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Official Position of Vatican Concerning the Responsibility for the Global Problem of Climate Change

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At the beginning of the new century humanity is more likely to think about problems because of its activities. Necessity to revise a lifestyle of the mankind becomes more urgent. Trying to take control over the nature for the sake of its good, people do not think about the consequences. Development of science in the modern world gives opportunities for solving many problems and provides more comfortable human life on the planet. But at the same time together with comfort people have got detrimental impact on the entire world. Ecological crisis has become one of the biggest global problems at the current stage of development of an international community, which is extremely fast on a planetary scale. It can be expressed in sharp aggravation of contradictions in relations between society and nature, violation of natural processes due to excessive anthropogenic action, unpredictable consequences of scientific and technological achievements, increased energy consumption and fossil fuel combustion, demographic explosion, armed conflicts, anthropogenic disasters etc. Prof. A. Herasymchuk notes that modern environmental problems arose as a result of the rapid human impact on nature (Герасимчук А., 2011, p.12). Ecological problems existed at all stages of human development and their scale depended on the

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level of technology development, density of the population and its quantity, presence of reproducible and non-reproducible natural resources, level of environmental thinking, caused by traditions, philosophical knowledge, general culture of the population of some country, religious views and so on.

To reveal the subject of research it is important to understand the meaning of ecology as a term in scientific and social discourse. In the explanatory dictionary ecology is understood as a comprehensive science of survival in the environment, the main tasks of which are clarification of development and functioning of the biosphere as a whole system under the influence of nature and, above all, anthropogenic factors, as well as determining the ways of effective coexistence of the technosphere and biosphere (Brancatelli R., 2016). Ecology is connected with studying of ecosystem of the planet and its elements, their groups of various ranks, living and non-living components of ecosystem, as well as impact of nature and anthropogenic factors on functioning of ecosystems and the biosphere at all. Today ecology has become a complex multifaceted discipline based mostly on biogeographic knowledge, which seeks possible ways to optimally develop humanity in the long term perspective, introduce new methods for the conservation of the planet's biosphere. The main aspect of the environmental problem contains necessity to preserve natural environment and its rational usage. Since the influence of man on nature is intensified, the ecological problem of interaction between man and nature becomes more acute.

In the second half of twentieth century the Catholic Church paid attention to the climate changes not only in a local perspective, but gave it global character. Since the Second Vatican Council in 1962 it was proclaimed that the Church should always be involved in solving of global issues around the world (Шепемера Б., 2011).

Government of the Catholic Church was one of the first that responded to the threat of an ecological crisis on the planet. Among the representatives of that period the prominent place is given to the Pope Paul VI, who in the *Octogesima adveniens* apostolic letter warned against excessive use and destruction of natural environment. The first official document of the Catholic Church on climate change in the world entitled *De iustitia in mundo (On justice in the world)* dates back to 1971 and calls for caring attitude and common good for all mankind. Next to the Pope Paul VI, John Paul II in his first *Redemptor Hominis* encyclical emphasized necessity for deliberate use of natural resources so that humanity can continue to live in this world (Pope John Paul II, 1990).

Pope Benedict XVI from the very beginning of his pontificate in numerous apostolic epistles, sermons, speeches and encyclicals noted a responsible attitude towards creation of God and the transfer to the future generations of the Earth where they could live.

However, the main focus of the global climate change issue is given by Pope Francis, who in 2015 published a circular letter calling for developing a new approach to solving global environmental problems. In the *Laudato si* encyclical Pope Francis calls for efforts of international community to join forces in order to solve ecological problems on the planet. According to the Catholic doctrine, people are trying to satisfy their material desires and do not think about devastating effects of its activity, they forget the spiritual side of life. Taking as much as possible from nature, a person causes enormous damage to the environment, surrounding people and the whole future generation. Pope Francis believes that the rapid development of science, indifference to the problems of others, breaking of the relationship between man and God become the main causes of the ecological crisis. It comes from the fact that people consider material resources as an obligation for everyone. But God, showing His love to the people, created the whole world, having prepared everything before the man came. And after people were created, they started to conquer the world at their own discretion, forgetting that everything is created by God for us to live in peace and enjoy our life, but do not for destroying it.

Pope Francis in the *Laudato si* encyclical gives an example of St. Francis of Assisi lifestyle, who believed that only life in harmony with its Creator, with nature and others brings to man a joy of life (Brancatelli R., 2016). Precisely because of a sinful life people are both harmful to nature through pollution of soil, water, air and all forms of life. Nowadays people neglect the fact that all means of existence they get from the outside world, primarily an air we breathe, soil as a source of food and products, water as an integral part of our body etc.

The name of encyclical is borrowed from the words of St. Francis, who in The Canticle of the Creatures religious song remind us that the Earth, our common home is like a sister, who lives together with us and also as a beautiful mother, who takes us into her embrace. And today Earth suffers for the sins of its people, as they have twisted God's instructions, violated His laws, and broken His everlasting. Pope Francis invites everyone to listen to his words, encouraging individuals, families, local communities, peoples and the international community participate in the so-called "ecological conversion", which according to St. John Paul II, is "change the course", taking into account beauty and responsibility in "caring for a common home" (Pope John Paul II, 1990).

At the same time, the Pope admits that nowadays we can observe the growing sensitivity to the environment and concern for nature, matured a sincere and painful concern for everything that takes place around the planet. According to Pope Francis, humanity still has the ability to cooperate in order to build the common home; people are still capable of positive interference and may turn back to the choice of good and revive. Evidently, Pope Francis appeals to Catholic faithful, repeating the words of St. John Paul II: “Christians, in particular, feel that their tasks within the created world, their responsibilities to nature and the Creator are part of their faith” (John Paul II, 1989). However, he also invites everyone to dialogue for discussing current ecological crisis in the world. Among other things, the dialogue serves as one of ways how to solve the ecological problem on Earth. From the very beginning, Pope Francis recalls that “other churches and church communities – as well as other religions – have developed deep concern and valuable preposition” on the theme of ecology. He repeatedly thanks to the main actors of this engagement – both individuals and organizations, recognizing that “the work of many scholars, philosophers, theologians and social organizations has enriched the Church’s views on these issues” and encourages everyone to recognize “the wealth that religions can make in a holistic environment and the full development of the human race” (Pope John Paul II, 1989).

Talking about the subject of the encyclical, Pope Francis starts his speech from the consideration of the situation on the basis of best scientific achievements, then converts introductory information to a comparison with Bible and Jewish-Christian tradition, distinguishing root of the problems in technocracy and excessive concentration of the human person on itself. In this context, Pope proposes a new approach to solving global ecological problem, mainly “Integral ecology, which will clearly include general human and social dimensions” (Добренко И., 2017). In this perspective, Pope Francis offers a fair dialogue at each level of social, economic and political life that will outline the transparent decision-making processes. He notes that no project will succeed unless inspired by established and responsible consciences, indicating the motives for growth in this direction at educational, spiritual, church, political and theological levels. His words are permeated with some thematic lines, which are analyzed from variety of perspectives that give them a lasting integrity: “the inner connection between poor and instability of the planet; conviction that the whole world is closely connected; critique of new paradigm and forms of power that come from technology; encouragement to seek other approaches for understanding economics and progress; inherent in the value of each creature; human meaning of ecology; necessity

for open and honest discussions; great responsibility of international and local politics, waste sorting and a new lifestyle proposition” (Pope Francis, 2015, p.137).

At the beginning of the encyclical Pope Francis summarizes the latest scientific data on the environment, trying to pay attention of an international community, turning into a personal experience what is happening to the world in order to determine potential contribution that everyone can make. Considering current environmental problems Pope Francis says that climate change has become the most urgent issue that needs immediate resolution. Climate change is a global problem with severe environmental, social, economic, disruptive and political complications and one of the main pressing challenges for humanity. If the climate is a common good that belongs to all and for all, then the worst consequences of its changes lie on the shoulders of the poorest. However, many of those who have more resources and economic or political power, in most cases neglect these problems and conceal their consequences. Besides of that, access to drinking water is an essential, fundamental and universal human right, since it defines the survival of people and therefore is a prerequisite for the exercise of other rights. Pope Francis stresses the inadmissibility water restrictions on the planet, noting that depriving certain categories of people to water means denying the right to life rooted in their inherent dignity (Pope Francis, 2015, p.28).

Equally important for the Official Vatican is biodiversity protection as an integral part of the future development of all mankind. We are not aware of how many plant and animal species disappear every day and maybe forever. Many experts believe we are on a rapid course to ecological disaster or planetary suicide. Competent biologists E. Wilson, N. Myers, and P. Raven claim that this is the worse devastation done to our Earth since the end of Mesozoic period over 65 million years ago (Hart R., 2003, p.46). Some biologists maintain that twenty thousand plant and animal species are becoming extinct every year. That would amount to one species every thirty minutes because of polluting the air, water, soil, and the raping of our forests. Each of these species represents a unique face of God, and each is important for the proper functioning of our planet which took billions of years to evolve. We terminate them forever without batting an eyelash. Why? Is it because we can live more comfortably and enjoy a convenient lifestyle? Pope John Paul II has said that our society will not find a solution to our ecological problem until we look seriously at our lifestyle (Pope John Paul II, 1989).

Within the framework of ethics of international relations, an encyclical points to the existence of a “true environmental debt”, in particular, the

Northern part of the planet in front of the South. Realizing the profound differences in solving ecological problems in developing and developed countries, Pope Francis was deeply impressed by the “weakness of reaction” in the face of tragedies of many people and communities. In most cases He points to “peculiar dullness and frivolous irresponsibility”. There are lack of culture and willingness to change lifestyles, production, and consumption, while urgent necessity includes creation a regulatory framework that guarantees the protection of ecosystems (Pope Francis, 2015, p.127).

In order to develop an approach to solving ecological problems in the world, Pope Francis gives an examples based on biblical stories, which is a comprehensive vision that follows from the Jewish-Christian tradition, emphasizing on “terrible responsibility” of the human, the inner connection between representatives of all living things on the planet and on the fact that “the environment is a collective blessing, an inheritance of all mankind and responsibility of all people” (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 70). The story of creation is central in comparison to the relationship between the human being and sin that divides the balance of the whole creature in its entirety. Pope Francis notices that these stories tell us that human existence is based on three fundamental relationships that are closely linked: relationships with God, with our neighbor and with Earth. According to the Bible, these three relationships of life are broke because of sin not only around us, but also within us. It should be noted that all mockeries of any creature are in contrary to human dignity. At the same time, the true sense of inner unity with other living creatures is impossible if there is no meekness, compassion and care for human beings in our heart. The consciousness of the common unity becomes necessary, because “created by the very Father, all of us, the creatures of the Universe, united by invisible ties and form a universal family [...], which prompts the sacred, full of love and humble respect” (Reese T., 2015).

It is important that Pope Francis it trying to understand not only causes of the environmental crisis but also comprehensively review its roots in dialogue with philosophy and the humanities. On the official level Vatican generally approves the technological development that contributes to the improvement of living conditions of people, however, such comfort is available to those who possess some knowledge, skills, economic power to use it etc. But the bad thing is that such technocratic domination leads to the destruction of nature and exploitation of the weakest people and communities. An ecological crisis has taken place because of excessive anthropocentrism inherent in the modern era – the human person no longer recognizes its place in the world and takes

a position drawn to her, focusing solely on itself and on its own authority. Considering people-to-nature relations, two key issues of modern world become more relevant. First of all, it is concept of labor. In any form of integral ecology that does not exclude human beings, it is necessary to introduce the value of labor. Pope Francis suggests that refusal to invest in people for immediate profit is the worst thing for our society. Second issue concerns the limitations of scientific advancement, with clear reference to GMOs. Although in some regions using of GMOs has led to economic growth and in some cases to improving quality of life, there are significant difficulties that should not be diminished. Pope Francis points out, in particular, small manufacturers and farmers, biodiversity, network of ecosystems etc. Therefore, international community should initiate scientific and social discussion that will be broad and responsible, capable of taking into account all available information and become clear, objective in its findings and starting from autonomous and interdisciplinary research at all levels (Rose Realy M., 2016).

According to Pope Francis, an integral ecology should become new paradigm of justice, where people will take a special place through the relationship with the reality that surrounds them. In fact, we can't consider nature as something separate from us or the usual framing of our lives. It concerns everything that we are experiencing in various spheres – economic and political, in different cultures, especially in those over which the greatest threat hangs, and even in any moment of our daily lives. With numerous examples, Pope Francis confirms his view that there is connection between environmental issues and social and humanitarian issues, and this connection should never be interrupted. Thus, “the analysis of environmental problems is inseparable from study of human, family, urban contexts, labor, as well as from the attitude of man to himself” since “there are no two separate crises, environmental and social, but rather – one and complex socio-ecological crisis” (Reese T., 2015).

An integral ecology is a new approach, inseparable from the concept of common good. It should be understood in today's context, where many injustices are encountered and more people rejected, depriving them of fundamental human rights. And because of that an integral ecology could become the best way to leave a lasting peace for next generation, not in words, but as a concern for today's poor, needy people (Penner D., 2015).

It is important to note that speaking about ways how to solve global environmental problem, Pope Francis constantly reminds invaluable dialogue as an instrument that can substantially help in solving certain tasks. It is necessary that concrete decisions do not fit into an ideological, superficial or simplified way, but there are discussions about environment

in which difficult to reach an agreement. In its turn, the Church does not pretend to outline scientific questions or put itself in the position of politics, but only invites to an honest and transparent discussion, so that partial interests or ideologies do not harm the common good. On this basis, Pope Francis is not afraid to formulate a rigorous judgment about existing international dynamics, stating that current world-class meetings on environment issues do not answer expectations and due to lack of political decisions they did not achieve significant and effective global environmental agreements. Society needs agreements on regimes for management of the whole range of so-called global common good, bearing in mind that environment protection can't be achieved only on the basis of financial calculations of value and benefits. The environment is one of those good things that market mechanisms fail to protect or adequately support (Шеремета В., 2011).

To provide that, Pope Francis insists on the development of fair and transparent decision-making processes in order to “distinguish” which entrepreneurial initiatives can lead to genuine holistic development. In particular, the study of environmental effects of a new project requires transparent political processes, while corruption that conceals the real environmental effects in exchange for a certain benefit often leads to ambiguous agreements that avoid an obligation of information and in-depth discussion.

All in all, the mail appeal of Pope Francis includes an essence of ecological conversion. According to him, roots of the cultural crisis are very deep, and therefore it is not easy to redefine habits and behavior. The starting point is underlining another lifestyle, which also opens up the opportunity to exercise a healthy attitude to those who hold political, economic and social power. Also we can not overlap the importance of educational environmental programs that influence daily gestures and habits, from reducing water consumption to separate garbage collection or turning off unnecessary lighting. An integral ecology consists of simple daily gestures, which break the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. In addition, contributing to the growth of special abilities, given by God to each believer, ecological conversion will contribute to the development of his creativity and enthusiasm. Catholic Church relies on exam of conscience in order to adjust the life in light of relationship with God. People must take into account not only their relationship with God, with others and with himself, but also with all creatures and nature in the world (Герасимчук А., 2011, p. 4).

Pope Francis observes that faith, revealing to us the love of God, encourages a more respectful attitude to nature, helps to read the written

“alphabet” of Him and find ways of development, conditioned not only by benefits and profits, but teach us to recognize that power comes from God for the common good of everyone. Solving of global environmental problem could become possible through the global reorientation of human being from the comprehension of past and recognition of problems to attempts to see in the future possibility of their solution, which, obviously, is closely connected with responsibility of people for their actions, mainly for the ecological consequences of its existence. By interpreting the man-nature orientation system, Catholic Church points to the achievements of science, which has its axiological expression in anthropology. Incorrect interpretation of the essence of science leads to the wrong and, consequently, harmful use of the achievements of human mind – one of the most valuable gifts of God.

Therefore, we conclude that an official position of Vatican towards global environmental problem is a clear example of combining an ethical component with integral ecology postulate and is essentially part of this integral approach that uses different ways, perspectives, etc. to achieve the desired result. Pope Francis as an official representative of Catholic Church in the *Laudato si* encyclical has pointed out the main challenges and potential solutions to global ecological crisis, which are poor environmental conditions and the lack response to climate changes, power of people to change an approach in environmental protection, concept of integral ecology as a new paradigm of justice and calling for dialogue, where religious organizations may become one of the mediators. His analysis leads to the conclusion that so-called socio-ecological crisis may only be steadily defeated if its deep roots are addressed, particularly the desert of values that permeates modern societies.

It also should be concluded that for believers the words of Pope Francis are recognition of the presence of Creator to whom everything belongs that we may better respond to and care for our common home. However, the paradigm of Catholic Church can be shared within the secular context, which may include addressing, together with care for the environment, fundamental issues of social justice and of North-South equity to the people of our planet.

OFICJALNE STANOWISKO WATYKANU W KWESTII ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚCI ZA GLOBALNY PROBLEM ZMIANY KLIMATU

(STRESZCZENIE)

W artykule przedstawiono stanowisko papieża Franciszka odnośnie do kwestii zmiany klimatu i problemów z nim związanych. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono encyklice *Laudato si*, którą Ojciec Święty Franciszek poświęcił problematyce ekologicznej i odpowiedzialności człowieka za środowisko, w którym żyje. Wskazano też, w jaki sposób w dokumencie papieskim zostały ocenione podejmowane przez różne podmioty działania na rzecz ochrony środowiska, a także omówiono wskazane przez papieża przyczyny zauważalnego obecnie kryzysu ekologicznego i omówiono procedury, jakie Watykan proponuje, by przezwyciężyć ten kryzys. Papież Franciszek zaproponował tzw. ekologię integralną, wedle której człowiek zajmuje w świecie szczególną pozycję jako nowy paradygmat w staraniach ludzkości o ochronę otaczającej jej rzeczywistości. Z naciskiem podkreślono, że wszystkie podmioty społeczne, w tym także organizacje religijne, zostały przez Kościół rzymskokatolicki zaproszone do otwartego i uczciwego dialogu, mającego na celu znalezienie zadowalających rozwiązań problemu zmian klimatycznych.

OFFICIAL POSITION OF VATICAN CONCERNING THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GLOBAL PROBLEM OF CLIMATE CHANGE

(SUMMARY)

The article highlights the views of the Pope Francis on the global climate change issue. The main attention is paid to the Encyclical letter *Laudato si*, in which Holy Father Francis addresses ecological problems that have resulted from human activity. The Papal document covers the current state in the field of environmental protection, the causes of the environmental crisis and possible ways to solve it. Pope Francis introduces an integral ecology as a new paradigm of justice, which will include a special place of person in the world and relationship with the reality that surrounds her. The Catholic Church invites everyone for open and honest dialogue about solutions global problems of climate change.

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