



**The Role and Contribution of the Social Welfare Sector
for Building a Relational Society”
Speech to the International Conference on the Occasion of
the 60th Jubilee of Caritas Hong Kong**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Brothers and Sisters!

It is both a great pleasure and honour for me to be able to speak to you today at this impressive international conference organised on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of Caritas Hong Kong. Thank you very much for your invitation!

My pre-predecessor as President of Caritas Germany, the late Prelate Georg Hüssler, who passed away at the age of ninety-one on 14th April of this year, was President of Caritas Internationalis for many years and drew my attention to his friend Carl Vath. This man, a sophisticated person and a priest, had provided the impulse for founding Caritas Hong Kong. In midst of the social plurality of this city and its manifold social issues Caritas has made itself heard as Caritas of the Church. This is a challenge with implications of importance far beyond this city. Therefore I have composed my speech in the following way:

1. A Catholic Welfare Association
 - 1.1 The Impulses Given by the Founder Lorenz Werthmann
 - 1.2 Non-Statutory Social Welfare and Caritas of the Church
2. Biblical and Theological References
3. Signs of the Times
 - 3.1 Service Provider, Advocate and Initiator of Solidarity
 - 3.2 Living Catholic Identity
4. Conclusion: The Church and her Worldwide Caritas

1. A Catholic Welfare Association
 - 1.1. The Impulses Given by the Founder Lorenz Werthmann
Lorenz Werthmann, born 1858, was a Catholic priest, an exceptionally gifted social politician, an organiser, a publisher as well as a networker and good speaker. Due to the beginning era of industrialisation there were great social needs in Germany of the nineteenth century. Many social initiatives developed especially in the context of the Church. Congregations such as the Charitable Sisters of
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Saint Vincent de Paul were founded. Already at an early stage, Lorenz Werthmann was moved by social misery and by the Caritas mission of the entire Church in response to it. His idea became stronger and stronger to unite Caritas of the Church under one umbrella in order to be able to confront social hardship better and more effectively. And he succeeded in convincing many of his vision. In 1897 Lorenz Werthmann founded the “Charity Association for Catholic Germany”. In 1916, in the middle of the First World War, this association was officially recognised by the German Bishops!

For Werthmann it was important to promote solidarity and to sharpen the social awareness of society by means of a Catholic social movement which speaks with one voice. Lorenz Werthmann once said, “Now take the best of social legislation: everything seems alright – but legislation alone will not move anything. Why not? Because Caritas is lacking in the heart of the factory owner, [...] and the government officer, who is in charge of monitoring the laws’ implementation, lacks an open mind and warm heart. Therefore, Caritas is the steam required for the social locomotive.”¹ Lorenz Werthmann considered Caritas to be a “medium of social reconciliation”² and a “pathfinder [...] for governmental and legislative measures.”³

Lorenz Werthmann refused what he called “welfare absolutism” of the state and was convinced that there should be non-statutory welfare alongside governmental welfare in the interest of common welfare and of the individual citizen. He saw organised Caritas as the social movement of the Church with explosive impact on society. And it will not be new to you, when I tell you that Carl Vath, the exceptionally gifted founder of Caritas Hong Kong, in this sense made Caritas the social conscience of Hong Kong.

1.2. Non-Statutory Social Welfare and Caritas of the Church

“As one member of the group of Non-Statutory Social Welfare Organizations, the German Caritas Association bears responsibility for moulding a socially just society ...”⁴ This statement can be read in the statutes of Caritas Germany. Nowadays in Germany, organised Caritas as an actor within the system of non-statutory social welfare is challenged to sharpen its identity and relevance as advocate, service provider and initiator of solidarity. As providers of services for the public good all organisations within the system of non-statutory social welfare differ from private profit-oriented and from public providers, in particular by their non-profit approach and by their specific values based on ideology or religion. However since the 1990s, there is no more priority of the organisations of non-statutory social welfare vis-à-vis others, especially commercial providers. The municipalities themselves have increasingly become providers and competitors. One reason for this is that they believe their own service offers cost less than those of the non-statutory social welfare organisations. At the same time they want to respond to the growing proportion of the population which does not adhere to a Christian denomination or to any religion.

However it belongs to the achievements of the 20th century in our country that the state does not monopolise the responsibility for its citizens. In a famous quotation taken from the works of Ernst-

¹ Lorenz Werthmann, Aus seinen Schriften (Extracts from his Texts), published by Karl Borgmann, Freiburg 1958, 69.

² Ibid., 69.

³ Ibid., 70.

⁴ Cf. <http://www.caritas.de/glossare/satzungdesdeutschencaritasverbandesev>

Wolfgang Böckenförde, a German scholar of constitutional law, this insight is pinpointed in the following way: “The libertarian secularised state lives by prerequisites which it cannot guarantee itself. This is the great adventure it is risking for the sake of freedom. A libertarian state can only endure if on one hand the freedom bestowed upon its citizens is regulated from within, based on the moral substance of the individuals and a certain homogeneity or consensus of society at large. On the other hand, the state cannot itself guarantee these internal regulating mechanisms, meaning by legal enforcement or authoritative decree, without losing its freedom and falling back – on the secular level – into the claim of totality it once led the way out of, back in the days of the confessional civil wars.”⁵

Caritas Germany, as an organisation of non-statutory social welfare, contributes to this for example by effectively participating in the designing of governmental social legislation. By social monitoring undertaken since 2003 in cooperation with the Federal Government new social laws are cross-checked for unintended side effects and corrections are demanded if needed. Furthermore, Caritas Germany is invited to evaluate the regularly published Poverty and Wealth Report of the Federal Government already before its publication. In this way Caritas Germany very much acts according to Lorenz Werthmann who made Caritas seriously take note of the importance of being a “pathfinder [...] for governmental and legislative measures”.⁶

At the same time Caritas Germany is “recognized by the German Bishops as the institutional union and representation of the Catholic Caritas in Germany.” And therefore “the German Caritas Association helps shape the life of the Church and society in general. Its actions lend credibility to Church proclamation in the public realm.”⁷ As specific faith-based organisations the Catholic Caritas and the Diakonie of the Protestant denominations have, as parts of their respective Churches, a separate status within the German constitution and social legislation. Being an association within the system of non-statutory social welfare on one hand, and an organisation of the Catholic Church on the other hand, the double mission of Caritas can be described as follows: Based on the Gospel and on the derived Catholic social teachings, it is to care for the people, especially for the needy and poor, with a national, European and worldwide focus.

2. Biblical and Theological References

In the very well-known parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10,29-37) a man lies half dying in the road after he has been robbed – for him it is a matter of life and death. The story demands active charity to save life. Three different persons are confronted with the situation created by the criminals, in this case the robbers. However the first two, a priest and a Levite, high-ranking religious representatives, do not react with a focus on the victim, but for religious reasons even ignore the situation. The Samaritan, a person who does not belong to the same religious community, passes by and “has mercy”. He tends to the wounds, organises transportation and arranges for further care of the victim. In this story the religious representatives do not contribute anything to improve the conditions. In the end it is the Samaritan who solves the situation, created by robbery and bodily injury, in a pragmatic and in this case ethical way. “Then go and do likewise!” (Lk 10,37) This is

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⁶ Ibid., 70.

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the mission Jesus gives us – the man from Samaria becomes our model solely by his action– not by pious words!

The importance of this witness by action belongs to the core concerns of the apostolic letter *Evangelii nuntiandi*⁸ written by Pope Paul VI in the year 1975. It underlines the priority of giving living witness and speaks of “witness without words” (21). For, as the first Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI reminds us: God is love – “*Deus Caritas est*”⁹. Never before has the organised Caritas of the Church received this kind of papal recognition. “Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community.”(20) The Encyclical underlines that everyone is called to the mission of charitable service.¹⁰ However this mission of the entire ecclesial community is not optional. “For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.”(25) Therefore the Church herself acts directly through her charitable institutions and services. “The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word.”(22) The message is clear. Eucharist and Charity are inseparable. And this also holds true under the conditions of a pluralistic society.

3. Signs of the Times

3.1. Service Provider, Advocate and Initiator of Solidarity

Caritas as an organisation steps up to the challenge of discovering the signs of the times, as indicated by the Second Vatican Council, and endeavours to act on them accordingly. The slogan “See a Need and Act on it” has been the motto of the work of Caritas in Germany for many years. Campaigns put concrete emphasis on selected topics. At present the annual campaign of Caritas in Germany under the slogan “Family can only be built together” focuses on the issue of the family which is recognised to promote solidarity and social cohesion in a special way.

“Family” is one of the most popular and debated topics of politics and election campaigns in Germany. Especially in this federal election year, our campaign under the slogan “Family can only be built together” demands a great deal from us. The crucial issue is to support families so that they are able to design their lives by themselves and take on responsibility. The role of politics is to create the necessary framework enabling families to master their lives. The current annual campaign of Caritas Germany wants to contribute to this. However the socio-political demands are just one side of the coin. Caritas also provides concrete assistance for families by way of facilities and services for children, youth and families, and tries to reach the families in cooperation with parishes.

It is unfortunately a fact that quite often the care for socially marginalised people is left to Caritas as an organisation. Many parishes are characterised by majority middle-class membership. On the other hand, the Caritas facilities and services most often deal with persons in completely different life settings. The key to a solution is a pastoral approach with focus on ‘*diakonia*’. A renewed orientation towards ‘*diakonia*’ would open up the parishes for many people. Parishes which deal with the

⁸ Apostolic Letter *EVANGELII NUNTIANDI* by His Holiness Pope Paul VI to the Episcopacy, the Clergy and all the Faithful of the Catholic Church on Evangelisation in the World of Today, new edition, Bonn 2012.

⁹Cf. Encyclical Letter *DEUS CARITAS EST* by Pope Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious, and all the Lay Faithful on Christian Love, published by Secretariat of the German Bishops’ Conference, Bonn 2008.

¹⁰ Cf. also “*Berufen zur caritas*” (Vocation for Caritas), published by Secretariat of the German Bishops’ Conference, Bonn 2009.

social needs of their surroundings experience this as enriching and stimulating. Liturgy and proclamation of the Word are said to become more true-to-life and vivid. In order to achieve this, concrete care for people must be an overriding principle of the pastoral approach and not a specialised category.

Caritas Germany has defined as its goal to strengthen and enlarge the 'social space' approach of its work. 'Social space' means both the social network on different levels that forms the framework of people's lives as well as the geographical setting where they live. One of the mottos of our international Caritas engagement is "Good knowledge of local conditions is necessary in order to help" – this is also a very adequate guideline for the work of Caritas in the country. The new pastoral entities which were established by combining of several parishes must be understood as networks with many nodes. Such points of concentration are by far no longer merely the spires of churches, but also Church-run schools, kindergartens, educational facilities, counselling services and many other places where people get together or receive assistance. The principle of the large and wide pastoral entity must be accompanied by the principle of proximity and concrete action: This means local nearness to people or as already said in other words "Good knowledge of local conditions is necessary in order to help!" In order to do this job, women and men, who have discovered their vocation for Caritas work, are needed on different levels. These persons are the most precious resources Caritas has.

3.2. Living Catholic Identity

In its vision-mission statement of 1997 Caritas Germany has formulated its normative organisational goals on the basis of the Catholic social teachings.¹¹ These normative goals of Caritas as an association are also valid for Caritas staff and in particular for managing staff. "[For] it is the responsibility of the Church's charitable organisations to reinforce this awareness in their members, so that by their activity – as well as their words, their silence, their example – they may be credible witnesses to Christ." Thus the words of Pope Benedict XVI in *Deus Caritas est*. (31)

However, a Caritas facility does not demonstrate its Church profile simply by featuring pious pictures, crosses and nativity scenes. This profile also does not become visible by delegating it to individuals. And it is not surprising when staff members refuse to compensate a possible lack of structural spirituality in their employing institution by way of their personal piety and religiousness. "The style of interaction, the way young colleagues are instructed and elderly ones seen off into retirement, how mistakes are addressed and conflicts are settled, all this reflects the ultimate aim of all charitable effort: It is to create a setting within which people can breathe, find themselves and apply their personal capacities, and in this they differ significantly from..." those which have other priorities. This was formulated already many years ago by the German pastoral theologian Rolf Zerfaß. For, charitable activity is also "a possibility to discover God Himself, to see Him and let His glory shine in this world. And this does not only happen by way of the generous attention experienced by the person in need, but also by means of the brotherly and sisterly atmosphere created by those who practice charity, by the living respect for human dignity which takes form in the management styles and organisational structures encountered by the employee"(Rolf Zerfaß).

First and foremost however, professional competence is required, also from Caritas employees, as Pope Benedict expressly indicates in his Encyclical "*Deus Caritas est*"(cf. 31). Piety alone is not enough. The stipulations laid down in the „Basic Rules for Church-based Services in the Context of Employment Contracts within the Church“, which were established in 1993, are valid for the Church and her Caritas in Germany. With regard to the keeping with loyalty obligations, these stip-

¹¹ See: <http://www.caritas.de/glossare/leitbilddesdeutschencaritasverbandes>

ulations differentiate between Catholic, non-Catholic and non-Christian staff. While non-Christian staff members are merely required to fulfil their work duties “as defined by the Church”, non-Catholic employees are expected to respect the truths and values of the Gospel. In addition they should contribute to making these truths and values have an impact within the institution. By the way, this is also formulated in the pontifical Motu proprio “Intima ecclesiae” which was promulgated in November 2012¹².

Ultimately, a hospital, a care facility or a counselling service is Christian or Catholic if the people seeking help can feel, through the atmosphere in the institution and by way of the nature of contact with its staff, that there is an underlying basic Christian attitude which accepts people with all their limitations and potentials and in this way lets them sense the traces of a God who loves mankind. The Auxiliary Bishop Franz Vorrath of the Diocese of Essen, which is a partner of the Diocese of Hong Kong, said, “Who can guarantee that Christianity is lived in a better way, proclaimed more vividly and practiced more effectively if all are baptised and confirmed? Is it not possible that Christian issues are often no longer worth addressing within a homogeneous Catholic context, and that on the contrary the religiously and ideologically heterogeneous composition of a staff body provides more opportunity for examining one’s own and other’s beliefs and thereby also provides occasion to give account of the Faith?”

4. Conclusion: The Church and her worldwide Caritas

What is so impressively formulated at the beginning of *Gaudium et spes* holds especially true for the work of Caritas as an essential part of the Church: “The joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.”¹³ The option for the poor, which Pope Francis reminds us of, prevents the reduction of the Church to a pastoral approach without ‘*diakonia*’. In fact it is necessary to cope with the social tensions a Catholic welfare association is challenged by and to contribute actively to solutions. In this respect Caritas Germany can learn a lot from Caritas Hong Kong, which from the very beginning has been successful in an environment in which it is exceptional to be Catholic. It is precisely this environment which perceives and appreciates the Catholic identity of Caritas Hong Kong. Ultimately it is only possible to protect and create identity based on trust in a God who sends us out to bear witness to Him before all people.

Prelate Dr. Peter Neher
President

Ladies and Gentlemen, Brothers and Sisters!

¹² Benedict XVI, Motu Proprio “Intima ecclesiae”; Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2012; online: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20121111_caritas_ge.html

¹³ Pastoral Constitution “Die Kirche in der Welt von heute“ (The Church in the World of Today) (*Gaudium et spes*), in Rahner, Karl: Vorgrimmler, Herbert (publ.), Kleines Konzilskompendium. Sämtliche Texte des Zweiten Vatikanums, (Complete Texts of the II Vatican Council) Freiburg et.al. 1966, 449.

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Lorenz Werthmann, born 1858, was a Catholic priest, an exceptionally gifted social politician, an organiser, a publisher as well as a networker and good speaker. Due to the beginning era of industrialisation there were great social needs in Germany of the nineteenth century. Many social initiatives developed especially in the context of the Church. Congregations such as the Charitable Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul were founded. Already at an early stage, Lorenz Werthmann was moved by social misery and by the Caritas mission of the entire Church in response to it. His idea became stronger and stronger to unite Caritas of the Church under one umbrella in order to be able to confront social hardship better and more effectively. And he succeeded in convincing many of his vision. In 1897 Lorenz Werthmann founded the "Charity Association for Catholic Germany". In 1916, in the middle of the First World War, this association was officially recognised by the German Bishops!

For Werthmann it was important to promote solidarity and to sharpen the social awareness of society by means of a Catholic social movement which speaks with one voice. Lorenz Werthmann once said, "Now take the best of social legislation: everything seems alright – but legislation alone will not move anything. Why not? Because Caritas is lacking in the heart of the factory owner, [...] and the government officer, who is in charge of monitoring the laws' implementation, lacks an open mind and warm heart. Therefore, Caritas is the steam required for the social locomotive."¹⁴ Lorenz

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Werthmann considered Caritas to be a “medium of social reconciliation”¹⁵ and a “pathfinder [...] for governmental and legislative measures.”¹⁶

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1.2. Non-Statutory Social Welfare and Caritas of the Church

“As one member of the group of Non-Statutory Social Welfare Organizations, the German Caritas Association bears responsibility for moulding a socially just society ...”¹⁷ This statement can be read in the statutes of Caritas Germany. Nowadays in Germany, organised Caritas as an actor within the system of non-statutory social welfare is challenged to sharpen its identity and relevance as advocate, service provider and initiator of solidarity. As providers of services for the public good all organisations within the system of non-statutory social welfare differ from private profit-oriented and from public providers, in particular by their non-profit approach and by their specific values based on ideology or religion. However since the 1990s, there is no more priority of the organisations of non-statutory social welfare vis-à-vis others, especially commercial providers. The municipalities themselves have increasingly become providers and competitors. One reason for this is that they believe their own service offers cost less than those of the non-statutory social welfare organisations. At the same time they want to respond to the growing proportion of the population which does not adhere to a Christian denomination or to any religion.

However it belongs to the achievements of the 20th century in our country that the state does not monopolise the responsibility for its citizens. In a famous quotation taken from the works of Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, a German scholar of constitutional law, this insight is pinpointed in the following way: “The libertarian secularised state lives by prerequisites which it cannot guarantee itself. This is the great adventure it is risking for the sake of freedom. A libertarian state can only endure if on one hand the freedom bestowed upon its citizens is regulated from within, based on the moral substance of the individuals and a certain homogeneity or consensus of society at large. On the other hand, the state cannot itself guarantee these internal regulating mechanisms, meaning by legal enforcement or authoritative decree, without losing its freedom and falling back – on the secular level – into the claim of totality it once led the way out of, back in the days of the confessional civil wars.”¹⁸

Caritas Germany, as an organisation of non-statutory social welfare, contributes to this for example by effectively participating in the designing of governmental social legislation. By social monitoring undertaken since 2003 in cooperation with the Federal Government new social laws are cross-

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At the same time Caritas Germany is “recognized by the German Bishops as the institutional union and representation of the Catholic Caritas in Germany.” And therefore “the German Caritas Association helps shape the life of the Church and society in general. Its actions lend credibility to Church proclamation in the public realm.”²⁰ As specific faith-based organisations the Catholic Caritas and the Diakonie of the Protestant denominations have, as parts of their respective Churches, a separate status within the German constitution and social legislation. Being an association within the system of non-statutory social welfare on one hand, and an organisation of the Catholic Church on the other hand, the double mission of Caritas can be described as follows: Based on the Gospel and on the derived Catholic social teachings, it is to care for the people, especially for the needy and poor, with a national, European and worldwide focus.

2. Biblical and Theological References

In the very well-known parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10,29-37) a man lies half dying in the road after he has been robbed – for him it is a matter of life and death. The story demands active charity to save life. Three different persons are confronted with the situation created by the criminals, in this case the robbers. However the first two, a priest and a Levite, high-ranking religious representatives, do not react with a focus on the victim, but for religious reasons even ignore the situation. The Samaritan, a person who does not belong to the same religious community, passes by and “has mercy”. He tends to the wounds, organises transportation and arranges for further care of the victim. In this story the religious representatives do not contribute anything to improve the conditions. In the end it is the Samaritan who solves the situation, created by robbery and bodily injury, in a pragmatic and in this case ethical way. “Then go and do likewise!” (Lk 10,37) This is the mission Jesus gives us – the man from Samaria becomes our model solely by his action– not by pious words!

The importance of this witness by action belongs to the core concerns of the apostolic letter *Evangelii nuntiandi*²¹ written by Pope Paul VI in the year 1975. It underlines the priority of giving living witness and speaks of “witness without words” (21). For, as the first Encyclical Letter of Pope Benedict XVI reminds us: God is love – “Deus Caritas est”²². Never before has the organised Caritas of the Church received this kind of papal recognition. “Love of neighbour, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community.”(20) The Encyclical underlines that everyone is

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called to the mission of charitable service.²³ However this mission of the entire ecclesial community is not optional. “For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.”(25) Therefore the Church herself acts directly through her charitable institutions and services. “The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word.”(22) The message is clear. Eucharist and Charity are inseparable. And this also holds true under the conditions of a pluralistic society.

6. Signs of the Times

3.1. Service Provider, Advocate and Initiator of Solidarity

Caritas as an organisation steps up to the challenge of discovering the signs of the times, as indicated by the Second Vatican Council, and endeavours to act on them accordingly. The slogan “See a Need and Act on it” has been the motto of the work of Caritas in Germany for many years. Campaigns put concrete emphasis on selected topics. At present the annual campaign of Caritas in Germany under the slogan “Family can only be built together” focuses on the issue of the family which is recognised to promote solidarity and social cohesion in a special way.

“Family” is one of the most popular and debated topics of politics and election campaigns in Germany. Especially in this federal election year, our campaign under the slogan “Family can only be built together” demands a great deal from us. The crucial issue is to support families so that they are able to design their lives by themselves and take on responsibility. The role of politics is to create the necessary framework enabling families to master their lives. The current annual campaign of Caritas Germany wants to contribute to this. However the socio-political demands are just one side of the coin. Caritas also provides concrete assistance for families by way of facilities and services for children, youth and families, and tries to reach the families in cooperation with parishes.

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Caritas Germany has defined as its goal to strengthen and enlarge the ‘social space’ approach of its work. ‘Social space’ means both the social network on different levels that forms the framework of people’s lives as well as the geographical setting where they live. One of the mottos of our international Caritas engagement is “Good knowledge of local conditions is necessary in order to help” – this is also a very adequate guideline for the work of Caritas in the country. The new pastoral entities which were established by combining of several parishes must be understood as networks with many nodes. Such points of concentration are by far no longer merely the spires of churches, but also Church-run schools, kindergartens, educational facilities, counselling services and many other places where people get together or receive assistance. The principle of the large and wide

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pastoral entity must be accompanied by the principle of proximity and concrete action: This means local nearness to people or as already said in other words “Good knowledge of local conditions is necessary in order to help!” In order to do this job, women and men, who have discovered their vocation for Caritas work, are needed on different levels. These persons are the most precious resources Caritas has.

3.2. Living Catholic Identity

In its vision-mission statement of 1997 Caritas Germany has formulated its normative organisational goals on the basis of the Catholic social teachings.²⁴ These normative goals of Caritas as an association are also valid for Caritas staff and in particular for managing staff. “[For] it is the responsibility of the Church's charitable organisations to reinforce this awareness in their members, so that by their activity – as well as their words, their silence, their example – they may be credible witnesses to Christ.” Thus the words of Pope Benedict XVI in *Deus Caritas est*. (31)

However, a Caritas facility does not demonstrate its Church profile simply by featuring pious pictures, crosses and nativity scenes. This profile also does not become visible by delegating it to individuals. And it is not surprising when staff members refuse to compensate a possible lack of structural spirituality in their employing institution by way of their personal piety and religiousness. “The style of interaction, the way young colleagues are instructed and elderly ones seen off into retirement, how mistakes are addressed and conflicts are settled, all this reflects the ultimate aim of all charitable effort: It is to create a setting within which people can breathe, find themselves and apply their personal capacities, and in this they differ significantly from...” those which have other priorities. This was formulated already many years ago by the German pastoral theologian Rolf Zerfaß. For, charitable activity is also “a possibility to discover God Himself, to see Him and let His glory shine in this world. And this does not only happen by way of the generous attention experienced by the person in need, but also by means of the brotherly and sisterly atmosphere created by those who practice charity, by the living respect for human dignity which takes form in the management styles and organisational structures encountered by the employee”(Rolf Zerfaß).

First and foremost however, professional competence is required, also from Caritas employees, as Pope Benedict expressly indicates in his Encyclical “*Deus Caritas est*”(cf. 31). Piety alone is not enough. The stipulations laid down in the „Basic Rules for Church-based Services in the Context of Employment Contracts within the Church“, which were established in 1993, are valid for the Church and her Caritas in Germany. With regard to the keeping with loyalty obligations, these stipulations differentiate between Catholic, non-Catholic and non-Christian staff. While non-Christian staff members are merely required to fulfil their work duties “as defined by the Church”, non-Catholic employees are expected to respect the truths and values of the Gospel. In addition they should contribute to making these truths and values have an impact within the institution. By the way, this is also formulated in the pontifical *Motu proprio* “*Intima ecclesiae*” which was promulgated in November 2012²⁵.

Ultimately, a hospital, a care facility or a counselling service is Christian or Catholic if the people seeking help can feel, through the atmosphere in the institution and by way of the nature of contact with its staff, that there is an underlying basic Christian attitude which accepts people with all their limitations and potentials and in this way lets them sense the traces of a God who loves mankind.

²⁴ See: <http://www.caritas.de/glossare/leitbilddesdeutschencaritasverbandes>

²⁵ Benedict XVI, *Motu Proprio* “*Intima ecclesiae*”; Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2012; online: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20121111_caritas_ge.html

The Auxiliary Bishop Franz Vorrath of the Diocese of Essen, which is a partner of the Diocese of Hong Kong, said, "Who can guarantee that Christianity is lived in a better way, proclaimed more vividly and practiced more effectively if all are baptised and confirmed? Is it not possible that Christian issues are often no longer worth addressing within a homogeneous Catholic context, and that on the contrary the religiously and ideologically heterogeneous composition of a staff body provides more opportunity for examining one's own and other's beliefs and thereby also provides occasion to give account of the Faith?"

4. Conclusion: The Church and her worldwide Caritas

What is so impressively formulated at the beginning of *Gaudium et spes* holds especially true for the work of Caritas as an essential part of the Church: "The joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."²⁶ The option for the poor, which Pope Francis reminds us of, prevents the reduction of the Church to a pastoral approach without 'diakonia'. In fact it is necessary to cope with the social tensions a Catholic welfare association is challenged by and to contribute actively to solutions. In this respect Caritas Germany can learn a lot from Caritas Hong Kong, which from the very beginning has been successful in an environment in which it is exceptional to be Catholic. It is precisely this environment which perceives and appreciates the Catholic identity of Caritas Hong Kong. Ultimately it is only possible to protect and create identity based on trust in a God who sends us out to bear witness to Him before all people.

Prelate Dr. Peter Neher
President

²⁶ Pastoral Constitution "Die Kirche in der Welt von heute" (The Church in the World of Today) (*Gaudium et spes*), in Rahner, Karl: Vorgrimmler, Herbert (publ.), *Kleines Konzilskompodium. Sämtliche Texte des Zweiten Vatikanums*, (Complete Texts of the II Vatican Council) Freiburg et.al. 1966, 449.

