NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Q & A: Cardinal George at Catholic Charities Mass

Michael Sean Winters | Oct. 28, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

This week, we are examining what is distinctive about Catholic charitable work. As many of you know, Catholic Charities USA recently celebrated its centennial and, as a part of that celebration, they held a Mass. Cardinal Francis George of Chicago delivered the homily, and the following excerpt perfectly touches on the theme.

You can find the wntire homily at the CCA website here [1].

Cardinal George: Behind the cases and the case studies, behind the plight of the poor, behind the well-organized response to their needs through Catholic Charities, there is the Gospel and its imperative to love. It is always important to give to a good cause; it is even more important simply to give, to be generous in imitation of the Lord himself, of Jesus who was generous to the point of self-sacrifice for our salvation. No matter the cause, disciples of the Lord Jesus have to give, are impelled toward generosity from the power of God?s grace working in them, in us. Salvation depends on this virtue. St. John of the Cross reminds us: In the evening of life, we will be judged by love, examined in love. Made in God?s image and likeness, created therefore out of infinite love, we will be asked how we have grown into the mind and heart of Christ, who saves us out of love. The One who loves us far more than we love ourselves will ask how we have loved those whom He also loves, and therefore have shown how we love Him. If love, which is the form of every virtue, informs our life and our actions, we have nothing to fear, in this life or in the next.

So we are here, brothers and sisters, because of the virtue of generosity; we are here also because of a motive: faith. It is a particular faith, a faith that, as St. James reminds us, sustains works, a faith that becomes visible in works, a faith demonstrated by good works.

There are tensions, as you know, particular to such a faith and the good works that it motivates: there is a tension between humanitarianism, helping the poor for the sake of the poor, and evangelization, helping the poor for the sake of Christ. There is a tension between professionalism, helping others from the knowledge and skills that have the poor come to us on our terms, the terms of our profession, a tension between that kind of professionalism and ministry, going to the poor on Christ?s terms and helping them as they want to be helped. There is a tension even between charity and justice, especially when justice is interpreted as vengeance.

Pope Benedict solved this conceptually in his first encyclical Deus caritas est (God is love) when he pointed out very aptly, and very obviously, what the world has often forgotten: one cannot be just to someone whom you don?t love; and one cannot love someone without seeing to it that they are treated justly.
t
These and other tensions are the stuff of many conversations, good conversations; but most of all, they are the stuff of daily life for Catholic Charities directors and staffs. They are resolved in practice each day by many thousands of well-prepared and well-formed men and women who have put their lives, their careers, and often risked their livelihood in service to the mission of Catholic Charities. Pope Benedict mentions them in his encyclical: ?The personnel of every Catholic charitable organization want to work with the Church, and therefore with the bishop, so that the love of God can spread throughout the world. By their sharing in the

Church?s practice of love, they wish to be witnesses of God and of Christ, and they wish for this very reason freely to do good to all.? I take great pride in the Catholic Charities workers, the directors, those who are responsible for Catholic Charities in the diocese I serve. I take great pride because I see men and women who could work in many places, but who are in Catholic Charities because they know what the mission is; and more than that, the mission has transformed their own hearts and their own lives in such a way that they are trustworthy, that they can work out the tensions in their good work. They can respond to individuals while keeping the principles in mind, and they do so day after day, year after year. I take great pride in them, and to them, especially, we owe a debt of gratitude today.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/12/2013 - 17:59*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/q-cardinal-george-catholic-charities-mass

Links:
[1] http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=2221