

Religion versus Sustainable Development. The Problem of Human Eco-development in the Teachings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI

Religia a rozwój zrównoważony. Problematyka ekorozwoju człowieka w nauczaniu papieża Jana Pawła II i Benedykta XVI

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Abstract

The problem of sustainable human development, in terms both of individual people and societies, represents an integral part of the Christian anthropology and Catholic doctrine. The Magisterium of the Catholic Church has expressed its view on this issue on many occasions. This topic was also commented on by two popes – John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Eight encyclicals have been analysed by the analytical-critical method. Those written by John Paul II are *Redemptor Hominis*, *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, *Centesimus Annus* and *Evangelium Vitae*, whereas those created by Benedict XVI are *Deus Caritas Est*, *Spe Salvi* and *Caritas in Veritate*. The popes' manifestos were to a large extent universal messages addressed to the whole mankind. Their main theses, which were formulated in the context of sustainable development, are:

- Man is not only the master, but also a part of the creation. That is why he is responsible for and has to take care of animate and inanimate world.
- One should rather *be* than *possess*.
- The human progress is something desirable. The lack of equal division of natural resources and their wasteful exploitation are among the main reasons behind disproportions in the steady development of societies.
- *Ecology of man*, understood as a set of actions undertaken to improve the natural and moral structure of societies, should be prioritized as one of the activities aimed at facilitating sustainable development.
- In the era of quickly progressing globalisation ethics should have primacy over technology.
- It is necessary to respect each person's dignity and life from their conception until their natural death as a way of building *the civilisation of love*.
- In the globalised world people should follow the logic of love for another human being and the whole creation and they should work for the common good.
- Globalisation as such morally neutral. It is as man who gives it an ethical (bad or good) meaning by his actions.

Key words: the social teaching of the Church, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, sustainable development

Streszczenie

Zagadnienie zrównoważonego rozwoju człowieka, w kategoriach jednostek i społeczeństw, stanowi integralną część antropologii chrześcijańskiej i doktryny katolickiej. Magisterium Kościoła Katolickiego wypowiedziało się wielokrotnie na ten temat. Problematykę tę podejmowali także papieże Jan Paweł II i Benedykt XVI. Metodą analityczno-krytyczną zbadano pięć encyklik papieża-Polaka: *Redemptor Hominis*, *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, *Centesimus Annus*, *Evangelium Vitae* oraz trzy encykliki Benedykta XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, *Spe Salvi*, *Caritas in Veritate*. Oredzia papieskie były w dużej mierze przekazami uniwersalnymi, skierowanymi do całej ludzkości. Oto ich główne tezy, sformułowane w kontekście zrównoważonego rozwoju:

- człowiek jest panem, ale i częścią stworzenia, zatem spoczywa na nim odpowiedzialność i troska o przyrodę ożywioną i nieożywioną;
- należy bardziej *być* niż *mieć*;
- postęp ludzkości jest czymś pożądanym, brak sprawiedliwego podziału dóbr naturalnych i rabunkowa gospodarka nimi są jednymi z głównych przyczyn dysproporcji w zrównoważonym rozwoju społeczeństw;
- *ekologia człowieka* jako działań podejmowanych na rzecz poprawy naturalnej i moralnej struktury społeczeństw, winna być priorytetem w działaniach na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju;
- w dobie postępującej szybko globalizacji etyka powinna mieć prymat nad techniką;
- konieczne jest poszanowanie godności i życia każdego człowieka od poczęcia do naturalnej śmierci, w duchu budowania *cywilizacji miłości*;
- ludzie w zglobalizowanym świecie muszą posługiwać się logiką miłości bliźniego i stworzenia oraz pracować dla dobra wspólnego;
- globalizacja jako taka jest moralnie neutralna, to człowiek swymi działaniami nadaje jej zabarwienie etyczne: dobre lub złe.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczna nauka Kościoła, Jan Paweł II, Benedykt XVI, rozwój zrównoważony

Introduction

The Christian and Catholic tradition has always discussed the problem of balanced and peaceful co-existence between man and other animate things as an important issue. It can be easily noticed in biblical sources, as the Holy Scripture serves as *norma normans non normata* for Catholic theology. At the very beginning of the Bible, in Genesis, there are words which define the relationship between man and nature – man should *subdue* the earth (Gen 1:28). However, the biblical description emphasizes, that both the animate creatures and the inanimate nature, i.e. the whole creation, were *very good* (Gen 1:31). This goodness results from the fact that the source of all creation is God, and *there is none good but one, that is God* (compare Mk 10:18). In every animate thing there is *life* (Gen 1:30). It exists also in man. And yet man, apart from being given *the breath of life*, possesses also something else – he has been created in God's *own image* (Gen 1:27). This enables him to use his reason and free will. Therefore, he is charged with an enormous responsibility – he should not only *subdue the earth*, but also take great care of everything he has been entrusted with. It is because both man and other creatures are *good*, that is coming from God. This is the reason why God wants them and supports their existence.

In Genesis there are two descriptions of the creation of man. One of them derives from the older Yahwistic tradition, whereas the other has its origins in the younger sacerdotal tradition. However, both these descriptions emphasize that God subjected all the living creatures inhabiting the earth to man and none of them is equal to him, as he has been created in God's image (compare Gen 2). One of man's important tasks was to use his own fertility in order to *replenish the earth* with human beings (Gen 1:28). *Subduing the earth* is closely connected with the fulfillment of a certain kind of *first commandment*, which man received from God. As a result, the issues connected with the human sexuality and demography are an integral part of the teachings and

work of the Catholic Church concerning sustainable development.

From the Antiquity to the Enlightenment period, the stance on the relationship between man and the environment, taken by the Catholic Church, did not require any major revision or specification. The progress of civilisation which then took place did not disturb significantly the ecological balance in man's environment. Although the human population was still increasing steadily, there were periods when its number was on the decline, which was caused by epidemics, wars and hunger. Extensive agricultural economy and craft would not have been sufficient to satisfy the needs of a significantly greater number of people. Thus, there were no dangers of anthropogenic character, which could not have been overcome by natural processes occurring within ecosystems in a relatively short time. An exception here can be e.g. the elimination of forest areas, which has caused permanent deforestation in, among other territories, the British Isles and Ireland.

The industrial revolution of the 18th century, in combination with the new scientific, philosophical and ideological trends, forced the Catholic Church to, as it were, revise its views on the man-to-man and man-to-nature relationship. The emerging trends were very often openly hostile to the Church. They were either atheist or deist in nature and contributed to the development of axiological systems, which dissociated themselves from the teachings of the Catholic Church or Christianity in general. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Church reacted to this allergically by labeling both valuable, pro-development concepts and those openly denying universal truths about man and the world as modernist and anticlerical.

In the 19th century, the Catholic Church was faced with, on one hand, post-hegelian development of sciences, emergence of socialism, as well as independence movements in Europe, and, on the other hand, with Darwinism and natural sciences. This forced the Church to respond to new challenges presented by the run-away progress of civilisation. This

concerned both individual people and societies and resulted in the constant confrontation of man (*Homo faber*) with the created world.

A milestone in this series of events was marked by the first papal social encyclical, *Rerum novarum*, written by Pope Leo XIII. Since then, successive popes and, as a result, the Magisterium of the whole Common Church, have been expressing their views on the changes taking place in the development of mankind. Popes of the 20th century pointed to the dangers created by the misuse of the achievements of civilisation, which, instead of advancing the development, led more than once to the destruction of the human life and natural environment. After the traumatic experiences of two World Wars, as well as the Nazi and Stalinist totalitarian systems, this issue has become particularly valid. In his encyclical, *Pacem in terris*, Pope John XXIII touched upon the problems which were later developed and analysed in more detail in *Gaudium et spes* – the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, enacted by the Second Vatican Council. In his encyclical, *Populorum progressio*, Pope Paul VI resumed the post-Council reflection on this issue.

Nearly twenty six years of the pontificate of John Paul II, i.e. Karol Wojtyła, were the time when the teachings of the Catholic Church, concerning the man-to-man and man-to-nature relationship, were further developed. This resulted, among other things, from the fact that the Polish pope, who was also a professor of ethics, acted in accordance with the personalistic and phenomenological approach to the issues he was considering and was able to regard them through the perspective of the Catholic teachings and the Christian axiological system. Also pope Benedict XVII in his encyclicals touched upon issues connected with the problem of sustainable development and wrote about them at length, especially in his social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*. He tried to show the problems faced by the modern world in the era of globalization as a challenge for the Christian love and truth. In the synthesis presented below there are juxtaposed the most important theses from the teachings of John Paul II, which were included in some of his encyclicals. These are documents of the utmost importance, as they also contain the papal teachings concerning the sustainable development of individual people and societies, as well as the relationship between man and natural environment.

The teachings of John Paul II on sustainable development

In each of his fourteen encyclicals there are elements of John Paul II's teachings connected with sustainable development, based on the respect for natural environment. In some of them, however, this topic is covered more extensively and even represents a major part of the whole document. Below the reader can find an analysis of original texts of five encyclicals

of John Paul II. The analysis attempts to put particular emphasis on those important elements of his teaching, which are directly or indirectly connected with issues presented in the introduction.

Redemptor Hominis (1979)

In his first encyclical John Paul II stressed the concern of Jesus Christ and His Church for the dignity and humane character of every person's life, while referring to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (GS 38:91). The thing which is noticeable here is the care for holistic development of the human being. The aim of this development is to make use of *man's similarity to God*, which has been embedded in man by God (compare Gen 1:27). The pope reminds the people that man as such is an exceptional being and has been created for his own sake (GS 24, RH 13). God has subjected the earth and all which exists on it to man's rule, as man is God's most beloved creation. At the same time each person, with his or her individual life history, has been included in wider social structures – a family, clan, nation, mankind. That is why, on one hand man has to be aware of everything which makes it easier for him to fulfill his life mission, as well as his social and individual role, whereas, on the other hand, he has to take into consideration everything which hampers his achievement of this. Although he is burdened with this kind of inner dilemma, he still remains *the route that the Church must travel* (RH 14). Meanwhile, the modern man is constantly in danger posed by the products of his own intellect and resourcefulness. He is continuously afraid of the power which he was given, so he could *subdue the earth* and which can turn against him. This danger has many sources. One of them is the unsustainable management of natural resources. The goals of this exploitation can be not only peaceful, but also military. This causes man to become more and more alienated from the world of nature. Such a situation is in contradiction of the Creator's plan as He has appointed man to be the master of nature but not its ruthless exploiter. Such a status quo provokes the following question: does the progress of mankind make the life of an individual more dignified and does this individual develop in the personal and ethical sense? (RH, 15).

So as the technical progress must not lead to the regression of human spirit, it is necessary that ethics have primacy over technology, the person be more important than the object and the spirit have advantage over the matter. Only such a state of things will make it possible to use the technical progress in favour of authentic human development based on the respect for rights and dignity of an individual, social justice as well as proper understanding of the call to *subdue the earth*. Man has to *be* rather than *have*, which will allow him to really become *the master* of the created world and not *the slave* of his possessions. The lack of proper balance in this matter re-

sults in the development in the spirit of consumerism, in which the surplus of produced goods is accompanied by malnutrition and hunger. The consumerist attitude is the reason behind the wasteful management of natural material and energetic resources as well as the degradation of natural environment. The scientific and technological progress cannot be treated as superior to ethics and morality. In such a case the most profound meaning of man's freedom is lost, whereas this freedom should govern economic development and not be governed by it.

Laborem Exercens (1981)

The pope emphasizes that, if man subjugates the earth by engaging his own work, he fulfills the God's commandment from Genesis. This commandment refers first and foremost to the part of earth on which a particular person is living, but it also covers the whole planet with all its resources. Those resources can be discovered and used by man. This order given by the Creator is valid throughout all historical epochs and at all stages of the progress of civilisation and it is addressed to all people without exception (LE 4). Man's rule over the earth involves his work: cultivating the soil, domestication and breeding of animals as well as extraction and processing of natural resources (LE 5). If the progress of mankind is not to turn merely into material progress, it has to treat the human being as the subject of work and not its object (LE 7). In this case John Paul II made references to the content of two encyclicals: *Mater et Magistra* by John XIII and *Popularum Progressio* by Paul VI.

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987)

In his document the pope referred directly to *Popularum progressio*, the encyclical written by Paul VI, on the 20th anniversary of its promulgation. Apart from deepening divisions between the rich North and the poor South, the pope also noticed some positive aspects of the progress of civilisation, including the man-to-nature relationship. People are becoming increasingly aware of the limited amount of natural resources and the necessity to respect the laws of nature in the planning of further economic progress, which the pope described as *ecological concern* (SRS 26). The experience of totalitarian systems of the 20th century is a reminder that the sole technical progress does not guarantee successful development of societies and individuals. The mere economic concept and mechanistic optimism, if they are not guided by moral and ethical standards, quickly turn into enslavement of man (SRS 27-28). The thing which is as dangerous as underdevelopment is overdevelopment, which means that an excessive number of possessions lie in the hands of a small group of people. The sole fact of possession of means and fruits of production does not ensure that progress and sustainable development in the holistic sense will take place. Once again the pope called on people to

be rather than *possess*, thus referring to Council documents (GS 35). The proper hierarchy of possession of material goods is shaped by the primacy of *to be* over *to have* (SRS 28).

Man, to whose care God has entrusted other creatures, shares, on one hand, their material nature which is formed *of the dust of the ground* (Gen 2:7), but, on the other hand, is God's own image (Gen 1:27). That is why, he has been not only called on to use other creatures, but also to look after them and care for their well-being. This results from a certain kind of *kinship* between God and man, according to which the similarity between them should govern both the possession and use of things (SRS 29). Human development is not only a secular phenomenon, but also a theological one. Man and woman should care for the whole creation because of their affinity with God, the main principle of which is their submission to the natural law. The result of this is the universal human vocation to become host of the planet. Realization of this task has been made more difficult and marked by obstacles because of the sin committed by the first parents (Gen 3). The faithful regard human development as being an integral part of the order of creation, as well as being based on the work of individuals and societies. Disobedience to God weakens the man's position as *the protagonist of development* (SRS 30).

Following the same course of thought, John Paul II emphasizes that new perspectives for the holistic development of individuals and the whole mankind were provided by the Gospel of Jesus from Nazareth. The idea of unlimited development has been given a new dimension by Him. While believing in the Resurrection of Christ, Christians hope that the lack of balance between *underdevelopment* and *overdevelopment* will be overcome by the final adoption of God's image by man. It will be possible because Christ, through His saving act, has offset negative effects of Adam and Eve's sin. Thus, the history of the work and development effort of the whole mankind takes on a new, not only wordly dimension. In this way, the person who chooses the guidance of the Gospel is sometimes called on to relinquish his or her own *having* for the sake of somebody else's *being* as part of the effort leading to sustainable human development (SRS 31). The need for sustainable development is a transcendental value. Universalism, however, should not be confused with uniformity – cultural diversity can greatly enrich sustainable development (SRS, 32). Real development makes everybody equal in their right to benefit from its achievements. While making this point John Paul II refers to Paul VI, who described such an order of things as *the civilisation of love* (SRS 33).

John Paul II gave three reasons, why man should behave respectfully towards other material beings, both animate and inanimate. Firstly, he should not use those beings for his own selfish purposes with impunity and unreasonably, while he does not understand

their specific character and the role they play in the universe as well as their mutual connections. Secondly, natural resources are limited, which also means that they are in some way non-renewable. In the context of life of future generations such a situation obliges today's people to accept certain duties. Finally, environmental pollution resulting from industrialisation has a negative influence on people's health and lives. Man has been called on by the Creator to use the nature, but not to exploit it unthinkingly. Man should benefit from the goods of nature while respecting not only biological laws, but also moral ones (SRS 34).

Centesimus Annus (1991)

The title itself refers to another anniversary – the centenary of promulgation of *Rerum Novarum*, Leon XIII's encyclical. While commenting and elaborating on his predecessor's thoughts, John Paul II stresses that the Creator has equally divided the dominion of the earth among all people. Thus, the created goods have a value recognized by all people. The earth yields its crops, which nourish man only when he puts in his own physical and intellectual effort, i.e. his work. The common availability of natural resources is not in contradiction with personal property. Especially nowadays, the importance of the common effort in obtaining the goods of the earth has increased. While reminding of and specifying the dangers connected with consumerism and the primacy of *having* over *being*, the pope calls for the protection of man's natural and moral environment of development. Whereas, he says, it is necessary and advisable from the point of view of the Church to protect nature, it is even more crucial to pay a lot of attention to the guardianship of man's natural and moral structure. The pope describes it as *human ecology*. The building of favourable social structures of life and work makes it possible to fully realize a person's vocation to live with dignity and be liberated from the destructive influence of the structures of sin, e.g. addictions (CA 38).

The basic unit of *human ecology* is the family. It represents a *sanctuary of life* – a place where life is passed on and where one can develop. The family functions as a centre of *life culture* and it acts as an opposition to the *culture of death*. Referring to his former documents (e.g. the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*), John Paul II condemns actions of certain countries and social organisations concerning *pro-creative policies*. According to the pope, such actions constitute an attack on the family and *human ecology*. The policies mentioned include, among other things, artificial birth control, abortion or euthanasia (SRS 25).

Protection of natural and human development cannot depend only on free market mechanisms. It has to be supervised by countries and governments. Although such mechanisms make it possible to obtain and use

natural resources, they are not sufficient. It is because there are collective and qualitative needs which cannot be satisfied by means of tools offered by the free market (CA 40). Sustainable social development should be correlated with integral development of the human being and result from it (CA 43). It can be achieved only in the atmosphere of respect for the dignity of fellow human beings and their right to live in peace. That is why John Paul II reiterated the opinion of Paul VI, who claimed that *another name for peace is development* (PP 77-78). Support for sustainable development lies within the collective responsibility of mankind. This may mean that well-developed economies will have to make some sacrifices, whereas societies with a consumerist attitude will have to change their lifestyles and limit their wasteful exploitation of environmental and human resources (CA 52).

Evangelium Vitae (1995)

This is an encyclical which aims to sensitize people to the issues connected with protection of the human life, since its conception to natural death. The pope described all attempts to strip people of their dignity both in prenatal and postnatal life as disgraceful. This includes both a direct attack on the inalienable right of life and self-determination as well as creation of external conditions which infringe upon this right (EV 3-4). A particularly significant part of the pope's text was devoted to the problems connected with the presence of abortion and euthanasia in the contemporary world as well as moral, psychological, demographic and sociological consequences of these suspicious procedures. Among things which, according to John Paul II, constitute a threat to the peaceful human existence (also to the life of the youngest part of mankind), there are the unequal division of goods on earth and the upsetting of natural ecological balance (EV 10). Disorders in the demographic development of societies, which are accompanied by disproportions in the division of goods between the rich North and the poor South, are one of the sources of the lack of sustainable development (EV 16).

In today's world, *the law of freedom* sometimes degenerates into *freedom without a law*, which is the lack of respect for someone else's right to live, as well as their right to develop at a personal and social level (EV 22). There is too much emphasis put on the quality of life, whereas only the material aspect of this quality is stressed (EV 23). The consent given by the human conscience to the progressing *materialization* and objectification of life blurs the borders between the good and the evil, facilitating the development of *civilisation of death* which remains in contradiction to *the civilisation of life*.

The pope reminds, that every life is good. It is wanted and supported by the Creator (compare Gen 1,31). Through granting the gift of life God, as it were, gives His every creation a small part of Him-

self. Therefore, the aim of the whole individual development of man is the union with God as the Source (compare EV 35). Everybody should respect their own life, as well the life of other human beings and all creation. As the image of God is embedded in each person (comp. Gen 1,27), everyone should share the collective responsibility for the protection of life. This includes both the act of procreation, in which two people pass on life to a new human being and the protection of the whole created reality. The same idea was expressed in the biblical excerption of placing the first people in the garden of Eden, which had to be cultivated and cared for by them (Gen 2,15). The pope says emphatically that: *It is the ecological question – ranging from the preservation of the natural habitats of the different species of animals and of other forms of life to ‘human ecology’ properly speaking – which finds in the Bible clear and strong ethical direction, leading to a solution which respects the great good of life, of every life* (EV 42). However, the use of the gifts of nature is not limited, but is subject to certain regulations, which are symbolically expressed by the prohibition of eating fruit from the tree, which is standing in the middle of the garden (Gen 2, 16-17). This vocation of man to be responsible for life is later specified in the commandment *Thou shalt not kill* (Deut. 5,17). Thus man is not the master of life, although the earthly beings have been subjected to him. Only the Creator, who is the Source of life, has the right to give it or take it away (comp. EV 53, 77).

According to the idea propagated by John Paul II, Christians are *people of life* – they have been given life by the Creator, whereas the Saviour, Jesus Christ, has renewed the life in them by sacrificing Himself. That is why, they are called on to preach *the gospel of life* and advocate the protection of life (EV 79). The concern shown for harmonious and sustainable development of individuals, especially those marginalized, is also a service done to life and a sign of humanitarianism (EV 87-88). In order to act in accordance with the spirit of this concern, it is necessary to undertake activities aimed at solving demographic problems of mankind – not through the policy of birth control, which affects the basic rights of parents and children, but through creating proper conditions for sustainable and sanitary development of various parts of the world (EV 91).

The teachings of Benedict XVI regarding sustainable development

The problem of sustainable development of individuals and societies, as seen through the perspective of the Catholic social science, represented also an object of interest for pope Benedict XVI. In three of his encyclicals he resumed and developed the course of thought pursued by his predecessors by trying to newly define the role of the Church in the globalized

reality, especially in the situation which followed the worldwide economic crisis of 2008.

Deus Caritas Est (2005)

In this encyclical pope Benedict XVI referred to the issue connected with the realization of Christian love in social life. He emphasized, that since 19th century the Catholic Church had been focusing more on matters concerning social justice and sustainable development of societies. Until then, *caritas* shown towards another human being had been associated mainly with charity (DCE 26-27). Since the publication of Leon XIII's encyclical, *Rerum novarum*, the Church has been paying more attention to the problem of creating favourable conditions for sustainable social development.

Benedict XVI regards politics as service in the name of social justice. The practical reason, which in the political life constantly tries to answer the questions *How to realize justice?* and *What is justice?*, has to be repeatedly purified and guided by ethics. From the point of view of the Church, the medium through which this ethics can be transmitted, is the Christian faith. Faith does not usurp superior power over the political order, but it wants to have its share in the process of *purifying* and *guiding*. This sphere of action of the Christian faith can be identified with the Catholic Social Science. The Church should not adopt the tasks of politics, while building social justice but it should help to open the human intelligence and will to the requirements of the good. At the same time, however, the fact that politics can realize tasks connected with the introduction of social justice does not exclude actions undertaken by the Church in the sphere of *caritas*. Charitable service done in the spirit of love for fellow human beings will always be valid and needed, independently of the efficiency of the state in this matter. The Church not only takes care of the human body, but also the human soul (DCE 28). Although direct political involvement of the Church as an institution is not advisable, the faithful have an obligation to engage in activities aimed at building just social structures, which will ensure sustainable development of individuals. Various economic, political and social actions undertaken by Christians can be treated as a practical aspect of the love for other human beings (DCE 29).

The pope stresses, that the phenomenon of globalization, which is accompanied by an efficient and quick exchange of information between different parts of the world, can facilitate the realization of the commandment connected with the love for other human beings. The concern for harmonious development of individuals and societies can nowadays assume new forms and reach beyond national communities. The Church contributes to the process of building a sense of solidarity among people. This has given rise to various forms of cooperation between the Church, states and charities, which increases the

efficiency of charitable service. The goal should be the same for all of them – building true humanitarianism (DCE 30). As far, as its actions aimed at realizing the commandment of love for fellow human beings are concerned, Christianity reaches beyond the framework of the Church and faith. Charitable help offered in the Christian spirit is supra-denominational and cannot be used in the service of any ideology. The historical experience has shown, e.g. by attempts to realize the Marxist utopia, that it is not possible to build harmoniously developing societies by relying solely on the ideology of progress. It is necessary to notice an individual man and approach his problems in the spirit of love, i.e. in the spirit of the good Samaritan. It is *faith, which worked by love* (Gal 5,6). At the same time the man who believes in God is aware, that through his service in the name of love he becomes a tool in God's hand. It is a kind of protection against the temptation of discouragement – I cannot help everybody and I cannot save the world by myself, but it does not belong to my tasks as a Christian. A lack of such a safety valve can lead to two extreme positions – passivity and discouragement or activism and turning towards utopian ideologies (DCE 35-36).

Spe Salvi (2007)

Pope Benedict XVI reflects upon the modern belief in progress and criticises such an approach. He points to the danger, which occurs when people are under the delusion that the human reason and will are enough to build social justice. If the practical reason and the ability to act are not enlightened by faith and taught by it to know the right from wrong, they will jeopardize the human freedom and well-being of other creatures. The process of building the freedom of societies and interest groups should go hand in hand with the respect for the freedom of individuals. Thus it is necessary to have a common criterion which is rooted in faith, and eventually in God. The fact of rejecting God sooner or later leads the human mind astray as it allows it to believe unreservedly in progress and to negate, in the name of this progress, someone's freedom (SpS 22-23).

The moral heritage of mankind remains a free choice – the modern man can draw from it or reject it. This freedom is helpful in developing the inner conviction about the rightness of undertaking certain actions and adopting certain attitudes. The sole universal and global structures are not enough to ensure the creation of *a better world*. Building of such a reality has to be connected with a rational and free choice made by individuals. The conviction that man can be *saved* by science or technological progress is false. Sustainable development and progress of mankind is not simply a sum of technological achievements. Each generation has to newly discover and choose freely the moral foundation on which it will build its own development (SpS 25-26). The fact of freely choosing God as the Giver of this foundation makes it pos-

sible to translate the truth about Christian hope into a language of concrete moral positions, which serve to promote justice in the world (SpS 28).

The kind of activity, which supports equitable development of societies and individuals, is the fight against suffering in all its manifestations. The obligation to come with aid to innocent suffering people in the physical, psychological and spiritual sphere is one of the basic duties of a Christian, as someone propagating justice. The human suffering urges us to undertake actions which serve, on one hand, to prevent this suffering and, on the other hand, to alleviate it. Those actions involve not only human beings but also other creatures, treated as a gift (SpS 35-36). The way in which a particular society responds to the suffering of people and other creatures is a measure of its development as a part of civilization (SpS 38).

Caritas in Veritate (2009)

The document deals extensively with a range of complex social issues. Benedict XVI devoted this encyclical to the problems concerning integral human development, which should be based on love experienced in truth. Love (*caritas*) is the way followed by the social teaching of the Catholic Church. For the Church, which is guided by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, love provides the basis for all kinds of human relationships and ties. The pope tries to convince people, that the choice of Christian values as a way of realizing love in truth is essential to build a good society and encourage integral development of individuals (CiV 4). The task which the social teaching of the Church has to undertake is to respond to the dynamics of God's love for the created world. This response involves the propagation of love in truth within the framework of existing social structures. Without love and truth, which Christianity tries to promote, it is not possible to stimulate development and prosperity and to solve economical-social problems in the era of globalization. The globalized society has to pay particular attention to two categories – justice and the common good. Justice is the integral part of the process connected with the fulfillment of love in truth. Love is superior to justice, but the former cannot exist without the latter. This is because, on a global scale, it translates into the respect for the right to develop which each man, nation and community has. Engagement in the process of building the common good is the more complete and authentic, the more it results from the love for another human being. Only if love is involved in the process of building a globalized society, it can ensure fair division of goods between particular societies and become a source of a complete, not only technological development (CiV 9).

Benedict XVI reflects at length upon the encyclical written by Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*. He reiterates his predecessor's view, that development constitutes a part of the man's vocation. Thus, it not only has a strictly technical aspect, but also a transcendent

one. It is realized most completely when man turns in the direction of the Absolute (CiV 10-20). The assumptions of Paul VI's social teaching still have not been fully realized. The question which is still valid nowadays is how to translate the economic profit into fair division of goods and elimination of destitution, so that development could involve everybody in a sustainable way (CiV 21). Whereas it is true that in today's reality of the globalized world the level of global richness rises, there are increasing inequalities connected with unfair division of the profit made. There are many reasons behind these disproportions and one of them is insufficient involvement of developed societies in the process of sharing the achievements of their cultural progress.

Forty years after the publication of *Populorum Progressio*, the geopolitical and economic situation is different from that in which Paul VI made his social diagnosis. Sovereignty of the development of countries is limited by the global economic-financial context. The process of building social justice in the reality of the global market seems to be more and more difficult. The pursuit for lowering production costs have adverse consequences for workers (CiV 25). The phenomenon, which can be noticed in the global society, is the cultural uniformization which poses a danger to the autonomy of particular cultures and favours axiological relativism. At the same time, the intercultural dialogue is often superficial or even fictitious (CiV 26). One of the most distressing symptoms of development disproportions in the era of globalization is the still unresolved problem of hunger in the world. Benedict XVI reminds his readers, that hunger is not so much a result of insufficient natural resources, but a product of their defective division. The pope points to several ways of eliminating development disproportions in this respect, these are for example: propagation of modern and sustainable agriculture, development of transport, elimination of exploitative economy, agrarian reforms and protection of the natural environment. On the basis of international solidarity people should be given one of their fundamental rights, i.e. the right to food and water (CiV 27).

The practices, which the pope considers to be completely erroneous and harmful, are those connected with birth control, which is propagated – or even imposed – on people living in societies characterized by high levels of development disproportions. He emphasizes, that without acceptance of new life, there is no authentic and complete development. Another phenomenon, which the pope regards as infringing the right to sustainable development, are the actions against religious freedom. This includes, on one hand, fundamentalist ideologies which appear in the world and, on the other hand, practical atheism imposed by political systems. In this way, the perspective, through which the development of a human being is perceived, is narrowed. If economic development is not followed by the moral one, it means re-

gress (CiV 29). The interdisciplinary aspect of the social teaching of the Church encourages cooperation between theology, metaphysics and specialized sciences on the basis of a holistic approach to human development. It broadens the scale of opportunities for solving development problems of modern societies and allows for a better management of economic resources, including the human ones. Such an interdisciplinary approach, which equips economy with humanitarian tools, makes it possible to implement a long-term development policy and prevents the occurrence of neocolonialism (CiV 32-33). The economy of the global market should comply with two rules promoted by the social teaching of the Church. These are rules of distributive justice and social justice. Elimination of moral norms from free market rules leads to the deepening of development disproportions. The goal of multiplying the common good should be achieved not only by free market mechanisms, but also through political decisions. It was proven by the world economic crisis, which began in 2008. The economic sphere is not ethically neutral, but assumes the shape which man gives to it. Sustainable global economic development requires the following rules to be abided by: social solidarity, transparency, honesty, responsibility, brotherhood or selflessness. Economy in the era of globalisation is subject to the influence of various cultures. Points of encounter indicated by Benedict XVI are three kinds of logic: logic of contractual exchange, political logic and the logic of unconditional gift (CiV 37). Fulfillment of these requirements encourages development of a civil society. In order to overcome the problem of underdevelopment it is necessary that the global economic structures adopt the elements of selflessness and communion (CiV 39). The pope warns people against regarding globalisation as something of fatalistic significance; in its essence, globalisation is neither good nor bad. It will assume the character given by people. The solution to the problem is to use the mechanisms of global exchange of material and immaterial goods in order to propagate justice and multiply the common good (CiV 42). Man and his needs should be placed at the heart of economic development. This is the man who is tied to other people by mutual relationships, while all of them live in the global reality.

Benedict XVI reminds his readers, that the natural environment should be treated as God's gift for man. A gift which should be looked after and cared for. However, he cautions against regarding the natural environment as more important than man or *vice versa* – perceiving it in purely economic terms. Attitudes of greater ecological awareness in underdeveloped societies can be shaped by a greater solidarity, shown by energy industries in rich countries. As the exploitation of natural resources has taken on an international aspect, the responsibility for sustainable management of natural goods should assume an international character as well. Peaceful co-existence

of nations and exchange of technological achievements will make it easier to protect natural resources of our planet. The Church shares the responsibility for the fate of man and the fate of his natural environment. Therefore, it calls upon nations to implement the idea of *the ecology of man* perceived in the spirit of love and truth, which will lead to a greater understanding of *the ecology of the natural environment* and protect mankind from its self-destructive tendencies. It is not enough to introduce legal regulations. It is necessary to change people's mentality and attitude towards the sanctity of life (CiV 51).

That is why, sustainable development is conditioned by the involvement of every person in the relations of one human family without excluding anyone. All cultural attitudes, which do not adopt the position of love, truth and peace, act against the development of mankind. They represent negative aspects of the process of globalization and do not lead to the meeting of people but set them apart. Between all the cultures there are points of encounter on the ethical ground, which can be called the natural law. They can provide the basis for an intercultural dialogue in the globalized society (CiV 59). Common human values manifest themselves e.g. in the sphere of education. Creation of a more equitable access to education is considered by the pope to be one of the basic aspects of equalizing the chances of development on an international scale (CiV 61). The phenomenon which poses a challenge for the modern global reality is the movement of people. It refers particularly to migration, exile and even tourism. In case of both positive and negative consequences of this phenomenon it is necessary for nations to cooperate more extensively (CiV 62). Another major problem is that of unemployment, which concerns also nations regarded so far as well-developed and which is directly correlated with the problem of destitution. Meanwhile, the respect shown for each person's dignity is inseparably connected with the process of enabling them to get a job which will ensure their stable development. In this context the pope also touches upon equality of rights and sex discrimination (CiV 63).

The inseparable element of development is technological progress. However, it has different aspects. Besides obvious advantages resulting from the subjugation of forces of nature and the practical use of physical laws, technological progress also involves certain dangers. They become more real if the modern man stops asking himself the question *why?* and satisfies himself with the question *how?* Behind technological progress there is always man with his reason and free will, who is created in God's image. The human intelligence, which is the author of this progress, represents man in a holistic way, not as a participant in some kind of world technocracy. Such progress in the field of technology will not take place without deep, moral formation of the people responsible for it. In the future, this should prevent technological progress from being misappropriated by

some maleficent ideology, which could oppose one part of mankind against another (CiV 68-72).

Today, one of the motive forces behind globalization are electronic media. The pope emphasizes the necessity to look carefully at the consequences of man's functioning in the virtual reality. The facility with which information is exchanged is not enough to nurture dignified and sustainable development of individuals and societies. Another important factor is the quality of the content communicated through electronic media. They should not strip anyone of their dignity (CiV 73). The respect for human dignity concerns human life from its conception to its natural death. It is because technological progress makes ample room for bio-manipulation, also in relation to human beings. This is connected both with methods of artificial fertilization and genetic manipulations (e.g. the creation of hybrids). This, according to Benedict XVI, endangers integral development of individuals and societies (CiV 74).

Summary

Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI addressed their teachings not only to Catholics and Christians, but also to *all people of good will*, which they emphasized in all their encyclicals described above. As a result, their message has a universal meaning. While their teaching was deeply rooted in the sources of revelation of the Catholic Church – the Holy Scripture and Tradition – they continuously made references to values common to all, universal truths which were given the name of the natural law by philosophy and Catholic theology. With regard to both the man-environment relationship and the sustainable development of individuals and communities, they touched upon issues concerning mankind as a whole. By using biblical sources and invoking teachings of the Church from past centuries they formulated diagnoses about the state of the progress of civilisation which had a supra-denominational character. They also pointed to the problems and dangers connected with this progress, as well as suggested some ways of dealing with them.

John Paul II frequently referred to the Book of Genesis, as it describes the creation of the world and man. At the same time, the pope reiterated the view, that man had been appointed to be *the master of the earth*, but he also called attention to the fact that man had not been given the absolute power – such power can be only wielded by the Creator. The rule over the earth is understood here as the concern and care shown for the whole creation. It should not be regarded as ruthless exploitation. Man is a part of the creation – he is both material and spiritual. He has his share in God's image and thus is called upon to act reasonably and respectfully in relation to the fact that all beings are *good*. He can satisfy his needs, but should remember that the resources of the earth are not unlimited. In order to resolve problems resulting

from the lack of respect for the laws of nature, he is obliged to make every effort to know those laws and abide by them. Such an attitude to the created world is possible only when ethics and morality have primacy over material things.

John Paul II noticed some basic dangers to the sustainable development in the contemporary world. In his opinion, the main cause of economic and social disproportions between the nations of the North and the South is the unequal division of natural goods. The consumerism of rich societies, which are obsessed with maintaining or improving the quality of their lives, appeals to the baser instincts – it is *to have* rather than *to be*. It leads to the lack of solidarity among people, wasteful exploitation of natural resources and treatment of man as the object of work, not its subject. Possession of too many goods can be as disorderly in nature as destitution and make one ignore someone else's needs.

The Polish pope used to point out that it is not enough to take care of ecology understood solely as the good state of natural environment. In the contemporary world, whose ambitions include sustainable development, priority should be given to *the human ecology*. This term was applied by the pope to denote a set of actions undertaken to improve the natural and moral structure of man. Primacy of ethics over materialism guarantees, that man will lead his life in an *ecological environment*, i.e. such an environment which will enable him to fulfill himself as a free and rational person, who is a part of nature.

John Paul II strongly emphasized that one of the inalienable rights of an individual and a family is the right to live and procreate. An equal division of goods was considered by the pope to be the basic requirement of a correctly understood policy of sustainable demographic development. The human dignity, which is a result of being created in *God's likeness and image*, is insulted by actions aimed at invasive interference in the process of procreation. The pope particularly stigmatized abortion and euthanasia. The former constitutes an attack on the human life which is not created by man, but only transmitted by him, whereas the latter undermines the fundamental basis of existence and development of societies. He was a great advocate of *the civilisation of life*.

Benedict XVI, in his turn, reflected upon sustainable development of individuals and societies in relation to problems connected with widely understood globalization. Referring to his predecessors on St. Peter's throne – Paul VI and John Paul II – he stressed the importance of noticing a human being in the world economy. Free market laws do not constitute a superior authority and do not have omnipotent decision-making power over the fate of individuals and societies. Without a moral backbone, economy becomes a system of exploitation, which is susceptible to the influence of destructive ideologies. Technological progress should serve mankind, not the other way round. The tasks with which global politics,

economy and uniformizing culture are faced are the service in the name of justice and multiplication of the common good. This should be done in the spirit of love and truth, the carrier of which is the Christian faith and, more comprehensively, the natural law.

Benedict XVI claims that only technology and economy enlightened by *caritas* will be able to rise to the challenges posed by globalization. By this he means a more equitable division of natural resources and goods produced by the global market, elimination of large disproportions in technological and cultural progress between societies, fight against famine, respect for the human life since its conception to its natural death and, finally, sustainable management of natural resources of the planet. The logic of justice and love will allow people, belonging to one global human family, to respect the right to work, education, free movement, procreation and life in general. It will protect mankind from the danger arising from such a kind of technological progress which excludes moral progress and thus turns into regress. In Benedict XVI's opinion, globalization presents a lot of challenges, but as such it is ethically neutral. It depends on the modern people, including politicians, whether it will acquire bad or good characteristics in the future. Modern electronic media, rapid exchange of information and achievements of the modern science (also in the field medicine and genetics) can create great opportunities for sustainable development of different parts of the world, but can also threaten the well-being and even existence of mankind. The Church feels responsible for the man thrown into the mainstream of global society.

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