



# SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

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## Audience with participants in the Conference of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontefice Foundation

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father received in audience the participants in the Conference of the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontefice* Foundation, to whom he addressed the following discourse:

### Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

Thank you [the President, Dr. A.M. Tarantola] for your words of introduction, and I thank all of you for the work you do. I consider your contribution with regard to the social doctrine of the Church to be very important, first of all at the level of its reception, because you contribute to making it known and understood; but I would also say at the level of deepening it, because you read it “from within” the complex economic and social world, and therefore you can continually compare that doctrine with reality, a reality that is always in motion, that changes continually.

The theme of your conference these days was “*Inclusive growth to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development for peace*”. It seems to me that the key expression is the initial one: “*inclusive growth*”. It brings to mind Saint Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, where he states: “Development ... cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well-rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man” (no. 14). So, development is either inclusive or it is not development. And so, here is our task, particularly yours as lay faithful: to “leaven” economic reality in an ethical sense, growth in the sense of development. And you try to do this, starting from the vision of the Gospel. Because everything stems from how you look at reality.

In one of his novels, a contemporary American storyteller describes the time that preceded the stock market crash, and writes: “The Depression had already started in the hinterlands, and farmers and rural folks throughout the region were feeling the pinch. We came across a lot of desperate people on our travels, and Master Yehudi taught me never to look down on them” (Paul Auster, *Mr Vertigo*, London 1994, 124).

Everything stems from one's way of looking, and from where one looks. To look down on another person, is legitimate only in one situation: to help him or her to get up. No more. This is the only moment when it is legitimate to look down from above. Jesus' gaze knew how to see in the poor people who put small change in the offering box at the Temple a gesture of total giving (cf. *Mk* 12:41-44). Jesus' gaze came from mercy and compassion for the poor and the excluded. Where does my gaze come from? A question that will always help us.

Inclusive growth finds its starting point in a gaze that is not turned in on itself, free from the search for the pursuit of profit maximisation. Poverty is not fought with welfarism, no, in this way we "anaesthetize" it but we do not fight it. As I have already said in *Laudato si'*, "Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work" (no. 128). The doorway is work: the door to the dignity of a man is work.

Without widespread commitment to developing labour policies for the most fragile, we foster a worldwide culture of waste. I also tried to explain this conviction in the first chapter of the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, where, among other things, it is recalled that "wealth has increased, but together with inequality, with the result that new forms of poverty are emerging" (no. 21). Wealth grows and new forms of poverty arise.

This is why the future calls for a new outlook, and each person in his or her own small way is required to be a promoter of this different way of looking at the world, starting from the people and situations he or she lives in daily life. The Master, in the novel I quoted, teaches his pupil to "never look down on anyone"; I think this can be a good indication for us all. We are all brothers and sisters, and if I am the owner of a company, that does not entitle me to look down on my employees. If I am the CEO of a bank, I must not forget that each person must be treated with respect and care.

The *Centesimus Annus* Foundation can interpret the important reflections of these days through the conversion of one's way of looking. The humble gaze of one who sees in every man and woman he or she meets a brother and sister whose dignity must be respected, before possibly being a customer with whom to do business. He or she is a brother, a sister, a person; maybe a client. Only with this outlook can we fight against the evils of current speculation that feed the winds of war. Never looking down on anyone is the style of every peacemaker. It is right to do so only to help him or her get up.

Dear friends, thank you for coming, and especially for the commitment that each of you offers, where you live and work, to promote inclusive growth and, more generally, knowledge of the social doctrine of the Church. From my heart I bless all of you and your families. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

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