

# **Evangelical Poverty: The Franciscan Way of being involved with the Common Good**

Thomas Dienberg & Markus Warode

## **Abstract**

Poverty usually is regarded as the lack of money, of status and participation in society. A poor person often lives a marginalized life. This kind of poverty urges everybody to fight for a just and good life.

From a spiritual point of view poverty also is a fundamental attitude towards life and creation. It is a category of relationship.

No one in the history of our Christian Spirituality laid more emphasis on this than St. Francis of Assisi. For him poverty had different perspectives: On the one side, it included the solidarity with the poor of his time by living with them and literally performing a 'change of location'. Poverty here includes the aspects of solidarity, help, looking at the other at eye level and love. On the other side for him poverty has also deep theological and spiritual roots. The incarnation of Jesus Christ let Francis call his free choice of poverty an evangelical poverty: Living in the same way that Jesus did.

Evangelical poverty should become a central issue in the practice of businesses in an inclusive economy. It has effects for the individual person with his attitude towards himself and the others (What is my spirituality? Does poverty play a role? How do I look at me and the other – culture of mercy, culture of failure, culture sharing?). It also has effects for the role and the work performance (e. g. in leadership with the question: How do I serve the organization and the team? How do I lead? Is my leadership a servant one, transformative and focusing on the person and not just the success?). Finally, it also has consequences for the organization (business culture, realization of the vision and mission, CSR and sustainability).

Evangelical poverty goes hand in hand with two other important Franciscan characteristics: fraternitas (brotherhood) and minoritas (being a minor). This Franciscan triumvirate can become a model for building institutions for the Common Good.

Therefore the paper will focus on three aspects:

- Explanation of the Franciscan triumvirate
- Exploring these three aspects in its importance for the three fields of person/role/organization
- A practical perspective