

*Prof. Željko Tanjić, Ph.D., Rector of the Catholic University of Croatia
Intervention
at the Jubileum Docentium, XIII International Symposium of University Professors
“Knowledge and Mercy”, 1st Session of the World Conference of University Rectors in Rome*

Thursday, 8 September 2016 at 10:30 a.m.

Global inequality and migration. Difficulties of international response.

Today, in a globalised world, we are possibly, more than ever before in the history of mankind, aware of tremendous scales of inequality that are reflected in various manners. Inequality is manifested within different aspects of life: social, economic, ecologic, demographic, as well as others, and is associated with an array of social processes. Nevertheless, scientific and professional literature refers to inequality mostly in regard of economic inequality and its affiliation to the global problem of poverty. Although countries with high inequality rates often have high poverty rates, these two concepts are not of the same equivalence. It is considered that “in distinction from poverty which is concentrated on the situation of those in social margins, inequality indicates how resources are distributed in the entirety of society. It displays differences in average income, how much the poor and the rich earn, and accent the level of quality in redistribution and sharing of income of different countries.” (Poverty and inequality in the EU, Croatian AntiPoverty Network: Zagreb, 2016.) Unfortunately, in spite of efforts to raise awareness and solve this problem, the gap between the rich and the poor is getting deeper on a global scale. This may be illustrated by the fact that, according to the Forbes’ list, there are 1700 billionaires (dollar) in the world today in a 7.4 billion population, i.e. for every 100 million adults there are 31 billionaires.

Inequality is associated with the question of social exclusion on a national and global scale, and the necessity to solve this problem with concepts of social justice and democracy.

Inequalities that are associated with poverty and the effort to maintain them are one of the push factors of global migrations. In general, two main courses in global migration can be identified: the first one is relocation from rural to urban areas, and the other one is relocation from economically undeveloped to economically developed areas. These two courses are in simultaneous action. Therefore, it can be said that international migration represents a strong symbol of global inequality, if observed from a standpoint of earnings, labour market, circumstances, or ways of life. A great number of employees and their family members move every year across state borders or to other continents, seeking to diminish the difference they see and feel, between their own position and the position of those in other wealthier regions. This should be extended to a number of migrants that are escaping from war zones. However, as the international migration activity is a bearer of significant risks and costs, the reduction of inequality that migrants were expecting and that motivated them to relocate, does not have to necessarily and actually be reduced. The other issue is how much the migrations are affecting the reduction of total differences between the societies of emissive and receptive areas. There is also a significant feature of migrations that should not be forgotten here, and that is its selectivity by various criteria. It is not only the poorest, the most uneducated or youngest population that take part in migrations, so the fact of emigration itself does not reduce economic, educational, or demographic differences between the areas of

origin and destination. On the contrary, the selectivity of migrations, may lead to reduction of differences by one or two features, but other differences will remain the same or even be deepened. Therefore, without solving the cause of inequality, the migrations cannot be the solution to reduction or elimination of global inequality in the world. These facts are especially important for the emissive areas that are on a global scale of international migrations recognised in South Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Among them, and due to its specific demographic features, Africa should be particularly pointed out. This most impoverished continent has a current population of 1.2 billion with a median age of 19 (median age of the world's population is 29.9 years). According to the latest population projections made by UN experts, more than 50% of world's population growth will be generated by the African population in the upcoming half-century. This fact shows us that global inequality will greatly depend on demographic and economic development of Africa. Thereby, any policy that will affect the African demography and economy will also greatly affect the world's income division. The responsibility for a more just distribution of assets and opportunities which would lead to socially and ecologically sustainable societies lies on the development policies on a local and global scale. It should therefore be especially accentuated here that coping with the problem of global inequality is not possible without including a moral dimension. The action objectives are coherent to the values that we intercede, and the ultimate objective is, as Pope Francis emphasised on September 29th 2015 in his speech to the United Nations 70th General Assembly participants: "to enable participation, real and equal rights in the decision making process. This will help limit any kind of abuse, especially where developing countries are concerned." Speaking

about the “culture of rejection,” the Holy Father has named inequality, associated with economic and social exclusion, as the greatest obstacles for socially and ecologically sustainable development of the globalized world, where the most impoverished suffer the most.

Global problems seek global answers and one of the crucial questions is who are the potential bearers of future solutions. For certain, those are global institutions that are already organized as networks throughout the world and therefore have the capacity to be a backbone for any future activity. Apart from the Catholic Church, which is universal and transmits ideas of cohesion and inclusion, we should mention the institutions of universities. Although they are originally a European mediaeval innovation, universities have expanded today, on a wave of global modernization, into a web that spreads over the entire world. That gives them an acting position in important international events, especially ones in regard to humanistic principles. Let us recall that originally the meaning of the term *universitas* indicates the community of teachers and students, not just the places where knowledge is adopted (Žmegač, 2014). That particular idea of community, incorporated in the grounds of universities, represents a potential for actions in connecting and including, common intellectual as well as cultural familiarization that could be future grounds for human actions. Universities, and amongst them particularly catholic universities throughout the world, are called upon to transmit the principle of community to the societies they act upon. Humanities and social science should especially work on affirmation of values connected to the culture of solidarity and peace. It could be said that universities

today have a special responsibility to act in the international community based on their authority, but also for the fact that they educate younger generations. In that sense, there is a question of how well do our universities recognize these crucial modern problems through their programs, and how great are our capacities to provide new development strategies for the culture of solidarity and peace. There are no simple answers or fast solutions in this matter. However, besides the traditional caring for preservation, transfer and production of knowledge, it seems that universities today have yet another significant task, and that is to work through common association, identification and cooperation, on the affirmation of values that would lead toward the culture of solidarity and peace.