

# **Why the World Needs Catholic Market Place Leaders**

Hyatt Regency

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

## ***Introduction***

Before offering a few remarks on the topic, “Why the World Needs Catholic Market Place Leaders,” I wish to thank you for your presence here this morning to help launch a new – and critically important – initiative in the life of the Archdiocese of Vancouver: the Association of Catholic Leaders. My special gratitude goes to Brett Powell, whom many of you know as the National Campus Director for CCO, for his foundational contribution to this endeavour, as well as the committee that worked with Brett to bring us together this morning. Every new undertaking requires a great deal of creativity, patience and plain hard work – and these folks had that in abundance. You will hear more from them later on.

But just a word on why I think that we are here this morning for an extraordinarily important purpose: to create an association of Catholic business leaders which will serve as a forum for fellowship, discussion about questions that are of concern to people of faith in the conduct of their business, and spiritual growth and commitment – since the path to holiness for you is integrally related to your profession. ACL is our attempt to bring together faith and business, connecting these two powerful realities. The Association, I hope, will offer a unique support

network of like-minded Catholics who influence the marketplace and who want to infuse their faith in the daily lives and workplaces of their friends, colleagues and employees. ACL will be dedicated to fostering a seamless integration of faith and work in the practical arena of business.

Similar groups for professionals seeking such integration already exist in the Archdiocese. For many years, the Catholic Physicians Guild has been bringing together all those in the health care professions.

And last week, with the first celebration in more than fifty years of the Red Mass in the Cathedral, I think we have the beginning of a Thomas More Guild for those in the law professions.

You are in good company in this initiative, and my hope is that you will be successful.

Why? Here I come to the topic of my reflection. Not only do you need, I believe, such an organization to ensure that your faith life is connected to your professional life in an integral and wholesome way, but also because the world – and more specifically, the marketplace, needs well formed and serious leaders.

We need a world where every person understands their God-given mission in life and is doing their best to fulfill it; a world where Catholic leaders are influential voices in society because we have something to offer to the building of a temporal order founded on Jesus. The world

needs Jesus' example of loving, servant leadership as lived in the workplace.

We are all designed by God for a specific purpose, and there are too many non-Catholics out there that are leaving us in the dust when it comes to living out our faith. We need Catholics out there in the market place that are not afraid to do what their faith commits them to.

### ***Nobility of Business as a Profession***

Let me begin with a couple of reminders: the first has to do with the task of all lay people – unlike priests and Religious – to contribute to the good of human society, a task which follows from their Baptism.

The vocation of the lay faithful to holiness implies that life according to the Spirit expresses itself in a particular way in their *involvement in temporal affairs* and in their *participation in earthly activities*. Once again the Apostle admonishes us: “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Blessed John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 17.

All secular human realities – both personal and social, as well as structures and institutions – are the context in which the lay Christian lives and works. These realities are places where God’s love is received; the commitment of the lay faithful must correspond to this vision and is to be considered an expression of evangelical charity; “for the lay faithful to be present and active in the world is not only an anthropological and sociological reality, but in a specific way, a theological and ecclesiological reality as well.”<sup>2</sup>[1141].

All the lay faithful are called to be sanctified in everyday professional and social life, seeing in their daily activities an occasion to join themselves to God, fulfill his will and serve others. This is both your vocation and your mission. Remember that “The essential characteristic of the lay faithful who work in the Lord’s vineyard (cf. Mt 20:1-16) is the secular nature of their Christian discipleship, which is carried out precisely in the world.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Blessed John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 541.

The Association of Business leaders aims to strengthen your spiritual and moral lives, so that you can be better leaders in the marketplace according to the mind of Christ (cf. Phil 2:5). For this you, like all of us, would benefit from a dynamic and ongoing formation directed above all to the attainment of harmony between life, in all its complexity, and faith. In fact, “there cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called ‘spiritual’ life, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called ‘secular’ life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture.”<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the marketplace is no exception to the rule that work, all human work is “a fundamental dimension of human existence as participation not only in the act of creation but also in that of redemption.”<sup>5</sup> The Church has always stressed that business activity is essential to the common good. Her social teaching, past and present, insists that commercial activity should be directed to the common good and not merely to the profit of a few. At the same time, the various social Encyclicals, especially *Centesimus Annus* (1991) and *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), have clearly pointed to the inherently social and

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<sup>4</sup> Blessed John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 59.

<sup>5</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 263.

civilizing character of business and the market. The attainment of a good and prosperous life on the part of great numbers of people – and, at least in theory, by all – would be unimaginable were it not for business leaders who create jobs, wealth and products, and innovations which are constantly expanding human opportunities and freedom.

Like other dimensions of human life those engaged in the marketplace are prone to the temptations of selfishness and narrow self-interest. “Nonetheless, the Church sees the world of economics, labour and business in a positive light as a significant sphere for creativity and service to society, a positive element in human affairs.”<sup>6</sup>

Yours, therefore, is a noble and treasured vocation.

### ***Why Your Vocation Is Needed***

Society today needs you to practice your profession in such a way that not only does your moral integrity shine through but that you build your business on certain key principles, principles that are at the heart of the social doctrine of the Church, that large – but insufficiently known – body of teaching. “This doctrine has its own profound unity, which flows from Faith in a whole and complete salvation, from Hope in a fullness of justice, and from Love which makes all mankind truly brothers and sisters in Christ: it is the expression of God’s love for the

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<sup>6</sup> Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Address at the Opening of the Executive Summit on Ethics for the Business World (16 June 2011).

world, which he so loved ‘that he gave his only Son’ (Jn 3:16).”<sup>7</sup>

In the social doctrine of the Church can be found three things: first, certain principles for reflection; second, criteria for judgment on situations and practices; and third, some directives for action which are the starting point for the promotion of the common good.<sup>8</sup>

Allow me to say just a word about some – just some, though I believe them to be important – of the principles that Catholic leaders bring to the marketplace by the example of their own practice and by their ability to persuade and convince others of a course of action. My premise, as you can gather, is simple: what you have to offer is not merely useful – though it is that – but essential for building a truly good society, the “better world” which we so often invoke in our slogans.

### ***1. Charity***

The first contribution to be made is elementary for a believer, but one that, in practice – or, as they say, “in the real world” – is not to the forefront where profit, growth and other factors become the control the vision and mission. It is so often detached from concrete decision making and is undervalued. In the marketplace it is easily dismissed as irrelevant for interpreting and giving direction.

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<sup>7</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 7.

Nonetheless, love is, according to the teaching of Jesus, the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36- 40). It gives real substance to our personal relationship with God and our neighbour; “it is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones).”<sup>9</sup>

It is helpful here to recall the relationship of justice to charity, a point taken up by Pope Benedict in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (2009). This is how he explains it – and why businesses must first be conducted according to the principles of justice but also not abandon the practice of love:

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<sup>9</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 2.

*Charity goes beyond justice*, because to love is to give, to offer what is “mine” to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is “his,” what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting. I cannot “give” what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way of charity or, in Paul VI’s words, “the minimum measure” of it (Address for the Day of Development [23 August 1968]).<sup>10</sup>

## ***2. Transcendent Vision of the Human Person***

It is a particular risk of the world of business, though by no means restricted to you, to work on a practical (though perhaps not theoretical) level, as if the human person were primarily a consumer, a being whose happiness would be guaranteed by “having more.” A purely consumerist and utilitarian view of life does not let us see that the human being is made for gift, for others, which expresses his transcendent dimension.

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<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 6.

Certain false utopian views circulate today, especially regarding the power of technology, to be *the* instrument of happiness. This forgets the fundamental truth that the human person is oriented to “being more.” We are transcendent beings who cannot be satisfied with simply a surfeit of goods and possessions. In Augustine’s words, “our hearts are restless until they rest in God.”

### ***3. Centrality of the Family***

Another contribution which Catholic business leaders can make in the marketplace is the place they attribute to the family as the central unit of both social and ecclesial life. In many ways this goes against the grain of many who see the marketplace composed simply of autonomous individuals.

Regarding the family as the natural community in which human social nature is experienced, it makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the good of society – and deserves to be served by those engaged in business.

Catholic teaching always held the family to be the basic building block of any society and expects believers to foster economic arrangements that strengthen, not weaken, the family. This is question that involves not only the right to a wage which could support a family but also working hours, work expectations and so on. Catholic leaders strive to avoid even subtle forms of exploitation that are often even

praised: over-working, work-as-career that often takes on more importance than other human and necessary aspects, and excessive demands of work that make family life unstable and sometimes impossible.

Family and work, so closely interdependent in the experience of the vast majority of people, deserve finally to be considered in a more realistic light, with an attention that seeks to understand them together, without the limits of a strictly private conception of the family or a strictly economic view of work. In this regard, it is necessary that businesses, professional organizations, labour unions and the State promote policies that, from an employment point of view, do not penalize but rather support the family nucleus. In fact, family life and work mutually affect one another in different ways. Travelling great distances to the workplace, working two jobs, physical and psychological fatigue all reduce the time devoted to the family. Situations of unemployment have material and spiritual repercussions on families, just as tensions and family crises have negative influences on attitudes and productivity in the area of work.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 284.

#### ***4. Reasonable Appreciation – not Idolatry – for the Market***

A last reason that I will mention regarding why the world needs you as Catholic business leaders is this: you bring to the marketplace an appreciation for the free market, yet with an awareness of how it can be disregarded.

Today we know that a free market can be a powerful force for good in the world. Despite the economic challenges we all face right now, it's still true that more people in more places live better and longer than at any time in history. That's an astonishing modern achievement. But it's also true that more people are poor and suffering than at any time in history. One of the lessons of history – and also the Scriptures – is that the rich forget the poor. Power, including economic power, can become a kind of addiction.

Adam Smith alluded in some of his early writings to the importance of religious faith and moral principles in guiding the very powerful machine we call the market. There's a reason why he did. At its root, the market is basically a “service-for-compensation” or “product-for-compensation” transaction. And the better we become at it, the more we risk losing sight of the larger moral environment of our culture.

In the great world religions, but especially in Christianity, the earth and its resources exist for the use of all people. And therefore, the

market exists for the benefit of everybody. People have a right to enjoy the results of their success. But we can never lose responsibility for the people around us. And when we do lose sight of that responsibility – when we reduce other people to statistics or impersonal social problems; when we ignore the moral implications of how we conduct our business; when we let greed and dishonesty take over our economic life – then the bonds that hold a nation together begin to unravel.<sup>12</sup> We cannot let that happen to Canada.

### ***Conclusion***

Where does God belong in the marketplace? He belongs in the hearts and the actions of the people who make the market succeed. And that means you. What we do, what we create, reveals who we are. And that's as true in the marketplace as it is in the painter's studio. The rest of us need good leaders like you to change things; to light the marketplace with habits of generosity, justice, and honesty.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Charles Chaput, Address to Catholic Business Leaders, Toronto (25 February 2009).

The philosopher Hugo Grotius once said that, “A man cannot govern a nation if he cannot govern a city; he cannot govern a city if he cannot govern a family; he cannot govern a family unless he can govern himself; and he cannot govern himself unless his passions are subject to reason.” I’d add just one more thing: A man’s reason can’t truly serve himself – or anyone else – until he roots it in moral integrity.<sup>13</sup>

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Charles Chaput, Address to Catholic Business Leaders, Toronto (25 February 2009).