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## Encyclical *Laudato si'* on the Question of Progress

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### Summary

Progress is one of the most recognizable characteristics of modern times. The present paper addresses the question of progress as the underlying theme of the encyclical *Laudato si'*. Progress has both good and bad sides. The latter are expressed in terms that have a fundamental significance to the encyclical, such as, "irrational faith in progress" and "the myth of unlimited material progress". In order to gain a clearer understanding of those terms, the author begins with outlining the history of the idea of progress and the philosophical criterion for its assessment. Then, he provides a critical analysis of the technocratic paradigm embodying the false face of progress. Within this framework, progress is presented as imperative and unlimited. However, by placing man in the centre and reducing his purpose in life to a relativistic principle "use and throw away", it leads to a global ecological, spiritual and cultural crisis. The following part of the paper is devoted to a new model of progress proposed by Pope Francis. This type of progress has both a vertical and horizontal dimension. Embedded in the Holy Trinity, it reaches its peak in Jesus Christ and it promotes human life and protects the work of creation. Its fruit is to be individual concern for the poor and greater justice between nations. It cannot be achieved without changing the mentality (conversion) and specific individual and political decisions. The last part of the article answers the question about the novelty of the model of progress proposed by Pope Francis.

Keywords: progress, *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis, technological paradigm, ecological conversion

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### Introduction

From the beginning of humanity, man has used his intelligence to improve the way of living. There is a huge civilization leap between the wooden ard and a modern plow, between bow and arrows and the fighter jet, between the flame of the torch and energy-saving LED electric lighting. Examples could be multiplied, but they all epitomize the idea of progress, which generally evokes positive connotations. However, when we take a closer look at that phenomenon, we

can see that it also has its downsides. Was this not exactly progress that inspired the dramatic statement in the opening lines of the first in the history "ecological" encyclical *Laudato si'* that "...our Sister, Mother Earth [...] now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her." (Francis 2015: No. 2).

Irresponsible use, wanton exploitation of goods has brought the earth to a state

of illness. Paradoxically, it is humanity's progress which can be pointed as the cause of this ailing condition. Whatever has been achieved in the field of civilization, has been done at the expense of environmental degradation and, consequently, potential human self-destruction.

It is worth looking at the issue of progress as it is presented in *Laudato si'*. The term 'progress', depending on the language version, appears in the encyclical about 40 times. A similar term, 'development', over 90 times. Throughout the document, the question of progress intertwines all relevant threads of the papal argument.

Individual points of *Laudato si'* refer to the question of progress and development in various areas of life. Assessing the last two centuries of history, Pope Francis states that we are now witnessing an unprecedented change in the functioning of humanity. One should appreciate and be thankful for the progress that people achieved so far, especially in the areas of medicine, engineering and communication. Its symbols are, for example, a steam engine, railways, electricity, cars or planes. It clearly manifests itself in modern medicine, IT and biotechnology and it can be associated with science and technology, which are products of human creativity originating in God's gift (Francis 2015: No. 104). Pope Francis, although appreciating such beautiful achievements, points out the numerous bad effects of progress achieved in the last centuries. Among those, environmental degradation and the culture of rejection come to the forefront. Negative phenomena form a long list and include, among others, uncontrolled urban growth, atmospheric pollution, desertification, energy waste and a waste of natural resources, climate migration, various forms of social exclusion, inequality in the availability and consumption of energy and other services, climate debt between North and South, export of toxic waste to poor countries, violence and social aggression, the scourge of drug addiction and nihilistic

loss of identity, unrestrained consumption, food waste (Francis 2015: No. 43-52). This list must also include the prevalence of abortion, the use of the atomic bomb or technologies used by totalitarian systems to destroy millions of people (Francis 2015: No. 104). What these realities have in common is the fact of their violating human dignity and infringing on the sense of justice due to the earth and its inhabitants. Environmental degradation and social injustice particularly affect the weakest inhabitants of our planet. Hence the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor unite in one voice rising from the earth (Francis 2015: No. 49).

The above-mentioned positive and negative effects of progress give rise to the question about its essence and moral dimension. The encyclical *Laudato si'* especially highlights and praises the progress in the field of technology. The development in such fields as medicine, engineering, communication has brought countermeasures to numerous misfortunes that have troubled and limited man (Francis 2015: No. 102). At the same time, the Pope speaks of the "irrational faith in progress", the need to stop the modern myth of unlimited material progress, and the fact that the progress of science and technology is not synonymous with the progress of humanity (Francis 2015: No. 19, 78, 113). Finally, from the first pages, the encyclical postulates the urgent need for a radical change in human behaviour in order to achieve genuine social and moral progress (Francis 2015: No. 5). This postulate leads to a proposal to redefine progress (Francis 2015: No. 194).

In order to gain a better understanding of the Pope's postulate to redefine progress and discover its authentic version, it seems plausible to explain such concepts as "irrational faith in progress" or "the myth of unlimited material progress". To this aim, we will briefly follow the development of the idea of progress and refer to some philosophical reflections on that issue.

## 1. History of the idea of progress

The idea of progress originates in the reflection on the essence of history. To talk about progress, it is necessary to treat history as a single, linear whole, not a collection of many separate, individual threads. Such an understanding of history itself in the history of humanity is characteristic of Christianity (Krasnodębski 1991: 18; Green 2017). Despite the significant contribution to the development of science and technology, ancient Greek thought perceives history in a cyclical way. The linear understanding of time underlying the idea of progress is linked to the biblical history of salvation. "The Christian vision of history involves (...) the idea of moving forward to a certain goal, although it is a goal that is beyond history. Consequently, historiography and history take on an ethical significance, learning about the past helps in achieving ethical perfection, historical events are analysed because of their ethical sense, and they are endowed with it because history is inscribed in the history of salvation. At the same time, people are fully aware of the limited character of human cognitive abilities. The true meaning of the past, as well as the ethical value of people's deeds, will only be revealed at the end of history" (Krasnodębski 1991: 20)

The perception of progress changes with the advent of modern philosophy of history. Human history is still evaluated linearly and holistically, but the important points of reference set in Christianity are here dispensed with. The relation to transcendence, or teleological conditioning of progress, is abandoned. According to Voltaire, religion being a cause of wars and many superstitions, hinders the development of humanity. Human reason and industrialization can promote progress alone and without the restrictions brought with religion (Voltaire 1759). The concept of Providence, which is crucial for Christianity, is rejected. God is not necessary to intervene in the fate of the world. Humanity can decide

for itself. God supporting the world in existence can be replaced by a Cartesian mechanical vision of the world, which by pointing to unchanging laws leads to logical conclusions. In modern thinking, the original sin and the final assessment of human behaviour in the Last Judgement are also seen as an obstacle to progress. This is how the historian of progress, J. B. Bury puts it: "There was (...) the doctrine of original sin an insuperable obstacle to the moral amelioration of the race by any gradual process of development. For since, so long as the human species endures on earth, every child will be born naturally evil and worthy of punishment, a moral advance of humanity to perfection is plainly impossible" (Bury 2008: 19).

By depriving progress of the teleological reference associated with transcendence, modern thought begins to perceive it as universal and imperative. These two characteristics permeate the myth of progress dominating in modern times. Progress is universal, infinite, i.e. it does not need to be related to any criterion. There is no regress involved in its course, which would be the price paid for development. It is also imperative, as is the organic growth observable in biological sciences. Consequently, this new perception of progress implies the idea of universal improvement. According to R. Spaemann, this means a departure from the classic, premodernist idea of progress, which implied a change for the better referring to a certain determined optimum in a particular type of activity (Spaemann 2004: 251). Another problem of modern progress relates to the associated attitude to freedom. Knowledge expanded without any hindrances leads to the conviction that if I have knowledge, I have power. If I know, I can control, rule without restrictions. The very idea of freedom in the modern thought has no limits. I can do what I feel like doing. However, such an attitude is deprived of any reference to good (Benedict XVI 2010: 43-44).

Although the modern-day idea of progress is primarily associated with the sphere of science and knowledge, it is also meant to embrace all other aspects of human life. Theoreticians of progress depend on the moral improvement of man. Once religion and the anthropology based on the idea of the original sin have been rejected, the problem of evil and suffering remains to be resolved. This can now be traced back only to the hostile nature or to another human being. Consequently, it is necessary, on the one hand, to tame nature, and on the other, to work towards creating a perfect man. “Natural evil was to be overcome—or at least mitigated—by the development of technology. (...) On the other hand, social evil could only be removed by changing the social and political way of human coexistence, and thus—ultimately—by a moral reformation of man, either forced or voluntary” (Krasnodębski 1991: 22-23).

## **2. Technocratic paradigm – the false face of progress**

The subjugation of nature with the help of technology and the project of moral formation of man without reference to Christian anthropology, lie at the base of the faith in unlimited material progress criticised in *Laudato si'*. It is most clearly manifested in the technocratic paradigm.

The Pope admits that the development of technology in recent centuries has brought enormous positive changes in societies and has influenced the material world available to man. The technique is capable of producing many valuable and beautiful objects. Moreover, it also gives those who use it a great power to rule over people and the world (Francis 2015: No. 104). Consequently, it can be concluded that “progress” is simply multiplication of power. However, as it is contended by Romano Guardini quoted in *Laudato si'*, modern man has not learned to use his power properly (Guardini 1998: 82). Technological growth is not accompanied by the necessary human

development in the sphere of responsibility, experiencing values and shaping conscience.

The technocratic paradigm, which has been widely accepted in a globalized society, dictates a specific way of thinking about human action. It is assumed that the object of action is something completely separate from man. This idea led to the conclusion about the total subordination of the subject. People’s autonomy leads them to improving the technique of possessing, controlling and transforming reality. The effect is total domination of man over the subject, i.e. the earth and its resources. This is how Pope Francis put it: “Men and women have constantly intervened in nature, but for a long time this meant being in tune with and respecting the possibilities offered by the things themselves. It was a matter of receiving what nature itself allowed, as if from its own hand. Now, by contrast, we are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting reality in front of us. Human beings and material objects no longer extend a friendly hand to one another; the relationship has become confrontational. This has made it easy to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology. It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth’s goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit” (Francis 2015, No. 106). The above words may be a synthesis of irrational faith in material progress.

The dominance of the paradigm extends to economy and politics. Technological progress has only one criterion, i.e. utilitarian maximization of profits. Consequently, progress has no limits. Profit can always be even greater. Environmental degradation problems are also supposed to be solved by the mere growth of economy and technology. Profit maximization based on a technological and economic model will not, however, ensure integral human

development or protect the environment. In this context, it is hard to disagree with the prophetic words of Pope Paul VI from half a century ago in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*: “The reign of technology—technocracy, as it is called—can cause as much harm to the world of tomorrow as liberalism did to the world of yesteryear. Economics and technology are meaningless if they do not benefit man, for it is he they are to serve” (Paul VI 1967: No. 34).

According to Pope Francis, the technocratic paradigm is so common that it dominated the modern way of thinking and valuing. It gave rise to some kind of social pressure. “It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same. Technology tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic ...” (Francis 2015: No. 108). Technocracy is forging a new culture. An interesting thing is that this is not done in a direct way. Cultural identity is not openly attacked, but rather penetrated. However, the tools used by technocracy are transforming the way of human life. “Everything must give way, in some degree, to their development. (...) Tools are not integrated into the culture; they attack the culture. They bid to become the culture. As a consequence, tradition, social mores, myths, politics, rituals and religion have to fight for their lives” (Postman 1993: 28). It is impossible not to discern in this mechanism the hallmarks of globalization or veiled totalitarianism.

At the core of the technocratic paradigm lies a specific vision of man. Modern, warped anthropocentrism, placed man at the center of the universe and made it difficult for him to discover his own identity. In a world deprived of the Creator, man is not able to respect himself, much less the world he has been given. *Laudato si'* describing modern anthropocentrism quotes the apt statement of St. John Paul II: “Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original

good purpose for which it was given to him, but man too is God’s gift to man. He must therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed” (John Paul II 1991: No. 38). A lack of respect for this truth leads to confusion in which technical achievements begin to harm their creators and all nature. Progress, which is deprived of its criterion, i.e. reference to nature understood in the category of gift and creation, can no longer be defined as progress.

Pope Francis emphasizes that practical relativism goes hand in hand with perverted anthropocentrism. What counts is only what is comfortable and direct. It leads to simultaneous degradation of the natural and social environment. Both of these areas, without reference to objective truth, suffer. According to the logic of relativism, progressive, hedonistic satisfaction of one’s own aspirations reduces another person to the object of use, violence and crime. The natural environment also suffers, because the slogan of modern progress is “use and throw away”, “consume more than you actually need”. Hence, on the one hand, the rejected man, and on the other, tons of waste and the littered planet (Francis 2015: No. 122-123). In the face of relativism, which penetrates human thinking and gives direction to modern progress, Pope Francis concludes: “We should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient to prevent actions which affect the environment because, when the culture itself is corrupt and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided” (Francis 2015: No. 123).

### 3. Towards a new definition of progress

Criticism of the technocratic paradigm and the associated false anthropocentrism epitomizing the modern idea of progress leads in the encyclical *Laudato si'*, to a radical postulate. Pope Francis demands that technology be limited and oriented

so that it could serve a different kind of progress, one which is to be “healthier, more human, more social, more integral” (Francis 2015: No. 112). Elsewhere, the Pope suggests “to move forward in a bold cultural revolution” (Francis 2015: No. 114). A new model of progress is needed, and its criterion is to leave the world in a better shape than before. The Pope states explicitly: “A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress” (Francis 2015: No. 194).

A new model of progress, more human, integral, which is able to create a different, healthier culture of being is possible only when people realize the truth about reality. One of them, which is highlighted in *Laudato si'*, reminds us that in the created world “everything is connected with each other” (Francis 2015: No. 16). To define this dimension of reality, Pope Francis consistently uses the term “integral ecology” (Francis 2015: No. 10, 11, 62, 137). In the world, social, cultural, moral, economic, political issues, i.e. “human ecology” goes hand in hand with environmental issues (Holeksa 2016: 73-74). The new model of progress must take this into account.

“The integrally higher quality of life” proposed by Pope Francis as a criterion of progress must be properly understood. As Cardinal Marx notes, the quality of life category has never been taken such a central position in documents related to the Church’s social doctrine (Marx 2016: 301). The concept of life quality has been present in the ecological and philosophical discourse, especially in bioethics for several decades, and it does not always carry positive connotations. John Paul II pointed out that in the modern world “the so-called ‘quality of life’ is interpreted primarily or exclusively as economic efficiency, inordinate consumerism, physical beauty and pleasure, to the neglect of the more profound dimensions- interpersonal, spiritual and religious -of existence” (John

Paul II 1995: No. 23). Pope Francis is aware of this. Writing about the ecological crisis that is affecting us, caused by a false understanding of progress, he criticizes not only contemporary perverted anthropocentrism and related relativism, but also all manifestations of human egoism, both in the individual and social dimension. Noteworthy is the necessity to appeal for respect of human life at all stages of development (Muszala 2016: 54-57). It is impossible to reconcile in the name of progress, the defence of nature with the simultaneous justification of abortion (Francis 2015: No. 120) or lack of respect for the human embryo (Francis 2015: No. 77, 117, 120, 136). As part of caring for the common good, politics and the economy must definitely serve human life (Francis 2015: No. 189).

If progress is to bring about a more integrally higher quality of life, as Pope Francis argues, it must take into account the trinitarian and Christological dimension of life. The transcendent, theological motivation of human actions is a beautiful proposition that can be found in the pages of *Laudato si'*: “The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity” (Francis 2015: No. 240). All human activity has more than one, horizontal dimension. It stems from the dynamism of the Holy Trinity. All creation, and especially man, has its share in it. Only such a deep perspective can make progress more integral, human and social.

A peak of progress is also designated. It is the risen Christ. The Pope reminds: “The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been

attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things” (Francis 2015: No. 83). The end of progress defined in this way influences its deeper understanding. It also gives the right teleological perspective for all creatures. The Pope emphasizes that “The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator” (Francis 2015: No. 83; cf. Schindler 2015: 582-583)

We are called in Christ to lead all creation to Its creator. The perspective of progress is therefore referred to the vertical, Christological dimension, in which it finds its final end. It emphasizes the extraordinary dignity of man and his responsibility. The teaching of Pope Francis reminds us that progress understood in this way is a calling. This idea is in line with the teaching of His predecessors, especially St. Paul VI and Benedict XVI. Man is called to develop, because his life is a calling. At the source of life is a transcendent call, which at the same time gives man a definitive meaning that he would not be able to define himself (Paul VI 1967; Benedict XVI 2009: No. 16).

The theological dimension of progress is a beautiful and remarkable proposition. However, we know that not all residents of the Common House – Earth share this perspective of life. In the encyclical we also find a horizontal dimension of progress that can appeal to all recipients with great power, without losing its theological depth. The new, integral, human progress presented in the encyclical can be interpreted from the perspective of the poor. Their cry rises with the cry of the wounded earth (Francis 2015: No. 49). Just as there is a close bond between the poor and the fragility of our planet, in a similar way

the newly defined progress is to serve both realities. In the name of the common good, progress must take care of rejected people, those devoid of basic rights. The common good requires solidarity with the poor and the realization of the truth about the universal destination of goods. (Francis 2015: No. 158). The key litmus test of progress is the real fight against poverty in poor countries and the social development of their inhabitants. However, as Pope Francis emphasizes, it is not enough to use market mechanisms in this case. Driven by the logic of profits, they are not able to protect the natural environment or guarantee the satisfying the needs of the poor (Francis 2015: No. 190).

Besides caring for the material dimension of human life, it is also necessary to care for significant intangible needs that allow to decide on the fullness of life. The new model of progress must be completed at the level of human relations. Pope Francis points here mainly to the family. It is the centre of the culture of life and the place where the authenticity of progress is tested. Progress is manifested, as if in the nutshell, in the sphere of family relations and the social functions arising from them: “In the family we first learn how to show love and respect for life; we are taught the proper use of things, order and cleanliness, respect for the local ecosystem and care for all creatures. In the family we receive an integral education, which enables us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity” (Francis 2015: No. 213). The family, fulfilling so many basic functions, deserves special respect and support.

To complete the immaterial dimension of progress, we must also mention the historical, artistic and cultural heritage of humanity. Pope Francis defines this sphere as cultural ecology (Francis 2015: No. 143). In the world of technocracy and unrestrained consumption, this dimension of life is often overlooked, manipulated and even threatened. That is why Francis’ call for “bold cultural revolution” is also a return

to the contemplation of beauty protecting against utilitarian pragmatism (Francis 2015: No. 215).

The main reason for Pope Francis to propose a new idea of progress is the widespread model of global development, which, through globalized technology, economy and politics, contributes to human self-destruction and the destruction of our planet. However, man has not lost his freedom and in its name he can limit and set the direction for technology (Francis 2015: No. 112). According to Pope Francis, it is necessary to slow down the pace of development without rejecting its positive aspects: "Nobody is suggesting a return to the Stone Age, but we do need to slow down and look at reality in a different way, to appropriate the positive and sustainable progress which has been made, but also to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur" (Francis 2015: No. 114). "(...) We need to grow in the conviction that a decrease in the pace of production and consumption can at times give rise to another form of progress and development (Francis 2015: No. 191).

According to Pope Francis, these new forms of progress in the field of production and economics should be associated with such use of natural resources that recognizes the limited resources and concern for future generations of humanity. Innovative production that respects the environment, recycling, creating new jobs and responsible creativity is also a hallmark of progress. In the name of solidarity with those in need, moderation and energy demand must be promoted in technologically advanced societies. This behaviour can help the healthy development of other, poorer regions (Francis 2015: No. 192-193).

The problem of the modern model of progress is the overgrowth of power based on knowledge and technical capabilities (Benedict XVI 2010: 43-44), which led to an ecological collapse. The new kind of progress proposed in the encyclical has primarily a moral dimension. It combines

respect for the human person with concern for the natural world. To achieve this, one must take into account the nature of each being designated by God (Francis 2015: No. 10). Technology, still a necessary dimension of progress, requires ethics. When the latter is missing, as emphasized by Pope Francis, all actions can be justified and there are no restrictions to its reign (Francis 2015: No. 136). Technology, depending on the purpose assigned to it, can be good or harmful. Pope Francis' proposals in this respect in *Laudato si'* can be encapsulated in the words of a famous American humanist, Leon Kass: "Because it is essentially *instrumental*, technology is itself morally neutral, usable for both good and ill. There are, of course, dangers of abuse and misuse of technology, but these appear to be problems not of technology but of its human users, to be addressed by morality in general. And, besides abuse and misuse, there is a genuine problem of technology itself: the unintended and undesired consequences arising from its *proper* use. Thus, the problems of technology can be dealt with, on one side, by technology assessment and careful regulation (to handle side effects and misuse), and, on the other side, by good will, compassion, and the love of humanity (to prevent abuse). This combination will enable us to solve the problems technology creates without sacrificing its delightful fruits" (Kass 2000: 30).

Will this progress take place? It is necessary to hope that it will. There is one condition for its implementation, i.e. human will. Hence the call to conversion present in *Laudato si'*, i.e. to change the way of thinking (Francis 2015: No. 216-221). It is a proposal addressed to Christians, but also to all people of conscience. The conversion must be deep and full. One cannot mock the concern for the environment or remain passive. Meeting with Christ, accepting the gift of creation, requires a human response. The model of such conversion is the figure of St. Francis of Assisi. One must recognize one's neglect in the sphere of care

for life and creation in order to experience a change of heart. Only such conversion will restore proper relationship with God, with ourselves, with other people and with all creation. There is no real progress without conversion. Pope Francis leaves no doubt: “If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships” (Francis 2015: No. 119).

Ecological conversion is also necessary on the level of the community. Social problems require the involvement of the entire community (Francis 2015: No. 220). This dimension of conversion must be marked in the sphere of political decisions. There is global responsibility for environmental issues. As Benedict XVI once said, “...It becomes clear that the political will ultimately cannot become effective unless there is in all mankind—especially on the part of the chief supporters of development and progress—a new, deeper moral awareness, a willingness to do without, which is concrete and which for the individual also becomes an acknowledged value for his life” (Benedict XVI 2010: 46).

The core of both individual and social conversion, but also of all progress, should be social love. It is only this love, according to Pope Francis, which is able to build a “civilization of love” (Francis 2015: No. 231). “In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life—political, economic and cultural—must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004: No. 582).

## Conclusion

The encyclical *Laudato si'* does not claim to be a dissertation on progress. Its main goal is to sensitize the reader to the growing ecological crisis, which threatens the existence of our planet. Its signs are

clear and severe to many inhabitants of the earth. Paradoxically, this crisis is the result of a specific, modern vision of progress. This progress, which has been observable for over two centuries, has found itself, so to say, in a crisis and even a deadly disease. Every human reality that is inscribed only in the categories of necessity and universality will sooner or later lead to its fall. The Enlightenment project, which is expressed in the technocratic paradigm, does not recognize that the earth and what fills it is a gift. So it treats everything as an object of use. Man engaged in progress, deprived of responsibility before God and future generations turns into a plunderer and destroyer who adheres to the maxim “use and throw away”. Despite undoubtedly good achievements in various areas of life that help achieve a better quality of existence, the currently dominant model of progress is also taking a cruel harvest. Human life is not respected in its most fragile form. The gap between the few possessing many and many deprived of almost everything is growing. The land is plundered of goods that cannot be replaced. We see the symptoms of the ecological crisis in soil, water, air and living beings.

The modern myth of unlimited material progress criticized in the pages of *Laudato si'*, meets the criterion of the so-called quantitative progress, which is the accumulation of knowledge and power, and a know-how technology (Von Balthasar 1994: 12). It creates a dangerous culture in which freedom is treated as the fulfilment of all possibilities. Without a clear criterion, it falls into the category of a “self-fulfilling prophecy” (Jonas 1984: 163). Regardless of the course that progress takes and how disastrous it will be, it will still be seen as progress.

In contrast, the new model of progress proposed by Pope Francis is based on the reading of the Creator’s original plan for the earth and its inhabitants. It is to be more human, social and integral. It should be the leaven of a cultural revolution that overcomes the pervasive selfish mentality

of profit and rule. Its fruit is to become a higher quality of life and leaving the land in a better condition than before. Anyone wishing to find in the encyclical *Laudato si'* a simplified pattern of thinking about progress that boils down to a purely horizontal socioeconomic view, will be disappointed. It is true that the encyclical can be read selectively, but then its depth is not revealed. The postulate of a new model of progress is rooted in trinitarian and Christological theology. It reminds us of the unification of all reality in creation and redemption. As Pope Francis recurrently reminds, "everything is connected with each other". In this light, the new model of progress highlights the category of interdependence, solidarity and coexistence of man in symbiosis with the world around him. Progress understood in this way, in the name of responsibility before the Creator, takes on a moral dimension which is an antidote against the egoism of use and the civilization of death.

The peak of progress is the risen Christ. The test of whether it is moving towards Him is the concern for the poor and suffering. This applies both to individuals and to the entire marginalized societies due to the ecological and moral crisis. A family that teaches love and virtues that build respect for people and things deserves a special promoter of progress. The new progress is integral. It also embraces such areas of life as art and culture.

In the political and economic dimension, as Pope Francis states, progress demands a slower pace of development, without rejecting its positive aspects. The Pope's demands resonate with commonly recognized priorities in the sphere of ecology, such as: innovative production respecting the environment, protection of non-renewable energy sources, recycling and creation of new jobs. In the sphere of technology, which must be combined with ethics in the name of new progress it is necessary, on the one hand, to counteract its abuses, and on the other, to mitigate the side effects of its proper application.

At this point, it is worth asking one more question: Are we really dealing with a new model of progress? The answer is twofold: yes and no. "Yes" because this progress is the answer to the challenges that humanity is currently facing. They have never occurred on such a scale and demand immediate and radical action. Pillage and violence against the earth, the cry of the poor is something real, not just a poetic term.

"No", because the postulates of progress promoted by Pope Francis, are a return to the original destination of land goods and a reminder of human responsibility as the warden of the shared home.

*Laudato si'* is not a proclamation of the gospel of progress because there is no such a gospel. It is, rather, re-evangelization, i.e. a return to the Gospel of creation and redemption. It is worth believing in this Gospel and at the same time undertaking the effort of conversion. If humanity, i.e. every individual, especially politicians and all those who are particularly responsible for the common good, listen to the call to change thinking and take appropriate action, then we can peacefully enjoy life in our common home. Not only will it not fall into rubble, but it can even shine with a new glow.

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## Encyklika *Laudato si'* wobec kwestii postępu

### Streszczenie

Postęp to jedna z najbardziej rozpoznawalnych charakterystyk współczesności. W niniejszym artykule temat postępu stanowi oś przewodnią lektury encykliki *Laudato si'*. Postęp ma zarówno dobre, jak i złe strony. Te ostatnie wyrażają się w fundamentalnych dla encykliki określeniach: „irracjonalna wiara w postęp” i „mit nieograniczonego postępu materialnego”. By je lepiej zrozumieć, najpierw ukazane zostają dzieje idei postępu oraz filozoficzne kryterium, służące do jego oceny. Następnie zostaje poddany krytycznej analizie paradygmat technokratyczny, który ucieleśnia fałszywe oblicze postępu. W jego ramach postęp ma charakter konieczny i nieograniczony. Stawiając w centrum człowieka, żyjącego według relatywistycznej zasady „użyj i wyrzuć”, powoduje on w skali globalnej kryzys ekologiczny, duchowy i kulturowy. Kolejna część artykułu poświęcona jest proponowanemu przez Papieża Franciszka nowemu modelowi postępu. Ma on wymiar wertykalny i horyzontalny. Zaszczepiony w Trójcy Świętej, osiąga swój szczyt w Jezusie Chrystusie. Promuje życie ludzkie i chroni dzieło stworzenia. Jego owocem ma być indywidualna troska o ubogich oraz większa sprawiedliwość pomiędzy narodami. Nie można go osiągnąć bez zmiany mentalności (nawrócenia) oraz konkretnych decyzji indywidualnych i politycznych. Ostatnia część artykułu zawiera odpowiedź na pytanie o *novum* proponowanego przez Papieża Franciszka modelu postępu.

### Słowa kluczowe

postęp, *Laudato si'*, papież Franciszek, paradygmat technologiczny, ekologiczne nawrócenie

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