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Cardinal: We must remember the individual in globalization

by H.E. Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran



From left to right: Onorato Grassi, professor of History of Medieval Philosophy, LUMSA; Monsignor Khaled Akasheh, head of the Office for Relations with Islam at the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue; Monsignor Samuele Sangalli, professor of ethics and economics, LUISS Guido Carli; Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, president of the Institute for Works of Religion; Sebastiano Maffettone, dean faculty of political science, LUISS Guido Carli; R

The following was written by H.E Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and translated from Italian. This reflection was originally delivered by Monsignor Khaled Akasheh at the Tony Blair Faith Foundation's seminar on faith and globalization in collaboration with Fondazione per la Sussidiarietà, held at Luiss Guido Carli University, Rome.

The phenomenon of globalization is not entirely new: Greece, Rome, China and the Habsburg Empire had global pretensions. Christianity, Islam, the colonial enterprise and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also have a universal dimension while not incorporating all humanity.

The reality now is that all the inhabitants of this earth are not only actors but objects of globalization. Globalization is perceived in these ways today:

- The whole world can be found in my house. (I have a Honda car, a Bosch refrigerator, etc.)
- Travel: It is not enough to be at an airport in the summer months! The further you go, the more you experience it ? that?s not to say the more you rest.
- In the event of natural disasters or famines, it is possible to mobilize the world's reaction.
- Computer science, the American way of life and large multinational companies lead the dance.

It seems that we have entered a new era where the market economy has virtually conquered the world. The globalization of trade has eliminated many barriers of the movement of people, capital and goods.

Globalization is neither good nor bad. It depends on our actions. No economic or political system is an end in itself -- it must serve the human person. Globalization, like any other system, must serve solidarity and the common good.

As a believer -- a Christian in particular -- how must I react to this reality?

When you look at Christianity today, it is clear there are new features:

1. It has become a religious community among many, even if it is numerically one of the biggest.
2. New religions coming from the southern part of the globe are taking root in countries that have long been Christian.
3. Christianity has returned to being an urban religion now confronting a new secularizing culture.

The world of today, as a whole, is more "religious" than ever. (I am not saying "Christian.") In the United States, a typical example of globalization, 85 percent of citizens claim to pray daily. In Asia, globalization has not favored secularization, but instead, a rediscovery of the local religions. So globalization is not only an economic problem; it also encompasses the cultural, political, ethical and ecological aspects of life.

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Actually, Christianity is inherently universalist. Just remember the story of Pentecost: each felt the message of the Apostles in their own language. It is the opposite of the Tower of Babel that reduced human diversity to a single model. So I would say that a Christian should lead the globalization of communication.

For the Catholic Church, there is a need for ethical values that rests upon two inseparable principles.

The first, the inalienable value of human person, source of all human rights and of the whole social order. The human being must always be the end and not the means, a subject and not an object nor a commodity.

Second principle: the value of human cultures cannot be minimized or destroyed by any power. Globalization should not be a new version of colonialism. It must respect the diversity of cultures. It should not deprive the poor of their religious beliefs and practices that manifest human freedom.

It is especially important that the leaders of society are convinced of the need to monitor technological developments, in itself positive, to promote respect for fundamental human values and the common good,

especially everything related to biotechnology.

Our ethics demand that all human systems must harmonize with human needs because the human person can never be sacrificed in the name of any system -- political, social or economic. My desire is that your reflection will bring to the fore a consensus and conviction that the benefits of globalization should fall on all of humanity and not only a small rich elite that controls science, technology, communications and the world's resources, penalizing the vast majority of people around the world.

Believers - and Christians in particular - should help to promote a globalization that serves the human person in its entirety.

Recently, the Holy Father reminded German parliamentarians of the need to make diversity a source of wealth.

He observed: "The culture of Europe was born from the encounter between Jerusalem, Athens and Rome -- the encounter between faith in the God of Israel, the reason of Greek philosophical tradition, and legal thought of Rome. This threefold encounter shapes the innermost identity of Europe.

"We will find again faith in the possibility of a better future if we are able to promote and live an authentic solidarity, the source of peace.

"One of the major ways of building peace is globalization directed towards the interests of the whole human family. In order to govern globalization, however, we need a strong global solidarity between the rich and poor, as well as within individual countries, including affluent ones" (Benedict XVI, Message for World Day of Peace, January 10, 2009, 8).

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