

A COMMENTARY ON *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*

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Many years ago the German Jesuit Oswald von Nell-Breuning advised that “the Chair of Peter is not a chair in economics.” [Mueller 1984, p. 65]. Several years before that another German Jesuit, Heinrich Pesch, asserted that “religion cannot produce grain; it cannot do away with physical evils.” [Quoted in Mulcahy 1952, p. 40].

The American Jesuit Thomas Divine [1944, p. 57] affirmed that the task of promoting economic justice “requires not merely a knowledge of the general principles of Catholic moral philosophy but an understanding as well of economic theory and practice which qualify these general principles in the application to any specific pattern of economic conditions.” Years later, Divine’s Jesuit colleague Bernard Dempsey [1958, pp. 73-74] asserted the same argument.

The American Jesuit Joseph Becker [1991, p. 50; emphasis added] stated that in answering “the call of the popes in their social encyclicals for priests to share in the task of building a Christian social order ... [they] were advised ... to master one or other of the social sciences -- *lest they do more harm than good.*” Every one of these Jesuits – von Nell-Breuning, Pesch, Divine, Dempsey, and Becker -- was a specialist in economics. It appears, however, that in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis, also a Jesuit but without an academic background in the social sciences, did not get the message.

Our comments on *Evangelii Gaudium* address economic gain vs. goodness, inequality, profits, freedom, the market, private property, and subsidiarity.

ECONOMIC GAIN vs. GOODNESS

In the matter of economic gain vs. goodness, notice the lack of documentation in what Pope Francis asserts in §54.

... some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system.

For sure, trickle-down economics is controversial. Even so, it is not without its supporters who call it supply-side economics to distinguish it from Keynesian economics that deals with the demand side.

By letting persons keep more of their earned incomes including profits from successful enterprises, supply-side tax cuts encourage investment in new and additional production facilities, requiring owners to hire more workers, leading to reductions in unemployment, increases in aggregate supply and wages paid, greater consumption expenditures and a boost in aggregate demand. Rejecting supply-side economics in effect reduces interventionist macro-economics to Keynesian economics.

There are without question opportunities in a market economy for evildoers. Several infamous ones come to mind: Bernie Madoff, Andrew Fastow, Michael Milkin, and Dennis Kozlowski. However, other executives demonstrate that virtue and profits are not at odds. Among them are the executives at TOMS Shoes, Hershey, Vanguard, Hyundai, Merck, and Newman's Own. Additionally the Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy, which has 175 CEO members involving 150 corporations, along with United Way, annually promotes billions of dollars in charitable giving.

Even so, it is not goodness that drives economic affairs in a market economy. It is economic gain. For any routine exchange to take place there must be gain for the parties involved. A transaction succeeds when for both parties what is gotten (use value) is more highly valued than what is given up (exchange value). Economic gain is realized when use value is greater than exchange value.

A transaction fails whenever that condition is not met. No doubt coercion and deception take place in the form of practices such as insider trading, insurance fraud, discrimination, expense padding, counterfeit products, but there are laws and internal company restraints that help contain the ill-gotten gains from such practices.

Supply-side economics does not rely on the goodness of the persons getting favorable tax treatment to institute the investments that in the end lead to more hiring and less unemployment. While goodness may indeed be part of what motivates investor-entrepreneurs, the driving force is economic gain. Pope Francis seems not to understand that. Individual gain is not the problem as he appears to suggest in §61. It is *ill-gotten* gain.

INEQUALITY

Evangelii Gaudium does not mince words about income inequality. In §53 Francis makes the following bold statement.

Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality... Today **everything** comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless.

This message is repeated at least three times. In §56 he says “While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few.” Then in §202 he asserts that “inequality is the root of social ills.” In §205 Francis calls for breaking down “the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society.” Clearly by “the economy” he means the market economy.

A 2014 study of intergenerational mobility in the United States found that, greater income inequality notwithstanding, nine percent of children born in 1986 to the poorest households compared to 8.4 percent of children born 15 years earlier were likely over time to climb to the most affluent households. [Chetty and others 2014, summary]. These data undermine the conventional wisdom that greater income inequality shuts the door on personal economic advancement.

Data from the Food and Agriculture Organization also provide a challenge to the assertions on income inequality in *Evangelii Gaudium*. On a global basis, undernourishment has dropped from 18.9 percent of world population in 1990-92 to 12.0 percent in 2011-2013. It has been even more impressive in Latin America where undernourishment fell from 13.8 percent to 7.1 percent. Though it still remains very high, undernourishment has fallen even in sub-Saharan Africa. The only region where it has not declined is Western Asia. [FAO 2013, p. 8].

The UN’s goal of reducing by 50 percent the proportion of persons living on less than \$1.25 a day relative to 1990 was met three years before its 2015 target date. GDP in the southern hemisphere has risen from one-third of world output in 1990 to one-half. Even sub-Saharan Africa has experienced income growth since the turn of the century. More than 40 developing countries have achieved better-than-expected human-development gains notably over the last ten years. [UNDP 2013, pp. 13, 26, summary].

Runst’s investigation found that persons in the more successful countries of Poland, Slovenia, Estonia, and Czech Republic were politically farther to the right, less inclined favorably toward a strong leader, more supportive of competition, and less supportive of equality than persons in less successful transition countries. Runst also demonstrated that countries in which there was greater support for market institutions were less likely to support socialist political parties, were more inclined to back market reforms, and were more successful in transition. [Runst 2014, pp. 85, 97, 98].

True enough, Runst’s study was released publicly after *Evangelii Gaudium*. However, more recently Francis has urged the leading executive officers of the United Nations to promote “the legitimate redistribution of economic benefits *by the State*.” [Francis 2014, pp. 1-2; emphasis added].

PROFITS

By choosing harsh language in *Evangelii Gaudium*, the pope leaves the impression that there is something fundamentally wrong with business owners pursuing profits. In section §56 he says the following:

In this system, which tends to devour **everything** which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule.

The same theme appears in §204.

I am far from proposing an irresponsible populism, but the economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new **poison**, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded.

Rather than condemning profits out of hand, in *Centesimus Annus* John Paul offers the following conditional approval.

Profit is a regulator of the life of a business, but it is not the only one: *other human and moral factors* must also be considered which, in the long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business. [John Paul 1991, §35; emphasis in original].

There is nothing wrong *per se* with profits that represent the gain necessary for the owners to put at risk the monies they invested in their enterprises. Take away those profits and those enterprises collapse and all of their employees, suppliers, customers, along with the owners, are adversely affected.

Limits on the amount of gain in the form of profits are necessary to prevent one party from taking advantage of another and to assure that market exchange serves everyone fairly and effectively. Those limits derive from the duties that economic agents owe one another under the principles of commutative, distributive, and contributive justice.

A competitive market reduces the control that any one seller has over price, keeps the market price close to the cost of production, and allows a reasonable but not undue profit margin. Thus there may be little need for personal restraint. A problem arises when agents are free to act without restraint. Action of this type can occur when the buyer is ill-informed about the market price and overvalues the product or service offered for sale. In such cases, the gain of the seller is ill-gotten because it is based on taking advantage of the buyer. The principle of commutative justice in all such cases informs both parties that the only justifiable gain is one that does not deprive the other party of the gain that is rightfully his/hers.

The principle of distributive justice helps limit ill-gotten gain because in dealing with his/her subordinates the superior is required to assure that what is gotten and what is given up are the same for everyone in the same or similar circumstances. The gain for the

employer who pays some workers less than others for the same work is ill-gotten because it originates in discrimination.

Fixing the price of a product or service through agreement with one's competitors violates the principle of contributive justice because the group of firms who entered that collusive agreement deliberately intend to extract from their customers more than their due. The gains from industry-wide price fixing are ill-gotten and in general are condemned by law.

FREEDOM

By mentioning freedom in the context of the marketplace in §57 Francis seems to refer to economic freedom and the market in a language that is not affirmative.

... ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response which is outside the categories of the marketplace. When these latter are **absolutized**, God can only be seen as uncontrollable, unmanageable, even dangerous, since he calls human beings to their full realization and to freedom from all forms of enslavement.

In §74 freedom is mentioned in the context of mass protests, but it is not clear if he means economic freedom, political freedom, religious freedom, or all three.

In many parts of the world, cities are the scene of mass protests where thousands of people call for freedom, a voice in public life, justice and a variety of other demands which, if not properly understood, will not be silenced by force.

In sharp contrast, John Paul spoke more clearly and positively about economic freedom. :

Among the many admirable values of this nation¹ there is one that stands out in particular. It is freedom. The concept of freedom is part of the very fabric of this nation as a political community of free people. Freedom is a great gift, a great blessing of God. [John Paul II 1987b, §3, emphasis in original].

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* John Paul makes the following extraordinary statement:

... one must not overlook that *special form of poverty* which consists in being deprived of fundamental human rights, *in particular* the right to religious freedom and the right to *freedom of economic initiative*. [John Paul 1987a, §42; emphasis added].

In *Centesimus Annus* John Paul alerts us to the centrality of freedom to human nature and warns about the suppression of self-interest.

The social order will be all the more stable, the more it takes this fact into account and does not place in opposition personal interest and the interests of society as a whole, but rather seeks ways to bring them into fruitful harmony. In fact, where self-interest is violently suppressed, it is replaced by a burdensome system of

¹ United States.

bureaucratic control which dries up the wellsprings of initiative and creativity. [John Paul 1991, §25].

The state, John Paul argues, is to be guided by subsidiarity to assure economic freedom and solidarity to defend the weak, limit the autonomy of the parties who determine conditions in the workplace, and provide basic support for jobless workers. [John Paul 1991, §15].

John Paul re-affirms the Church's commitment to freedom as a necessary condition to assure the "transcendent dignity of the person" [John Paul 1991, §46]. Even so, he recognizes that freedom in economic affairs is not absolute. Economic freedom, he asserts, is only one element of human freedom. When economic life becomes absolutized, that is

when man is seen more as a producer or consumer of goods than as a subject who produces and consumes in order to live, then economic freedom loses its necessary relationship to the human person and ends up by alienating and oppressing him. [John Paul 1991, §39].

It is a pity that there is no room in *Evangelii Gaudium* for economic freedom especially since John Paul spoke at great length about it in two encyclical letters. One suspects that Francis could not find a way to reconcile economic freedom with income inequality. It could have been done, however, if he had paid more attention to the evidence on global hunger and poverty, intergenerational income mobility, and the experience of transitional countries in central and eastern Europe.

MARKET

The market comes under heavy attack in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. §54.

This imbalance (income inequality) is the result of ideologies which defend the **absolute** autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. §56.

If every action has its consequences, an evil embedded in the structures of society has a constant potential for disintegration and death. It is evil crystallized in unjust social structures, which cannot be the basis of hope for a better future. §59.

Today's economic mechanisms promote inordinate consumption, yet it is evident that unbridled consumerism combined with inequality proves doubly damaging to the social fabric. §60.

We can no longer trust in the unseen forces and the invisible hand of the market. §204.

To evaluate the validity of these attacks, it is necessary to understand how markets work. Two central questions are addressed through markets. Who determines prices? How do markets allocate resources?

Formulating the first question in terms of “who” directs one’s attention to the human beings who are interacting in the marketplace and the workplace -- buyers and sellers, employers and employees, producers and resource holders. Strictly speaking, economic decisions are made not by markets but by economic agents, by living, breathing, existential actualities.

Markets operate systematically and automatically to produce the conditions whereby buyers and sellers are brought to agreement. Whenever the price rises above the market price, the resulting surplus sends a clear signal to sellers to lower the price until the surplus is eliminated. Similarly, whenever the price falls below the market price, the resulting shortage signals sellers to raise the price until the shortage is eliminated.

As to the second question, markets allocate resources through the “pulling force” of prices and the “pushing force” of unmet need. We flesh out the meaning of that assertion with the example of two producers. Producer A faces a shortage market for the product that he/she is producing, while Producer B confronts a surplus market.

The resources discharged by Producer B who faces a surplus are attracted to Producer A who is hiring and is paying more for the resources he/she requires because he/she is facing a shortage. This is the way in which mainstream economics explain the allocation of resources in a market economy: the pulling force of prices draws resources away from producers where they are in excess supply and toward producers where they are in short supply, thereby simultaneously remedying Producer B’s surplus market condition and Producer A’s shortage market condition.

Mainstream economics, however, overlooks the pushing force of unmet need whereby redundant workers and other idle resources are pushed away from producers where they are in excess supply and toward producers where they are in short supply by the hardship and unmet need brought on by their idleness.

Command economies allocate resources and determine prices through central planning boards that allocate resources and set prices for those goods and services regarded as most needed. The central planning board substitutes the judgment of public officials for the judgment of private economic agents pursuing their own self-interest. Command economies and market economies are alike in that they depend on human judgment: the judgment of public planning agents, the judgment of private economic agents. They differ in that participation in command economies involves a handful of “experts” who know best how to allocate resources and set prices. Market economies are constructed around much greater participation by ordinary persons who know best what they need and want and express those needs and wants by interacting with others. Market economies affirm the principle of subsidiarity, command economies do not.

By attacking the market system and offering no suggestions to reform it, Francis appears to favor the judgment and decision-making of public planning agents over private economic agents.

PRIVATE PROPERTY

In §189 Pope Francis asserts that the “private ownership of goods is justified by the need to protect and increase them, so that they can better serve the common good ...” Sadly, he does not call attention to the comprehensive statements of his predecessor in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.

Based upon and justified by the Church’s principle that “God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples” [*Gaudium et Spes*, §69], John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (hereafter *SRS*) argues that private property is not exclusively private in nature, that it has a social function. Employing language that applies to residential property sales, John Paul asserts in *SRS* that “private property ... is under a ‘social mortgage’.” [John Paul 1987a, §42].

John Paul’s assertion that private property is under a social mortgage raises two questions. First, why is the principle of private property subordinated to the principle of the universal destination of the goods of the world? Second, what kinds and amounts of social mortgage payments or other transfers are sufficient to satisfy the demands of the social function of private property?

To address these questions, it is necessary to differentiate private ownership of property from how that property is used as John Paul suggests in *SRS*.

... the *option* or *love of preference* for the poor ... is an option, or a *special form* of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our social *responsibilities* and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods. [John Paul 1987a, §42; emphasis in original].

The principle of the universal destination of the goods of the world addresses the issue of the *use* of the goods of the world. The principle of private property deals with *ownership*.

Regarding the first question, the principle of private property is not an absolute principle because, as John Paul argues, God created the universe for the benefit of all humankind. The goods produced through the ownership of private property are the means by which human material need is met and for that reason alone private property is subordinate to the universal destination of the goods of the world.

Further, humans who do not own private property are thereby limited in their access to the goods produced by that property and if all human beings truly are created equal how can they claim equality if they are denied access to all that they need to survive as humans? In

other words, private property ownership is a lower-order principle and therefore subordinate to the use of that property.

As to the second question about the kinds and amounts of social mortgage payments or other transfers that satisfy the demands of the social function of private property, there are two basic forms: private and public. Two examples of private forms suffice for our purposes. One common private arrangement involves the business enterprise that employs persons who have no private property of their own. The employees share in the goods produced in that enterprise through the wages paid by the owner of that property. A second private form is the voluntary transfer of funds generated from production at private enterprises to organizations that provide services for those in need either by those enterprises acting individually or collectively through such community-based appeals as United Way.

Two examples of public arrangements that qualify as social mortgage payments include taxation and regulation. Taxation transfers some of the proceeds from the ownership of private property to public use to provide for such public services as police and fire protection and education. Regulation restricts the ways in which a private property owner may use his/her holdings by setting limits, for example, on hazardous emissions into the environment and through zoning ordinances that set limits on the specific activities that are acceptable in a given location.

In the end social mortgage is grounded in social justice as set down by Pius XI in his 1937 encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*.

Now it is of the very essence of social justice to demand *from* each individual all that is necessary for the common good. [Pius XI, § 51. Latin text translated into English; emphasis added].

Because what is owed to another depends very much on how one defines and measures that obligation, social mortgage as with all contingent being is constituted of two norms, one positive, the other negative. The positive norm functions in the actuating mode and explains how much of the goods produced by owners are to be shared with others. The negative norm operates in the limiting mode and explains why no more than that must be shared.

The principal *positive* norm is the material need that humans are not able to meet acting alone. That unmet need may be defined in absolute or relative terms. An absolute income standard addresses the following question: How much income does an individual/family need to purchase the goods and services required to maintain a minimal standard of living? A relative income standard addresses this question: How much income does this individual/family have relative to the income of others?

Regarding the positive norm as to how much must be shared with others under social mortgage, at minimum it must be sufficient to address basic human needs. This norm must be constructed to incorporate *both* an absolute standard of need and a relative standard

because human beings are at once individual and social beings, with the absolute standard reflecting human individuality and the relative standard human sociality.

The chief *negative* norm is the ability of private property holders to meet that need. Following the principle of subsidiarity, unmet need is to be addressed preferentially through private action because private persons and groups in general are closer to the parties requesting assistance and therefore better able to detect false claims of unmet need and to rank authentic unmet need by its scope and intensity.

The negative norm that explains why no more than the goods that meet basic human material need are to be shared by property owners under social mortgage is problematical. In a poor country, the overall level of production from private property may be so small as to make earning a living difficult even for property holders. What is shared is widespread impoverishment. In a wealthy country, however, the level of production from private property may be so substantial as to make possible a level of assistance well beyond basic human material need.

The question then is how much above that basic-needs threshold is owed under social mortgage? The answer lies in the conscience of property holders because if as a result of government intervention more than the goods required to meet basic need is demanded of the holders of that property, those holders may respond by reducing production making it more difficult to reach that threshold of support. Government action in other words may be self-defeating.

Better to leave that decision to one's own conscience provided it is properly informed to avoid the crass materialism to which John Paul calls attention in his warning that "the more one possesses the more one wants." [John Paul 1987a, §28]. By having and wanting more, the holder of private property puts his/her development as a person at risk of becoming a genuine *homo economicus*, a rational, utility-maximizing machine driven by an acquisitive desire.

The properly informed conscience could lead to strictly private action either individually or collectively or to public action. Here again preference is given to private action as against public action on grounds that being located closer to the parties claiming assistance, private action likely is better informed as to true extent of human material need.

PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY

In §240 of *Evangelii Gaudium* Francis says that "It is the responsibility of the State to safeguard and promote the common good of society," and cites §168 of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* where the lead sentence reads as follows: "The responsibility for attaining the common good, *besides falling to individual persons*, belongs also to the State, since the common good is the reason that the political authority exists." Sadly, as noted earlier, Francis fails to affirm John Paul's insight regarding the two principles that guide state action in economic affairs: subsidiarity to assure economic freedom and solidarity to defend the weak, limit the autonomy of the parties who

determine conditions in the workplace, and provide basic support for jobless workers (see John Paul 1991, §15).

Whatever principles, convictions, beliefs, or sentiments might have prompted *Evangelii Gaudium* and however much we may admire and put them into practice, there is no excuse for using material from a Church document selectively to drive home a point that seems to set the principle of subsidiarity on its head. Just as he found nothing useful in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* on the question of private property, nowhere in *Evangelii Gaudium* does Francis cite the origins of subsidiarity in *Quadragesimo Anno*.

In §206 Francis sees economic affairs in a global context: “Each meaningful economic decision made in one part of the world has repercussion everywhere else.” Then he seems to toss aside the principle of subsidiarity: “... it is becoming increasingly difficult to find local solutions for enormous global problems which overwhelm local politics with difficulties to resolve.” Additionally, by calling for “a more efficient way of interacting” he implies that something more than the market is needed to “achieve a healthy world economy.”

By affirming a preference for private enterprise compared to public enterprise, the principle of subsidiarity effectively decentralizes ownership and control of economic activities that in turn (1) lead to a greater diversity of goods and services produced because entrepreneurs have a freer hand; (2) a smaller risk that large-scale mistakes will be made because in general private enterprises have a smaller reach than public enterprises; and (3) private enterprises will be more responsive to their customers because they are driven by economic gain.

The principle of subsidiarity in effect encourages the establishment of private organizations midway between the state and the person. There are two kinds of intermediary bodies in the economic order of special interest: supra-firm alliances and inter-firm partnerships. These bodies fulfill the general functions of the “vocational groups” that Pius XI refers to in *Quadragesimo Anno*.

An inter-firm partnership is cooperation between two or more firms in which there are no new formal organizational arrangements. A supra-firm alliance is cooperation between two or more firms by means of a distinct, formal organization which has a staff and its own decision-making role. Of the two, the supra-firm alliance is the more complex organizationally and more subject to attack as collusive.

An inter-firm partnership involves a nonformalized understanding between, for example, a producer and supplier, an employer and employment agency, an entrepreneur and a banker in which their day-to-day relationship is governed by more than the profit-maximization principle. Such an understanding may arise initially from the firms’ sharing common space such as a parking lot or garage, a hallway or elevator, a loading dock or delivery agent. An understanding may arise even among competing firms that form a critical mass in one location in order to better serve each one’s best interests without exploiting the others involved. Examples abound in the United States both today and years

ago: Chicago (railroads), Detroit (autos), Silicon Valley (computing), Pittsburgh (steel), Milwaukee (beer), St. Louis (shoes), New York (finances), Boston (medical education). Such partnerships known locally as “antique alley,” “farmers market,” “restaurant row,” or “flea market” develop even in small cities.

To be an authentically separate level of decision-making, supra-firm alliance must be formalized and largely independent of the larger and more powerful public authority, that is outside the direct control of the state. The supra-firm alliance must be voluntary (so as not to usurp control from a member of the group that is functioning satisfactorily) and representative of the various private-individual organizations that are allied (so as to know more precisely its own domain). The supra-firm alliance should be supportive but nonintrusive in the sense that if a member encounters organization-specific dysfunction in the workplace and asks for assistance, the group should be ready and willing to provide whatever help it can in order to deal with the dysfunction in a satisfactory fashion.

At the supra-firm level, control of the workplace proceeds not through owning property but through sharing problems. Thus, the workplace at the supra-firm level may be defined as any work site(s) where dysfunction is occurring that cannot be managed satisfactorily at the intra-firm level and where the immediately affected persons voluntarily request assistance from a private group of persons all of whom are familiar with the work site(s), understand the dysfunction occurring there, and have some direct interest in the good or service produced there.

PRIDE of St. Louis, which was established in 1972, is a voluntary labor-management organization in the construction industry that meets monthly to identify and deal with stress points that interfere with the completion of building projects on time and within budget. PRIDE members include representatives from the various building trades, construction firms, architectural and engineering firms, and material suppliers. It is an example of private group decision-making that seeks to find ways to deal with problems in the construction industry that cannot be addressed by private individual decision-making. PRIDE eliminates the need for public group intervention.

What distinguishes supra-firm alliances and inter-firm partnerships from collusive arrangements is that they yield positive-sum outcomes. Rather than being condemned, these types of alliances and partnerships should be affirmed as means that help meet human material need and satisfy human wants.

At a time when big government is getting bigger, creating even greater distance between decision-makers and the persons affected by their decisions, intermediary organizations such as PRIDE offer promise for slowing the growth of big government thereby helping preserve the free exercise of economic initiative. The need for maintaining private control of economic decision-making is necessary even when big government is good government because as Jesuit Joseph Becker audaciously asserts in his defense of the principle of subsidiarity “good government is not a substitute for self-government when the governed are persons.” [Becker, p. 9].

FINAL REMARKS

Evangelii Gaudium presents two fundamental problems for the careful reader: content and style. With regard to content, our comments have been restricted to the sections relating to subjects in economics: economic gain vs. goodness, inequality, profits, freedom, the market, private property, and subsidiarity. In the most general terms, problems with every one of these topics originate with an inadequate understanding of basic economics that Jesuit economists Divine and Dempsey warned about years ago. This problem is worsened by a failure to cite empirical evidence for statements that beg for documentation. Some of this problem could have been avoided had Francis leaned on the scholarly work of John Paul notably in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus*.

As to style, Francis engages in hyperbole rather than careful scholarly language to drive home his message. Consider the following direct quotations, emphasis added.

Today *everything* comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful *feed upon* the powerless. §53.

The culture of prosperity *deadens* us; we are *thrilled* if the market offers us something new to purchase. §54.

This imbalance (income inequality) is the result of ideologies which defend the *absolute* autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. §56.

The *thirst* for power and possessions knows *no limits*. In this system, which tends to devour *everything* which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule. §56.

... *unbridled* consumerism which *feeds* the market ... §70.

We can *no longer trust* in the unseen forces and the invisible hand of the market. §204.

... the economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new *poison*, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded. §204.

The language Francis uses may win favor with progressives on the far left but hardly comports with his central theme of the joy of the Gospel. Sadly, on economic issues he has done more harm than good.

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