

REPORT

The CEEPUS Bioethics International Teaching Week

The Palacky University, STS Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology

03rd to 07th November 2025, Olomouc, CZE

The CEEPUS Bioethics International Teaching Week (ITW) that took place in the first week of November 2025 at The Palacky University, STS Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, in Olomouc, CZE, was a multinational and multicultural experience in the bioethics field and beyond. It entailed a considerable number of lectures and workshops so that every participant was to choose which ones they would take part at. My choice was as follows (to each title I have added a few interesting ideas and thought (of my personal selection) from the given reach contributions of the professors and other lecturers or workshops moderators:

1. Laudato Si' and the Catholic Social Teaching on Sustainability - An Interim Conclusion Ten Years After Publishing (prof. dr. Johannes J. Fröhbauer)

»Laudato si', mi' Signore« – Praise be to you, Lord«. This encyclical, as a pastoral letter from the pope Francis, is about what is happening to our common home, about the human roots of the ecological crisis, about integral ecology, and about ecological education and spirituality, about the poor countries' indebtedness, sustainable management. A landmark – beyond the Catholic Church.

Man is not a king of creation but rather in the position of a stewardship. Human being is not the central factor, but a part. We are in the relationship with plants, animals etc. Thus, anthropocentrism is not our right attitude.

Central issues: natural spirituality, living connected with nature, approach through real and concrete problems, ecological challenges – social justice, responsibility of religions, environmental pollution, climate change, littering, water shortage, global social injustice, dialogue among all, the presence of God in ecological education and ecological conversion, change of lifestyle, universal sisterhood, world opened Catholicism.

The pope reminds us that our bodies are made up of the elements of the earth and that we breathe and drink the products of the earth.

Traditional social Principles are common good, solidarity, subsidiarity...

Most inhabitants are believers – this should be a source of energy for changes. Religion has a meaning to very many people around the world.

2. Vocation, Profession, Virtues

Few people have the luck that their profession is at the same time also their vocation. Vocation – as a life mission of a person – should involve professional approach and be based on virtues.

Virtues generate good deeds. They contribute to the good in the world.

Vocation is something more than a profession. A profession does not necessarily involve virtues, vocation does.

A Christian anthropological vision of Man living a full life.

Beruf = is one's earthly occupation. Berufung is more spiritual ...

How strong is the distinction between sacred and secular life.

Profession being vocation – a means of loving and serving one's neighbour.

Righteousness by faith frees the Christian from working to earn salvation, allowing work to become an expression of gratitude and service.

The good professional is not defined by success or status but by faithful service, integrity, and love of neighbour within one's calling.

The communal dimension of holiness: The Christian is sanctified in communion – within the Body of Christ, the Church.

Holiness is thus both personal and ecclesial: each believer's growth contributes to the sanctification of the whole community.

Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

A profession is a person's chosen occupation or work, often requiring skill, dedication, and a sense of responsibility. It represents one's participation in the social and economic order – a way of contributing to the common good and sustaining life.

Vocation originates from God's initiative.

Profession arises from human discernment and social context.

Both profession and vocation aim at self-giving and fulfilment.

In a vocation, the ultimate end is union with God and the good of others.

In a profession, the immediate end is the excellence of one's work and contribution to society.

Vocation as dialogue: Call and Response:

Divine dimension: God calls – an act of love and invitation; God sends – mission and purpose; God empowers – through grace and Spirit. Human dimension: The human person listens and discerns. The person responds and cooperates. The person lives out the call in fidelity. We are called into relationship – not merely work.

Chesterton on Virtues. In Orthodoxy...

Redemptive suffering, faithfulness under persecution, and hope beyond oppression) ← Placid Olofsson OSB (1916-2017).

Our life story to be at the same time one among the huge number of stories and at the same time a participation in the one overwhelming God's story.

3. The Basic Elements of Intellectual Property (Agnieszka Grzesiok-Horosz, PhD)
IP is everywhere. Everywhere we engage with copyright law, licences, trademarks, business's names, franchises, geographical indications and appellations... A patent is an exclusive right granted for an invention.

IP refers to creations of the mind: from inventions and literary works to brand names, unique designs, symbols, names, and images used in commerce. It is deeply woven into daily life, influencing our consumer choices and the quality of living.

International IP law (also: WIPO Copyright Treaty and WIPO Performances and phonograms treaty 1996).

European IP Law (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/oj/eng>). EUIPO. EURLEX, Regulation.

IP makes the world a better place. IP works for everyone.

Geographical indications and appellations...

4. From Tolerance to Understanding: Challenges in Work with Romani People and Refugees; Reflection, Prejudice, Inclusive Social Work (www.romanity.de) (by an activist and founder of self-organization Romaniti and Student Association of Sinti and Roma in Germany. Research assistant: experiences of racism and forms of discrimination against students, successful educational biographies and supporting factors)

How privileged are we? How much we know about Romani people? What is our knowledge about racism and discrimination? How tolerant are we?

What is tolerance? According to the Cambridge Dictionary: Tolerance is willingness to accept behaviour and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with or approve of them.

What is understanding? Understanding is the ability to recognise, respect, and appreciate cultural differences while fostering meaningful interactions across diverse communities...

Tolerance implies enduring what we dislike; understanding means engaging with what challenges us (Bauman, 2004, Identity). Tolerance: endurance, distance.

Prejudice and bias: how they work? Prejudice involves negative attitudes toward a group and the generalization of negative beliefs and expectations to all members of that group.

What do you know about Romani people or Geopple or Gypsies? Stereotypes, positive discrimination, ignorance, racism.

The Roma have been and still are a target of prejudice, marginalization, and social exclusion across Europe.

Anti-Roma attitudes need to be recognized as a unique form of prejudice because they reflect socially approved dominant societal norms.

Many refugees in Europe identify as Roma or experience similar exclusion.

Power and privilege: Prejudice cannot be fully understood without analysing structural and cultural dimensions of domination and exclusion.

(race, education, sexuality, ability, age, gender...).

Why tolerance is not enough? Tolerance maintains distance. Understanding builds relationship.

Are refugees un-thankful and demand ever more?

5. Postsecularism and Cotemporally Spirituality (Karol Jasinski, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, POL)

Religion – religiousness – spirituality

People feel a hunger for spirituality and seek new forms of spirituality. Spirituality used to be linked to religion, but not anymore.

About 10.000 various religions and creeds may exist in the world nowadays.

Religion is the relationship between man and the Absolute. Such a relationship would translate individual spiritual experiences, a doctrine, a worship and a community of the faithful.

Religions should primarily assist man in re-reading and re-interpreting his life in the transcendental perspective, establishing a relationship with the Absolute, as well as choosing God and, consequently, a certain lifestyle.

Functions of religion:

Humanisation of the world and protection of the dignity of man as a person (Zofia Jadwiga Zdybicka).

Struggle with the ultimate life problems through beliefs and practices (John Milton Yinger).

Niklas Luhmann: the primary and auxiliary functions of religion:

- Initiating, maintaining, and strengthening the relationship between humans and the Absolute, understood in various way.
- God is a personal being...

Secularisation appeared in the 17th century, in the Context of the German religious wars and the French Revolution. Was very intense in 1950s and 1960s. Secularism emerged in the 19th century, due to George Jacob Holyoake, who promoted a naturalistic morality and undermined the realm of the supernatural. Primarily a form of ideology.

Post-secularism: New forms of experiencing sacrum and the need for religion in the public sphere were noted. Religion did not disappear but changed its form.

Peter Berger: The world is more religious today.
 Religion is undergoing a metamorphosis.
 The collapse of institutional religion.
 Contemporary spirituality does not adopt institutional forms.
 Religion returns mainly in the form of spirituality, in which the subjective way of life and self-fulfilment are emphasised.
 Faith without affiliation → believing without belonging.
 The individual can choose from a variety of religious orientations, models, values and norms.
 Religion is individualized – human being is a kind of its creator.
 The individuals are interested in the self-fulfilment of their own personality.
 New spirituality, postmodern spirituality → not yet clearly defined. The metaphysical element is based on theosophy and gnosis.
 The issue of the meaning of life is increasingly important – it is associated only with the spiritual experiences of a human being.
 An important role is played by the human self with its inner experiences, personal searching and self-fulfilment.
 There is also no reference to personal transcendental reality. Transcendent God is sometimes reduced to some form of impersonal and immanent sacrum...
 The Absolute is then not a personal God, but a being that encompasses the whole reality.
 Atheistic spirituality is immanent because it is limited to contact with the universe and experiencing a unity, freedom and peace.
 Tomaš Špidlik – spirituality is a multifaceted concept. It is, above all, a life within and with the Holy Spirit, who gives strength, harmony and meaning.
 Language is very important, it shapes us; how to talk with un-faithful?
 Linguistic games – Wittgenstein.
 Taylor also stresses that communitarian bonds cultivated through religious practices continue to play an important role.
 Religious practices can still help to revive human relationship with God.

6. Democracy needs religion

The role of religion in post-secular society is related to a just social order as a civic virtue. Three reference works: John Rawls: The theory of Justice; Jürgen Habermas: Glauben und Wissen. Charles Taylor: A secular Age.
 Habermas' view reflects a post-secular society where religion has not faded but continues to be a relevant force in the public sphere, requiring a new approach to the relationship between religion and democracy.

Religion should not be confined to the private sphere but can and should participate in public discourse in a democratic society, though religious arguments must be translated into a secular language for public debate.

Modern state should be neutral, however, Democracy needs religion.

State should not be aligned with any specific religion and must provide a framework that accommodates religious and non-religious citizens equally.

Nowadays we face decreasing willingness to listen to others. Democracy requires hearing. Harmut Rosa speaks of resonance and the **listening heart**.

Religion's role in democracy: Society needs religion for its democratic health. To hear the voice of others. Not about dogma but a source of meaning and diving into practice in different spaces.

7. Media in the USA (John Honner)

US Media bias chart. There is a lot of politically left oriented and financially supported media and only a few right oriented. However, the best and the most dominant is right oriented one, The Fox News. Televisions are far most important and influential.

The only way to find the truth in the USA and most probably in the whole world is to listen to and compare the news from different sources, right and left.

8. A Way of Being Church (Jordan Nyenyembe)

The envisaged lecturer could not obtain visa therefore a representative of the Faculty of Theology moderated an exchange of information amongst the participants from various world countries. In most of them Christians or even all peaceful people suffer.

9. Doing Theology from the Margins. What can We Learn from the Mediterranean? (Rev. Dr Mark J. Zammit, University of Malta)

The presentation was about the Mediterranean vision of the faith along with the popular piety of the Pope Francis. It gave us a slight taste of what the Mediterranean can contribute to Christian theology.

The mediterranean theologies of the three Abrahamic religions are in their utmost depths influenced by the sea, climate, and land. Although each region is diverse, countries have similarities in habits, customs, trade, doing business... People are product of the land. The Mediterranean enables them to become better, different. The sea generates cycles in the environment and that influences peoples' behaviour, and how they live their faith.

The Mediterranean is a bridge between cultures and histories of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. It unites diverse nations with distinct faiths, cultures, economies, and histories.

How they celebrate, how they practice hospitality, how they combine reason and myth, connect the people to the communities.

Declining religious affiliation, esp. among youth, is a challenge. However, there is also a growing awareness that the social significance of religion extends beyond confines of formal religious organization. It is accompanied by the individualization of religion, personal autonomy in values and morals.

Mediterranean thought reaffirms the region's right to define itself, rather than being shaped by external forces, particularly from Northern Europe.

Theology, rooted in the Mediterranean, involves a deep engagement with the socio-cultural context. The sea plays a vital role in this theological perspective. It is a symbol of encounter, dialogue, and cultural integration.

The popular piety of the Mediterranean stands as a testament to its openness to multiculturalism and the diverse religious traditions within the region. Popular piety is about how you daily live your faith, i. e. how you pray, relate to God, feast...

10. Blue Theology and the Arctic (Sigridžur Gudžmarsdottir, University of Iceland)

The hearth tackling lecture was related to the three regions of disaster, referenced to Kirsten Hastrup who first named them: (1) the melting of the ice, (2) the rising of the seas, and (3) the drying of the lands. All three are about the water and about what is happening within the humanity as a whole. Altogether they are aimed at searching for social responses to climate change.

The lecturer strongly referred also to:

- Willis Jenkins, The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Religious Creativity.
- Paul Tillich: Nature and Sacrament.
- Elizabeth A. Johnson: Losing and finding. Creation in the Christian Tradition.
- Marcel Barros de Sousa: Liberation Theology.
- Manitza Kotze & Koeus van der Walt: Living Water (Reformed Theology in Africa. An interdisciplinary exploration of water as a theological theme.

The Palacky University was so kind that they made available to us, visitors from many foreign countries, their student dormitories which were clean, easy for approach, and comfortable. They arranged for us a guided city tour as well as the welcome and the farewell dinner. For me, coming from Slovenia, meant the visit to Moravia and to the STS Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology also a dive into the very history of our Sloveno-Slavic Christian roots.

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