

## PRESERVING CLIMATE THROUGH DIALOGUE

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### Abstract

This theological reflexion explores climate as a common good and looks at how dialogue can contribute to climate preservation. The paper is structured around three main points.

The first point – *Raising awareness of the meaning of the common good* – starts with a question – how much awareness of the common good is present at this time of particularism and fragmentation of life. The central purpose is the actualization of the common good, »a central and unifying principle of social ethics« (*Laudato si'*, no. 156). Its fundamental role stems from its direct connection with global society, and, thus, the common good connects us all at a very fundamental level.

The second point – *Climate protection as a common good* – centres around the far-reaching consequences of climate change that create new forms of injustice and impoverishment of human beings on the planetary level. It is possible to encourage new forms of mutual collaboration and organization only through solidarity and shared preferential option for the poor. This ought to develop in the direction of thorough and cross-linked interdisciplinary discussions about the common good that will contribute to activities which preserve life on the planet and enable new generations to have a future.

The third point – *Dialogue as the way forward* – highlights the key significance of dialogue when considering the issue of championing the common good. The path that leads to the common good ought to reach the whole through the realisation of the integral development of all societal stakeholders, which at the same time, includes a step towards gathering around climate protection as a common good. In this context, social teaching of the Catholic Church, with an interdisciplinary dimension (cf. *Centesimus annus*, no. 59), enables collaboration in the service of the common good.

*Keywords:* common good, dialogue, climate protection, social teaching of the Church.

## Introduction

The starting point is twofold.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, there is a growing awareness of climate change, the climate crisis and its consequences. We can see that in the way people recognize the importance of those tasks which will go in the direction of alleviating and slowing down the trends we have been witnessing and which represent »one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day«.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there is a strong feeling of helplessness, a strong psychological demotivator that prevents shouldering responsibility and changing our behaviour, particularly in relation to political power. The language we use to discuss climate change frequently reflects resignation and inability to act in an integral approach with regard to the climate crisis. Scholarly discussions have also fostered a kind of conceptualisation of climate change as a social dilemma, which in turn has been associated with diminished efforts in reducing climate change.<sup>3</sup>

The significance of this is highlighted when we consider who is *actually* responsible for finding solutions and who are the actors that will put these solutions into practice. Although growing awareness of climate change has given new strength to environmental movements, which can be seen in the inclusion of new groups and networks, protests and demonstrations, many actors remain divided and demand different policies, regulations and practices. Similarly, interaction of political and non-political actors remains to be sufficiently implemented. Humanity is striving to identify the opinion-makers, the problem-solvers, the attitudes that prevail and the decision-makers. It is also striving to determine the strength of different interpretations and techniques or scales used to measure them.

This paper will explore responses to the climate crisis starting from an initiative launched by Pope Francis, in particular the social encyclical *Laudato si'* which offers a substantial boost and new incentives both in the detection of

<sup>1</sup> The paper is an elaboration of a presentation given at The Third International Conference of Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church (CTEWC), A Critical Time for Bridge-Building: Catholic Theological Ethics Today, Sarajevo, 26–29 July 2018. The presentation was held in Concurrent Sessions II, 2.8 Promoting Shared Responsibility.

<sup>2</sup> POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*. Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home (24. V. 2015), no. 25. Available from: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018). (hereinafter: LS).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Stuart Bryce CAPSTICK, Public Understanding of Climate Change as a Social Dilemma, in: *Sustainability*, (2013) 5, 3484–3501. Available from: <https://ideas.repec.org/a/gam/jsusta/v5y2013i8p3484-3501d27960.html> (Accessed 16. VII. 2019).

the problem and in finding a path to desired reactions, decisions and behaviours that will contribute to dissemination of best practices. In other words, Pope Francis has been very successful, both in terms of *Laudato si'* and in terms of other activities; he has encouraged constructive climate behaviour and has attracted attention of the global public, politicians and scientists, civil society and financial institutions. For his efforts, he has been honoured by former US vice president Al Gore, one of the leading climate change activists, in an interview given to Vatican News in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

The question that arises is what can we, as theologians and especially as social ethicists, do in this dimension? How much are we, as theologians and social ethicists, aware that it is our issue as well, or does the opinion prevail that it belongs solely to the previously mentioned actors? What is our contribution in this perspective? The intention of this paper is to follow in those footsteps, to present a theological reflexion along the lines of Pope Francis' incentive. The main aim is to develop three steps which, at present, are of the utmost importance. Those three steps are: firstly, to raise awareness of the meaning of the common good; secondly, to point to climate protection as a common good, and finally, to introduce dialogue as the way forward.

## 1. Raising awareness of the meaning of the common good

Theological-ethical reflection is essential in reaching a path that will allow us to overcome helplessness and social dilemmas that stand in the way of constructive efforts around climate change. Undoubtedly, there are various approaches,

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<sup>4</sup> »Pope Francis's leadership has been an inspiration to all of us across the world, particularly when it comes to his strong and repeated emphasis on solving the climate crisis. I am grateful for and in awe of the clarity of the moral force he embodies. He also speaks in the most powerful way about the most vulnerable among us – the poor – and helps all who listen to understand how they are uniquely affected by the climate crisis. In particular, his papal encyclical, *Laudato si'*, marked a crucial step for the Catholic church in leading the world to commit to addressing the climate crisis ahead of the Paris Agreement. In these and many other ways, the Pope has been at the forefront in leading the world toward constructive climate action. Virtually all of my Catholic colleagues and friends are thrilled to the marrow of their bones that he is providing this kind of spiritual leadership. As am I. More generally, spiritual teaching obviously plays a crucial role in communities around the world. The Pope is a model for leaders of other faith traditions to communicate the dangers posed by the climate crisis and our duty as stewards of God's creation to solve it«, Alessandro GISOTTI, Al Gore: Pope Francis a 'moral force' for solving climate crisis (4. VII. 2018), <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2018-07/al-gore-pope-francis-climate-crisis.html> (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

which indicate the importance of climate change both as a political and moral-ethical, but also a spiritual issue.

In contemplating the solution and thinking about what could provide strength and help in overcoming these situations of individual-societal-political helplessness and social dilemmas, the awareness of the importance and meaning of the common good comes up as an answer. In other words, the common good is a term that provides strength and can be a key to a solution and a way out. Why the common good? Because it belongs »to everyone and to each person, it is and remains ‘common’, because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future«.<sup>5</sup> The common good, because it holds within itself profound ethical-moral meaning, both for an individual person and for groups, it is common to all because »it is the good of ‘all of us’«<sup>6</sup>, it is the good of all people and the whole person, it covers the present and the future.

The question is – how do the world and Christians, understand the common good? In Church-theological discourse we frequently use words and terminology which our contemporaries either fail to understand or misunderstand all together. The common good is such an example. We might say that Catholic understanding of the common good is not aligned with the contemporary idea of the common good. To illustrate this point, let us look at decision-making. The political scene and the decision-making level are more of a reflection of particular and partisan political interest, rather than a reflection of consideration of the common good. On other levels of societal engagement and responsibility, it is also evident that decision-making is frequently rushed, hasty and cosmetic. Such short-termism takes up great strengths with weak or detrimental long-term effects.

The term »common good« is well known in Catholic teaching, but its understanding in social-political life is problematic. A good example of this is a frequent practice of identifying the common good with democratic freedoms and human rights, or with social and distributive policies, and with

<sup>5</sup> PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2. IV. 2004) no. 164, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018). (hereinafter: *Compendium*).

<sup>6</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in veritate. Encyclical letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth* (29. VI. 2009), no. 7, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018). (hereinafter: CV).

distribution of goods.<sup>7</sup> However, as soon as we point to those demands that, in Catholic understanding arise from the common good and which underscore that »no one is exempt from cooperating, according to each one's possibilities, in attaining it and developing it« (*Compendium* 167), the level of its acceptance decreases significantly. To put it more simply, Antonio Argandoña, Spanish emeritus professor of economics and business ethics recognizes that the principle of the common good – as understood in classical social and political thought and developed by the social teaching of the Church – has not been widely accepted by »secular« media and that, when it might be discussed it is done so from a narrow and impoverished vision of the common good, which in this sense remains inadequate.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, only deliberation of the wealthy and well established principle of the common good can help us to re-define decisions, tasks and forms of advocacy that would reflect »the constant ability and effort to seek the good of others as though it were one's own good« (*Compendium* 167).

The term and the principle of the common good has been fostered within social teaching of the Church, particularly following the Second Vatican Council. Therefore, such an approach to the common good holds a potential

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<sup>7</sup> Leonardo Boff defines it: »We know that civilized societies are built on three fundamental pillars: participation (the citizenry), social cooperation and respect for human rights. Together, they create the common good. But the common good has been thrown into the limbo of preoccupation with politics. It has been replaced by the concepts of profitability, flexibility, adaptability and competitiveness. The freedom of the citizen is replaced by the freedom of the market forces, the common good by the individual good, and cooperation by competition. Participation, cooperation and human rights guaranteed each person's existence with dignity. By denying those values, people's existence is no longer socially guaranteed, nor are their rights assured. As a result, everyone feels compelled to guarantee his or her own: employment, salary, car, family. Individualism, the greatest enemy of social coexistence, rules. Consequently, people are not encouraged to build something in common. The only thing that is left in common is the war of all against all, seeking individual survival«, Leonardo BOFF, *The Common Good was Thrown into Limbo* (23. II. 2015), <https://leonardoboff.wordpress.com/2015/02/23/the-common-good-was-thrown-into-limbo-2/> (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Antonio ARGANDONA, *The Common Good* (July, 2011), 8. Available from: <https://www.iese.edu/research/pdfs/DI-0937-E.pdf> (Accessed 4. VII. 2018). In public debates the concept of the common good has undergone various historical changes, from rejection of its previous meaning in liberalism at the end of the 18th century, through its ideological abuse by totalitarian states of the 20th century, to the most recent time when the concept of the common good has been used more often in relation individual – society – state – the world in which we live under various aspects: legal, demographic, economic, political. The concept of the common good has also found its way into legislature, including Croatian legislature. Interest in the common good in social debates reappears again at the beginning of the 1980s, in the debate between liberalism and communitarianism; cf. Ursula NOTHELLE-WILDFEUER, *Die Sozialprinzipien der Katholischen Soziallehre*, in: Anton RAUSCHER (ed.), *Handbuch der Katholischen Soziallehre*, Berlin, 2008, 144–145.

for raising awareness of the common good in the world. It might be argued that social teaching of the Church guards the common good. Without going into the history of Catholic thought and the development of the principle of the common good,<sup>9</sup> we ought to emphasise that discussions on the common good tend to

<sup>9</sup> The concept of the common good (lat. *bonum commune*), in all its forms, has had a long history. From Plato and Aristotle through Tomas Aquinas the concept of the common good (*bonum commune*) entered into the theological social thought where it had a specific development until the end of the 19th century, so that today it is, next to solidarity and subsidiarity, one of the fundamental principles determining the relationship between an individual and society. One of the greatest social ethicists, Oswald von Nell-Breuning, calls these three principles »laws of building a society«; cf. Oswald von NELL-BREUNING, *Baugesetze der Gesellschaft. Gegenseitige Verantwortung – Hilfreicher Beistand*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1968. In Aristotle's Greek polis the common good was closely related to the idea of fairness. In that context, the common good represents the function and the goal of a political community and in it the needs, the interests, and happiness of all citizens are realised through virtuous and just life; cf. Werner VEITH, *Gemeinwohl*, in: Marianne HEIMBACH-STEINS (ed.), *Christliche Sozialethik. Ein Lehrbuch*, Regensburg, 2004, 272–273. For Thomas Aquinas (13th century) the common good is not exhausted in the inner-worldly, the immanent as the good of a political community, but instead it points towards the transcendent, i.e. the human nature, which can be finally realised only in God. Since the end of the 19th century and the first social encyclical of Pope Leo XIII *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *bonum commune* has been in the centre of numerous social documents of the Church, and the context to which many issues such as the relation towards the state, society, and economy have been framed. The theme of *bonum commune* has been especially pursued by German social ethicists such as Gustav Gundlach, Oswald von Nell-Breuning and Joseph Höffner. In the social encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (1961), Pope John XXIII relates the common good with developing countries and, therefore, gives it a global dimension. In the context of just pay, he emphasises a need to take into account »what the international common good demands, i.e. the common good of the universal family of nations of every kind, both large and small«; JOHN XXIII, *Mater et magistra. Encyclical on Christianity and Social Progress* (15. V. 1961), no. 71, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018). The Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) describes the common good as »the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment«. Today, the common good »takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family«; SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (7. XII. 1965), no. 26, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const.html) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018). After the Second Vatican Council the common good has become increasingly important, as one of the main principles of social teaching of the Church, in both ecclesial social documents and in discussions among theologians. All of this is evident in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2005), which summarises the Christian social thought and emphasises that: »The principle of the common good – to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning – stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people... The common good does not consist in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains 'common', because it is indivisible and because only together is it possible

remain within Church-theological sphere. What does this mean for theologians and social ethicists? It is our specific duty to raise awareness of the importance and the meaning of the common good, in order to come up with the ways of protecting and promoting the common good, on both local and global levels.

It is about raising awareness of the common good in society. However, how do we do it? In fact, how do we make ourselves, others, those around us, our families, societies, the world we live in and work in, aware? This is a great and a complex duty. We have witnessed how increasingly important human rights awareness has become in civil and democratic political cultures. Human experience, but also research carried out worldwide, show us that awareness of human rights increases potential for democratization in every country. These results indicate that development of this awareness does not depend so much on social demographics (although there are some differences among nations) as it does on political culture – support for democracy and its values.

If we are to save what is left of climate is it not necessary to look for ways of strengthening awareness of the common good now? The awareness of the common good implies a process of emerging from the unconscious to conscious and hence it also implies historical development, a social dimension of life; it requires efforts in creating content which will lead to a departure from a dominant selfish awareness which reduces common sense to calculated utilitarian dimension towards an awareness of the common good as the only guarantee for »attaining the ultimate ends of the person and the universal common good of the whole of creation« (*Compendium* 170). The Church's social teaching is unique in that it constantly reminds us of the fact of crucial importance: there is no recipe, there is only a path towards generating processes and the Catholic Church bears a distinct role and responsibility.

There are two characteristics which should not be overlooked. The first characteristic is that the common good begins in our environment. As Croatian theologians and social ethicists involved in the common good, we have the experience, as Pope Francis is also well aware, »of the fact that secularism is trying to banish Christianity from public discourse and to make it irrelevant«. <sup>10</sup> In this context, we have been having more and more problems in Croatia, even in raising awareness of the common good. A good example of this is the experience with the Croatian Science Foundation, an umbrella

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to attain it, increase it and safeguard its effectiveness, with regard also to the future« (*Compendium*, no. 164).

<sup>10</sup> PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *The Global Common Good: towards a more Inclusive Economy*. Casina Pio IV, Vatican City 11–12 July 2014, Vatican City, 2016, LII.

institution for the development and promotion of science, which has failed to recognise the importance of the common good and it has failed to fund the project »The Common Good in the Croatian State and Society«, headed by the Department of the Social Teaching of the Church of the Catholic Faculty of Theology, University in Zagreb.<sup>11</sup> The other characteristic is the awareness that the common good directs towards the universal, global and planetary level. Thus, it is important to build up global, scientific and cultural stands of Catholic theology, social ethics and social teaching of the Church, to allow us to firmly outline the path towards the realization of the common good.

Likewise, awareness that each individual and each institution plays an irreplaceable part in the possible promotion of the common good of the whole human family will be of great benefit. When Pope Francis speaks about processes which will build peoples he describes them as »an ongoing process in which every new generation must take part: a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and a willingness to achieve this through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter«.<sup>12</sup> The first step directly and reflexively leads to the second step with the purpose of protecting climate as a common good.

## 2. Climate protection as a common good

Back in 2001 American bishops had raised the issue of climate change from the perspective of the common good and in doing so they pointed out: »Global climate is by its very nature a part of the planetary commons. Responses to global climate change should reflect our interdependence and common responsibility for the future of our planet.«<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb through the work of the Department of the Social Teaching of the Church ran two research project on solidarity (»Theological Funding of Solidarity in Croatian Society« – 0203007, 2002 – 2006) and subsidiarity (»Subsidiarity in Croatian Society« – 203-1941533-0732, 2007 – 2013), directed by prof. Stjepan Baloban. Based on these experiences, a third study on the common good was proposed. It was subsequently not accepted by the Croatian Science Foundation, citing, in our point of view, unconvincing reasons.

<sup>12</sup> POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium. Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (24. XI. 2013), no. 220, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

<sup>13</sup> THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good* (15. VI. 2001), <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/global-climate-change-a-plea-for-dialogue-prudence-and-the-common-good.cfm> (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).



Fourteen years later in his encyclical Pope Francis defined climate as a common good »belonging to all and meant for all« (LS 23). Furthermore, he has continuously warned of extremely dangerous situations threatened by climate change which pose »a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods« (LS 25). That is why we speak about the climate crisis as one of the greatest challenges to humanity which according to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, »has become a dominant moral and ethical issue for society«.<sup>14</sup>

And because of the presence of these factors of danger, on the global level there have been many environmental movements, initiatives and summits. Scientists and research provide us with data and facts. It is encouraging to hear that: »There is still time to mitigate unmanageable climate changes and repair ecosystem damages, provided we reorient our attitude toward nature and, thereby, toward ourselves.«<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, it is necessary that all peoples align their particular interests with the common good and contribute equitably to global solutions because experience teaches us that: »The search for the common good and the voices of poor people and poor countries sometimes are neglected.«<sup>16</sup> Pope Francis and ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew express faith that true and lasting solutions are impossible »unless the response is concerted and collective, unless the responsibility is shared and accountable, unless we give priority to solidarity and service«.<sup>17</sup>

Where are the factors of danger positioned in the context of the common good and common responsibility? How much is the common good threatened by all of this on both the global and individual level? How aware are we that the climate crisis is dangerous for each and every one of us, each individual, for peoples, and parts of the world? Moreover, how aware are we that climate represents a global good and that because there is no way of limiting access to

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<sup>14</sup> THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, *Climate Change and the Common Good. A Statement Of The Problem And The Demand For Transformative Solutions* (April 2015), 1, <https://www.cser.ac.uk/media/uploads/files/climate-change-and-the-common-good.pdf> (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*.

<sup>17</sup> POPE FRANCIS AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW, *Joint Message for the World Day of Prayer for Creation* (1. IX. 2017), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2017/documents/papa-francesco\\_20170901\\_messaggio-giornata-cura-creato.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20170901_messaggio-giornata-cura-creato.html) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

climate, each human activity affects it? In this context and even more specifically, Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff asserts: »Who will see to the common good of planet Earth? What world organ is confronting this situation that destroys the planetary common good? Who will care for the common interests of more than seven billion people?«<sup>18</sup>

Any change in attitude and any true and lasting solution is possible only if we raise awareness of climate protection as a common good and invest common efforts in finding solutions to protect that common good.

### 3. Dialogue as the way forward

The climate crisis as a global problem requires us to take a step forward and to rally around the common good. When we gather together our common responsibility will, in the words of Pope Francis, »motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world« (LS 216), and in order to do so we must look for answers that inspire the cultivation and development of the common good in people. In that sense, Pope Francis reminds us: »We need words that can reach the minds and hearts, and not shouts aimed at the stomach. Pleasing the audience is not enough; let us not follow the circus of indignation that often conceals great egoisms; let us devote ourselves with passion to education, that is to 'drawing out' the best from each person for the good of all.«<sup>19</sup>

In the words of François Houtart, the author of a very significant text *From 'Common Goods' to The 'Common Good of Humanity'*: »Achieving this cannot be the work of just a few intellectuals who think on behalf of others, but a collective work (...) nor can its dissemination be the exclusive responsibility of one social organization or one avant-garde party monopolizing the truth, but rather of many anti-systemic forces, fighting for the Common Good of Humanity. Of course, many theoretical and strategic issues remain to be studied, discussed and tried out.«<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Leonardo BOFF, *The Common Good was Thrown into Limbo*. »In a recent article in the magazine *Science*, (01/15/2015) 18 scientists list the nine Planetary Boundaries, four of which have been already exceeded (climate, integrity of the biosphere, use of the soil, biogeochemical fluxes-phosphorous and nitrogen). The others are in an advanced state of degradation. Just exceeding those four can make the Earth less hospitable for millions of people, and for biodiversity«, *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> ANDREA TORNIELLI, *The Pope addresses the Bologna university students* (2. X. 2017), <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/the-passion-for-the-common-good/> (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

<sup>20</sup> François HOUTART, *From 'Common Goods' to The 'Common Good of Humanity'* (November 2011), [https://www.cetri.be/IMG/pdf/From\\_common\\_goods\\_to\\_the\\_common\\_good\\_of\\_humanity\\_EN.pdf](https://www.cetri.be/IMG/pdf/From_common_goods_to_the_common_good_of_humanity_EN.pdf) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

This was also affirmed by American bishops in 2001 when they demonstrated that Catholic social teaching directs to and calls for greater and more generous engagement in the name of the common good for climate protection, and that: »The common good is built up or diminished by the quality of public debate. With its scientific, technological, economic, political, diplomatic, and religious dimensions, the challenge of global climate change may be a basic test of our democratic processes and political institutions. (...) These efforts should not be demeaned or distorted by disinformation or exaggeration. Serious dialogue should not be jeopardized by public relations tactics that fan fears or pit nations against one another. Leaders in every sector should seek to build a scientifically based consensus for the common good; avoid merely representing their own particular interests, industries, or movements; and act responsibly to protect future generations and the weak.«<sup>21</sup>

The significance of this is reflected in the unique duty of theology to direct efforts towards dialogue-building. The challenges before us are great. So far, we have not developed a more extensive interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and other sciences concerning the climate crisis. Social teaching of the Church plays an important part in this interdisciplinary dialogue as it carries a distinct interdisciplinary dimension which has been reflected most notably in social teachings of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Both Popes have demonstrated that social teaching of the Church realizes this duty both in dialogue with various other disciplines and in dialogue with individuals and groups »with specific responsibilities in the areas of politics, economics and social life, at both the national and international levels«.<sup>22</sup> Social teaching of the Church is able to connect various social factors in this perspective and in doing so it is able to realise extremely efficient tasks. Benedict XVI gives us a definition to confirm social teaching of the Church as »caritas in veritate in re sociali« (CV 5).

It is therefore the duty of social ethicists to offer dialogue and discussions with the purpose of raising awareness of climate as a common good. In this fashion the subject of dialogue and discussions are all those recent global efforts which have focused on raising awareness and clear articulation of the

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<sup>21</sup> THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*.

<sup>22</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Centesimus annus. Encyclical letter on the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum* (1. V. 1991), no. 60, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_01051991\\_centesimus-annus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

principle and legal foundation for the development of new lifestyles – the concept of common concern of humankind.<sup>23</sup>

Within this concept a special place belongs to climate care and climate protection. By bringing together the principle of the common good and the principle of common concern of humankind we will establish a stronger connection between theory and practice, learning and life. However, this tremendously dynamic process demands systematic and comprehensive vision. Therefore, all efforts around A Universal Declaration on the Common Good of the Earth and Humanity are praiseworthy<sup>24</sup> and open the space for another important dimension of dialogue between social ethicists and everyone else.

Two most recent documents, fundamental for the future of Church-educational institutions, Apostolic constitution *Veritatis gaudium* (2017)<sup>25</sup> and

<sup>23</sup> »The concept of common concern of humankind has never been articulated in detail in any legal instrument. From 1990 – 1991, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) hosted a group of legal experts to examine the concept. The report of the final meeting of the group noted that ‘the concept...was sufficiently flexible to warrant its general acceptance as providing a broad basis for the consideration of environmental issues... and should relate both to environment and to development’. Since 1992, there has been only limited attention to the concept until recently. Scholarly writing has proposed that access to and quality of fresh water should be viewed as a common concern of humankind, and there are incipient efforts to explore its application more broadly in other fields«, Edith BROWN WEISS, *Nature and the Law: The Global Commons and the Common Concern of Humankind*, in: PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, *Sustainable Humanity, Sustainable Nature: Our Responsibility*, Extra Series 41, Vatican City, 2014, 12–13. Available from: <http://www.pas.va/content/dam/accademia/pdf/es41/es41-brownweiss.pdf> (accessed 4. VII. 2018). »The ingredients constituting the concept of ‘common concern of mankind’ lay in ‘involvement of all countries, all societies, and all classes of people within countries and societies, long-term temporal dimension, encompassing present as well as future generations, and some sort of sharing of burdens of environmental protection’«, R.S. PATHAK, Introduction, in: *Environmental Change and International Law: New Challenges and Dimensions*, United Nations University, 1992. Available from: <http://www.nzdl.org/gsdImod?e=d-00000-00---off-0aedl-00-0---0-10-0---0-direct-10---4-----0-11-11-en-50---20-about---00-0-1-00-0-4---0-0-11-10-0utfZz-8-10&cl=CL1.1&d=HASH01e262d576f8179e3bed95ea.72.5&gt=1> (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Miguel D’ESCOTO – Leonardo BOFF, *The reinvention of the United Nations, an indispensable organization*. Available from: <http://servicioskoinonia.org/logos/articulo.php?num=118>; Birgit DAIBER – François HOUTART (eds.), *A postcapitalist Paradigm: The Common Good of Humanity*, 2012, [https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls\\_uploads/pdfs/sonst\\_publicationen/common-goood.pdf](https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/sonst_publicationen/common-goood.pdf) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Veritatis Gaudium. Apostolic Constitution On Ecclesiastical Universities And Faculties* (8. XII. 2017), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco\\_costituzione-ap\\_20171208\\_veritatis-gaudium.html#\\_ftn27](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco_costituzione-ap_20171208_veritatis-gaudium.html#_ftn27) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018). (hereinafter: VG).

a document published by the Congregation for Catholic Education *Educating to fraternal humanism* (16. IV. 2017)<sup>26</sup>, go in that direction. These documents implore Church-educational institutions to deepen the dialogue with various scientific areas. *Veritatis gaudium*, for Church-educational institutions the most important document, calls for a development of a global network of universities and faculties that would offer »a bold cultural revolution« (VG 3, LS 114). In other words, the Catholic Church encourages Church-educational institutions to take a step forward towards the others and the diverse, where in »responsible freedom and mutual transparency« (VG 5), we will build relationships directed to »a radical paradigm shift« (VG 3), which bears »a great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge« (VG 6, LS 202) of openness towards the others, relationship revival and history-building in line with authentic culture of encounter. One of the building blocks of that interaction will be intergenerational ethics,<sup>27</sup> as an extensive field of dialogue. Both are expected to become key criteria in quality assessment of educational institutions.<sup>28</sup> That intergenerational ethics will create sustainability relationships »with respect to the needs of future generations«,<sup>29</sup> and »a relationship of solidarity with the generations that came before us«.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, »a more responsible approach to climate issue is the promotion of 'authentic development', which represents a balanced view of human progress and includes respect for nature and social well-being«.<sup>31</sup> A more responsible approach will promote a culture of dialogue which »does not simply suggest an exchange of views«, with a grammar able to »build bridges and... to find answers to the challenges of our time«.<sup>32</sup> A »grammar of dia-

<sup>26</sup> Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION (for Educational Institutions), *Educating to fraternal humanism. Building a »civilization of love«. 50 years after Populorum progressio. Guidelines* (16. IV. 2017), [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_20170416\\_educare-umanesimo-solidale\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20170416_educare-umanesimo-solidale_en.html) (Accessed 4. VII. 2018). (hereinafter: *Educating to fraternal humanism*).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Lawrence B. SOLUM, *To Our Children 's Children 's Children: The Problems of Intergenerational Ethics* (2001). Available from: <https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.hr/&httpsredir=1&article=1878&context=acpub> (Accessed 4. VII. 2018).

<sup>28</sup> »The themes developed in university courses, to that effect, should be focused on a key criterion for quality assessment: sustainability with respect to the needs of future generations«, in: *Educating to fraternal humanism*, no. 22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 23.

<sup>31</sup> THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good*.

<sup>32</sup> *Educating to fraternal humanism*, no. 12.

logue« is rooted in »an ethical framework of requirements and attitudes for formation, as well as social objectives«. <sup>33</sup>

A culture of dialogue is built into us through education for solidary humanism, and the solidarity that we are invited to has been facing a challenge: »Since 'the problem is that we still lack the culture needed to confront this crisis... and we need leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations'«. <sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

Surely, one of the most important features of Pope Francis' pontificate is that he encourages reasoned and systematic discussions. In relation to the climate crisis the latest example is the most recent international conference »Saving Our Common Home and The Future of Life on Earth« organized by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development to mark the 3rd anniversary of *Laudato si'*. <sup>35</sup> In his speech, Pope Francis pointed to the importance of participation of all societal stakeholders in efforts to improve the culture and the practice of integral ecology – including political power, civil society, economic and financial institutions, religious institutions and organised religions, the youth and indigenous peoples.

Finally, it is only people who are capable of bringing about change with the strength of the common good. It is the change that would allow the human person to find itself once again, to come to (cf. Lk 22,32) and to discover its bond with the overall dynamics of life on Earth. The latest Church documents, which primarily offer orientation to Church-educational institutions, advocate dialogue with the world of science, and the entire societal reality in general, in order to realise that unique and integral vision of knowledge as the only one capable of dealing with the issue of the common good and the climate crisis. The issue of climate change is, in essence, an issue of great injustice and uneven development. Therefore, the matter of integral development as defined

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* »The ethical requirements for dialogue are freedom and equality: the participants in the dialogue must be free from their contingent interests and must be prepared to recognize the dignity of all parties. These attitudes are supported by the consistency with one's own specific universe of values«, *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 21; LS no. 53.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Saving Our Common Home and the Future of Life on Earth. International Conference on the 3rd Anniversary of Laudato Si'*, Vatican City, 5–6 July 2018, <https://laudato-si-conference.com/> (Accessed 16. VII. 2019).

by Magisterium starting from Pope Paul VI all the way to Pope Francis, has been exceptionally significant for climate protection.

Theologians and social ethicists are also members of diverse peoples. Together with our Church-educational institutions and in dialogue with other religions and religious communities we can be pilots in the journey towards the promotion of the common good and climate protection as a common good. Global networking opportunities bind us to give our contribution and thus build bridges among ourselves and with the others, diverse from us.

### *Sažetak*

#### **DIJALOGOM PREMA OČUVANJU KLIME**

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*Teološka refleksija se bavi pitanjem klime kao općega dobra i razmatra kako dijalog može doprinijeti očuvanju klime. Rad je strukturiran oko tri glavne točke.*

*U prvoj točki rada – Posvijestiti značenje općega dobra – polazi se od pitanja koliko je u vremenu partikularizama i fragmentizacije života prisutna svijest o općemu dobru. Središnja je nakana aktualizacija općega dobra, načela »koje ima središnju i ujedinjujuću ulogu u socijalnoj etici« (Laudato si', br. 156). Temeljno mjesto koje mu se pridaje proizlazi iz njegove direktne povezanosti s globalnim društvom, a samim time predstavlja i ono temeljno što nas povezuje.*

*U središtu druge točke rada – Zaštita klime kao opće dobro – nalazi se dalekosežnost posljedica klimatskih promjena koje stvaraju nove oblike nepravdi i osiromašenja ljudi na planetarnoj razini. Tek u solidarnom i zajedničkom opredjeljenju za siromašne moguće je poticati nove oblike zajedničke suradnje i organizacije. One će ići u smjeru temeljitih i umreženih interdisciplinarnih rasprava o općem dobru kako bi se pridonijelo djelovanjima koja će sačuvati život planete i omogućiti budućnost novim generacijama.*

*Treća točka rada – Dijalog kao put – pokazuje da je značenje dijaloga danas od ključne važnosti i kada se promišlja pitanje puta do ostvarenja općega dobra. To je put koji cjelinu dohvaća ostvarenjem cjelovitoga razvoja svih dijelova društva, te koji istovremeno obuhvaća iskorak prema okupljanju oko zaštite klime kao općeg dobra. U tom kontekstu socijalni nauk Katoličke crkve, koji posjeduje interdisciplinarnu dimenziju (usp. Centesimus annus, br. 59), omogućuje suradnju u službi općega dobra.*

*Ključne riječi: opće dobro, dijalog, zaštita klime, socijalni nauk Crkve.*