



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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Audience with participants in the international conference of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the international conference of the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation, which took place in the Vatican from 21 to 22 October, on the theme “Solidarity, cooperation and responsibility: the antidotes to combat injustice, inequality and exclusion”.

The following is the Pope’s address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I am pleased that we can be with one another during your International Convention. Thank you, Madam President, for your kind and, as ever, clear words. In these days, you are discussing significant, and indeed fundamental, issues: solidarity, cooperation and responsibility as antidotes to injustice, inequality and exclusion.

These are timely issues, since the uncertainty and instability present in the lives of many individuals and communities have been aggravated by an economic system that continues to discard people’s lives in the name of the god of money, fostering greed and destructive attitudes towards the resources of the earth and fueling various forms of injustice. In the face of this, we cannot remain indifferent. At the same time, our response to injustice and exploitation must be more than mere condemnation; first and foremost, it must be the active promotion of the good: condemnation of what is wrong, yet promotion of what is good. For this reason, I am most appreciative of your work, especially in the areas of education and training, and in particular for your commitment to financing study and research by young people on new models of economic and social development inspired by the Church’s social doctrine. This is important and greatly needed: in soil contaminated by the predominance of finance, we need to sow many small seeds that can bear fruit in an economy that is equitable and beneficial, humane and people-centred. We need possibilities able to become realities, and

realities able to offer hope. This means putting into practice the social teaching of the Church.

I want to return to the term “predominance of finance”. Four years ago a distinguished economist who had also worked in government came to see me. She told me that she had tried to create a dialogue between the economy, humanism and religion in a think-tank, and that it had gone well and continues to go well. I tried the same thing, she said, between finance, humanism and religion, yet we could not even begin. Interesting. That made me think. This economist made me feel that finance was something impractical, something “fluid”, “ephemeral” that ends up like a chain letter. I share this experience with you and perhaps it may help you.

The three words you have chosen – *solidarity, cooperation and responsibility* – represent three pillars of the Church’s social teaching, which sees the human person, naturally open to relationships, as the summit of creation and the centre of the social, economic and political order. Based on this vision, with concern for human beings and sensitivity to concrete historical processes, the Church’s teaching contributes to a vision of the world opposed to individualistic visions, since it is based on the interplay between persons and directed to the common good. At the same time, that teaching is opposed to the collectivistic visions that today are reemerging in a new form, concealed behind projects of technocratic standardization. This is not simply a matter of “politics”; the Church’s social teaching is grounded in the word of God and seeks to promote integral human development on the basis of our faith in the God who became man. For this reason, it should be practised, cherished and developed. Let us once more become passionate about that teaching, let us make it known, for it is a treasure of the Church’s tradition! It is precisely from your study of the Church’s social doctrine that you too have felt called to combat forms of inequality that strike especially the most fragile, and to work in promoting a real and effective fraternity.

Solidarity, cooperation and responsibility: in these days you have placed these three words at the centre of your discussions. Three words that recall the mystery of God himself, who, as Trinity, a communion of persons, inspires us to find our fulfilment in generous openness *to others* (solidarity), through collaboration *with others* (cooperation) and through commitment *to others* (responsibility). He inspires us to do this in every aspect of our life in society, through our relationships, our work and civic engagements, our relationship with creation and our participation in political life. In every sphere of life, today more than ever, we are bound to witness our concern for others, to think not only of ourselves, and to commit ourselves freely to the development of a more just and equitable society where forms of selfishness and partisan interests do not prevail. At the same time, we are called to be vigilant in upholding respect for the human person and his or her freedom, and in safeguarding his or her inviolable dignity. This is the mission of implementing the Church’s social doctrine.

Dear friends, in promoting these values and this way of living – as we know – we often find ourselves going against the grain, yet let us always remember that we are not alone. God has drawn near to us. Not merely in words, but by his very presence: in Jesus, God became incarnate. With Jesus, who became our brother, we recognize in every man a brother, in every woman a sister. This universal communion inspires us, as a believing community, to cooperate readily with everyone for the common good: without forms of rejection, exclusivity or prejudice. As Christians, we are called to a love that transcends borders and limits; we are called to be a sign and witness that it is possible to pass beyond the walls of selfishness and personal and national interest. Beyond the power of money that often decides the destiny of peoples; beyond ideological divisions that foster hatred; beyond all historical and cultural barriers and, above all, beyond indifference, that culture of indifference which, sadly, we experience daily. We can be “brothers and sisters all”, and so we can and must think and work as “brothers and sisters of all”. This may seem to be an unrealistic utopia. But we prefer to believe that it is a dream that can come true. For it is the dream of the triune God. With his help, it is a dream that can begin to become reality, also in our world.

Building a more solidary, just and equitable world is a daunting enterprise. For believers, however, it is not simply a practical matter, with no relation to doctrine. Indeed, it is the way to embody our faith, to praise the God who loves men and women, who loves life. Dear brothers and sisters, the good that you do for every person on earth brings joy to the heart of God in heaven. Continue resolutely on this path. I accompany you with my prayers and I bless you in your work. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.

