

THE HUMAN DIGNITY PROJECT. AN IDEA, ASSUMPTIONS AND CHALLENGES

Collaboration between Catholic University of Lublin of John Paul II
and Tangaza University College–Nairobi, Kenya

The collaboration between John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) and academic circles in Nairobi, is an outcome of personal engagement. One of KUL graduates (Institute of Law and Institute of Theology), Mr. Radoslaw Malinowski MA, who happen to settle down in Africa. Mr. Malinowski witnessed the brutality of human trafficking, modern day slavery, and out of this experience he decided to create a non governmental organization, devoted exclusively to the noble cause of abolition movement. As his experience in Africa was very interesting to TUC, the university has decided to engage Mr. Malinowski as TUC lecturer. Here we can add that I had a personal encounter with Mr. Malinowski as a curate in his home town, Radziejow (located in Wloclawek Diocese). I was in charge of preparation of Mr. Malinowski for his first holy communion, which was nearly thirty years ago. It is not surprising therefore, that my person served as a focal point for his various initiatives. Recently our collaboration was enriched by the third person – Fr. Dr Robert Lezohupski OFM Conv, a missionary, lawyer, who for the past two years has been a lecturer in TUC and other Universities.

In January 2014, during short visit of Mr. Malinowski in Lublin consultations with the vice-rector of CUL, prof. Urszula Paprocka-Piotrowska took place. As an outcome of these consultation, there was an idea that the collaboration of private nature could be institutionalized and thus benefit both academic institutions. Such change of nature was possible during my short visit in Nairobi in January and February 2014. While visiting TUC, we managed to create ties between the authorities of TUC – Rev. Prof. Steven Payne, rector of TUC, Rev. dr. Albert de Jong, dean of Theology, and the authorities of CUL. The institutional collaboration between the two Universities was formalized with the bilateral agreement dated 31.01.2014. The authorities of

TUC nominated Fr. Dr Robert Lezohupski OFM Conv (lecturer of the School of Theology) and Mr. Radoslaw Malinowski MA (lecturer, Institute of Social Mission) as coordinators of the project on behalf of TUC.

Soon, after our collaboration took off we had the first Skype conference with CUL being represented by dr hab. U. Paprocka-Piotrowska, vice-rector of CUL, Z. Cieszkowski MA, the director of international cooperation office and Rev. dr. M. Wysocki, who represented the theology institute. TUC was represented by dr. E. Ushuru – Deputy Principal Academics and Strategic Planning, Rev. prof. dr hab. Jerzy Pałucki (CUL) Rev. Dr R. Leżohupski OFMConv - Coordinator, s. Redempta Agoti Director of the Institute of Spirituality, R. Malinowski – Coordinator and M. Otieno – a head of IT department. The conference agreed that we will have more academic events in the near future – related to family issues (spearheaded by R. Malinowski), also concerning the history of the Church (as suggested by dr. Reginald Cruz – a head of history sub department at TUC), and Canon Law (under the guidance of Rev. Dr R. Leżohupski OFMConv) among others. The proposed topics oscillated around the following issues: the Fall of Byzantium and the invasion of Islam, St. Adalbert and Cardinal Otunga – patrons of emerging local churches, the Canon law and inculturation, The institution of family in Africa, among others.

So far there were several initiatives within the collaboration: two days symposium at Tangaza University College TUC (17-18.02.2014) – Day 1: Canon Law – “Participation of the Laity in the Mission of the Church”; Day 2: Pastoral Theology – “Family, the hope of humanity”. Then an International video Conference on the reception of Canon Law in Africa. Is the Code of Canon Law an instrument of Neo-Colonialism? (19.02.2014) followed by International video Conference on Social and Cultural determinants of Marriage and Family – African Context (12.03.2014). Finally on the 02.04.2014 we participated in symposium that was simultaneously organized in TUC and CUL on the occasion of canonization of blessed John Paul II. The symposium was titled in Lublin: saint among saints – before the canonization of John Paul II, and in Nairobi: John Paul II – The African Heritage. Rev. Dr. Robert Lezohupski presented a paper titled John Paul II and Africa – African echoes of the Canonization process.

There are plans to initiate other forms of cooperation like video-lectures involving academic staff from both institutions, especially from the Institute of Family Science and Social Work, Institute of Canon Law, institute of

Church History and Patrology. There are also plans to start a PHD e-learning program for the students of TUC.

All above initiatives together with other plans (like for example empirical research and collaboration) will definitely enrich academic life for both institutions, benefit both academic staff and students from Lublin and Tangaza and bring the two cultures closer to each other.

Concluding, let us underline it once more, the Human Dignity Project is a joint collaboration of Tangaza University Project (TUC) from Nairobi, Kenya and John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. The project brings together the vibrant academic institution from East Africa together with the largest catholic university from Europe. The area of interest for both centers entails joint academic discourse, exchange of academic staff and students, empirical research, joint conferences and publications among many. Presently, within the project there has been a number of organized several video-conferences attended by the authorities, lecturers and students from both institutions. This periodic, Human Dignity Journal, includes mostly papers presented from our academic events.

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