

Kamil Michaluk

The concept and essence of economic development in papal teaching after the Second Vatican Council (1965 - 2015)

Abstract

Research on the Catholic Church's perception of economic issues is not a new phenomenon, but it is worth looking at these issues from a slightly different perspective. The aim of this work is to show the vision of economic development in the perspective of papal teaching from 1965 to 2015. It is the issue of economic development that is a suitable construct allowing to extract from papal statements what actually concerns the broad picture of economics. This in turn is more than just concern for economic growth. Therefore, it takes into account cultural factors, such as religious inspirations.

The advantage of such a concept is that one can use the theory of economic development, which allows one to see papal statements in the perspective of specific factors of economic development or the functioning of institutions important for its stimulation. Thus, for example, the work contains reflections on the papal vision of the free market, labor, capital or the use of natural resources. Such an approach makes it possible to use concrete concepts, which are able to convey more than the sometimes used phrases "economic life" or "economic reality".

Willingness to organize and select the content of papal teaching through the use of the concept of economic development forces the choice of an appropriate chronology. The study examined the sources from 1965 to 2015. Such a choice was dictated by the fifty years that have passed since the close of the Second Vatican Council – an extremely important event for the recent history of the Church. At the same time, the year 2015 brought the promulgation of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which had a fairly controversial reception – the statements on ecology contained in it sum up the discussed period in a great way. We are already talking about a kind of Catholic vision of sustainable development. The source base, which was used in the work, are the documents of papal teaching from 1965 to 2015, where the leading role is played by encyclicals.

The dissertation is divided into two parts, which is justified by the theories of economic development: some of them place a stronger emphasis on the determinants affecting the

induction of economic development, while others give greater importance to its factors. Both parts of the work have four chapters each.

The first chapter is devoted to the way in which economic development has been viewed chronologically. A very important task of this part of the dissertation is also to sort out definitional issues. In particular, it is about the distinction between growth and economic development. The basic factors of economic development are also discussed, the perception of which has undergone numerous transformations during the fifty years presented in the dissertation.

In the second chapter the primary concern is to strive to identify the reasons which have led the Church itself to take an interest in issues of economic development. This concerns both changes within Catholicism, where development issues have grown to become an important theme in papal teaching, but also objective external influences. The Church has entered into a particularly intense dialogue with the world, where the issues of developing countries have gained prominence. Also cited here are attempts to define important concepts (economic growth, economic development, development, progress) present directly in papal texts.

The third chapter presents the ways in which papal teaching values the role of the individual in the pursuit of economic development. Here, the opinions of successive popes on the commonly held concepts of the economic individual - especially *homo oeconomicus* - are presented.

The content of the fourth chapter deals with the importance of institutions for economic development in the light of papal teaching. The introductory contents are of great importance for the understanding of the issue, but essentially it is about the views on the functioning of the free market and the enterprises located in it, the operation of the state and the need for planning in economic life. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the rules that successive popes from Paul VI to Francis believed should guide international economic relations.

The fifth chapter is at the same time the beginning of the second part of the work, which deals with the papal perception of the factors of economic development. The first chapter describes work, to which so much importance was attached by successive popes, basically from the beginning of the formation of Catholic social teaching. What is important here is the very perception of what work is for the successive successors of St. Peter. The way it is perceived here is much more varied than in reductionist approaches to the issue. Other important topics,

Konrad J. Mikul

described in the fifth chapter, are the functioning of the labor market and the problem of unemployment.

The sixth chapter deals with capital as a factor of economic development, which has very interesting meanings in the papal teaching. Not only are the definitional issues resolved here, but also the functioning of capital at the international level. There is also a discussion of human capital and social capital. These concepts appear in the documents and it is worthwhile to extract from them their proper meanings.

The seventh chapter deals with land as a factor of economic development. It must be admitted, however, that in the papal teaching this theme has been approached in a very modern way. It is not only about a factor responsible for stimulating agricultural production, but also about a broader vision, where ecology plays an important role. The environment becomes a conscious element essential not only for any kind of production, but also for life itself.

The eighth and final chapter includes a consideration of technological progress as one of the sources of economic development, the importance of which is constantly increasing. In the opinion of successive popes, this progress has a dual nature: it makes it possible to overcome the ancient scourges that have plagued mankind, but it also places at man's disposal a destructive force, which he does not fully realize and which he uses to his own destruction.

The conclusions that emerge from the individual chapters allow us to appreciate the Pope's vision of economic development as an interesting example of taking into account the "bigger picture of the economy". The papal way of evaluating economic processes is very close to what has been called sustainable development for several decades. The main difference is that the Catholic version of this concept does not include acceptance for abortion or artificial family planning as methods to reduce the birth rate, which is disastrous in many parts of the world. It is hard not to look at the papal teaching as multifaceted and very cautious when it comes to evaluating the most important economic phenomena. It is also possible to point to the most important socioeconomic issues that the Church will probably have to face in the coming decades.

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