet, individual rights, which appear to be the main message of the Church. These values are fair and desirable. "But who can guarantee the truth of these values as proposed today?" Just look at the interpretation of human rights, that of anthropology, of the mystery of life, to realize that ideologies have captured these issues.

1.2 The identity crisis of the charitable mission of the Church

The charitable mission of the Church is also involved in this turmoil, to the point that Pope Paul VI had already warned that some misunderstandings and deviations undermined a good understanding of ecclesial charity, and had reaffirmed that Christ was the only dimension of the witness of charity and the proclamation of the gospel was part of the Church's charitable activity. Note that "Paul VI said essentially two great truths: the first is that “the whole Church, in all her being and acting, tends to promote integral human development when she proclaims, when she celebrates, when she performs works of charity.”” “The second truth is that “authentic human development concerns the whole of the person in each and every

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single dimension.”\(^6\) Without a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, "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. Because genuine development requires a transcendent vision of the person; it needs God; without him, development is denied or entrusted to the only hands of man who may be subject to the presumption of self-salvation and ends up promoting a dehumanized development.”\(^7\) And Paul VI continues: "Between evangelization and human advancement — development and liberation — there are in fact profound links (...) Testimony to Christ's charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of evangelization”\(^8\), because, for Jesus Christ, who loves us, the whole human being is important.”\(^9\)

Pope John Paul II, from the beginning of his ministry, highlighted the link between the Gospel and charity asking properly to situate "the integral development of human in the context of evangelization.”\(^10\)

The mission that the Holy Father has entrusted to me two years ago, at the head of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, makes me a privileged witness of the joys but also the difficulties and challenges faced by the Church in its charitable actions in a context which is still different from that of the post-conciliar Church. Society is currently experiencing an unprecedented global economic crisis which affects particularly the social aspects and obliges the Church to face these paramount challenges. This is a serious crisis that has anthropological, ethical, cultural and spiritual dimensions and concerns the human being in his identity and in his essence. We must admit that religious

\(^6\) Lett. Enc. Caritas in Veritate n. 11
\(^7\) Lett. Enc. Caritas in Veritate n. 15
\(^8\) Lett. Enc. Evangelium vitae n. 31 AAS 68 (1976) 26 cité in Caritas in Veritate n. 15
\(^9\) Lett. Enc. Caritas in Veritate n.15
\(^10\) cf Jean-Paul II, discours à l’Assemblée Plénière de Cor Unum, le 28.11.1978
indifference, secularism, atheism, ethical and religious relativism, new ideologies in our society anyway inspire and feed life "as if God did not exist."\(^{11}\) And even among the baptized and disciples of Christ there is as a "silent apostasy", a rejection of God and the Christian faith in politics, economy and current Western culture. Unwillingly, we breathe with all our lungs these doctrines which are contrary to human being. They create new policies that practice undermining, destruction, demolition and aggravated assault, slow but steady on all aspects of the human person, his life, his family, his work, and his relationships. It is easy to see that what hinders the real happiness of man, which destroys his deepest part is confusion and unbalanced minds, is money slavery, is his attempt to do without God, is the exploitation for commercial purposes or selfish secret dream that man carries in his heart, it is ignorance of the true value of the human person created in the image and likeness of God, is the neglect of the key aims of society: we do not even have time to live, to love and adore. This is a formidable challenge for the Church and for Caritas. The Church, in fact, also denounced the many forms of suffering which the human person is victim. Now, we are in a new cultural era, so-called post-modern, offering, at best, a humanism without God, accompanied by a heightened subjectivity. These ideologies are conveyed today by groups extremely influential and financially powerful which are hiding under the guise of international service. This power is enhanced by the phenomenon of globalization which gather all financial markets in the world and make them interdependent, setting aside the just autonomy of sovereign nations. Globalization reduces any distance between people, destroys to standardize all complementary beauties and riches constituted by races, cultures, precious historical traditions, and creates an amalgam of realities among which it is extremely difficult to have enough wisdom to discern what is good or bad. This difficulty of judgment is increased by the speed of connections and communications which make man live in immediacy.

\(^{11}\) cf Jean-Paul II, encyclique Christifideles Laici N. 34
All this also applies to Africa. Although a young continent, it is exposed to this mentality that promotes a unique vision of man and development, so that the charitable activity of the Church, in turn, is facing this diffuse cultural climate, especially when dealing with international humanitarian organizations, either as part of or in cooperation projects for funding.

This is why I felt it was important these days to highlight "the elements that form the essence of Christian and ecclesial charity" (DCE 31) and refocus our thinking about the identity of the charitable activity of the Church and the responsibility of Bishops, in the light of the Encyclical Deus Caritas Est, document that in recent years has become arguably our roadmap. This encyclical, which opened the pontificate of Benedict XVI addresses the exercise of ecclesial charity by connecting directly to the Church, the incarnation of the Son of God and the God-Trinity. It emphasizes a vertical view of the Church which has its origin and its end, the identity of his works, and its charitable mission, within God-Trinity alone. The Church is the moon that transmits light and love of God. And I want to tell you now, that Christian values and ecclesial identity of the charitable activity of the Church are not negotiable. They must reject any ideology contrary to the teaching of God transmitted by the Church and reject categorically any financial assistance that imposes ideological conditioning opposed to Church teaching. To do this, we need to realize in a more acute way what is the Church's charitable activity, what is its specificity, and grow in our responsibility as Christians and in our mission in the service of Love.
2. **Deus Caritas est**

2.1 *Contemplation of God as love*

The Pope tells us of at the outset that the source of any charity is God and the son of God, who incarnated and gave himself on the cross for love for us and for our salvation, is himself the manifestation of this love of the Father.

Contemplating the open side of the crucified Christ, the apostle John understood that God was love; Jesus gave his life for love of us to save us. I quote verbatim the passage which contains this statement: "We recognize the love that God has for us and we have believed, God is Love. He who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him "(1 Jn 4, 16). The experience of Christ's love and faith in God-Love is the *conditio sine qua non* of our Christian witness. "Staying in love" that is the purpose of the charity to save man by allowing him to experience the love of God and thus "remain in God." In a few verses, John tells us the heart of the Christian message that Jesus has revealed to us through His death on the cross.

2.2 *The mission of the Church*

In turn, the Church continues this mission of the son of God, who is to proclaim the Saviour’s love of the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit; there is nothing else. The mission of the Church, says the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, is to bring the light of Christ to the world and to be sign and instrument of unity of men with Christ (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 1).

The Church was founded from the Trinitarian communion and tends towards the Trinitarian communion. The vocation of man is the *communio cum Deo* (GS 19). The divine proposal reaches man only through Christ who incarnated, and expressed himself by words and signs. This communion is born from the encounter with the Son of God, who, by his Church and by the power of the Holy Spirit, comes among
men. Also communion between men rests on that of Christ in the Trinitarian life. The Church is in itself an eschatological dynamic; its goal is the communion with the Trinity God

2.3 The nature of "diakonia"

This communion with the God-Trinity is reflected in the "diakonia", which is an essential dimension of the universal mission of the Church.

From the beginning, the first apostles and messengers of the Good News have learned that the mission of the Church was to follow Jesus, to live and to follow the example of kindness and burning love of God the Father. Then gradually, formed in their heart the belief that diakonia was another aspect of the message of salvation and that both pastoral duties could not be separated. This is why they want to engage also in favour of giving relief to needy announcement of a new era in eschatology. Consequently, the members of the Church felt, as much individually than collectively, that they must take charge of those who suffer. In this regard the Church of Jerusalem had understood that acts of compassion of Christ, when he multiplied loaves (Mt 14, 17-21, 15, 32-39, Jn 6, 1-65), healed the sick, or resurrected the dead (Lk 7, 11-17, Jn 11, 1-43), interacted with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4, 1-41), or had lunch with Zacchaeus (Luke 18, 1-10), were the manifestation of the good news of salvation, so that it was not possible to separate the doctrine of Christ's presence and loving compassion towards those who suffer and who are the most disadvantaged. Also, during the early years, the service to the poor, widows, orphans, prisoners, the sick, to those who were hungry and thirsty, were bare and abandoned, was meant to be and was like the other side of the coin of the announcement of the good news.

The mission of the Church is thus composed of three munera: evangelize (kerygma-martyria), celebrate (leitourgia) and serve (diakonia). In Deus Caritas Est, at n. 25, the Holy Father defined these as enlightening one other and not being able to
exist independently of each other. The more the Church will perform these three tasks, the more it becomes itself, allowing the communion between men and God-Trinity.

The consequence is that "Charity is not for the Church a kind of welfare activity which could be left to others, but it belongs to its nature, it is an expression of its essence itself, which it cannot give up" (DCE n. 25a).

The first diaconal ministry was born in the early Church, the community of Jerusalem, when the apostles chose seven deacons to serve tables. It was not, however, perform a purely technical distribution service; these men were to be "filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom" (cf. Acts 6: 1-6). "This means, says Benedict XVI, that the social service which they had to perform was quite specific, but at the same time, it was undoubtedly also a spiritual service, so it was for them a truly spiritual ministry which carried out an essential responsibility of the Church, namely a well-ordered love of neighbour " (DCE n. 21).

The expression used by the Holy Father to define the service of charity seems to me very important: a truly spiritual ministry.

The ministry consists in participating in the mission, in the service and dignity of Christ as the Servant sent by the Father and in the service of men, because he came to serve and not to be served (cf. Mt 20:28). And to participate means to be a kind of instrument, and refrain from any claim to be "behind," source or end of whom is being served. This means that our charitable organizations and in particular Caritas, are not autonomous or self-referential, but fit into this spiritual Ministry of the Church, strictly united to the Bishop and to the local Church.
As the essence of the Church is made up of *tria munera*, it cannot be exempted from the practice of charity. However, it will ensure that the specific expressions of ecclesial charity should not be confused with the activity of the State, even if it remains true that "charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, expressed as "social charity" (DCE 25). It must be clear to all that "church charities are (...) the" opus proprium "of the Church, i.e. a task agreeable to her nature, in which the Church does not cooperate collaterally, but acts as a subject with direct responsibility, doing what corresponds to her nature "(DCE 29).

This involves as first consequence the role of the Bishop in this field:

3. **Responsibility of Bishops vis-à-vis the practice of diakonia (DCE n. 32 ).**

The mission that the Church has received from Christ has been entrusted to the bishops as successors of the apostles. Since the structure of the Church is episcopal, the three tasks that express its mission are under their responsibility. The encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* reminds us that “In conformity with the episcopal structure of the Church, the Bishops, as successors of the Apostles, are charged with primary responsibility for carrying out in the particular Churches the programme set forth in the Acts of the Apostles” (cf. 2, 42-44) » (DCE 32). This responsibility is clear according to the *Directory for the pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, which considers the Bishop as "the President and the Minister of charity in the Church" (n. 195). This implies firstly a concrete commitment and a testimony of paternal closeness and loving charity to the poor. And, from a pastoral point of view, this means to pay particular attention so that the Church, at diocesan and parish levels, live the *diakonia* taught by Christ himself.

In this regard, I would like to make some considerations with regard to the pastoral plan:
1. The primary responsibility of every pastor regarding charity is to exhort the faithful to live their Christian life and to act in Christ's commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15 12), so that they see the need and practical applications of charity. In this regard I have in mind lay persons who, like Frederic Ozanam founded charities, namely the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul.

2. It is clear that the Bishop alone cannot preside at the service of Charity, for love "also needs to be organized as a precondition for ordered community service" (DCE 20). It is organised service that we discover the role of the diocesan Caritas. Its particular role consists, unlike other organizations from secular groups or religious institutes, in being the official organ of the bishop for pastoral charity.

During its history, the Church has realized that it would organize a service to the poorest and most vulnerable members of society, regardless of their race, social status, culture or religion. The episode which occurred in the Church of Jerusalem, about the recrimination of the widows of Greek origin against the Hebrews because they felt neglected in the daily service, forced the Church to organize and establish an early form of Diakonia. Through the institution of seven deacons for the service of the tables, we are somehow in presence of the first official charity of the Church. This episode may serve as an example to understand what are the Diocesan Caritas.

Hence by virtue of its origin and nature, all Caritas is more closely related to the pastors of the Church and as such it is called “to share in collaboration with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the mission of the Church to demonstrate, through the practice of charity, the love of God himself.”12 Hence the importance, said Benedict

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12 Décret du 2 mai 2012
XVI, of a greater awareness and increased vigilance on the part of the Bishop, so that all the faithful of his diocese live as a family: the family of God. In this family no one ought to go without the necessities. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, says Saint Paul, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (cf Ga 6,10) “Yet at the same time caritas-agape extends beyond the frontiers of the Church. The parable of the Good Samaritan remains as a standard which imposes universal love towards the needy whom we encounter “by chance” (cf. Lk 10:31), whoever they may be. » (cf DCE 25 b).

What are the areas affecting charitable activity that today require special attention on the part of bishops?

a) Firstly, it is necessary to define the nature of the charitable activity in order not to transform it into a political or purely social or humanitarian action. The true meaning of Christian charity is not due to an injustice or an external factor such as the violation of the fundamental principles of the dignity of the human person by a State or other established authority. The service of charity comes from the personal encounter with the love of Christ, who, in faith, moves us generously and freely to the poor to testify Trinitarian love.

The great danger is to believe that the purpose of the pastoral charity of the Church is to reform society, to fight for a fairer and more democratic society. But “The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. (...) A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply” (DCE 28 a). But fundamentally, it is the State that has to deal with social issues, this is not the immediate responsibility of the Church. Professor Gehring will speak about it. He
will indicate with clarity the importance of establishing a just distinction between the theology of the charity and the social doctrine of the Church.

Today, however the political issue is to know how to face the UN international organizations and the ideologies that they convey. Because, while recognizing their importance, the Church is not dependent upon the orders or campaigns launched by the major international organizations.

The Church does not obey the philosophies that want to impose themselves in the field of globalization and often do not respect the true nature of man. We cannot allow ourselves to be dominated by those with powerful means, often financial and media with great manipulative skills, who want to spread under the guise of so-called progress and a vision of man supposedly universal rights, a philosophy that we cannot accept.

b) So, let me ask this fundamental question: What is the vision of man we want to promote through our charity? The assistance provided by the agencies of the Church aims at integral human development. It is therefore not to reduce charitable activity to a service that provides professionally such type of activities facing such type of troubles, even if competence and efficiency are essential and aconstitute the first aid. But it is also and above all to deeply respect the human person in his dignity as a child of God, and for that, we must radically defend a vision of man who absolutely integrates the religious dimension, transcendent, of the human being called to communion with God. It is clear that in this area there is no ready-made solutions but one thing is very important: each project must be appropriate and in favour of the eminent dignity of the human person. That is why we must constantly ask ourselves: What man do we want to love, help, rescue, save? What is his true happiness, how to drive him to his fullness? What is he
called to? Is it enough to build schools, hospitals, provide food and clothing, give tools to work the land?

If a man is called to a life of communion with God by faith, we understand that charitable activity must occupy a special place in God's plan for the salvation of man through the new evangelization. Revelation teaches us that charity is at the heart of the gospel: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (Jn 13:35) As the words of apostle John say, charity is the great sign which refers to God. This charity by its testimony helps the heart of man to receive the Holy Spirit. Thus the practice of charity can be compared to a silent, but lively and effective preaching. So who practice charity must be credible witnesses of Christ as “Those who practise charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith upon others. They realize that a pure and generous love is the best witness to the God in whom we believe and by whom we are driven to love. A Christian knows when it is time to speak of God and when it is better to say nothing and to let love alone speak. He knows that God is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8) and that God's presence is felt at the very time when the only thing we do is to love. (…) Consequently, the best defence of God and man consists precisely in love. It is the responsibility of the Church’s charitable organizations to reinforce this awareness in their members, so that by their activity—as well as their words, their silence, their example—they may be credible witnesses to Christ.” (DCE 31 c). The credibility of the testimony must pass through personal witness, for charity is not primarily work but relationship; it always requires a personal dimension, which requires prayer, the Sacraments and worship as the supreme expression of our love and communion with God.

c) The personal relationship to God, prayer and the use of the sacraments are essential so that those working in church charities, are true witnesses of the love of Christ and do not fall into activism or secularism. This means that our service
can develop from a heart deeply renewed by Christ and the Gospel that will make us act not based on some form of superiority of a dominant financial power, but because the Lord has given us a gift and we are just an instrument between his hands, without having the pretention of having, by ourselves, to realise any necessary improvement of the world. It is God who governs the world and not us: we, "we are any servants" (cf. Lk 17: 7-10) and the co-operators of God (cf 1 Cor 3.9; 2Co 6.1).

The credibility of the testimony also involves formation of the heart and for that we must have "a heart which sees" as God because "God Himself has planted in our heart's eye" (Sir 17, 8). In this regard, the Holy Father has requested formation of the heart of all those working in charities: “Those who work for the Church's charitable organizations must be distinguished by the fact that they do not merely meet the needs of the moment, but they dedicate themselves to others with heartfelt concern, enabling them to experience the richness of their humanity. Consequently, in addition to their necessary professional training, these charity workers need a “formation of the heart”: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others. As a result, love of neighbour will no longer be for them a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love.” (cf. Gal 5:6) (DCE 31 a). The Spiritual Exercises that the Pontifical Council Cor Unum promotes aim at responding to this objective through intense moments of prayer, listening to the Word, deepening of faith and a personal experience of God's love for each of us. In addition to the material support, which is important and necessary, the human suffering and distress need to receive a message of love, comfort and hope that only Christ can bring through the witness of the faith of believers. Three meetings have been held in different continents. The first in 2008, in Guadalajara (Mexico), was for those who are responsible for the Church's charitable mission in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2009, in Taiwan was
held the second meeting of spiritual exercises, this time, for those responsible for charity in Asia. Finally in 2010, the shrine of Jasna Gora in Czestochowa, hosted the third meeting of the Spiritual Exercises for Europe. Currently we are working on a fourth meeting we would like to offer responsible charitable mission in Africa.

Conclusion

In summary it is important that charitable activity be truly an ecclesial activity, an evangelizing mission that brings to man the love of God, before being a social activity. Paul VI clearly understood that the fullest development of man is realized in his encounter with God (cf. Encyclical Letter Populorum Progressio n. 20). The encyclical Deus Caritas Est aims at enabling the human being to meet God through the ministry of Charity. This is to prove to the human being that he is infinitely loved by God and that the Church is the instrument of this love for his salvation. We must never forget that to live, to practice and to reveal love to bring the light of God in the world is at the heart of the Christian message. We hope that the observations and analyzes that we have outlined here can help to understand the ministry of Charity of the Church and make us engage with more responsibility in the service of love.