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Nov 10th, 8:30 AM

Pope Francis and Alternative Economic Visions

John Sniegocki

Xavier University, sniegocj@xavier.edu

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Sniegocki, John, "Pope Francis and Alternative Economic Visions" (2017). *The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy*. 5.

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2017 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

Nov. 8-10, 2017, Dayton, Ohio

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Research Panel: Faith-Based Perspectives

Presenter: John Sniegocki, Xavier University

Title: Pope Francis and Alternative Economic Visions

Abstract: Pope Francis has expressed deep concern about the injustices and ecological harms of the current global economic system: “[L]et us not be afraid to say it,” Francis proclaimed to a worldwide gathering of grassroots social movements in Bolivia. “We want change, real change, structural change. This system is by now intolerable.” In this paper I explore Francis’ multifaceted critiques of our current global economic system, including the empirical evidence that supports such critiques. I will both highlight continuities in the views of Francis and previous popes—especially Paul VI and John Paul II—and highlight several ways that Francis articulates important new or enhanced emphases in Catholic social teaching. Among these new emphases are a more central awareness of the profound depths of the world’s ecological crises and Francis’ stress on grassroots action and popular movements as the manner in which CST is to be implemented—a welcome change from more top-down visions of social change present in most prior CST documents. I will also suggest several ways that CST could be yet further enhanced, particularly in developing a clearer notion of what viable alternatives to current dominant policies might entail. This will include dialogue with the work of prominent proponents of “economic democracy” and “ecological economics.”

Keywords: Catholic social teaching, Pope Francis, economic democracy, capitalism, ecology

About the presenter: John Sniegocki is associate professor of Christian ethics and director of the minor in peace and justice studies at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. He received his Ph.D. in Christian ethics from the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of *Catholic Social Teaching and Economic Globalization: The Quest for Alternatives* (Marquette University Press, 2009); an article in *Theological Studies* entitled “Neoliberal Globalization: Critiques and Alternatives”; and an essay, “The Political Economy of Sustainability,” published in the volume *Just Sustainability*, Christiana Peppard and Andrea Vicini, S.J., Eds., and other journal articles and book chapters on Catholic social teaching, economic justice, food ethics, ecology, war and peace issues, the Catholic Worker movement, and Buddhist-Christian dialogue.