

Christianity and economic inequality

1. The current global economic and financial order is profoundly unfair. 20 percent of the world population consume 80 percent of the resources and are responsible for 80 percent of climate-damaging emissions. 800 million people live in extreme poverty, two billion people must survive on less than two dollars a day. The consequences of the financial crisis and global warming most severely hit the poor in developing countries. But they are the least responsible for both of them.
2. The Covid-19 pandemic makes evident that the global natural commons like the atmosphere are overused and the global social commons like health care are underprovided. It makes us aware that health is the most precious universal common good and that it is globally vulnerable. It makes us also aware that we are all in the same boat and one human family. The virus doesn't know or respect any frontiers. To stop the pandemic the countries must look and cooperate beyond their borders. We feel more and more interdependent from each other, we are all vulnerable, we are connected globally for the best and the worst. We should give up our collective short-termism and understand solidarity as an intragenerational and intergenerational challenge.
3. The Corona crisis makes us aware that we have to rethink and to reshape our present model of globalisation taking into account the poor, the natural environment and the future generations. Pope Francis with his Encyclical *Laudato Si'* on the care for our common home offers a compass and a roadmap for this. Its central message is that dangerous climate change and the unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources continue to threaten the future of our planet. The issue of ecology is an issue of justice. The Pope also questions our present economic system, which he associates with a throwaway culture that is incompatible with the stewardship of creation. *Laudato sí* is a dramatic and a joyful document. Dramatic because it faces the global crisis of today's world which is both ecological and social. Joyful because it offers ways and hope to tackle this crisis.
4. Another innovation of *Laudato Si'* is to consider the atmosphere, the oceans and the tropical forests as natural global common goods. In the present crisis, we can add health as the principal social common good. The global common goods cannot be solely under the rule only of national states but they belong to all humanity. So the principle of the universal destination of goods must be applied. We have a common but differentiated responsibility for these common goods and to discharge that responsibility we need democratic governance of them.
5. After 1989 capitalism has become arrogant. Today's capitalism is actually making things worse, both for the environment and for people. The capitalist incentive structure rewards cost cutting and short-term profits. Extreme free-market thinking is at the root of the damage humanity is inflicting on the planet.
6. There is an urgent need of a thorough and rapid transformation of the production and consumption system. The market alone will not solve the problems. We have to change the old trends, and changing trends depends on changing minds. We need a new mindset, a new model of civilization.
7. Inspired by Ignacio Ellacuría, Jon Sobrino and Pope Francis I plead for a „civilization of shared frugality“. That means on the one hand that resources and wealth must be divided

more equitably and on the other hand that this will inevitably require restrictions in the lifestyle of the people in rich countries. Its decisive criteria have to be universality, justice, and sustainability. The economies of the rich nations of the north are not universalizable because of reasons having to do with the environment and because of limits of natural resources. Whatever is not universalizable cannot be defended ethically either, according to Kant's categorical imperative. On a global scale, justice means that all human beings have the same right to natural resources and to energy and that ecological consequences are distributed equitably or at least in a more or less similar way. Sustainability means administering resources in such a way that the foundations of action are not destroyed and that the rights and interests of future generations are borne in mind.

8. The implementation of such a civilization of shared frugality is a gigantic challenge. For it a new social contract between business, science and politics is needed. The interlocking of the problems requires interdisciplinary efforts. Here also the religious communities with their motivation and action potential are in great demand. Justice and preservation of creation are also questions of faith.

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