

**Marek Jurek**

## **The dignity of human life**

This year International Forum of Catholic Action Meetings' message is expressed by the words: bread, life, peace and freedom. Each of these four words describes value indispensable for the dignity of human life – matter that I shall speak about.

In this place, I could directly pass on the question of building such a social community, which protects and supports life of the people.

However, before drawing attention to several issues due to speaking of the human life dignity, I intend to remind, that it is one of these concepts, which Europe owes to Christianity, and that, if it has to remain important in life of societies, it requires the presence and activity of Christian public opinion.

That is just Christianity, which says that the human dignity has its beginning in God, who created us in His own image. That is God, who caused that the reason and free will distinguish us in created world. Here it is the source of the dignity of human nature, therefore the source of people's rights and uniqueness of every man and every human fate ensuing from it. Redemption raised dignity resulting from Creation still the more. God had a wish to be solidary with people sharing our fate and suffering for us. Human dignity gives us not only rights of our own, but first and foremost, obligates us to be solidary in relation to others.

Do culture and social conditions predominating at present carry into effect this truth about the dignity owing to human life?

Unfortunately, today we are the witnesses of transition from republican democracy founded on solidarity to relativistic democracy rejecting constant moral principles and responsibility for other people.

Tension between the moral order, confirmed and protected by Christianity, and liberal world has its long history. However, nowadays its concern is no longer the struggle with the authority of the Church, but the struggle with every trace of Christianity in legislation and public life, and even with human nature.

Legal-moral radical turn in question of right to life was of particular importance in this matter. No further back than forty years ago the right to life before birth was widely recognized in the West, then ( in the 70's) the official oracles declined from resolving the question, only to sequester the right to life by establishing finally "new generation human rights" with so called "reproductive rights" at the forefront.

In order to confirm dignity of human life today, we should restore the following principles: common good as the principle of operation of the state, human nature, that defines contents of the common good, and the rights of the family as the most important community-environment, where life of human begins and is fulfilled.

### **Why do we protect the rights of the family?**

Not because we consider a family to be the absolute value. To be aware that things in a family may go wrong- we do not need media and their rather hypocritical concern. We know, being Christians, that the first evil on the earth took place in the family- through married couple that concerned more of themselves than God. A family can be an egoistic community and the egoism of solidary, organized in a good team family may be even more terrific than the egoism of individuals. We protect a family and its nature – values of domestic life, owing to which families are verily families despite all human insufficiencies. We protect the family open-minded to God, community and other people, the family raising children and responsible for their future, the family well disposed towards life – because refusing life is the

most dramatic aspect of the egoism. We protect the family, which does not disregard anybody.

Civilization of life, which John Paul II taught about, is particular connection of economic development with the rights of the family.

Restoring solidarity of the state with families – taxes reduction, prolongation of maternity leaves, improvement of social insurance for women not working professionally – is extraordinarily important in activities on behalf of the family rights.

Present economic system that we experience in Poland with particular intensity – imposes on families huge taxes referring to children's parenting (we pay much more indirect taxes VAT type, than personal income taxes type PIT).

It may and should be changed. The greatest reduction of PIT tax for families parenting children carried into effect by Right of the Republic of Poland (notwithstanding the Government) proved its possibility.

However, it requires not only elaboration of specific legal solutions, but also active commitment to the public debate, because the rights of the family are attacked and contested permanently. And what it concerns is simple justice. Whereas, from existing hitherto experiences it outcomes, that in every case when we undertake real, not ostensible activities on family behalf, we have to overcome real and sturdy resistance.

Family oriented state policy is sometimes presented as a luxury, which only very rich countries can afford. The truth is quite different, however. Apart from fundamental truth, that this policy is the matter of justice, the truth is also that it determines the best way to prepare secure future for the state.

### **The Burden of Dechristianization**

Effective protection of the dignity of human life, defined in Christian civilization in democratic state, requires permanent public opinion's committal by promotion of family in social and economic legislation, of Christian culture in parenting and culture policy, creating Christian opinion in international policy and through indispensable active opposition against totalitarian and Anti-Christian driftage of the present policy, therefore through protection of common good and human nature when they are attacked. John Paul II in Adhortation Ecclesia in Europa (art. 19) wrote splendidly, that Christianity forms present Europe not only by teachings (which are accepted), but also by controversions (when it is rejected). Certainly, we encounter the last situation when we are able to raise moral and social reasons, that we protect.

It is, therefore, increasingly evident how today's liberalism goes from religious indifference to active anti-religious policy, aimed at institutions of Christian life. Non-believing politicians tell the Christians what and how to profess and bring on the charge open pressure in order that the Church give up the ethical critique of contemporary political order. It is particularly visible in attacks directed against the Holy Father Benedict XVI. European Parliament evidently transgressed the limits adopting resolution in which (point 20) condemned the Catholic Church for proclaiming opinions opposing using contraceptives. Then, politicians and Belgian Parliament followed that way. The Pope was attacked simply for reminding that marital fidelity and sexual morality do protect life.

Christianity has always had its opponents and the Gospel convinces us to quiet life and acceptance of its consequences. Essential consequence of Christian life is (besides solidarity, undertaking responsibility for others), experience of rejection and necessity of objection. However, ordinary realism is sufficient to become aware of what will be the consequences of the Catholic opinion's silence – while the opponents of Catholicism want to create opinion about the Church.

Much the same aggressive and paternalistic tone concerns after all not only the Pope – the visible head of Christianity – but also the states, which are recognized to be important centers also in social dimension. Several days ago David Cameron – the new winner of the last British election and probably the new British Prime Minister announced, that: “ In East Central Europe there are political parties which must overcome a certain way to accept equal rights for gays” and that he will “help them to go this way”. To make it the leader of British Conservatives will send his close associate and declared homosexual Nick Herbert with mission to Poland. The representative of The British Conservative leader will take official part in planned gay parade in July in Warsaw.

David Cameron’s announcements and initiatives manifest both the struggle against Christian civilization in Europe and permanent pressure to which Poland will be subjected to in this matter. Long-term, consistent, courageous Polish human rights policy, protecting the dignity of human nature, the rights of the family, the right to life, freedom of religion, thus the policy realizing the heritage of John Paul II can be the only effective response. The policy telling Europe quietly and openly, that political gay movement is not a manifestation of human rights but the threat to these rights: to freedom of speech, when it seeks repressions for so called “homophobia” (as these, which befell parson Ake Green in Sweden), to children’s rights (when it claims for gay couples the right to adopt parentless children), the rights of the family (when – as in schools in Spain – homosexual propaganda is obtruded upon within political-civic education), to freedom of religion (when as is it in Britain – claims for “the right” of homosexual persons to Catholic clergy vows are put forward).

One can not speak about political responsibility and abstain from assuming standpoint in the question of the right of nations to moral order in social life. Four years ago “The Parliament of the Republic of Poland identifying itself with Judeo-Christian moral heritage of Europe [declared that] it can not approve introducing to documents of EU notions of such type like “homophobia”.

### **We should build a firm Christian opinion in Poland and in Europe**

Europe is one – we should support one another. And Poland - our homeland should be a spokesman and supporter for Christian opinion in whole Europe. That is the clear way to protection and rebuilding of Christian civilization and not competition of outlooks on the world and ideologies but right out people’s life, its dignity is at stake in this struggle.