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“Business Initiative in the Fight against Poverty. The Refugee Crisis: Our Challenge.” (CAPP Conference 2016)

SESSION 4: Is it possible to make a business decision inspired by Christian faith? (Session 4 DDr. Thomas Rusche / Dr. Nikolaus von Bomhard)

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Introduction:

Catholic Social Teaching has matured over one-hundred years of development. It presents itself as a body of teaching grounded in principles with great relevance for practical life and for guiding a business in its ethical decision making. At the same time, developments in theological discussions of the last thirty years have increasingly taken into account the applicability and practicality of this teaching. From this it follows that Catholic Social Teaching is not something closed in upon itself, but rather something that is in the process of increasing development. In this regard, there are several German theologians whose names could be mentioned. Furthermore, the development of doctrine is always dependent upon the teachings of papal encyclicals. Pope Francis, and his predecessors, have given important contributions in this area.

The new situation in European-Asian politics also demands on the part of the Church a sophisticated reflection and a Christian response. In the current climat has been clear that a greater flexibility is needed. Europe is neither a fortress nor a completely open field, but rather a temporary refuge for the refugees. Efforts to care for the refugees of war must be concerned to ensure that these men and women obtain the knowledge necessary and appropriate skills for the reconstruction of their homeland and then they should be able to implement this knowledge upon their return to their ravaged country.

Economic refugees, who may also exist in Europe, has to be evaluated differently. Germany must remain an attractive country for “innovators” coming from foreign lands (such as those who came to Germany from Spain and Italy shortly after the economic crisis in 2008). Here, “thoughtful immigration” is about helping the newly arrived to be integrated quickly and purposefully in the work process. Entrepreneurs in Germany need and want teachable youth for the economic good of their own companies.

1. What are the “new challenges”?

Europe and the world stand before decisive and profound new challenges. New regional conflicts are appearing throughout the world which have an impact on world politics and another challenge is the cooling of the economy in important regions. This brings new challenges, which should be seen as an opportunity to set a course for Catholic Social Teaching and its relevance in all different contexts. In particular, the following “new challenges” should be mentioned.

- There is a partial failure or end of the neo-capitalist form of economy with and through the banking crisis (2008).
- There is a discernible loss of trust in institutions (state-sponsored as well as ecclesial but also athletic, as the current discussions about FIFA and UEFA reveal).



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- There are sharply increasing, world-wide migrations of refugees from war and other crisis areas (Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria), which over the course of several years will extend also to Europe.
- Through the emerging changes in climate, more movement of refugees will be added on account of poverty and environmental changes.
- Moreover, additional economic refugees are to be expected, who are drawn by the attraction of a well-organized economic system and quality of life.
- Globalization and the new means of communications permit even “the poorest” to become informed about the situation of the global economy
- Increasing digitalization will bring about significant changes in the industrial process (industry 4.0 - collective term for technologies and concepts of value chain organization).
- Demographic changes will bring Europe, if it wants to maintain its social systems, to become a net immigration continent or to think about other ways of avoiding a collapse of social systems.

From these changes emerge several risks, which could be divided into several categories:

- In the short term, a political decision should immediately outline a path to a new, diversified source of new forms of energy (Energienmix), which would allow countries to go without (or reduce) fossil fuels. This has the consequence that whole branches of industry will undergo a dramatic change.
- Challenges in the one year perspective in political finance (monetary policy: Switzerland, trade embargo: Russia).
- Looking further into the future, we can see five-year challenges:
 - Products like wind energy are quickly reaching the threshold of viability.
 - It must be anticipated an increased of voluntary relocations, rationalisation of plant or product but also enforced by global economic shifts of power.
- This results in serious challenges for employees, which result in:
 - A lack of life-long activity in a single trade, since a continuous change of individual personnel is expected. The culture of a job for life is finished
 - A change in dealings with employees: the rise of a society governed by consensus also in business.
- Acceleration of processes in the economy.

2. What is a *business decision*?

With this question, we are talking about how the “fight against poverty” can be implemented. By “business decision” we mean those company decisions which significantly influence the company itself. Here the following measures are mentioned.

- Taking business decisions such that the long-term and sustainable activity of the company is secured. To this end should contracts be designed (contracts with employees, suppliers and clients). (Stakeholder responsibility management).
- Establishing the goal of promoting entrepreneurial activity among the refugees currently living here, so that after their return they might contribute in a positive way to the life of their homeland.
- Business decisions are always taken under certain constraints. For that reason, the following points are to be considered from the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching.
 - Incentives for doing the right thing (ethics of virtue)
 - Bonuses for sustainable activity (actually, all our activity should be good and sustainable), but in this regard there should be a special emphasis that the collective activity of the company is organized not only under the principles of personalism, solidarity and subsidiarity, but also under the principle of sustainability.
- Leaders must make certain assumptions when making responsible business decisions:
 - The dignity of the human being must be put at the center of all activity – that means, that through the entire chain of production (including suppliers) one must ensure that the employees are not exploited.
 - The leadership of the company should keep in mind the formation and continuing education of employees.
 - No costs of production should be displaced onto third parties – that is, costs of production should not be socialized. (Concretely, this means, among others, increasing recycling, avoiding



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early retirement, since in this case the costs of the company are displaced onto the solidarity of the community etc.).

- Long-term investment in employees.
- Companies should also keep families in mind. The compatibility of professional and family life is especially to be promoted for mothers and fathers.

3. What does “Christian inspiration” mean?

In light of change in the religious affiliation of peoples, Christian inspiration may once again be recognized as a competitive factor.

- Why do Christians think and behave differently?
 - Christian anthropology: the dignity and centrality of the person.
 - LS 128: Every human being has a right to work for the safeguard of his or her own existence (also refugees must have something to do, as without work they lose their confidence in their own dignity). Dignified life through work.
- Advertising for a socially-minded label (such as “bio” or the advertising labels which emphasize that the product does something directly positive, in this case one eats healthier) is an advantage given the change in consciousness and a desire to instill compassion. In this sense, the contribution of a Christian behavior can be recognized as a competitive factor.
- Short-term efforts to integrate refugees into the work force as interns (6 months) should be implemented
- To support employees with a Christian spirit (this refers to the Christian spirit, but here Catholics have a particular role by example).

4. How is it possible to make a business decision inspired by Christian faith?

In essence, we are speaking about the voice of conscience, which at this point may become concrete. This could be illustrated in the following points:

- Compassion: openness of heart (**Herzensfähigkeit**): This is a language that all human beings speak – it is to be set forth as a model to be followed. People who serve as role models could surprise others by acts of compassion; and when an explicitly Christian language is used, it should be such that it reaches to the heart. Such a language of compassion and openness of heart (**Herzensfähigkeit**) can be seen in several discourses of Pope Francis.
- Compassion is convincing and successful depending on how one speaks and behaves (there should be no mobbing or scolding/ tear strips of s.o.). This is about unifying our words and deeds.
- Dialogue is a central element for participatory leadership by consensus.. Individualism is not helpful; this is rather about taking people together onto a path toward a better life.
 - Reciprocity: regardless of what we do, we are doing it with another. And this other is just as much a human being as we are.
 - Christians as bridge builders: in this respect the Christian element of overcoming ditches should be given center stage. Truth does not divide, but rather unites.
- We can “export” our model of human dignity: especially in an international context, human dignity is an “export” capable of reaching all men and women of good will.
- The cardinal virtues are part of our inheritance from Greek culture (here one sees the ability of Christianity to integrate even pagan virtues, and thus allow them to enter into the inheritance of all humanity). This spirit is to be promoted: justice, fortitude, temperance (discipline and moderation), prudence/wisdom.
 - In this respect Christianity is capable of building connections with others
 - Fortitude is necessary to resist adverse circumstances. Rather than focusing on short-term goals, we are to think about the long-term yields for the increase of the common good.
- An integration is easiest through music, sport and work.
- We are to be guided by the Holy Spirit, a creative Power which comes from above. We should remain open to unexpected solutions.



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Conclusion

Our times contain new and enduring (global) challenges – “new challenges” – in all parts of our life. Important decisions must be made in order to avoid conflicts, to ensure justice and to give direction to new priorities. These decisions can only be made within a well-established framework of values – and by those involved in politics, economies and each individual. The social teaching inspired by Christian faith offers a set of values which can be of help in business decisions. Ultimately, we are dealing with the ability of Christian values to promote action, while ensuring that the human person (and not profit) remains at the center of all economic activity.

Given:

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