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Francis to G8: 'Money must serve, not rule'

Thomas Reese | Jun. 16, 2013 NCR Today
Pope Francis

In his first message to the leaders of the economically powerful nations of the world, Pope Francis did not mince his words: "Money and other political and economic means must serve, not rule." The human person should not be just a cog in the economic machine. "Concern for the fundamental material and spiritual welfare of every human person is the starting-point for every political and economic solution and the ultimate measure of its effectiveness and its ethical validity," he wrote.

The pope's message [1]was in response to a letter to the pope [1]in which British Prime Minister David Cameron as the current president of the G8 set out the agenda for its meeting in Northern Ireland on June 17 and 18.

In his letter, the pope complements Cameron for including on the agenda world hunger and the protection of women and children from sexual violence in conflict situations, although he notes that international peace is the ultimate solution to such violence. In this context, he calls on the G8 to "help to obtain an immediate and lasting cease-fire" in Syria "and to bring all parties in the conflict to the negotiating table."

Francis also supports the rule of law and "commitments to deal with tax avoidance and to ensure transparency and responsibility on the part of governments." Citing his predecessor, Pope Benedict, he notes that the "present global crisis shows that ethics is not something external to the economy, but is an integral and unavoidable element of economic thought and action."

In keeping with what has become a signature theme of his papacy, the Pope Francis reminded the leaders of their responsibility to make helping the poor a priority: "The goal of economics and politics is to serve humanity, beginning with the poorest and most vulnerable wherever they may be, even in their mothers' wombs."

"Every economic and political theory or action must set about providing each inhabitant of the planet with the minimum wherewithal to live in dignity and freedom, with the possibility of supporting a family, educating children, praising God and developing one's own human potential," he wrote. "In the absence of such a vision, all economic activity is meaningless."

The pope acknowledges that this will take a courageous change in attitude to restore the welfare of the human person as the end of human activity and to recognize economics and politics as only means to achieving that end.

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