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Economy: A Challenge to our Faith?



Mozaik, the periodical you hold in your hands is a monographic and monothematic issue on globalisation. When I write the word "globalisation" on my personal computer, the program I am using does not recognise it as an existing

word, even if both the program and the operating system are means of globalisation.

THE QUESTION OF DEFINITION

Globalisation is a word recently used very often. But we do not agree on its meaning. What is globalisation? A blessing for the welfare of all people? Or the *face of Satan* today? A historical situation caused by the end of a two-block world and the rising of the communication revolution? Or a new *totalitarian ideology*?

Surely, one of our tasks, as Christians and students, is defining the word 'globalisation'. We have to understand the world in which we live, because God calls us to live in it now and to try to make it a better world. The subjects we are studying help us in this.

But, personally, I believe we do not have to focus too much on the word globalisation, because it can be an obstacle to our understanding. Many people, after knowing the consequences of globalisation, often say: "This is terrible, but what can I do? I am really *powerless* regarding this enormous phenomenon."

BEING POWERLESS

As Christians, we could say that this is a wrong feeling. God shows us how important *simple people* can be. The family which God gave to Jesus was made up of a carpenter and of a young woman, pregnant without being married; Jesus was not born in a proper place. The friends Jesus chose were marginalised people: first of all fishermen, but let us not forget the tax collectors and the prostitutes. Jesus died on a cross with two thieves. And to the one who recognised His innocence, Jesus promised the paradise. On the morning of Easter, the first people to know and to believe in the Resurrection were women (we know how they are still marginalised today!). Then we should not forget the Holy Spirit, who enlightens our lives as individuals and as communities. In a few words, the love of God in creating us and in sending Jesus and the Holy Spirit to us shows how important we are for God. But the feeling of being powerless regarding globalisation is real.

ECONOMY AS A MATTER OF FAITH

The Synod 2001 of the Methodist and Waldensian church in Italy (my church), approved a document on

globalisation, stating that economy is a matter of faith, because it is not a natural process (as many liberal extremists believe), but the way humans relate to money. It is a choice. When we Christians make a choice, we must take into account the most important choice of our lives: answering God's call.

Personally, I agree with the statement of my church. When God calls us and we respond, our life changes. The gift of the faith becomes part of our life, if not, all of our life. Money was made to have an easier life. The way we use it is part of how we choose to live. We may use it to buy a nice gift, an ice cream, a book; we may offer it for the church or for other organisations (e.g. for WSCF). We may use money very badly, to hurt others (we could do it today).

THE WAY TO USE MONEY

Today, it is not that easy to understand the best way to use our money. The message we receive is that the welfare of people is not the important thing, but keeping the market alive, by any necessary means. We have nice toys for little children made by other children. We have nice shoes made by exploited women. We can eat chocolate and bananas, but the workers in the poor countries do not eat bread or drink clean water. We may buy an ice cream made from the milk of a mad cow. If we do not want to have animal milk, we can buy soy milk, but most of the soy is genetically modified. We could watch a movie produced by a company, whose wealth comes from cigarettes or arms.

ALERT AND INFORMED

What can we do? We can do our best to be alert and informed. We can rethink our way to use money; we can rethink our way to relate to the rest of humankind; we can rethink our lives in the light of our faith.

In Luke 19, Jesus enters in the house of Zaccheus, who, then, changes his life. To the conversion of Zaccheus, Jesus says: "Today salvation has come to this house." In the same chapter, Jesus tells an economic parable: the three servants who have to do business with the money of the master. The one who refuses to use the money, is punished by his master. We see that the Bible does not give us a clear solution on the use of money, on the role of economy in our life. We should not be afraid in using money, but we must take into account our master, our God. This is why we should think about whether today's economy is an obstacle to our relationship to God, to our faith.

We hope this issue of MOZAIK will help and enrich the discussions in our student Christian movements and in the whole Federation.

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