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The Guidelines of Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on Current Ecclesiological Problems in the Inter-religious Dialogue

Prieš daugiau kaip keturiasdešimt metų pasibaigęs Vatikano II Susirinkimas suteikė galingą impulsą Katalikų Bažnyčios ekumeninei veiklai. Šiandien Bažnyčia ir toliau džiaugiasi besiplečiančiu ekumeniniu dialogu ir jį skatina. Tuo pačiu metu ekumenizme išryškėjo kai kurios neteisingos interpretacijos ir klaidos, visų pirma susijusios su vadinamuoju religiniu reliatyvizmu. Dvidešimtojo amžiaus antroje pusėje religinio reliatyvizmo ir sinkretizmo tendencijos išaugo tiek, kad 1996 metais tuometinis Tikėjimo mokslo kongregacijos prefektas kardinolas Josephas Ratzingeris jas įvardijo kaip pagrindinį pavojų Bažnyčios tikėjimui. Dėl religinio reliatyvizmo įtakos ekumeniniame dialoge susiformavo kelios problemiškos santykio tarp Katalikų Bažnyčios ir kitų krikščioniškųjų konfesijų sampratos. Jų plitimas kėlė vis didesnį rūpestį Bažnyčios Magisteriumui. Šios neteisingos sampratos turėjo tiesioginės įtakos ir tarpreliginiam dialogui. Vienas iš didžiausio atgarsio susilaukusių Magisteriumo dokumentų, kuriame aptariama ši tema, yra Tikėjimo mokslo kongregacijos deklaracija *Dominus Iesus* (2000). Šiame straipsnyje apžvelgiamos ekumeninių santykių problemos, tiesiogiai nagrinėjamos deklaracijoje.

More than forty years ago, Vatican Council II gave powerful impetus for the ecumenical activity of the Catholic Church. With the constant support of the Catholic Magisterium, this activity received further development after the Council. However, during the same period several erroneous interpretations emerged in the sphere of the ecumenical dialogue. They are first of all related to the so-called religious relativism, which increased especially during the second half of the 20th century. In 1996, the then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger identified religious relativism as the main danger for the faith of the Church. Under the influence of religious relativism, there arose several problematic ideas of the Catholic Church's relationship to other Christian confessions, which also directly affected the inter-religious dialogue. These ideas were periodically addressed by the Catholic Magisterium. One of the more recent documents that deal with this topic is Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2000). The present paper reviews those aspects of the ecumenical dialogue that are directly treated in the Declaration.

Introduction

On September 5, 2000, at the Holy See Press Office in the Vatican Declaration *Dominus Iesus* was promulgated. Immediately after its promulgation, the document was widely commented by both Catholics and non-Catholics, as well as by the secular media. Most of the reactions of the non-Catholics were very negative, especially initially. Important part of the negative reactions came from Christian leaders of other denominations, and was ai-

med at the ecclesiological sections of *Dominus Iesus*. This paper reviews the Declaration's main assertions on the ecclesiological issues.

The o b j e c t of this article is the ecclesiological sections of *Dominus Iesus*, in the broader context of the dialogue between Catholicism and other religions.

The g o a l of the article is to analyse the teaching of the Catholic Magisterium on the ecclesiological issues related to the Church's missionary activity. The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* is taken as the key document, presenting the most pressing questions.

To achieve this goal, the following p r o b l e m s are considered: the relationship of the Church founded by Christ with the contemporary Catholic Church, with the other Churches and ecclesial communities; the relationship between the Church, the kingdom of God, and the other religions; the role of the Church in the salvation of non-Catholics and non-Christians.

To consider the aforementioned problems, the m e t h o d s of theological analysis and synthesis are being employed

1. The relationship of the Church founded by Christ with the contemporary Catholic Church and with the other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities

In the current ecumenical debate *Dominus Iesus* distinguishes as one of the most pressing problems the relationship of the Church founded by Christ with the other Churches and ecclesial communities. This problem could be stated as follows: how can the Church of Christ be one and united if there are so many Christian Churches and ecclesial communities? *Dominus Iesus* indicates two incorrect ways of solving this problem. The first asserts that 'the Church of Christ is nothing more than a collection – divided, yet in some way one – of Churches and ecclesial communities.'¹ The second maintains 'that today the Church of Christ nowhere really exists, and must be considered only as a goal which all Churches and ecclesial communities must strive to reach.'²

According to *Dominus Iesus*, the correct approach to solving this problem is based on the following truth of faith: *The Lord Jesus (...) constituted the Church as a salvific mystery: he himself is in the Church and the Church is in him (...). Therefore, the fullness of Christ's salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord. Indeed, Jesus Christ continues his presence and his work of salvation in the Church and by means of the Church (...), which is his body (...).*³

Christ and His Church are united in the most intimate way, and that is the basis for the link between the unicity of Christ's mediation and the unicity of the Church: *Therefore, in connection with the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus Christ, the unicity of the Church founded by him must be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: 'a single Catholic and apostolic Church.'*⁴

Faith in the constant unicity and unity of the Church is based on '(...) the promises of the Lord that he would not abandon his Church (...) and that he would guide her by his Spirit (...)':⁵ '[T]he unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on his Church from the beginning (...), subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can

never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.⁶ However, the separations among Christians is an obvious and sad reality in today's world. Is not this reality an indication that the Church of Christ is deprived of her unity? "The lack of unity among Christians is certainly a wound for the Church; not in the sense that she is deprived of her unity, but 'in that it hinders the complete fulfilment of her universality in history.'"⁷

What is the relationship between the Church, which was instituted by Jesus Christ, and the contemporary Catholic Church? *Dominus Iesus* first of all emphasises '(...)' that there is a historical continuity – rooted in the apostolic succession – between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church (...).⁸ Jesus Christ '(...)' after his resurrection, entrusted [his Church] to Peter's pastoral care (...), commissioning him and the other Apostles to extend and rule her (...).⁹ 'This Church [of Christ], constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in [subsistit in] the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.'¹⁰

The term 'subsistit in' received ample attention after the Council. It has been interpreted in various ways. *Dominus Iesus* stresses the authentic meaning of this phrase: *With the expression subsistit in, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that "outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth", that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church. But with respect to these, it needs to be stated that 'they derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.'*¹¹

The term 'subsistit in' does not mean that the Church of Christ can subsist also in non-Catholic Churches: *The interpretation of those who would derive from the formula subsistit in the thesis that the one Church of Christ could subsist also in non-Catholic Churches and ecclesial communities is therefore contrary to the authentic meaning of Lumen gentium. 'The Council instead chose the word subsistit precisely to clarify that there exists only one 'subsistence' of the true Church, while outside her visible structure there only exist elementa Ecclesiae, which – being elements of that same Church – tend and lead toward the Catholic Church.'*¹²

Therefore, the relationships between the Church of Christ and the contemporary Christian Churches and ecclesial communities could be expressed as follows:

1. The Church of Christ 'subsists in the Catholic Church.'¹³
2. The Orthodox Churches '(...)' which, while not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, are true particular Churches. Therefore, the Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches, even though they lack full communion with the Catholic Church (...).¹⁴
3. The Protestant ecclesial communities, since they 'have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense; however, those who are baptized in these communities are, by Baptism, incorporated in Christ and thus are in a certain communion, albeit imperfect,

with the Church.¹⁵ John Paul II explained this point in the Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*: *It is not that beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community there is an ecclesial vacuum. Many elements of great value (eximia), which in the Catholic Church are part of the fullness of the means of salvation and of the gifts of grace which make up the Church, are also found in the other Christian Communities. All these elements bear within themselves a tendency toward unity, having their fullness in that unity. It is not a matter of adding together all the riches scattered throughout the various Christian Communities in order to arrive at a Church which God has in mind for the future. (...) This reality is something already given. (...) The elements of this already-given Church exist, joined together in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other communities (...).*¹⁶ The Vatican Council II emphasised the place of Protestant communities in God's plan of salvation: *The separated Churches and communities as such (...) have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.*¹⁷

2. The relationship of the kingdom of God with the Catholic Church and with other religions

What is the relationship between the Catholic Church, the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of Christ? What relationship do other religions have with the kingdom of God? The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* starts the analysis by setting the limits of the problem: *The meaning of the expressions kingdom of heaven, kingdom of God, and kingdom of Christ in Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, as well as in the documents of the Magisterium, is not always exactly the same, nor is their relationship to the Church, which is a mystery that cannot be totally contained by a human concept. Therefore, there can be various theological explanations of these terms. However, none of these possible explanations can deny or empty in any way the intimate connection between Christ, the kingdom, and the Church.*¹⁸

The time of the Church is one of tension between history and its eschatological fulfilment – *already, but not yet*: 'Christ the Lord *already* reigns through the Church, but all the things of this world are *not yet* subjected to him.'¹⁹ The Church has a twofold 'function' – she is instrument of the kingdom, and also she is 'the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery.'²⁰ This is how the situation is described in the Declaration: *The mission of the Church is 'to proclaim and establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom' (Lumen gentium 5). On the one hand, the Church is 'a sacrament – that is, sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of unity of the entire human race' (Lumen gentium 1). She is therefore the sign and instrument of the kingdom; she is called to announce and to establish the kingdom. On the other hand, the Church is the 'people gathered by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit' (Lumen gentium 4); she is therefore 'the kingdom of Christ already present in mystery' (Lumen gentium 3) and constitutes its seed and beginning. The kingdom of God, in fact, has an eschatological dimension: it is a reality present in time, but its full realization will arrive only with the completion or fulfilment of history (see Lumen gentium 9).*²¹

The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are not identical with the Church, but neither can they be separated. All three of them are in a very close connection with one another. If they are separated one from another, they lose their authentic meaning: *If the kingdom is separated from Jesus, it is no longer the kingdom of God which he revealed.(...) Likewise, one may not separate the kingdom from the Church. It is true that the Church is not an end unto herself, since she is ordered toward the kingdom of God, of which she is the seed, sign and instrument. Yet, while remaining distinct from Christ and the kingdom, the Church is indissolubly united to both.*²²

The kingdom of God surpasses the visible boundaries of the Church and is in different degrees related to religions and cultures of the world. John Paul II states on this issue: *The kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society and the world. Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God's activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the kingdom of God is the manifestation and the realization of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness.*²³ *It is true that the inchoate reality of the kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church among peoples everywhere, to the extent that they live 'gospel values' and are open to the working of the Spirit who breathes when and where he wills (see Jn 3:8). But it must immediately be added that this temporal dimension of the kingdom remains incomplete unless it is related to the kingdom of Christ present in the Church and straining towards eschatological fullness.*²⁴

The Declaration is concerned with those theological "conceptions which deliberately emphasise the kingdom and which describe themselves as 'kingdom-centered,'"²⁵ and according to which, the mission of the Church is limited to promoting values which are common for all religions and constitute a common ground for their dialogue. They are silent, however, about the greatest treasures which the Church has to offer to all the peoples: *[T]hey are silent about Christ: the kingdom of which they speak is 'theocentrically' based, since, according to them, Christ cannot be understood by those who lack Christian faith, whereas different peoples, cultures, and religions are capable of finding common ground in the one divine reality, by whatever name it is called. For the same reason, they put great stress on the mystery of creation, which is reflected in the diversity of cultures and beliefs, but they keep silent about the mystery of redemption. Furthermore, the kingdom, as they understand it, ends up either leaving very little room for the Church or undervaluing the Church in reaction to a presumed 'ecclesiocentrism' of the past and because they consider the Church herself only a sign, for that matter a sign not without ambiguity.*²⁶

If the Church were to follow this way she would betray the greatest treasure she is called to bring to the world. She would deprive the world of a possibility to come to what the world is longing for. It is true that one of the tasks of the Church is "promoting such 'values of the kingdom' as peace, justice, freedom, brotherhood, (...) [and] fostering dialogue between peoples, cultures and religions, so that through a mutual enrichment they might help the world to be renewed and to journey ever closer toward the kingdom"²⁷ However, the mission of the Church does not stop here. It leads further – toward the true source and fulfilment of these values. Therefore, the above mentioned conceptions '[t]ogether with positive aspects (...) often reveal negative aspects as well.'²⁸

‘Kingdom of God’, ‘kingdom of Christ’, ‘kingdom of heaven’, are closely linked with the Church and cannot be separated from her. The Church is ‘on earth, the seed and the beginning of that kingdom [of Christ and of God].’²⁹ While she is not identifiable with them, at the same time she cannot be separated from them either.

3. The role of the Church and that of other religions in the salvation of non-Catholics and non-Christians

In considering the teaching of the Catholic Church on the possibility of salvation for non-Catholics and non-Christians, some fundamental questions arise: What is the role of other religions for the salvation of those who belong to them? If God ‘(...) desires all men to be saved,’³⁰ how can it be that the Church is necessary for salvation, when many people objectively cannot become members of the Church? If God has His ways to save people of other religions, why should the Church continue her missionary activity of leading people to conversion to Christ and entering the Church through Baptism? To restate the necessity of the Church for salvation, *Dominus Iesus* quotes Vatican II: (...) *the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism (see Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5), and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through baptism as through a door.*³¹

At the same time the Church teaches, that salvation is potentially available to all people, not only to those who belong to the Church: *‘Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation.’*³² Those who are not formally members of the Church, can be saved ‘(...) by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ (...)’³³. Salvation of saved non-Christians comes from Christ in relationship to the Church, ‘in ways known to [God].’³⁴ However, the Declaration makes the following warning at this point: *It would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary to the Church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the Church toward the eschatological kingdom of God.*³⁵

The doctrine of the necessity of the Church for salvation does not contradict the doctrine of the ‘universal salvific will of God’³⁶, which affirms possibility of salvation for those who do not belong to the Church: *While acknowledging that God loves all people and grants them the possibility of being saved (see 1 Tim 2:4; Lumen gentium 14-17; Ad Gentes 3), the Church believes that God has established Christ as the one mediator and that she herself has been established as the universal sacrament of salvation (see Lumen gentium 48; Gaudium et spes 43; Ad Gentes 7, 21). (...) It is necessary to keep these two truths together, namely, the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all humanity and the necessity of the Church for salvation.*³⁷

The salvation of those, who do not belong to the Church, comes in relationship to the Church, which is Christ's '(...) instrument for the salvation of all (...)'.³⁸ The Church '(...)' has, in God's plan, an indispensable relationship with the salvation of every human being.³⁹

This is how the universality of salvation is explained by John Paul II: *The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church. Since salvation is offered to all, it must be made concretely available to all. But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the gospel revelation or to enter the Church. (...) For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit.*⁴⁰

The statement 'outside the Church there is no salvation' has to be interpreted as follows: on the one hand, '(...) they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.'⁴¹ On the other hand, those can achieve salvation who could not know about Christ and His Church, but are co-operating with God's actual graces working in their lives.⁴² In this case their salvation comes from Christ and is related to the Church, even though they may not know it.

How does God communicate His saving grace to those who do not formally belong to the Catholic Church? '(...) [T]he Second Vatican Council limited itself to the statement that God bestows it "in ways known to himself."⁴³ Theological research is encouraged to investigate these *ways* more deeply. However, some aspects are already known – all saving grace comes through Christ, by the action of the Holy Spirit, and has a special relationship to the Church.⁴⁴

The relationship between the Church and the kingdom of God determines the relationship between the Church and other religions in respect to communicating the salvific will of God: all saving grace – also in other religions – has special relationship with the Church. This 'unique and special relationship'⁴⁵ between the kingdom of God and the Church, 'while not excluding the action of Christ and the Spirit outside the Church's visible boundaries, confers upon her a specific and necessary role (...)'⁴⁶ Msgr. Fernando Ocariz at the Press Conference in the Holy See Press Office expressed this in the following way: 'We must believe that all salvation – even of non-Christians – comes from Christ through the Church, but we do not know how this comes about in the case of non-Christians.'⁴⁷

The Church is entrusted by God with the 'fullness of grace and truth',⁴⁸ and it is through her alone 'that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.'⁴⁹ The other religions, on the other hand, are mixtures of elements of different value in respect of help to attain salvation. *Dominus Iesus* identifies two different groups of these elements. The first one is of positive value: *Certainly, the various religious traditions contain and offer religious elements which come from God (see Ad Gentes 11; Nostra aetate 2), and which are part of what 'the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and reli-*

gions' (*Redemptoris missio* 29). Indeed, some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the human heart is prompted to be open to the action of God. One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin or an *ex opere operato* salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments.⁵⁰ These are 'the riches which a generous God has distributed among the nations,'⁵¹ '(...) the seeds of the divine Word (*semina Verbi*), which the Church recognizes with joy and respect.'⁵² Christians, who live among the people of other religions, 'should be familiar with their national and religious traditions and uncover with gladness and respect those seeds of the Word which lie hidden among them.'⁵³ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses their positive value in leading towards Christ: *Thus, the Church considers all goodness and truth found in [other] religions as "a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life"* (*Lumen gentium* 16).⁵⁴ The statement quoted above ('[w]hatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions serves as a preparation for the Gospel'⁵⁵) was further explained by Cardinal Ratzinger: '*preparation for the Gospel*' must be considered not as what is to be found in religions but only 'what the Spirit brings about' therein. From this, a most important consequence arises: the path to salvation is the good present in religions – as the work of Christ's Spirit – it is not the religions in themselves.⁵⁶

Then, there are '(...) other rituals, [which,] insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors (see 1 Cor 10:20-21), constitute an obstacle to salvation.'⁵⁷ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes this point as follows: *In their religious behavior, however, men also display the limits and errors that disfigure the image of God in them: 'Very often, deceived by the Evil One, men have become vain in their reasonings, and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and served the creature rather than the Creator'* (*Lumen gentium* 16).⁵⁸

In summary, to those who belong to other religions, "[God] does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain 'gaps, insufficiencies and errors,'⁵⁹ which are mixed with the elements that are 'true and holy.'⁶⁰

The Church has a special place among the other religions in God's plan for the salvation of humanity: 'With the coming of the Saviour Jesus Christ, God has willed that the Church founded by him be the instrument for the salvation of all humanity (see Acts 17:30-31).'⁶¹ Through Christ the Church was given the '(...) fullness of grace and truth (...)'.⁶² She is founded by God to 'be the instrument for the salvation of all humanity'⁶³, and this "rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism 'characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that 'one religion is as good as another'" (*Redemptoris missio* 36).⁶⁴ The following statement from the Declaration expresses this even more clearly: *If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation.*⁶⁵ Similar position was expressed by Pope Paul VI: *[T]he religion of Jesus, which [the Church] proclaims through evangelization, (...) effectively establishes with God an authentic and living rela-*

*tionship which the other religions do not succeed in doing, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out towards heaven.*⁶⁶

This, of course, cannot serve as a basis for any kind of ‘Catholic triumphalism’, as the Second Vatican Council solemnly declared: *All the children of the Church should nevertheless remember that their exalted condition results, not from their own merits, but from the grace of Christ. If they fail to respond in thought, word, and deed to that grace, not only shall they not be saved, but they shall be more severely judged.*⁶⁷

The missionary proclamation of the Church is based on the command of Jesus, and on Church’s love for all people. Whether knowingly or not, the whole of humanity is seeking for what the Church has to give, while non-Christian religions of the world are expressions of that quest. Therefore, in order to bring people to what they are searching for, the Church ‘(...) proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ (...). In him (...) men find the fullness of their religious life.’⁶⁸ ‘The Church’s relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: ‘Respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man.’⁶⁹ This respect does not lessen, but, on the contrary, strengthens, the Church’s obligation and desire to show them this ‘fullness of (...) religious life.’⁷⁰

‘The reason for missionary activity lies in the will of God, ‘who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Tim 2:4).’⁷¹ Therefore, ‘today as always, missionary activity retains its full force and necessity.’⁷² The inter-religious dialogue is not an alternative for Church’s mission *Ad Gentes*, but a part of it: *(...) the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue. Instead, she feels the need to link the two in the context of her mission ad gentes. These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore, they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable.*⁷³

Inter-religious dialogue, as it is based on the Church’s belief in the fundamental equality of all human beings, presupposes equality of the parties involved. However, equality in this area may easily be misunderstood, and can lead towards erroneous conclusions: *Equality, which is a presupposition of inter-religious dialogue, refers to the equal personal dignity of the parties in dialogue, not to doctrinal content, nor even less to the position of Jesus Christ – who is God himself made man – in relation to the founders of the other religions.*⁷⁴ Cardinal Ratzinger made the following explanation of this: *Esteem and respect towards the world’s religions, and towards cultures that have objectively enriched the promotion of human dignity and the development of civilization, does not diminish the originality and unicity of Jesus Christ’s revelation nor does it in any way limit the Church’s missionary task.*⁷⁵

The Church in her missionary activity does not violate human freedom. Instead, she proclaims human responsibility before the truth: *All men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and his Church, and to embrace it and hold on to it as they come to know it.... [T]hese obligations bind man’s conscience. Truth can impose itself on the mind of man only in virtue of its own truth, which wins over the mind with both gentleness and power.*⁷⁶

The Declaration reminds that the ‘(...) true religion continues to exist in the Catholic

and Apostolic Church (...)⁷⁷ The truth is that basis by which the teaching of the Church appeals to the human minds for acceptance. The truth 'imposes itself as an all-embracing authority'⁷⁸ and it is able to overcome all the barriers which separate people of different cultures and religions and to bring them '(...) to share in the unity of the family of God's children (...)'⁷⁹ Christ is the Truth itself, and this Truth is an adequate basis for an authentic unity of people from different cultures and religious traditions. The Church in her proclamation appeals to the capacity of the mind to recognise the truth and to accept it by exercising human freedom. This proclamation, therefore, does not restrain human freedom in any way, but it fully depends on human freedom, as this freedom is the prerequisite for an authentic embrace of the message. No coercion in this area is allowed, for it would lessen the freedom of the response.

The missionary activity of the Church does not contradict her belief that God desires and has ways to save people regardless of their religious affiliation. On the contrary, the Church's belief in the 'universal salvific will of God does not diminish, but rather increases the duty and urgency of the proclamation of salvation and of conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ.'⁸⁰ Out of obedience to the will of God, and out of love to all the people the Church 'proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ (...)'⁸¹. It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, 'for the love of Christ urges us on' (2 Cor 5:14; see AA 6; *Redemptoris missio* 11.). Indeed, God '*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*' (1 Tim 2:4); *that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.*⁸²

Conclusions

1. While addressing the problem of the relationship of the Church instituted by Christ to contemporary Christian Churches and communities, the Declaration reviews the teaching of the Magisterium on the topic. The statement from the Lumen Gentium is repeated here to state that the Church of Christ *subsistit in* the Catholic Church, while other Churches and communities are in different degrees united and related to it.

2. The problem of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the kingdom of God is set in the context of religions of the world. The position of the Catholic Church is described by balancing two statements: on the one hand, the Church is the instrument for God's kingdom, on the other – she is the beginning and the seed of that kingdom. The other religions are in different degrees related to the kingdom of God, but that relationship is of a different kind than the unique relationship that the Church has to the kingdom of God.

3. The problem of salvation of those who do not belong to the Catholic Church is reviewed as an issue which unites the previously analysed problems. The possibility of salvation for non-Catholics was solemnly repeated by Vatican II. The tendencies in con-

temporary theology gave rise to opinions which question the necessity of belonging to the Church in order to achieve salvation. The position of the Magisterium could be summarized as follows: the salvation of all people – Catholics or non-Catholics – comes through the Church, even though the latter may know nothing of her. That is why the Church is necessary for salvation. The position of those who belong to the Church (there is a warning about a danger of belonging ‘in body’ but not ‘in heart’) is better, for in the Church there is the fullness of means for attaining salvation. Other religions, on the other hand, contain elements both of positive and negative value in respect of attaining salvation.

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- ⁴¹ Lumen gentium 14.
- ⁴² See *ibid.* 20.
- ⁴³ Dominus Iesus 21; quoting Ad gentes 7. Full quotation: (...) [A]lthough in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel to that faith without which it is impossible to please him (Heb. 11:6), the Church, nevertheless, still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize.’
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Artūras LUKAŠEVIČIUS

DEKLARACIJOS *DOMINUS IESUS* NUORODOS DĖL DABARTINIŲ EKLEZIOLIGINIŲ TARPRELIGINIO DIALOGO PROBLEMŲ

S a n t r a u k a

Jubiliejinių 2000-ųjų metų viduryje Vatikane buvo paskelbta Tikėjimo mokslo kongregacijos parengta deklaracija *Dominus Iesus*. Netrukus po paskelbimo paaiškėjo, kad ši deklaracija – vienas iš priešiščiausiai priimtų Bažnyčios dokumentų po Vatikano II Susirinkimo. Ji buvo aštriai kritikuojama pačiuose įvairiausiuose sluoksniuose – nuo sekuliarios žiniasklaidos ir nekrikščioniškų religijų atstovų iki kitų krikščioniškų konfesijų vadovų ir net kai kurių katalikų hierarchų. Tuo pačiu metu dauguma pripažino, kad dokumentas nepareiškė nieko naujo, palyginti su tuo, kas jau buvo pasakyta ankstesniuose Magisteriumo dokumentuose. Tai liudija, kad deklaracija palietė tikrai opią ir aktualią temą. Šiame straipsnyje apžvelgiamos ekleziologinės (taip pat ir ekumeninės) dokumente nagrinėjamos temos.

Viena svarbiausių ekumenizmo problemų yra santykis tarp Kristaus įsteigtosios Bažnyčios ir kitų šiandienių krikščioniškų denominacijų bei bendruomenių. Deklaracija *Dominus Iesus* vėl pakartoja garsiąją formuluootę iš *Lumen Gentium*, kad Kristaus Bažnyčia savo esme egzistuoja (*subsistit in*) Katalikų Bažnyčioje. Kitos Bažnyčios ir bendruomenės yra skirtingais laipsniais susijusios su Kristaus Bažnyčia. Katalikų Bažnyčios santykio su Dievo karalyste teologinė problema nagrinėjama bendrame pasaulio religijų kontekste. Šis santykis nusakomas nurodant du aspektus: viena vertus, Bažnyčia yra Dievo karalystės ženklas ir įrankis; antra vertus – Dievo karalystė jau egzistuoja per Bažnyčią, kuri yra jos sėkla ir pradžia. Taigi Bažnyčia yra esmiškai susijusi su Dievo karalyste. Pasaulio religijos taip pat susijusios su Dievo karalyste, bet šis ryšys kokybiškai skiriasi nuo to ryšio, kurį turi Bažnyčia.

Svarbi teologinė ir praktinė problema yra nekatalikų išganymo galimybė ir šio išganymo priklausomybė nuo šių žmonių santykio su Katalikų Bažnyčia. Vatikano II Susirinkimas vėl pabrėžė Bažnyčios tikėjimą, kad gali būti išganyti ir asmenys, formaliai nepriklausantys Katalikų Bažnyčiai. Ši pozicija po Vatikano II Susirinkimo dažnai buvo neteisingai interpretuota tarsi pagrindžianti nuostatą, kad visos religijos ar net nereliginės pasaulėžiūros yra vienodai vertingos siekiant išganymo. Magisteriumas siekia ištaisyti šią klaidingą sampratą pabrėždamas, kad Bažnyčia yra būtina išganymo malonei pasiekti. Tai yra visų – tiek katalikų, tiek nekatalikų – išganymas įmanomas tik per Bažnyčią, nors pastarieji gali apie tai net nežinoti. Tačiau sąmoningas atsisakymas būti Bažnyčioje užkerta kelią į išganymą, nes tuo radikaliai atsisakoma bendradarbiauti su malone. Kita vertus, katalikams – tai yra esantiesiems Bažnyčioje – primenama, jog išganymui nepakanka vien formalaus priklausymo Bažnyčiai (plg. *Lumen gentium*, 14).

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: deklaracija *Dominus Iesus*, ekumenizmas, tarpreliginis dialogas, religinis reliatyvizmas, Dievo karalystė, išganymas, pasaulio religijos.

KEY WORDS: declaration *Dominus Iesus*, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, religious relativism, kingdom of God, salvation, world's religions.

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