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The Mind of Francis: Capitalism, Jobs & Globalization

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Pope Francis

It is well known that Jorge Bergoglio, S.J., was not a fan of liberation theology, but that does not mean Pope Francis is a supporter of unbridled capitalism. In 2000, he acknowledged in *On Heaven and Earth* the role of private property, but said it "carries with it the obligation to put it at the service of others within just parameters."

He noted that the church is not only against communism but also "against the wild economic liberalism we see today." In Latin America, "liberalism" describes what we in the United States would refer to as economic libertarianism.

His critique of capitalist systems is not just economic and political; it is also theological because "it tames religion so that it does not bother Capitalism too much." It fosters a worldly spirit that forgets "the act of adoring God means to submit to His will, to His justice, to His law, and to His prophetic inspiration." Capitalism, he wrote, fosters "a civilization of consumerism, of hedonism, of political arrangements between the powers or political sectors, [and] the reign of money."

But his strongest words come in criticizing capitalism's treatment of workers: "There is no worse dispossession," he wrote, "than not being able to earn one's own bread, than being denied the dignity of work." What degrades the poor, he wrote, is "not giving them the oil that anoints them with dignity: a job." He praises priests, who, imitating Don Bosco, help kids in shantytowns to become electricians, cooks, tailors, etc.

In his book, Bergoglio also condemns the flight of capital from the developing world: "Someone who operates a business in a country and then takes that money to keep it outside of the country is sinning because he is not honoring with that money the country to which he owes his wealth, or the people that

worked to generate it."

In fact, he has serious issues with globalization. As archbishop of Buenos Aires, he approved of a "true globalization" where "everyone is integrated but each player maintains his particularities, which, at the same time, enrich the others." But a globalization that makes everything uniform is not human but "essentially imperialistic and instrumentally liberal. In the end it is a way to enslave the nations."

John Allen reported before the conclave that Bergoglio had become a voice of conscience and "a potent symbol of the costs globalization can impose on the world's poor" because of the leading role he played during the Argentine economic crisis.

More recently, in both his homily and in his weekly audience Wednesday, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, he was even more harsh in his criticism. When he learned that the workers killed in the clothing factory disaster in Bangladesh were paid only 38 euros a month, he called it "slave labor."

He said, "Not paying a just [wage], not providing work, focusing exclusively on the balance books, on financial statements, only looking at making personal profit. That goes against God." He complained that "People are less important than the things that give profit to those who have political, social, economic power."

Returning to the topic of unemployment, he noted it is "very often caused by a purely economic view of society, which seeks self-centered profit, outside the bounds of social justice." He urged "those in public office to spare no effort to give new impetus to employment."

"When society is organized in such a way that not everyone has the opportunity to work ... then there is something wrong with that society: it is not right! It goes against God himself."

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Echoing the teachings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, Francis said work gives us "the ability to maintain ourselves, our family, to contribute to the growth of our nation."

But work for Pope Francis is much more; it makes us similar to God, who works in creation. He cites Genesis, where God entrusts man and woman "with the task of filling the earth and subduing it." But, always the environmentalist, he explains that "does not mean exploiting it, but nurturing and protecting it, caring for it through their work (cf. Gen 1:28; 2 15). Work is part of God's loving plan, we are called to cultivate and care for all the goods of creation and in this way participate in the work of creation!"

Earlier examinations of "The Mind of Francis" looked at optional celibacy and denying Communion.

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