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'I want our nation to be inspired by what the pope said'

by Dennis Coday

NCR Today

Here's the second part of my report on the teleconference called by the Catholic Democrats earlier today. I already reported on what Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro of Connecticut and Congressman Jim McGovern of Massachusetts think about tomorrow's meeting between President Obama and Pope Benedict XVI. To sum up their thoughts: It's more than a mere photo-op.

The two representatives also talked briefly about Pope Benedict's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. Here's a quick sampling:

DeLauro: "[Pope Benedict] has provided an excellent road map in how we can go about securing economic justice. I think it is so refreshing to read what he has to say. He presents a challenge to all political leaders when he basically concludes, and I quote, 'every economic decision has a moral consequences.' ...

"Many of us go back to look at our rich history and our Catholic faith of social justice, which we are so proud to stand on. ... When you take a look at what we try to do with our legislative agenda ... whether it is the poor, or hunger or war and peace or health care -- any of these -- these are truly a part, come out of the pope's encyclical."

McGovern: "I was inspired by the pope's encyclical. ... The fact of the matter is, this world is in very tough shape. There are wars that are raging all across the globe. There are countless people living in extreme poverty. We are told by the United Nations that the number of hungry people in this world now exceeds one billion. It is shameful and unconscionable that this has been allowed to happen. Nations, including our nation, like to talk about how bad poverty is, like to talk about how bad hunger is and violence, but we haven't risen to the occasion. I say to people all time in Congress that hunger is a political condition. We can solve this problem, we can end hunger on this planet in my lifetime if we have

the political will to do it. My hope is that the pope's moral leadership and his clear words in his encyclical can guide not only the United States but also the rest of the world to move in a different direction. ...

"I want our nation to be inspired by what the pope said."

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