

Székely János:

## **A World in the Image of Jesus**



According to a story a father wanted to read, but his six-year-old son kept disturbing him. Moved by a sudden thought the father cut out a world map from a magazine and created a puzzle by cutting the map into small pieces. He asked his son to solve the puzzle making sure that all the national borders, rivers and oceans match precisely. He expected his son to be busy at the task for an hour or two, but he was wrong. In about 5 minutes the little boy was back at his side, showing him the assembled pieces. The father was astonished to see that the world map was accurately completed. He asked his son how he was able to assemble this extremely complicated map in such a short time. The boy smiled, and said it was quite simple. The other side of the magazine page featured a large, beautiful Jesus icon, an image of Jesus. He assembled the image of Jesus, then he turned the pieces, and the perfect world map was ready.

It is my intention to attempt something similar in this article. I want to write about what our world would be like if humanity would listen to Jesus Christ, if we would live the way He lived to show us the meaning and authentic path of human life. What would the world be like if we would realise what the Creator's dream of the world and of humanity was?

Our world, the economic setting, our ecological situation, international relations are extremely complicated, hard to understand. I am not an expert in these areas. I know a few things about the message of the Bible, the wisdom inherent in Christianity. The book is based on these resources. It presents dreams and ideals that require the work of a host of competent professionals, public figures, and charismatic individuals to come true.

## **1. Beautiful Harmony and Order Written into the World**

A magnificent order, a multitude of patterns exists in the world. The world is like a huge symphony with lots of melodies. The fine tuning of the universe that makes life and the human being possible is awe-inspiring, the enormous amount of information carried by the DNA and the way this information determines cells and living organisms is awe-inspiring. The process of the development of life on Earth, during which a mysterious sense of purpose, an upward striving, and the appearance of quality surpluses can be observed is awe-inspiring. This harmony, this beautiful order implanted in the world is reality itself, the objective truth.

Humanity's greatest thinkers always believed that the truth - which is reality - can be known. One cannot say that „objective truth does not exist“ or that „truth cannot be known“ in a meaningful way, since whoever says this, has immediately refuted himself. If there is no objective truth, or if it cannot be known, the above sentence is not true, and he could not have come to know the truth. People are deeply convinced, they know that truth exists, and it can be known. They cannot think or speak otherwise, they cannot completely deny or abandon this deep conviction.

Ever since Homo Sapiens exists on earth, he has been engaged in a peculiar dialog, a sort of argument. People argue about who was right, who is right, what action is right and what action is wrong. If two people get on a bus, and there is only one seat that is not taken, normally they will not resolve this conflict by force, like animals would do, but will bring up reasons to decide who should take the seat. I am older, I got on first, etc. All people are convinced that they should act in a fair manner. Human dialogue and life in general resemble a soccer match that is played according to rules. Everyone has a soccer field in their mind, a set of values, that they attempt to live by, and that they expect others to follow. Just as players on the soccer field do not go at each other with force, but play according to certain rules, so it is in the game of human life.

Let's imagine a liberal-minded person, who thinks that there are not objective moral values, that these are only culturally and historically changing human habits. If we were to tell this liberal-minded person that there is a tribe in Africa, who roasts and eats a small child every year, he would be outraged, and would say that this has got to be immediately prohibited, that this should not happen anywhere on Earth, no matter what the culture and the subjective opinion of the tribe is, this should never ever happen again. When a serious situation arises, everyone knows that objective moral laws exist which apply to everyone.

Everyone knows that they should live in a fair manner, that it is not right to do onto others what we do not want them to do onto us. Throughout history there has never been a human culture that valued selfishness, dishonesty, disloyalty, cowardice.

Moral values are not a by-product of evolution and are not merely intended as behaviour that helps the survival of the group. Sometimes lies, intrigue, exploitation and the use of force were a lot more effective tools for survival, than moral actions.

A divine harmony is expressed in the world, and we recognize this harmony. This harmony is present not only in the world of atoms, not only in the biosphere of the Earth, but also in human life. The beautiful order of how to live with dignity is written into the human soul. This order is objective. The alarming approach of ecological disaster is a wakeup call for our often arrogant and blind modern profit-oriented consumer society. It confronts us with the fact that

the world is governed by rock-hard, objective laws. Humanity can either humbly search for these laws or will go down the path of self-destruction.

The same objective divine order can be seen in the greatest moments of human history. In history, in human language Being speaks, and reveals itself. The life, teachings, death on the cross, and resurrection of Christ is at the peak, at the centre of human history. This event declares the same eternal truth (logos, logic cf. John 1:1-14) the same beautiful divine harmony that is found in nature, and in the world.

The basic premise of this book is that the objective moral order can be recognised in the world, in the human soul, and humanity has sensed this order ever since Homo sapiens lives on Earth. This divine order gleaned from nature is the same as the divine order, truth and radiance revealed in the Christ event. Our book is based on these two sources: the values and truth that humanity has been aware of for thousands of years, and the message of the Christ event.

## **2. Happiness**

People are searching for happiness, wholeness, inner peace, the joy of creation, catharsis through human relationships, safety, being accepted, and joy.

Jesus teaches us that happiness is not found in possessions, in pleasure, nor in power, but in love. „For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?“ (Matt. 16:26) „Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.“ (Matt. 10:39)

The world was born out of love, from the eternal flow of life between Father, Son, Holy Spirit. God the Creator is eternally birthing and eternally being born, eternally surrendering himself. The dance of the atomic nucleus and electrons, the love between man and woman, blossoming flowers, and the laughing face of children all originate from this secret. We were born to learn to love, to give our life as a gift of love, and thus to enter the Creator's mighty symphony of love through the mysterious gate of death. (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-13).

## **3. Human Rights, Basic Values**

The meaning of human rights is that if anyone stands in front of me – no matter what the colour of their skin, nor if they are rich or poor, healthy or sick, a recently conceived baby in a mother's womb or a vulnerable old person – they have the right to be treated with dignity. As Jesus said: „Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.“ (Matt. 25:40)

Lot of people think that the source of human rights is public consent. This is why they introduce rights such as „reproductive rights“ (easy and free access to contraception and abortion); right to gender self-identification (same-sex marriage, adoption, change of gender) thereby spreading fallacy. There was a time when on similar premises certain people believed that they have the right to keep slaves, or to appropriate farmland acquired by conquest. The source of human rights is not simply the will or opinion of certain individuals, not even that of the existing majority.

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church „The ultimate source of human rights *is not found in the mere will of human beings...but in man himself and in God his Creator.*“

(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 153; hereinafter CSDC). There is an objective intent on the part of the Creator, an objective human nature, that can be discovered with the help of the human intellect and the divine intent that is revealed in history.

If I have a watch, I can determine if it functions or not only if I know that it is meant to be used for telling time. If I use it as a cabinet pad and it breaks, and I therefore consider it defective, my judgement is incorrect. I can only decide if a human action is good or bad, if I know, or at least sense the purpose of human life, if I know the beautiful divine harmony implanted into the world.

The Catholic Church also emphasizes that rights and duties are inextricably connected. (CSDC, 156) It is the right and the duty of parents to raise their children. Members of society have the right to be supported by the wider community to meet their needs, but at the same time it is their duty to support the wider community to the best of their ability.

The ultimate source of human rights is that every human being is created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). The first and most fundamental human right is the right to life (CSDC, 155). Human life starts at conception, and there is not leap in quality during its development. All tiny babies conceived have the right to be born and to live. „Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me...their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.” (Matt. 18:5; 18:10)

Other human rights follow: the right to live with dignity, to clean drinking water, to know the truth, to learn human values, etc.

#### **4. The Common Good**

The human being is essentially a social being. A wider community is needed in order to perform to the best of one's ability. The state as the organisation of the wider community has as its goal to serve the common good by creating the bodily, intellectual, and spiritual conditions that allow its members to reach their fulfilment. (CSDC, 164).

„For the lay faithful, political involvement is a worthy and demanding expression of the Christian commitment of service to others.” (CSDC, 565).

#### **5. Family**

The world was created out of love, and the goal of the human being is to live in love and devotion. God the Creator wanted life, the life of a small child to be conceived from love, to stem from love – love should beget life, love should be fruitful. God created humans to be male and female, out of the love of the two new life is born, the family is built on their love. (cf. Mark 10:6-9).



Gender identity is not something that one can create for oneself. We do not choose our mother tongue, the story of our parents, our ancestors - all of this is given to us. It is the same for gender identity. The reality that we are born with is not a hurdle. Freedom is not an arbitrary detachment from reality. We must build on reality even if it is wounded. The success of reparative therapies proves this (cf. J. Nicolosi, Case Stories of Reparative Therapy).

*Children have the right* to have confirmation of their ability to love and of their gender identity.

The amount of *old age pension* should reflect the number of children brought up by the pensioner.

## 6. Education

The *parent* has the primary right and responsibility to raise the child.

It is the right and responsibility of the child to learn the wisdom of previous generations. Human beings are sociohistorical beings. We gain most of our knowledge and our outlook on life from the previous generations, from the wider community. The child has the right to *hear the truth, to learn values*. The goal of education and upbringing is to acquaint the new generation with the great masterpieces of mankind. A good school imparts wisdom and life skills in addition to technical skills (computers, languages).

True education is never neutral in its worldview. Using the brilliant analogy of C. S. Lewis if children resemble small ships, the education they receive today is very limited. They are taught how to sail without colliding with other ships. They are to be tolerant. This, however, is not enough for a successful voyage. They should also learn to sail so that their boats do not sink, to overcome forces that pull them down, to overcome passions. But still more is needed for successful sailing. The captains should know if there is a port, and where that port is.

The natural goal of human reason is truth. One is sensible if one recognises truth to be true, if one sees reality as it is, if one is never mistaken. Human reason is a one-way ability, it is directed towards truth, and reality.

Another basic ability of humans is free will. The natural aim of free will is what is good, what is valuable. One is not free when one makes random decisions or if one sometimes chooses worthless things. Freedom comes when one is freed from one's shackles, when one can soar and love, when one only wants and strives for what is good, what is valuable. Real freedom is not an arbitrary detachment from reality. Reality is not our enemy. This is what Jesus said: „everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin ...the truth will make you free” (John 8:34, 8:32)

Children have the right to be taught what is truth, what is good. They have the right to be shown these values, and to start them on the path of finding them.

## 7. Work

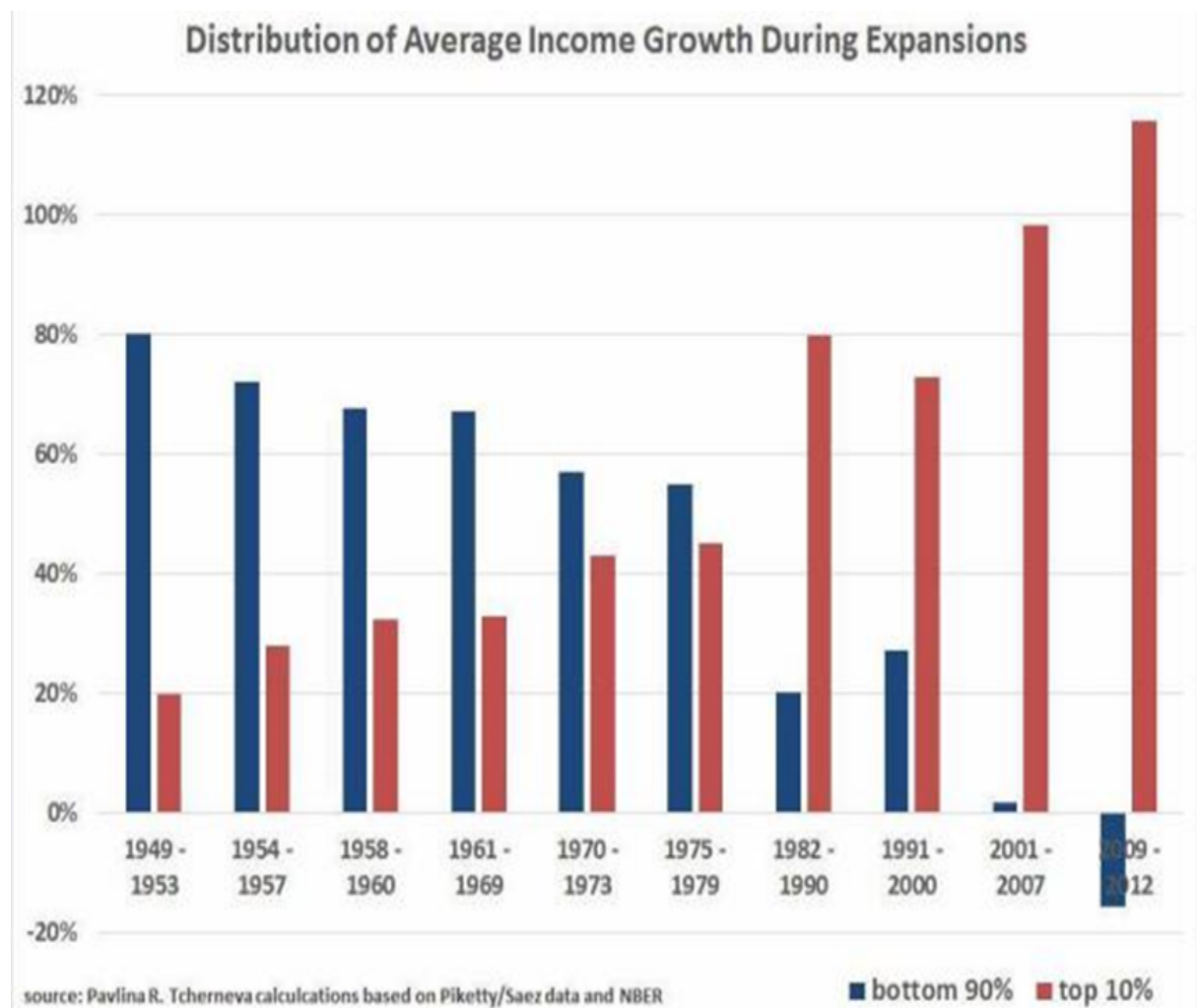
*The goal of work is not only to achieve profit, but also to serve others, to beautify and care for the created world, to perfect oneself, and to enjoy the joy of creation. Labour is more important than capital (CSDC, 277). Everyone has a right to work. According to the teaching of the Catholic Church *full employment* is a mandatory objective of every society (CSDC, 288).*



## 8. Economy

The *purpose of economic life is not profit*, but the happiness and fulfilment of people – of the whole person (body, mind, soul) and of all people (the poverty-stricken, the sick, the old).

GDP is a very misleading number. Cleaning up an oil spill in the ocean can result in an increase of GDP. However, if a woman cares for her elderly parents at home it has no value in terms of GDP. The constant increase of GDP is primarily in the interest of the wealthy and of large capital.

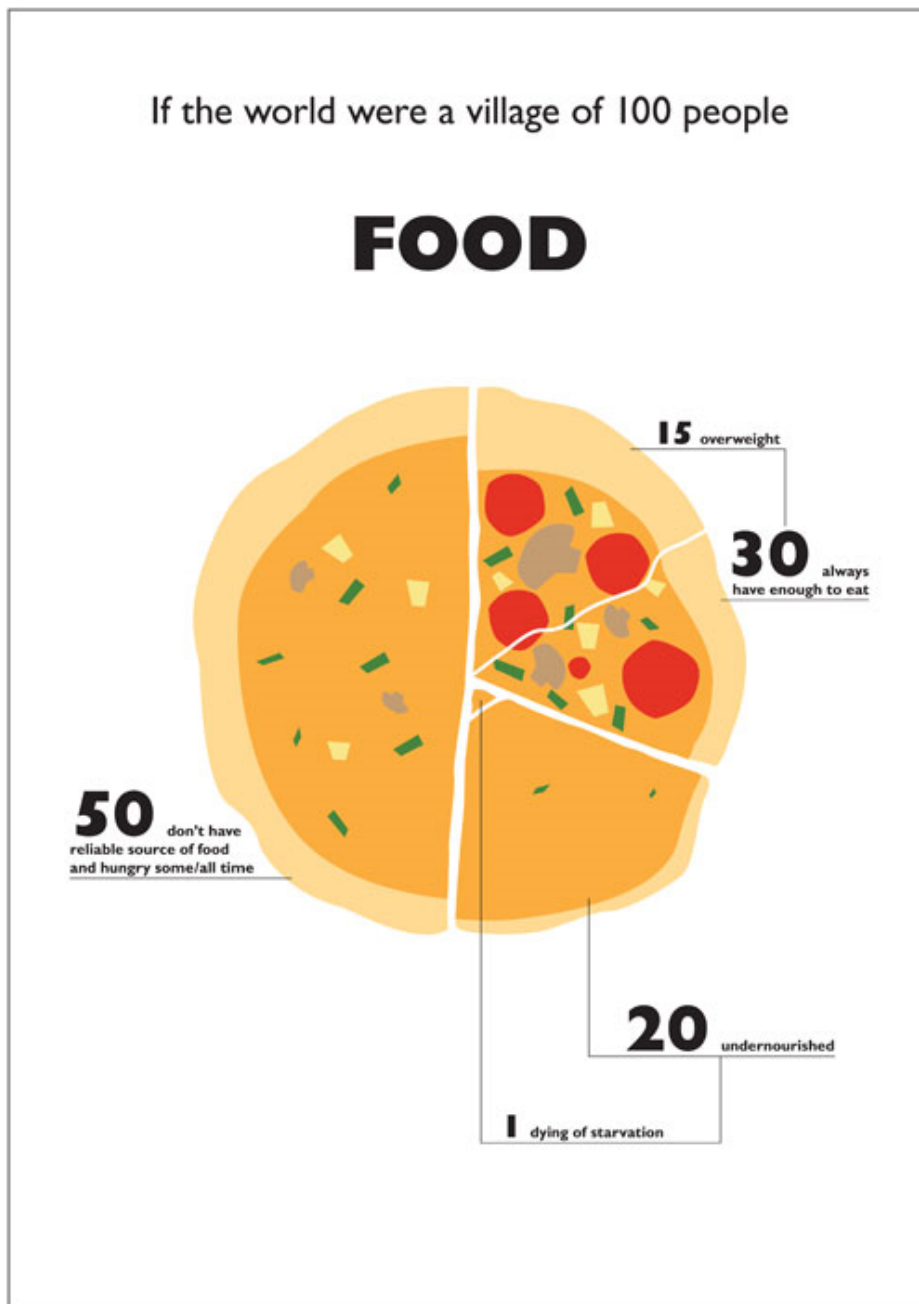


Christianity considers private property to be good. „*Private property...* assures a person a highly necessary sphere for the exercise of his ...autonomy and ought to be considered as an extension of human freedom” (CSDC, 176). The abolition of private property (e.g. in communist states) meant the mutilation of humanity.

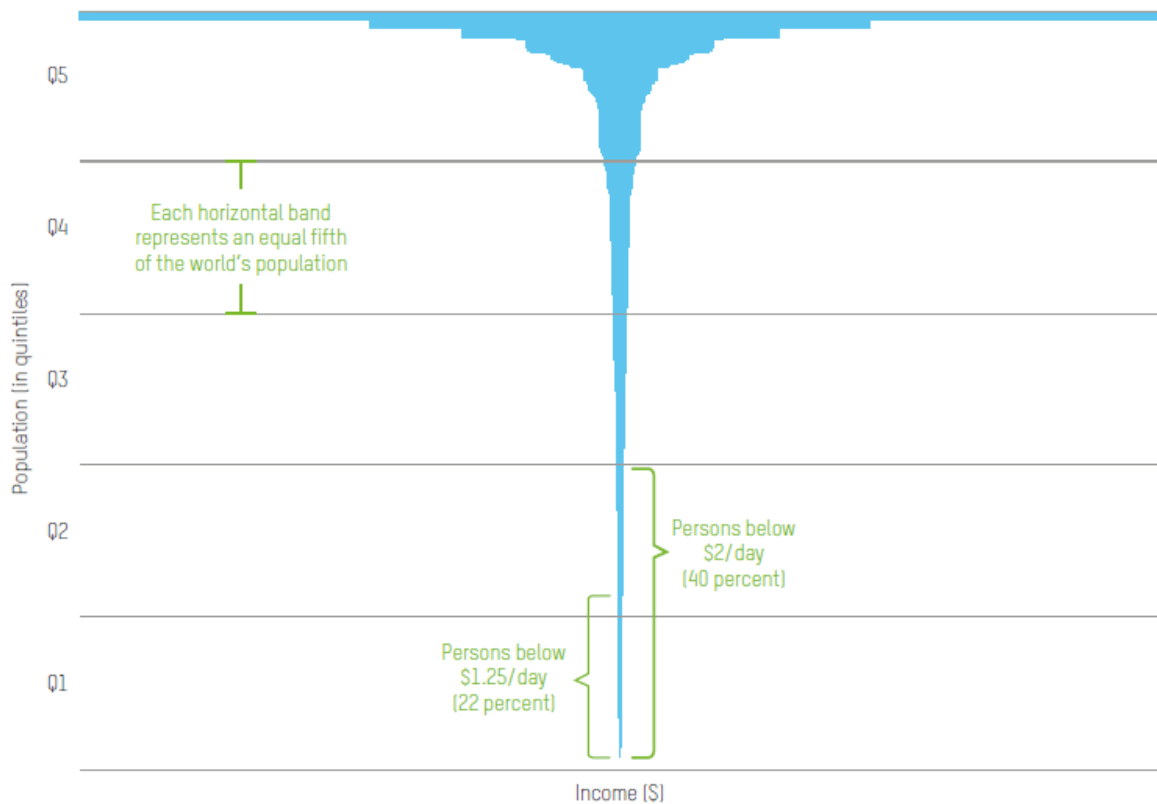
However, „Christian tradition *has never recognized the right to private property as absolute and untouchable*” (CSDC, 177). The right to private property is preceded by the right of all people to a decent living. The catholic terminology calls this the universal destination of goods. (Laborem exercens, 14). „Ownership of the means of production... becomes illegitimate, ... when it is not utilized or when it serves to impede the work of others” (Centesimus annus 43).



Jesus asked the wealthy again and again to help the poor (Mark 10:21; Luke 11:41). Even today the common possessions of the first Christians is a prophetic sign for the world: „All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had needs... Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.” (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32)

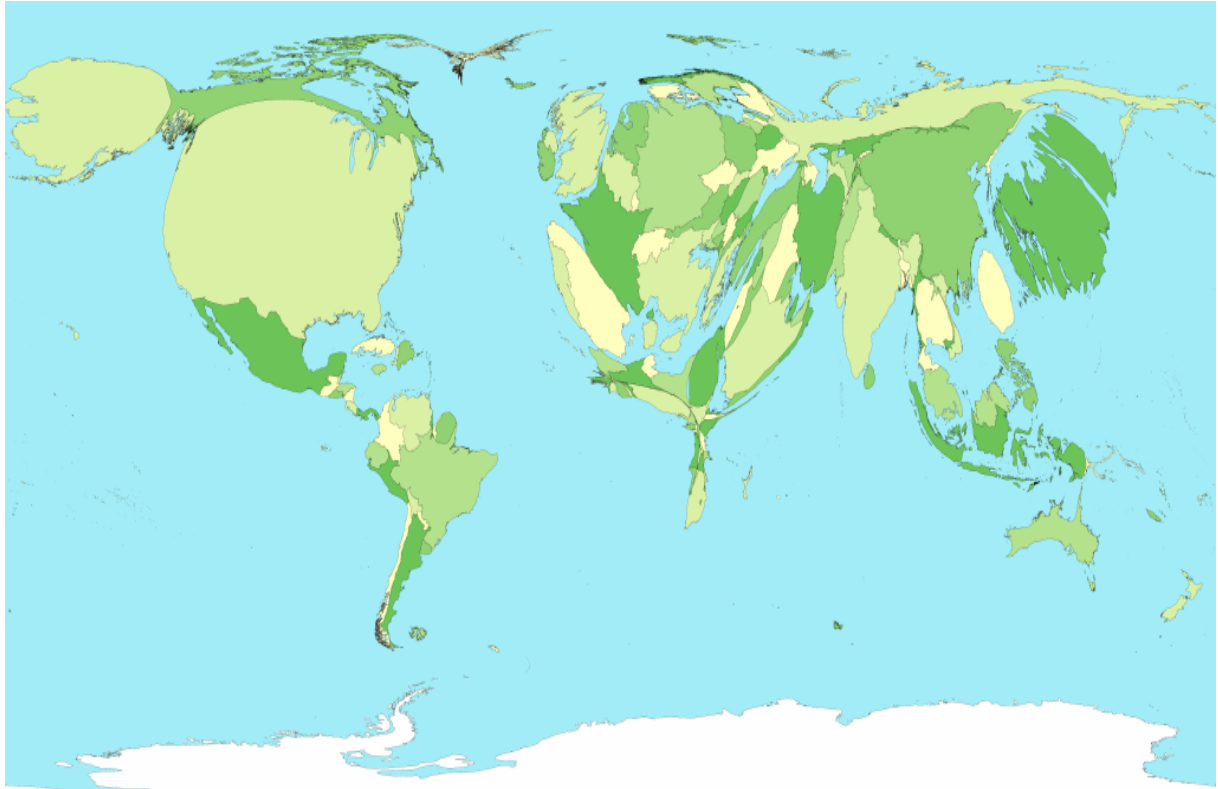


**FIGURE 1:** Global income distribution by percentile of population (\$)



(Oxfam report 2017)

It is the great challenge of our times to formulate this right – the right of all people to a respectable livelihood – in concrete legislation, and to incorporate it in a more fair, more humane economic system.



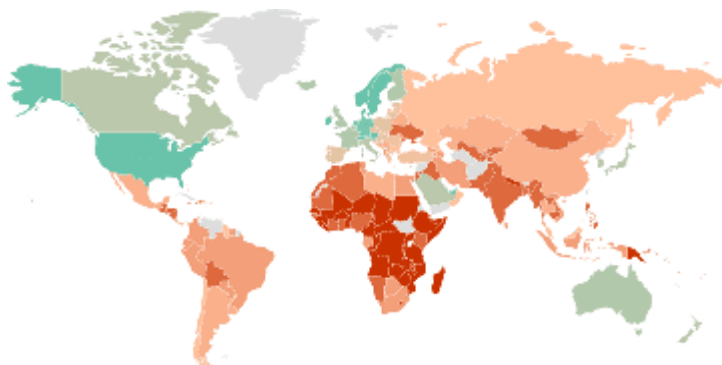
Energy consumption pro capita (Mark Newman, University of Michigan <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mejn/cartograms/>)

To achieve this a *universal public authority* is needed (CSDC, 441), which does not work like the UN, but where countries *can vote according to their population*. The jurisdiction of this

universal authority would not entail promoting a certain type of state (Western democracy) or other perceived freedoms, but its responsibilities would include:

- fair regulation of *world trade*,
- drawing fair *national borders*,
- collection of a universal (worldwide) *property tax* to support the poor; enhance the contribution - *0,7 % of the GDP* - of developed countries to support investments in the poorest regions of the world
- protection of the *created world*.

Creation of a more just economic system requires *financial transparency* (CSDC, 355) and a strong guiding role to be exercised by the *international community* (CSDC, 364, 370). Based on certain objectives the *market must be restricted* by the economic system (CSDC, 349).



The poorest countries of the world (income pro capita)

In the past centuries humanity rightfully took away hereditary power (democracy instead of kingship), as well as some of the inherited agricultural lands (land distribution). A similar step should be taken with respect to unjustly accumulated private property.

A tangible solution to achieve this could be the determination of an upper limit (how much a person can own), and imposition of worldwide wealth taxes and property taxes to benefit the poor.

Part of the wealth taxes and the property taxes intended for the benefit of the poor could go towards providing *inheritance* to children who otherwise would not have an inheritance. It could also help eliminate starvation and be used for caring for creation.

World trade and the stock market must be regulated in accordance with the principles of justice and solidarity. No place is free of morality, this includes the stock market.

Free competition, the logic of „let the stronger win” does not work, it cannot create a happy and humane world. It was not the strongest species that survived throughout evolution. Very often they became extinct. The species *most responsive to change* survived. If we wanted a family to function based on the logic of free competition and

every member would have to fight to be right, to be happy first and foremost, we would never get a loving, happy family. Similarly, the fight between different interest groups will never result in humanity that is happy and full of vitality.

*National borders* could be modified based on the decision of the international community if linguistic, ethnic, and historic reasons and the will of the population of the area support this (e.g.: Kurds).

The international community should oversee world trade to assure that the prices are determined to include fair wages for the workers creating the given goods, who could thus be ensured a respectable livelihood.

## **9. Care for Creation**

It is humanity's responsibility to the next generation to care for the created world. We are especially responsible to the most vulnerable and poorest of our fellow human beings, since they are the ones who have the least possibilities to prevent the detrimental effects of environmental degradation.

God entrusted humans with the care and preservation of the beautiful garden of the created world (Gen. 2:15). If man turns towards the world with violence, the cosmos will fall back into chaos. God, however, has prepared a refuge to preserve life, the symbol of which is the arc, alluding to people of God, to the Church. It is a place where people live together as brothers and sisters and with all living beings according to God's law. (cf. Gen, 6-9).

Humanity should strive for qualitative not quantitative development. We need „ecological conversion“. Caring for the created world is „not an optional task“ for Christians. (Pope Francis: *Laudato sí*, 217).

## **10. Demography**

Married couples have the right to freely decide how many children they will have. According to the Catholic Church decision concerning the number of children they will have depends on the right judgment of the parents (*Gaudium et spes*, 51). All couples should consider how many children they can responsibly raise from human, health, and financial point of views. This consideration can also include taking into account the carrying capacity of humanity, of a continent or of a region.

Western societies are threatened by a demographic winter (Hungary: the population fell by 300 thousand in the past 10 years). Having children is not a question of money, it is a question of the heart.

## **11. Culture, Communication**

In communication *truth and reality* are to be talked about, and this should be done with respect.

Expressing one's own belief, if done with respect, and if it is not blatantly untrue, cannot be considered *hate speech*.

*There is no place of destructive content* in communication. Display of violence, promotion of terrorism, pornography, defamation and spreading blatant falsehoods, are punishable acts. The world wide web is like an intellectual supermarket. No-one is allowed to place poison on the shelves of the supermarket. It is not left up to the customer to choose between poisons and food. „If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea.” (Mark 9:42)

The human being has a right to search for truth. *Free practice of religion* is a basic human right. Religious communities have the right to establish their own institutions. Where they perform public tasks (education, social services, healthcare) they should receive *equal funding*.

## **12. Nations**

Human beings are sociohistorical beings. Different languages, cultures and nations are divinely mandated values in humanity's life.

The elimination of languages and nations was the intention of world empires (cf. Gen. 11). God's family consists of many nations and languages (cf. Act. 2:1-11; Rev. 7:9), yet they all speak the same language: the language of love.

In addition to the leaders who were voted into power professional organisations should also be granted an important role in making significant decisions for a nation.

A nation has the right to decide how many and what kind of *immigrant* it can receive. Immigrants are obliged to respect the material and cultural heritage of the country of adoption. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2241; Pope John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace, 2001; AAS 93 (2001) 241).

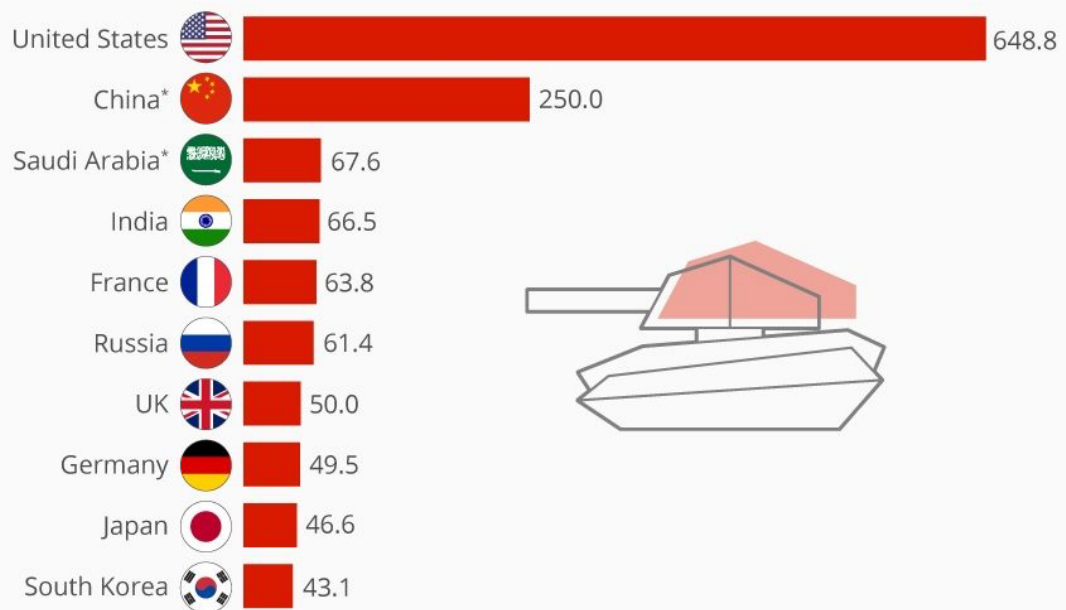
*God intended the Earth for all people*. If somewhere on Earth life becomes very difficult due to natural disaster, war, persecution, or environmental degradation, then people who live in the area have the right to find a new home somewhere else. For those fleeing from situations that seriously threaten their lives and human dignity, the countries of the Earth are obliged to offer a welcoming new homeland. „You shall not oppress a resident alien... for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” (Ex. 23:9)

## **13. Peace**

Peace is the fruit of *righteousness and love* (cf. Isa. 32:17). „War is never an appropriate way to resolve problems that arise between nations” (CSDC, 497). Soldiers and other government employees are obliged to disobey all inhumane orders.

## The Countries With the Biggest Military Budgets

Countries with the highest military expenditures in 2018 (in billion U.S. dollars)



\* Estimate  
Source: Sipri

statista

„*The international community as a whole* has the moral obligation to intervene on behalf of those groups whose very survival is threatened...” (CSDC, 506) *Sanctions* against the aggressor must be used in a targeted manner and for limited duration (CSDC, 507).

### 14. Solidarity

*Everyone is responsible for everyone* (Sollicitudo rei socialis, 36-37). Humanity can only be blissfully happy, if there is bread on all tables on Earth, if everyone has an opportunity to live a decent life. Our happiness depends on that of others, on their wellbeing.

The wider community as well as the individual has a special responsibility towards the poor and the weak. *The most important measure of the humanity of a society is how it treats the weak, the sick, the poor, and the elderly.* (Benedict XVI., Caritas in veritate). This is what Jesus was teaching through the parable of the good Samaritan: „Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He (the scribe) said, „The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, „Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:36-37)

It is an important goal to ensure that the proportion of social spending does not decrease in the budget of individual countries, that there are appropriate institutions to help those in need (psychiatric wards, nursing homes, scholarships for poor students, etc.), that states help families in terms of housing and livelihood.

### 15. Christianity as Contrast Society with a Prophetic Role

Christianity has a prophetic role, to be the leaven of the world. Human dignity, truth, and unconditional love are concepts with biblical roots. The incredible economical and scientific development in western society also originate from the Bible. *The first hospital open to all* (institution of Saint Basil the Great in Caesarea), *the first free schools* were Christian inventions.

Just as the life of the Early Church had a huge impact on human history, so had, at a later date the struggle of William Wilberforce and his companions, these enthusiastic Christian politicians, who fought for and achieved the abolition of slave trade in the British Empire.

We could also be leaven. This could be achieved by leading an authentic life, with special love for the poor, by bravely spreading the Gospel, as well as by ideas arising from Christian fantasy, the plan for building a more just, more humane world, with the help of great Christian economists and lawyers.

In this endeavour we must find friends among the representatives of the scientific, economic and public spheres, other religions and movements. Together we can achieve significant changes to create a more humane world, to help the poorest of the poor, to protect the created world, to support families, to ensure a value-centred education, and a culture open to God.