

# ГЛОБАЛЬНАЯ ЭТИКА

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## THE LANGUAGE OF ETHICS IN THE GLOBAL WORLD: POPE FRANCIS AS A TEACHER OF MORALITY



*Persona grata of the article is Pope Francis I represented as a great person, as well as a great man, which provides the humanism of the Gospels as a real humanism of the mankind. The author analyses the true course of Evangelization of post-modern culture through the surmounting the relativistic view to spiritual values and the denial of the very essence of morality as a universal regulator of human relations.*

**Keywords:** *Pope Francis I, real humanism, moral philosophy, spiritual values, spiritual evolution, global consciousness.*

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## ЯЗЫК ЭТИКИ В ГЛОБАЛЬНОМ МИРЕ: ПАПА ФРАНЦИСК КАК УЧИТЕЛЬ НРАВСТВЕННОСТИ

*Persona grata статьи — Папа Франциск I представленный как великий человек и как великая личность. Раскрыта сущность евангелистического гуманизма, проводником которого является Папа Франциск I, как реального гуманизма человечества. Автор анализирует реальный ход евангелизации культуры постмодерна через преодоление релятивистского взгляда на духовные ценности и отрицания самой сущности морали как универсального регулятора человеческих отношений.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Франциск I, реальный гуманизм, моральная философия, духовные ценности, духовная эволюция, глобальное сознание.*

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*Woe to those who build their houses in sin,  
for they will be rooted out from their foundation,  
and will fall by the sword.  
And they who acquire gold and silver  
will be destroyed by sudden judgment...*  
**Enoch, 94-7**

It is not by accident that I chose this motto, because it most aptly reflects the efforts of Pope Francis I to be pope of the poor and to give the Church back to those whom Christ wanted to be in the Church and find solace there — the unhappy and wronged. Those who died in the name of the Christian faith and, by their self-sacrifice, transformed it from a heresy, into a world religion.

Many popes were great persons, but not many were also great *men*, worthy men. Pope Francis chose the way of Christ — which is to be reviled and misunderstood. For he is a reformer, as was the Teacher from Galilee. Only those who have a narrow historical and intellectual perspective would deny that the mission of Jesus was not simply to reform Judaism but to create a new model of human relations, and a new understanding of moral values based on the principles of equality, fraternity, solidarity and love between people. It is not accidental that He reversed the system of values of his time, changing the rule *An eye for an eye* into the principle of *God's all-embracing love, of which even the least of men and women, even the humiliated, are capable* — «*Love thy neighbor as thyself*».

The humanism of the Gospels is a **real humanism**, the religious vocabulary of which cannot conceal the meaning of *Christ's spiritual revolution*, which, through the words and the person of the Savior, changed the very concept of man, whereby a person can be saved from the trials of inauthentic being only through love, by elevating himself above the limits of the Self and overcoming hatred in the world, where man is man's enemy and tormentor.

**Christ** came as a savior precisely in the Jewish community in Palestine because, as Erich Fromm, one of the great 20th century thinkers, has shown, the poor are great problem in a society in which the bottom of society, the *Arameans*, or *the people of the country*, represented the extreme form of a people oppressed and deprived of their rights [1], and were in continuous conflict with the upper strata, the aristocracy and the Pharisees, the wealthy, the teachers, who even expressed their *revulsion* against the lowborn<sup>2</sup>; and those who were in fact spurned by society

<sup>2</sup>K. Kautsky called them the «Christian proletariat» [3, s. 345].

responded with *hatred*, for which there is ample evidence in the **Talmud**. This explains the emancipatory role and the charisma of Jesus, and the spiritual revolution that he brought about. His teachings quickly crossed the borders of Palestine and spread throughout the Roman Empire, where Christianity became synonymous with *religion of the poor*. The slaves in Rome, like the people deprived of rights in Judea, were equally attracted and won over by the promises of *a justice that lies beyond the world*, where there are no poor and rich, and God's grace goes to the humble and tormented.

Those who value their material prosperity above all else, will learn that they will not always be privileged, but it will be too late when they do. They will pay for their arrogance towards the poor and will understand through suffering that property does not bring happiness: a life of wealth is an *illusory existence*; those who are deprived of bread or earn their bread with pain and tears will be comforted by the loving God, who loves **most of all those who have not and who suffer**. Here lies the unique consolation of Christ's preaching, which *turned a persecuted religion into the faith of millions of people*. This preaching condemned material inequality as pernicious for human evolution and emancipation. The eternal significance of this messages related to the *horizons of hope* for human perfection, for freedom from the constraints of material existence and for an achievable brotherhood.

Today, as in the first two centuries of Christianity, it is necessary to recall again and again that the philosophy of the Gospels is above all a *moral philosophy*, and that it promises a *state of spiritual comfort*, determined by the *inner value of each person*. The emancipation of the spirit represents a rejection of the rules and power structures that humiliate and oppress the individual. What is important is not wealth but *the quality of life in love and harmony*.

**The power of Christ is not of this world**, and the attractions of worldly vanity cannot be the goal of a moral life. Moral existence presupposes that man will become a *person of spiritual values*. This can only be possible when man knows himself and becomes aware of himself as the subject of *his self-elevation through the overcoming* of his sinful physical nature. For this, rank and wealth are of no avail. They are an obstacle on the path to God, for material attractions enchain the spirit. But those who have tasted of suffering, the simple and meek, will receive comfort and love. Their tears will be wiped away and the just will smile:

«Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.

Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be filled.

Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh» [Luke, 6:20-22].

The true good lies in restoring the cosmic balance between the powers of Light and of Darkness. One should not tremble with fear for the outward trappings of wealth and not be dependent on one's property — this is one of **the supreme moral virtues** of the true Christian. Only the poor are free of the shackles of property and may entirely devote themselves to their faith. The wealthy sinners, for their part, will receive the punishment they deserve, because they have not lived by God's law. They have deviated from that law and have become hostages to the satanic attractions of thinking themselves *above the others only because they surpass the others in wealth and power*. They have lived opulently and without care, they have «fattened their heart» but have not known the Way of the just.

If poverty is not a shortcoming or a deprivation of God's mercy, then the true beatitude lies in *servicing the good* as a fulfillment of the Gospel values and virtues, the self-realization of a life of humility and restriction of wealth and of material demands. In overcoming their material desires, people come closer to the Divine. Only then can they change the quality of life and life itself in the physical world, simultaneously changing the social existence as well.

*Poverty is a blessed state of being, which is free of the burdens of material things* — this is what Christ taught, having Himself chosen the way of meekness, temperance and poverty. Understandably, for those who believe the Mammonization of the Church is a natural course and prefer the Dogma to Living Evangelical love, Pope Francis I is an **inconvenient** pope, because he has dared to utter the uncomfortable truths about a world that has forgotten the Christ who came in the name of the poor and suffering, while the hypocrites and sinners live under the illusion that salvation can be won through material gifts.

It seems that it is always easier and safer to avoid the road of *moral self-perfection*, and to buy off one's personal mistakes and even profound sins by ritual, by the purchase of indulgences, and even the building of temples. In this case, humble and devoted obedience and service to the Divine truths is substituted by loyalty to the decisions of ecclesiastical councils and by depriving the faithful of the right to seek God and to know Him through reason and the heart. By why did Christ bestow His truths on unlearned people, on stonemasons and fishermen, and why did He set his Church upon Peter as upon a stone foundation. Christ Himself was a carpenter, even though a descendent of David. He became a teacher of the world, for He was not afraid to oppose the powerful of the day, whether those of worldly or of

religious power. That is why He died on the cross and turned His death into a triumph of Eternal Life.

Christianity brought about a turn in the religious life of humanity through its respect and care for *every human being, seen as valuable*. Pope Francis I restores the initial purity of Christianity, in reminding those who have forgotten the deep meaning of the Gospel saying that *religion is above all a moral life lived in the name of God's truth, love and justice*. Thus we avoid idolatry and Phariseism. What is important is not the temples but the true faith, in which God's children pray. Nothing could be easier than abiding by the ritual while being sinful towards one's neighbor and, hence, towards Christ. In this way, Christ's teaching becomes a hostage of the ecclesiastical institution, as does Buddhism, with its great doctrine of emancipation and its denial of rituals, which likewise eventually turned into a powerful cult, with its idols, temples and clergy.

The new pope, **in declaring himself against the ulcers of poverty and the lack of spirituality in modern life**, has returned to the primal role of Christ — *to be a teacher of morality* and to criticize all the social and religious practices that contradict the Divine law of love, which is also the law of brotherhood and solidarity between people as «brethren in Christ».

We cannot fail to be surprised by the outright furious criticisms addressed to this pious man. When the German theologian Martin Mosebach declares in an interview for the magazine *Speigel* that Pope Francis serves the emotions of the crowds and, by his public statements, *is profiting, gaining popularity at the expense of the Church*, he is forgetting the simple but basic fact that the papal institution was realized through the personal creative effort of the Apostle Peter and hence the activity of every pope defines the style of the Church, helping the Church to redeem its historical wrongs, such as the Inquisition, and to respond to the important issues of human development without remaining at the level of pre-Copernican astronomy.

In this sense, *the name of Francis stands for an integral action program* that visibly worries the conservative circles of the Church by preaching «poverty and humility instead of magnificence and power».

It is indicative that according to Mosebach, the new pope is conducting a successful PR effort but is going against Church traditions:

*Mosebach:* Yes, Francis of Assisi is simply the absolute counter-figure of the papacy: the antagonist of the institutionalised Church. He never wanted to be a member of the hierarchy himself. He was profoundly loyal to the hierarchy but he represented to himself, for his monks and nuns a completely different model, an anarchic Model.

*Spiegel:* Pope Francis bears a contradiction to himself just by his name?

*Mosebach:* The Church, which is made up of many opposites, also lives within the opposites between Pope and Francis of Assisi. It is fruitful for the Church. She needs the institutions and the anarchic Christians. But these two poles cannot both exist in one person.

*Spiegel:* Perhaps that was the intention of the Pope: To show from the beginning that he wants to lead the Church back closer to the foundations?

*Mosebach:* To which foundations? The Church must always go back to the foundations because it is an historical institution and refers to a specific time — the so-called fullness of time into which Jesus came...

*Spiegel:* Perhaps Francis has set himself exactly this task — blasting tradition and its guardians, the curia?

*Mosebach:* Mrs. Merkel can change her party programme when she finds it advantageous to do so, but the Pope is bound by Tradition... He has to care for the continuity of Tradition. That is his principal task.

*Spiegel:* But a Pope can come up with something new?

*Mosebach:* Figures like Francis of Assisi, founders of orders, mystics... they can all explore the religion in every direction and risk a lot. The Pope can not...» [4].

Curiously enough, the Pope is being also opposed by groups that claim to follow the banner of liberal thought. He has even been accused of Satanism, been called a «servant of Satan» [5]. A Bulgarian New Age site has looked for body language in the pope that indicates a connection with the devil: «Pay attention to the photograph given below and you will see how the Pope begins his speech in using the satanic sign for "OK", used by the Illuminati. That might explain why the Pope does not pray to God before beginning his speech» [2].

In complete contrast with his deniers, ordinary people adore Pope Francis and team to see him at his visits; they are impressed and delighted by the lack of outward show and the humility of this vicar of Christ, this pope who is not afraid to speak in



their own terms and to touch upon their problems, and whose concerns range from mercy to the homeless and the refugees, to the problems of birth control. A very powerful aspect of his speeches is that they are potentially addressed to all believers. And when, in his speech before the American Congress, he enumerated all the various age and social groups, the Pope was in fact turning to *all the people of the world*. His speech was so moving and powerful, because it was addressed to all of humanity:

«Knowing full well that the problems of Americans are not only theirs but *of all humanity*, he managed to *present an integral program of Christian solidarity and mutual aid*, which was met with skepticism by corporate America, but was felt to be a blessing by ordinary Christians who expect to hear these very words of hope from their Shepherd. And when they hear the pope stressing the theme of solidarity and human rights, when they see he is not avoiding the social emphasis but is consciously making it, the response is enthusiastic throughout the world — despite the skepticism and even the outright negative attitude of the global corporations, who are shocked by the pope's, and hence the papal institution's, active defense of the needy and of the middle class, which is the backbone of developed societies.

In talking about solidarity with the suffering refugees with those in need of aid and support, the Pope teaches people to perceive the suffering of others as their own, and pleads for tolerance between religions. The essence of his speech to the American people, and to the world at large, was this: «**Let us recall the golden rule: "So in everything, do to others as you would have them do to you"** [Matthew 7:12]» [6].

After that, however, he returned once again to a topic that is particularly important for him, that of *inequality as destructive of social peace*, and pleaded for more socialness in politics, connecting the essential Christian understanding of equality to the ideal of social justice for all:

«All political activity must serve and promote the good of the human person and be based on respect for his or her dignity: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" [Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776]. **If politics must truly be at the service of the human person, it follows that it cannot be a slave to the economy and finance.** Politics is, instead, an expression of our compelling need to live as one, in order to build as one the greatest common good: *that of a community*

*which sacrifices particular interests in order to share, in justice and peace, its goods, its interests, its social life* (my italics — E. L.). I do not underestimate the difficulty that this involves, but I encourage you in this effort» [6].

This emancipatory rhetoric *is truly Christian in its spirit* for it identifies as fundamental to the motives of human activity the ideal of fraternity and equality set by Christ in the Gospels. By his own way of life and thinking, Pope Francis I affirms the values of *Apostolic Christianity*, unhampered by the material existence of the institutional Church and loyal only to the principles of active and all-forgiving Love. His just criticism of modern consumer civilization and of the greed of corporations hits the mark: it brands the pursuit of profit, the cult of consumerism, admiration of the rich and the successful as being the heroes of our time.

Corporate America was especially shocked by his highlighting four key figures, among whom, in addition to the two national heroes **Abraham Lincoln** and **Martin Luther King, Jr.**, he also pointed out two persons whose names are emblematic of solidarity — **Dorothy Day** and **Thomas Merton**. In other words, the «pope of the poor» once again made a moral emphasis in his speech, singling out as a paramount virtue the capacity of compassion and of giving aid to those in need.

At the same time, he gave a sublime lesson in ethics to all people, when he evoked the ideal of a humble and honest life lived in solidarity and care for the suffering. His personal modesty, bordering on asceticism in his personal habits, is a return to the *original image of the Christian*. The example is well-liked by the faithful, because it reminds them of the life of the Savior, of Christ's implacable rejection of the Pharisees and Phariseeism.

Pope Francis has raised ethics to a new level by linking the road of spiritual evolution to social emancipation. He appeals for a life of tolerance and mutual aid, of solidarity and care for each and all in the spirit of love for one's neighbor and of equality and fraternity, for which the Savior came to this world, endowing with hope the New Earth and the New Heavens.

That is why Pope Francis has become an inspiration for people who are seeking their spiritual path in rejecting mercantile, selfish, consumerist attitudes. This is the true course of Evangelization of post-modern culture and of surmounting the relativistic view of values and the denial of the very essence of morality as a universal regulator of human relations. By this intertextual approach, the new pope stands out not only as a *great reformer* but as a *great teacher of morality*.



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