

**Reinhard Cardinal Marx, Chairman of the Jury of the International "Society and Economy"  
Award of the *Centesimus Annus - Pro Pontifice Foundation*:  
International "Economy and Society" Award Ceremony of the *Centesimus annus – Pro  
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*Spoken word applies!*

As chairman of the jury of the International "Society and Economy" award of the *Centesimus Annus - Pro Pontifice Foundation*, I am happy to present today on this solemn occasion the winners of the third edition of the award.

Among more than 57 works submitted from 12 countries and 5 continents and written in 6 different languages, it is my special pleasure to announce that this time the jury has chosen a German text as the winner of the prestigious International Award:

- **Markus Vogt**, *Prinzip Nachhaltigkeit. Ein Entwurf aus theologisch-ethischer Perspektive*, Monaco, Oekom in 2013.

This third edition of the International Award also includes two new prizes for journalists. These two awards show the Foundation's recognition of the importance of journalism in disseminating the Church's social doctrine. The jury chose the following two from among the nominations from seven countries:

- The first of the two journalists is French **Father Dominique Greiner** whose prize-winning blog "*La doctrine social sur le fil*", is published on the "La Croix" website.

- **Burkhard Schäfers**, the second prize winner, is German, and received the award for his radio show "*Oswald von Nell-Breuning - Was von der katholischen Soziallehre geblieben ist*".

Now a few words about the winners.

**I.**

**Markus Vogt**, born in 1962 in Freiburg, is married with 3 children. After studying theology and philosophy in Munich and Jerusalem, he worked for some years as an ecology expert for the German government. Then from 1998 to 2007 he was professor of Christian Social Ethics at the

Salesian Philosophical-Theological University in Benediktbeuern. Since 2007 he is professor of Christian Social Ethics at the University of Munich, where he is now also Dean of the Theological Faculty.

Vogt has been studying sustainability for more than 20 years and can be considered one of the leading experts on this subject, which is also the focus of Pope Francis's recent Encyclical, *Laudato si*. His book contains, so to speak, the range of Professor Vogt's research to date. It was first published in 2009, and the third edition was published in 2013. This circumstance, quite exceptional for a book on the social doctrine of the Church, demonstrates the importance of the text.

The principle of sustainability is no stranger to traditional economics. Throughout the centuries there have been principles that take into account the consequences of human action on the environment, for example by regulating the use of woods and forests. Modern technologies however have increased our possibilities and therefore the consequences of our actions on the world, with the result that today's problems have a much broader range requiring a reconsideration on a global scale.

One of the most evident symptoms is surely the climatic changes which many try to deny despite all of the evidence. Vogt affirms that it is clearly difficult to attribute the cause of a single extreme meteorological event, like a single hurricane, to global warming, and that it is furthermore impossible to explain global warming with a single cause. It is however impossible to deny the phenomena as such and this challenge must be confronted with sense of responsibility in order to do what is in our power to reduce it.

Markus Vogt suggests we reconsider the connections between the three essential and interdependent facets of human life: the economy, ecology and the social dimension. With this thesis Vogt is in total agreement with Pope Francis who invites us in the fourth chapter of *Laudato si* to begin to think in terms of an "integral ecology", that is to say, an "environmental, economic and social ecology". In the long run, the economy will not flourish without a healthy environment and without resolving the problem of poverty. But this is equally true for the two other dimensions: it will be impossible to safeguard the environment without a functioning economy and without offering everyone the opportunity to develop their gifts. In a similar way, the problem of poverty cannot be tackled with a weak economy and without proper care of the environment.

According to Vogt an example of a society where ecology, economy and social affairs were well coordinated was the Jewish society of the Old Testament. This was a society where men, respecting

certain rules concerning the environment and the poor (for instance the sabbatical year in which the fields were kept fallow and debts were forgiven), were able to extract even from poor soil enough food to avoid the famine which recurred elsewhere over several centuries.

Vogt rejects the view that would make ecology a new doctrine of salvation. The person, not the environment, is at centre of the Church's social doctrine and the importance of the environment stems from the needs of the person. Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato si'*: "It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted (91)."

We cannot resolve the enormous problems facing today's world if we focus on only one of the three aforementioned elements. What is required therefore is a process of discernment capable of spelling out the connections between the various issues. Vogt's book addresses the issue of sustainability from different ethical, theological, scientific, sociological and even political perspectives. Our present challenge is to find new ways of thinking, which also, for example, would shoulder the responsibility for future generations (the "solidarity" principle), that consider nature as creation, that is, as a gift and not merely as the embodiment of resources to be used for industrial production.

Vogt does not simply present a solution which would be dropped from on high. It is true that politics plays a key role in addressing the ecological issue and that the competences of international institutions must also be strengthened. At the same time, it is not entirely a political problem. Indeed, Vogt underlines the importance of the subsidiarity principle, pointing out that many steps must be taken at local level by the intermediary bodies that form society. In this respect as well, we can detect a great agreement between Vogt and Pope Francis, who invites every actor in the global arena to make his contribution to the solution of the ecological problems: international institutions, national and local politics, without excluding the private contribution of every single human being (cfr. chapter 5 of *Laudatio si'*).

What is the role of the Church in the search for sustainability? Vogt suggests that she accepts sustainability as one of the fundamental principles of her social doctrine alongside personality, solidarity and subsidiarity. In fact, he considers sustainability a modern-day development of the traditional principle of the common good.

To sum up: reading Vogt's book is an enriching experience. He does not wish to endorse a unilateral way of thinking, but knows how to take even-handed and unbiased positions in the face of radical attitudes. Nonetheless, he also indicates some concrete ways to improve our world.

## II. 1.)

The first of the two award-winning journalists is **Father Dominique Greiner**. Born in 1963 in Toul (Meurthe et Moselle). Father Greiner studied economics and theology and teaches moral, social and political theology at the Theological Faculties of the Catholic Institute of Lille and Paris. He is a member of the Assumptionist Order (Augustinians of the Assumption) and editor-in-chief of the "La Croix" newspaper.

Fr. Dominique Greiner's award-winning blog "*La doctrine sociale sur le fil*" was started in 2013 and specializes in the Church's social doctrine. It includes more than one hundred articles published in "La Croix" in recent years. The blog articles can be subdivided into six main areas:

- 1) Ecology and ways of life;
- 2) The poor and migrants;
- 3) Economics, market, enterprise and employment;
- 4) Politics and the common good;
- 5) War, peace, terrorism and
- 6) Miscellaneous.

The blog uses the Internet to offer those wishing to widen their interest in the Church's social doctrine, a rich and invaluable tool vis-à-vis "a more just, more fraternal and more supportive society".

## 2.)

The second award-winning journalist is **Burkhard Schäfers** who studied political science, communication sciences, and European ethnology in Freiburg and Munich. Today he works in Munich as a journalist for public radio (Deutschlandfunk and Deutschlandradio Kultur), for various newspapers and some online media. He is director of studies of the Institut zur Förderung publizistischen Nachwuchses (Institute for the advancement of new generations of publicists).

The 15-minute award-winning radio show presents the thought of Oswald von Nell-Breuning (1890-1991), one of the major protagonists of the Church's twentieth century social doctrine. Von Nell-Breuning was one of the main authors of Pius XI's 1931 *Quadragesimo Anno*. During his long life, he recognised the need to start from facts, rather than from rules and regulations, in order to understand the social reality. During Schäfers's broadcast, several interviewees illustrate the principles of subsidiarity, personality and solidarity. The contribution concludes with some reflections on the relevance of the Church's social doctrine in today's Germany.