

John Chrysostom: "Not to share one's goods with the poor is to rob them and to deprive them of life. It is not our goods that we possess, but theirs" (Homily on Lazarus, 1:6-PG 48, 992D).

Dear Ambassadors, there is a need for financial reform along ethical lines that would produce in its turn an economic reform to benefit everyone. This would nevertheless require a courageous change of attitude on the part of political leaders. I urge them to face this challenge with determination and farsightedness, taking account, naturally, of their particular situations. Money has to serve, not to rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but the Pope has the duty, in Christ's name, to remind the rich to help the poor, to respect them, to promote them. The Pope appeals for disinterested solidarity and for a return to person-centred ethics in the world of finance and economics.

For her part, the Church always works for the integral development of every person. In this sense, she reiterates that the common good should not be simply an extra, simply a conceptual scheme of inferior quality tacked onto political programmes. The Church encourages those in power to be truly at the service of the common good of their peoples. She urges financial leaders to take account of ethics and solidarity. And why should they not turn to God to draw inspiration from his designs? In this way, a new political and economic mindset would arise that would help to transform the absolute dichotomy between the economic and social spheres into a healthy symbiosis.

Finally, through you, I greet with affection the Pastors and the faithful of the Catholic communities present in your countries. I urge them to continue their courageous and joyful witness of faith and fraternal love in accordance with Christ's teaching. Let them not be afraid to offer their contribution to the development of their countries, through initiatives and attitudes inspired by the Sacred Scriptures! And as you inaugurate your mission, I extend to you, dear Ambassadors, my very best wishes, assuring you of the assistance of the Roman Curia for the fulfilment of you duties. To this end, upon you and your families, and also upon your Embassy staff, I willingly invoke abundant divine blessings.

Mr. SANDERS. I don't usually comment much on religious matters, but I was very impressed by what the Pope had to say today. In his remarks Pope Francis called for a revamping of the global financial system, a system which he pointed out benefits the few, values money over human dignity, and continues to widen the gap between the rich and everybody else.

While acknowledging the advances modern society has made in health care, education, technology, and other areas, the Pope expressed his concern for the least amongst us. The Pope said:

We must also acknowledge that the majority of the men and women of our time continue to live daily in situations of insecurity, with dire consequences . . . fear and desperation grip the hearts of many people, even in the so-called rich countries; the joy of life is diminishing; indecency and violence are on the rise; poverty is becoming more and more evident. People have to struggle to live and, frequently, to live in an undignified way.

The Pope went on to say this in his rather brief remarks:

One cause of this situation . . . is in our relationship with money, and our acceptance

of its power over ourselves and our society . . . The worship of the golden calf of old has found a new and heartless image in the cult of money and the dictatorship of an economy which is faceless and lacking any truly humane goal.

The Pope continued:

The worldwide financial and economic crisis seems to highlight their distortions and above all the gravely deficient human perspective, which reduces man to one of his needs alone, namely, consumption. Worse yet, human beings themselves are nowadays considered as consumer goods which can be used and thrown away. We have begun a throw away culture.

He also said:

Solidarity, which is the treasure of the poor, is often considered counterproductive, opposed to the logic of finance and the economy.

Further quoting the Pope, and I hope everybody listens to this:

While the income of a minority is increasing exponentially, that of the majority is crumbling.

Let me repeat that. This is what the Pope said today:

While the income of a minority is increasing exponentially, that of the majority is crumbling. This imbalance results from ideologies which uphold the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation, and thus deny the right of control to States, which are themselves charged with providing for the common good. A new, invisible and at times virtual, tyranny is established, one which unilaterally and irremediably imposes its own laws and rules. Moreover, indebtedness and credit distance countries from their real economy and citizens from their real buying power. Added to this, as if it were needed, is widespread corruption and selfish fiscal evasion, which have taken on worldwide dimensions. The will to power and of possession has become limitless.

This is from a speech Pope Francis made today. I think it is important that we listen to the Pope on this issue. Frankly, I have strong disagreements with the Catholic Church on issues of women's rights, issues of gay rights, and a number of other issues. On this issue of what is happening economically around the world—the power of financial markets; the growing gap between the very rich and everyone else; the need for government and for states around the world to step in and protect the dispossessed; the need to understand that money unto itself means nothing unless it is being used in a way that improves the lives of all people—that is a message coming from the Pope. It is a message worth thinking about and discussing.

THE IRS

Mr. SANDERS. In the Senate, I hear a lot of criticism of government, some of which is certainly justified. All of us, I would hope, are deeply concerned, embarrassed, and disagree with what the IRS did in terms of picking out one political persuasion in terms of tax-exempt status. That is clearly wrong, unacceptable, and must be dealt with.

Many of my friends attack government day after day when government

is trying to do the right thing in protecting middle-class and working families. There are some in the Congress, for example, who believe that government programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid should be significantly cut or that maybe government shouldn't even be involved in those areas. They believe these programs are unconstitutional.

If you were to eliminate Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, what would happen to tens of millions of people who rely on Social Security for their retirement, especially at a time when many private pensions have been cut severely? If you make cuts or eliminate Medicare for the old or you undo the Medicare system we know and turn it into the system our friends in the House would like to have, what will happen to elderly people when they get sick and need health care and don't have the money in their own pockets to pay for that? I will tell you what will happen.

This year alone, it is estimated that approximately 45,000 Americans will die because they never made it to a doctor on time when they should have made it. If you make major cuts in Medicare or do away with the basic guarantees Medicare now provides, clearly the number of people who will die will simply increase.

If you are 67 years of age and are diagnosed with cancer and Medicare is not there for you and you don't have a family who has money, what will happen to you? Some of my Republican friends will say: Well, go to charity. Charity is not going to be there to provide health care for millions of people.

In terms of health care, what we must point out over and over again because many Americans don't understand it is that our Nation is the only Nation in the industrialized world that does not guarantee health care to all people as a right of citizenship.

Today, although we hope that will change in the very near future, 50 million people have no health insurance. Many others have large deductibles or copayments, which keep them from going to the doctor when they should.

We have invited the Ambassador from Denmark to join us in a town meeting in Vermont on Saturday. He will explain to us how in Denmark, among many other countries throughout the world, they can provide health care to people that is virtually free from out-of-pocket expenses and yet per capita end up spending substantially less than we do. He will explain to us why the cost of their prescription drugs is substantially lower than it is in the United States.

In terms of education, this is at a time when in my State the average college graduate in Vermont leaves school some \$28,000 in debt—roughly the national average. This is at a time when hundreds of thousands of young people cannot afford to go to college, and we lose all of their intellectual capabilities and the genius they might provide

for our society. In Denmark, college education is virtually free, including graduate school and medical school.

At a time when in our country millions of people are overworked and underpaid; at a time when we work some of the longest hours of any people in the industrialized world, when people in Vermont are working not 40 hours a week but 50 hours a week, 60 hours a week; at a time when people are not working one job but two jobs, three jobs, trying to cobble together an income; at a time when some employers are hiring people and providing zero vacation time or maybe, if one is lucky, a week off, how does it happen that in countries such as Denmark people not only get 5 weeks' guaranteed paid vacation, but they get another 11 vacation days?

In this country, we talk a lot about family values. However, if you are a working-class woman having a baby, you will get some maybe. If you are working for a large enough employer, family medical leave may have an impact and you may get some time off to have the baby, but you can't stay home very long to take care of your newborn because you will not have any money coming in. Millions of folks have a baby and go right back to work, putting the child back in childcare when they would prefer otherwise. How does it happen in countries such as Denmark that women get 4 weeks off, fully paid before they give birth, and then months off afterwards to stay home with the baby, not to mention three-quarters payment from the government for childcare, while we so poorly manage that?

I think it is time we have a serious discussion about values, and that discussion has to include whether we feel good about the fact that in this country so few have so much and so many have so little.

Do we feel comfortable with the growing imbalance in terms of income and wealth such that the top 1 percent owns 38 percent of the wealth and the bottom 60 percent owns only 2.3 percent, and the gap between the billionaire class and everybody else is growing wider?

As the Pope asked: Are we comfortable with a financial system where the goal is not to invest in the productive economy but to make money for itself, such that the top six financial institutions in this country have assets equivalent to some 70 percent of the GDP of the United States—some \$9 trillion—and enormous political power?

This IRS business people are talking about on the floor of the Senate is related to the absurd campaign finance system we have where big companies can secretly put hundreds of millions of dollars into the political process. Are we comfortable with a political system where people can make contributions in secret that end up in the political process and then end up on a 30-second ad on our TV—money coming from billionaires who don't have to disclose their contributions?

So when we talk about values, it is important to assess who we are as Americans and what we believe in. I believe most Americans believe we have to do a lot better job at focusing on the needs of the declining and disappearing middle class; that we have to create millions of jobs so our young people do not have outrageously high levels of unemployment and older people who lose their jobs have nothing to go back to; that we have to address the issue of high childhood poverty; and we have to, in fact, make sure government works for all of the people and not just the people on top.

I would just conclude by recommending to the Members and to the American people they examine the remarks made this morning by Pope Francis, which I think raise some very important issues. I think there is a lot to be learned from those remarks.

With that, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WORKER PROTECTION

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 50 years ago, in August 1963, Martin Luther King wrote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

When a factory full of human beings collapses in Bangladesh, it matters in Bucyrus and Boardman and Bellefontaine. When the concrete ceiling of a shoe factory crumbles in Cambodia, it matters in Celina and Canton.

Earlier this month we observed Workers Memorial Day. We paused and remembered those Americans who had lost their lives on the job. We honor their memories by passing laws to help ensure no other child waits by the door for a mother or a father who will never return home from work.

Out of the ashes of the Triangle Shirt Waste Factory fire 100 years ago in New York City, we fought and won workplace safety reforms that have helped save countless lives decade after decade in our country. Yet even though we have passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, even though we have a National Labor Relations Board, we still have a moral responsibility to be vocal about violations to worker safety wherever it happens—whether it happens in Cleveland, in Honolulu, or in Bangladesh.

We are interconnected with this world. Our economy is linked to the women and children—to the people—whose names we don't know, the workers we don't know, who sew labels we all know in our shirts and in our sweaters. American and European retailers purchase some two-thirds of Bangladeshi garment production.

That is why, Mr. President, in the aftermath of the deadly Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh and the Wing Star Shoes collapse outside of Phnom Penh, we might have expected outraged American companies to take action. That is not exactly what happened. Which member of this multibillion-dollar industry will speak out for workers who face hazardous conditions for a minimum wage—in many cases of just \$38 per month—making the clothes we wear in this country?

Today, Leader REID, Senator HARKIN of Iowa, DURBIN of Illinois, LEVIN of Michigan, LEAHY of Vermont, MURRAY of Washington State, ROCKEFELLER of West Virginia, and I sent a letter to some of our leading American retailers. We are urging retailers such as Walmart to sign onto a legally binding global accord to help ensure worker safety in Bangladesh. We are asking a number of the largest retailers in America to sign onto this legally binding global accord to help ensure worker safety in Bangladesh.

Remember, as Dr. King wrote some 50 years ago, injustice anywhere threatens our ability to create a more just world. Signing this accord from our retailers is one step our leading retailers can take to help us usher in a new era of justice in this new century.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COWAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am back again to remind this body and the American people for what I think is perhaps the 32nd speech on this subject that I have been giving weekly, that it is time, indeed it is well past time, for Congress to wake up to the disastrous effects of global climate change. The famous Mauna Loa Observatory has for the first time ever hit 400 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere. That is an alarming benchmark to have hit.

What is happening? Over on the House side today they are repealing ObamaCare for the 37th time. That is the level of seriousness in Washington right now. In particular, our oceans—the Presiding Officer represents the Bay State, I represent the Ocean State—our oceans face an unprecedented set of challenges that come from climate change as well as from pollution and energy exploration and more.