

***Ciudadania, migraciones y religion* by Fr. Julio L. Martinez, S.J.**

**LAUDATIO**

The first of the two ex aequo winners of the award “Economy and Society” is Fr. Julio L. Martinez’s *Ciudadania, migraciones y religion*. The three words in the title identify the three pressing problems of our society on which the author meditates. *Citizenship*, i.e. how a citizen’s relationship to his/her country should be correctly viewed; *Religion*, i.e. what contributions can religions give to social and political life; *Migrations*, i.e. how should citizenship and religion be declined in a multicultural society such as ours, increasingly made up of people who for different reasons have left their mother country? I will just point out some of the main points Fr. Martinez makes.

As regards the idea of citizenship, he criticizes two widely accepted concepts. Liberal thought suggests that the individual is but an atom which could live even outside a community. On the other hand, communitarian thought risks giving absolute priority to the community, isolating members of one group from those of other groups. Prof. Martinez favors the republican model which fully recognizes man’s social nature and believes that each citizen, while respectful of a fundamental consensus, can contribute to the building of a community. But he goes one step further and asks us to widen the traditional concept of citizenship: we are not just citizens of a given country, we are at the same time citizens of the world, brothers of all our fellow men and women.

The second subject is the relationship between Church and State, faith and politics. Here too Fr. Martinez criticizes two widely accepted theories. On one side liberal thought reduces faith to a private matter that has no influence on public life. On the other side fundamentalists believe that society should be regulated exclusively in accordance with faith’s precepts. Prof. Martinez supports a healthy secularity of the State, that looks at religions as an indispensable ethic source of social values. True, religions too can degenerate into violence, but the quest to give a meaning to life is first of all a common bond. And thanks to religion man can become aware of his dignity, an indispensable condition towards respecting the dignity of others.

The third subject is immigration. While until recently our societies were largely uniform, often characterized by an official religion, today’s societies are multicultural. Every year millions of people leave their mother country for a foreign land whose culture and religion are often different from theirs. This situation is not always easy, but Prof. Martinez believes that the challenge of diversity can offer a providential opportunity to bring about God’s project of a universal community. Admittedly it is not easy for people with different cultures to live peacefully together. It does not come automatically and so the faithful, whatever their religion, are encouraged to engage in mutual dialogue, beginning with the little gestures of everyday’s life. This intercultural and interreligious dialogue will force no one to disown his or her identity but will bring change and enrichment to everybody. It will demand that citizens of the host country be ready to accept immigrants and immigrants be willing to integrate, learning the language and complying with the

customs and laws of the host country. The family has a fundamental role in this process as vehicle of humanization for individuals and societies.

*Ciudadania, migraciones y religion* opens new horizons to the reader. It does neither deny the problem's complexity nor offer simplistic solutions but helps confront reality with a more mature approach.