



Janusz Mariański,
*Godność ludzka, praca, bezrobocie
i braterstwo w nauczaniu społeczno-moralnym
papieża Franciszka*
[Human Dignity, Work, Unemployment,
and Fraternity in the Socio-Moral
Teaching of Pope Francis].
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Janusz Mariański, the renowned Polish sociologist and expert on the social teaching of the Church, addresses in his monograph the key elements of Pope Francis's socio-ethical thought in the areas of human dignity, work, unemployment, and fraternal solidarity. The work is grounded in the Church's social doctrine, while also drawing on insights from modern sociology of work, economics, and anthropology. Its relevance lies in the examination of the fundamental ethical pillars of social life in times when globalization, technological changes, and the ecological crisis are impacting human dignity and social justice. This publication is set within the context of a rapidly changing world exposed to global crises, economic insecurities, the climate change, and growing social inequality. Mariański approaches

the subject in a systematic and interdisciplinary manner, relying on the analysis of official documents by Pope Francis (particularly the encyclicals *Fratelli tutti*, *Laudato si'*, *Evangelii gaudium*, among others), as well as sociological and philosophical sources. The publication is divided into several chapters that explore four main thematic areas: human dignity, work, unemployment, and universal fraternity.

Discussing the issue of human dignity, Mariański draws on Pope Francis's anthropological concept and the fundamental principle of the Church's social teaching, according to which the human being is created in the image of God and possesses inalienable dignity. In the first chapter, the author criticizes the dehumanizing mechanisms of globalized market economies and emphasizes that dignity is not merely a formal legal construct, but requires concrete social, economic, and cultural conditions that allow every person to live, develop, and act with dignity.

In line with Pope Francis's teaching – particularly the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* and the encyclicals *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti* – he states that dignity is inalienable, universal, and must not be subordinated to any ideological or market-based criteria. Mariański warns against certain economic tendencies that reduce the human being to a mere producer and consumer. Such approaches, he argues, lead to the marginalization of the poor and elderly, migrants, and those working in precarious conditions. These groups are excluded from social participation, which leads to a loss of personal subjectivity and dignity. The author conceptually builds upon the social teaching of John Paul II, particularly the encyclical *Centesimus annus*, and develops it further in the context of current global and technological challenges. Human dignity also includes the ability to make decisions about one's life and to have access to work, housing, education, and healthcare. Mariański notes that these dimensions are most frequently threatened by the logic that prioritizes profit over people – something also strongly criticized by Pope Francis. Human dignity must be the foundation of every economic and political system, not its casualty. The author also points to the ecological dimension of dignity. In the spirit of *Laudato si'*, Mariański emphasizes that the environmental destruction, the degradation of ecosystems, and the climate change most severely affect the most vulnerable. Therefore, the issue of dignity is also connected with fair access to natural resources and the balance between human needs and care for creation. Today, the appeal to build a culture of encounter is particularly relevant – the culture in which a person is not reduced to a tool of the system but is seen as a partner in a social dialogue. In this sense, dignity has both a profound spiritual and political dimension, posing a challenge to individuals, communities, and global institutions alike.

The second chapter discusses the relationship between human dignity and work, which according to Pope Francis is not merely a means of securing material needs,

but a fundamental dimension of human dignity and a key instrument of full integration into society. Mariański emphasizes that Francis builds on the tradition of the Church's social teaching (especially the encyclicals *Quadragesimo anno*, *Laborem exercens*, and *Centesimus annus*), while at the same time updating it in the light of current circumstances. In *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*, the Pope repeatedly reminds us that work is the foundation of the social pact and that its neglect leads to the disintegration of community. Work is understood as an act of creativity and cooperation, transcending its purely economic dimension and touching upon the human identity as a creator, a co-participant in God's work, and a subject of social relations. The Pope sharply criticizes all forms of labor exploitation and speculative, unstable forms of employment that rob people of perspective, dignity, and security. He also calls for the recognition and support of informal and care work, such as caring for family members, the elderly, or the environment – the forms of labor that are often marginalized by economic models. According to Mariański, by advocating for the right to work for all, Francis stands in opposition to the absolutization of the market logic, which conditions labor profitability. The Pope anchors work in the logic of gifting, solidarity, and the common good. Work should be a source of integration, self-realization, and social esteem – not merely a commodity subject to ruthless competition. In this light, work also becomes a place of spiritual growth and an expression of human co-responsibility for the world.

In the third chapter, Mariański turns his attention to the absence of work. According to Pope Francis, unemployment is more than just an economic phenomenon – it is also a moral and anthropological issue that reveals a deep failure in the social order. Mariański points out that the long-term unemployment has a destructive impact on a personal identity, leading to a loss of meaning, weakening of family and community ties, and ultimately the rise of social pathologies. In multiple documents, Francis highlights that staying jobless equals being deprived of dignity, perspective, and often a voice in the public sphere. Mariański develops this line of thought and identifies structural causes of unemployment, such as technological displacement, automation, outsourcing, and economies driven by financial speculation. He warns that these are not merely technical challenges as they carry moral decisions about who is valued and who is deemed “superfluous.” In the spirit of Francis's vision of an inclusive society, Mariański calls for transformations of economic models to ensure the integration of all, especially the vulnerable and marginalized. Francis sees unemployment as a symptom of a broader cultural illness – a culture of exclusion in which unproductive individuals become “invisible.” Therefore, Mariański proposes that the reaction to unemployment should not be limited to the creation of new jobs, but should also include the creation of a society in which everyone has a place, even if they do not provide immediate economic

benefits. Key to this effort are investments in education, participatory forms of economy (e.g. social enterprises), and the strengthening of community solidarity.

The concept of fraternity represents one of the most fundamental ideological lines in Pope Francis's social teaching and forms the core of his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, which Janusz Mariański consistently draws on in his work. Fraternity is understood here not merely as an abstract ideal or a moral recommendation, but as a political, social, and spiritual vision to be concretely realized in interpersonal relations, economic systems, and international policies. In the spirit of Francis's call for "universal fraternity," it serves as a crucial alternative to the world fragmented by rivalry, exclusion, and individualism. Mariański points out that the Pope does not view fraternity solely in a canonical-ecclesial sense, but as a fundamental anthropological and social bond that unites us all as children of one Father. It is an anthropological paradigm that overcomes the dualism of "us" and "them," and calls for an integral humanism rooted in respect for the other, regardless of religion, nationality, class, or culture. In this sense, fraternity creates the conditions for inclusion, reconciliation, and solidarity at all levels of society. One of the key points Mariański reflects on is Francis's sharp critique of nationalism, economic fundamentalism, and formal democracies which, despite proclaiming equality, generate in practice deep social divisions and exclusion. Fraternity, as both a political and moral demand, entails overcoming the "culture of walls" and building a "culture of encounter," where the other is not seen as a threat but as a gift. Mariański emphasizes that this challenge has concrete implications for areas, such as migration, care for the marginalized, development of inclusive labor markets, and promotion of participatory democracy. According to Francis, fraternity is not limited to emotional compassion but requires institutional change and a new political imagination. It thus stands in opposition to neoliberalism, which reduces the human being to an individualistic market actor, and to populism, which sows fear and polarization. An important element that Mariański highlights is the connection between fraternity and interreligious dialogue. In *Fratelli tutti*, Francis draws on the *Document on Human Fraternity* signed together with Grand Imam Ahmad al-Tayyeb of Al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi in 2019. This historic moment frames fraternity as a foundation for building peace among religions and cultures, overcoming exclusive or confessional interpretations of the common good. In the conclusion of this chapter, Mariański argues that the ideal of fraternity has basic significance in our current time of ecological, economic, and anthropological crisis. He notes that without fraternal responsibility for others, it will not be possible to confront climate threats, migration, or the breakdown of traditional forms of solidarity. Fraternity thus ceases to be a merely idealistic slogan and becomes a moral imperative for a new understanding of globalization as a shared human project.

Janusz Mariański's book *Godność ludzka, praca, bezrobocie i braterstwo w nauczaniu społeczno-moralnym Papieża Franciszka* [*Human Dignity, Work, Unemployment, and Fraternity in the Socio-Moral Teaching of Pope Francis*] represents a remarkable contribution to the understanding of deep connections between the Catholic social teaching and the challenges of the contemporary world. The author shows that Pope Francis's teaching is not merely a collection of moral recommendations but an integral vision of humanity and society that responds to a global civilizational crisis. Mariański does not settle for a descriptive summary of the Pope's encyclicals, but strives for a philosophical-sociological interpretation. He employs qualitative research methods, document analyses, and comparative approaches. One of the author's strengths is his ability to connect theological reflections with concrete social problems, such as unemployment, ecological degradation, the dissolution of social bonds, or the crisis of labor. In this respect, Mariański aligns himself with other prominent figures in the contemporary Catholic social thought, such as Stefano Zamagni who emphasizes the ethics of gifting and the common good in economics. The book is a valuable source for those engaged in social ethics, the Catholic social teaching, sociology of religion or philosophy of work. It can also serve as an excellent pedagogical material in theology, ethics, social philosophy, and political science, offering a critical and constructive perspective on the impact of Pope Francis's social teaching on shaping a responsible and solidaristic society in the context of the post-industrial world.

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