

# **Health and Social Welfare Economy and the Common Good. Responsibilities of Society, Church and State – a Catholic perspective**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Catholic Social Teaching offers principles and reflections not only for the realm of the mission of the Church for the common good, but also for social and political order in a secular and pluralistic world. In following Christ, the Church imitates and continues the privileged attention for the sick and the poor as a necessary focus for contributing to the common good – of all and every single person. Catholic health and social welfare organizations are an integral part of the Church's mission as was repeatedly underpinned by the recent papal magisterium (e.g. Encyclicals *Deus caritas est*, 2005; *Caritas in veritate*, 2009). These Catholic organizations – like public and private organizations in the health and social welfare sectors – do not only face tremendous economic challenges, but they are also significant economic factors in many countries. In the case of Germany, they are employing more than 620.000 persons (2014), rising to more than 1 million employees of *both* Catholic and Protestant organizations (not counting pastoral ministers).

In the health and social welfare mix of public, free and private institutions, which have been the rationale of the German social system, its development and current situation? Which are central challenges and achievements of this system in contributing to the common good, including Catholic and Protestant agencies? What about the basic tenets, strengths and weaknesses as compared to other social systems, e.g. in contrast to the United States with their achievements and struggles towards the common good? Along these questions, I intend to identify the responsibilities of society in general, of the Church and/ or religious communities and of the public order as guaranteed by the State, using and probing the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, of the self-understanding of Catholic social welfare as well as economic principles of health and social welfare: business, public, private, and faith-based.

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**Research Interests:** Theological and interdisciplinary studies of (Catholic) health care and social welfare systems, the Church's mission in the social and political field; interdisciplinary empirical research on religion and spirituality in illness and various age, social and professional groups.