

Theologians reassess 1986 economic pastoral

By Dennis Sadowski
Catholic News Service

CLEVELAND — Economic globalization has meant that the U.S. bishops' 1986 vision that moral principles guide economic decisions so that each person has the basic necessities of life remains an elusive goal in rapidly changing world, a Jesuit priest said at a session during the Catholic Theological Society of America's annual convention.

Father David Hollenbach, director of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College, told about 40 people that the world's economy has been altered by globalization and poses far different challenges than the bishops envisioned in their 24-year-old pastoral letter, "Economic Justice for All."

"This challenge remains as demanding and controversial today as it was when the (bishops') document first appeared," Father Hollenbach said June 12.

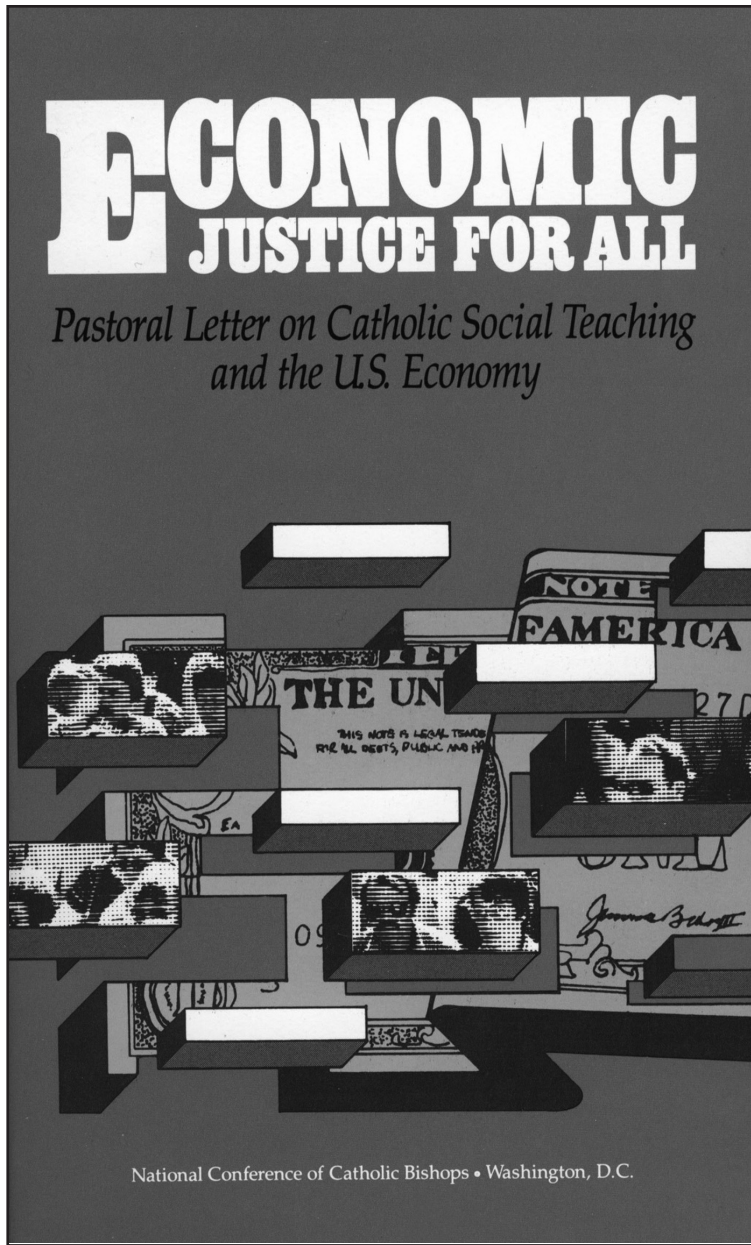
The Jesuit's remarks were made during the first of three annual discussions sponsored by the CTSA related to the letter's 25th anniversary in 2011. Future programs examining the pastoral letter will occur at the 2011 and 2012 CTSA conventions.

Although Father Hollenbach credited the development of global markets for the decline in the overall number of people worldwide living in extreme poverty from 1.9 billion in 1981 to 1.4 billion in 2005, such progress has been felt in far too few countries. He expressed particular concern for countries of sub-Saharan Africa, where extreme poverty has remained unchanged for decades.

Extreme poverty is defined as living on less than \$1.25 a day.

The priest cited aid programs introduced by financial institutions such as the World Bank that were intended to lift people out of their dire condition but likely contributed to growing poverty in some developing nations. He said some of the programs led to an interdependence that boosted "inequality, domination and oppression."

"In the face of differing aspects of globalization, one of the chief contributions of the church's ministry today will be to support movement ... to patterns based on equality, reciprocity and solidarity," he said.



1986 COVER OF 'ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL: PASTORAL LETTER ON CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND THE U.S. ECONOMY' — This is the cover of "Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy," which was approved by the U.S. bishops in 1986. The Catholic Theological Society of America has begun exploring how the pastoral letter has fared in the years since its release. (CNS file photo)

"Inclusion of those being excluded from the benefits of global markets and assistance to those negatively affected by these markets are requirements of justice," he added.

Father Hollenbach also called for public and private aid programs that aim to increase the participation of the poor in both economic and political life.

During the same program, Daniel K. Finn, professor of economics and theology at St. John University in Collegeville, Minn., reported on the True Wealth of Nations Project, which is examining the boundary between theology and economics by involving theologians, economists, social scientists and people studying the humanities.

He discussed how the conversation has evolved since the

project was introduced by the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at the University of Southern California several years ago. He also explained how a conflict arises between economists who focus on data that measure wealth and theologians who readily discuss less quantifiable characteristics associated with people's well-being.

To bridge the gap, the project has focused on the notion of prosperity, which includes wealth but also broadens the discussion to include other aspects of life such as living conditions, education and health, Finn said.

Catholic social teaching and its emphasis on the common good has played a significant role in the discussions, Finn noted. The effort has considered how church teaching pro-

vides insight into the minimum conditions necessary for human life to flourish, he said.

"Out of this framework then comes an explanation for why Catholic social thought so often includes a 'both/and' designation," Finn said.

"It relies on the private sector but also on government as agents of development. It encourages freedom of enterprise and yet calls for safeguards to protect the interests of workers, consumers and the earth. It praises both market and nonmarket mechanism for allocating resources within the economy," he continued.

The project's next activity is a conference co-sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in October in Rome. It will examine Pope

Benedict XVI's 2009 encyclical Caritas in Veritate ("Charity in Truth") along with the U.S. bishops' 1984 statement, "We want to make the legacy of Christian social thought a living, growing resource that can inspire hope and help shape the future."

Responding to Father Hollenbach and Finn, Jaime Vidaurazaga, assistant professor of religious studies at Emmanuel College in Boston, said the True Wealth of Nations Project is correct in stating that "the economic and cultural criteria identified in Catholic social teaching provide an effective path to sustainable prosperity for all."

Keeping pace with rapid changes in the globalized economy is crucial for keeping "our prophetic word grounded in reality," he added.

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N.J. rep ticked by lax report on human trafficking

By Adeshina Emmanuel
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The New Jersey congressman who sponsored the Trafficking Victims and Protection Act of 2000 said the State Department rankings of three Asian countries' efforts to fight human trafficking gives them a "free pass" and "puts additional children and women at risk."

"This year the administration missed the opportunity to press India and China, both of which are facing a trafficking explosion of historic proportions because of the loss of 100 million girls from their countries, largely to sex-selective abortion," said Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J.

Smith was the prime sponsor of the Trafficking Victims and Protection Act of 2000, which spurred increased penalties against traffickers and provided victims with assistance.

Smith said there is solid evidence that Vietnam is a source country for labor trafficking and that "Vietnam has intimidated, harassed and threatened family members and repatriated victims who filed petitions to request investigation of the traffickers."

The State Department's 2010 Trafficking in Persons Report, released June 14, included assessments and rankings of governments' efforts to combat human trafficking. It also designated "special cases" - countries that are not ranked but have enormous trafficking issues for particular reasons, such as Haiti.

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