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PRESS RELEASE

**International Conference**

**A Fragmented World in Search of Spirituality:  
Freedom and Pluralism from Within the Social Doctrine of the Church**

**New Synod Hall - Vatican City**

**29 May 2026, 9:00 - 19:15**

“A Fragmented World in Search of Spirituality: Freedom and Pluralism from Within the Social Doctrine of the Church” is the theme of the international conference promoted and organised by the Centesimus Annus - Pro Pontifice Foundation, which will take place on Friday 29 May 2026, in the Synod Hall.

«In an age marked by widespread wars, growing polarisation and deep cultural and social divisions, the Foundation is dedicating its 2026 international conference to one of the most pressing issues of our time: the search for a new spirituality capable of restoring meaning to freedom, pluralism and peaceful coexistence among individuals, peoples and nations. The chosen theme stems from the awareness that contemporary crises are not merely economic, political or geopolitical, but are rooted in a progressive weakening of the ethical and spiritual foundations of society», explains Paolo Garonna, President of the Centesimus Annus - Pro Pontifice Foundation. Hence the need to reaffirm the importance of multilateralism and international law for peaceful coexistence and universal fraternity. «The Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church represents a source of inspiration for imagining new forms of international cooperation capable of addressing the geopolitical, economic, climatic and social crises of the present», emphasises Garonna.

Particular attention will also be paid to the crisis of contemporary democracies and the progressive weakening of multilateralism. The so-called “democratic recession”, the rise of authoritarian leadership, mistrust of international institutions and the return of unilateralism are calling into question the entire post-war global order. However, precisely for this reason, it is now considered necessary to promote a new multilateralism founded on shared ethical principles, the centrality of the human person, respect for international law and the pursuit of the global common good. A central role in the discussion will be attributed to the principle of subsidiarity as it safeguards the dignity of individuals and communities, preventing higher levels of power from supplanting or stifling the responsibilities proper to families, intermediate institutions and local communities.

**The entire conference will take the form of a one-day programme**, opening with Holy Mass and continuing with two plenary sessions and several working groups inspired by the synodal method.

The **first plenary session** will be dedicated to the human person, their aspirations for freedom, their need for belonging and their search for meaning. Topics such as psychological distress, burnout, the loss of meaning in contemporary societies, and the relationship between spirituality, responsibility and community building will be addressed. Psychologists, educators, scholars, artists and experts in the Church's Social Doctrine will offer interdisciplinary perspectives to understand how to rebuild authentic social bonds and promote a culture of peace and solidarity.

The **parallel sessions**, meanwhile, will explore different paths of reflection and action. Topics will include the relationship between artificial intelligence, freedom and spirituality; the role of communication and evangelisation in the age of fake news and social media; peace-building in Europe, the Middle East and the world; interreligious dialogue; post-conflict reconciliation; development and the growth of Catholic communities in Africa; investment and responsible leadership in Asia; the experiences of popular movements in Latin America; synodality and overcoming polarizations in the economy, society and international relations.

The **second plenary session** will, however, be dedicated to the reform of multilateralism and international law. Starting from an assessment of the current global disorder, the discussion will focus on the need to build new institutional frameworks based on cooperation, equal dignity among cultures and nations, and shared rules.

**Members' Assembly.** The conference will be preceded by the Members' Assembly – on Thursday 28 May, dedicated to the theme "Renewing the Vision of *Centesimus Annus*: Catholic Social Thought Facing the Challenges to Freedom and Pluralism". The Assembly will take place in Rome – from 9.00 am to 7.00 pm – at the Pontifical International College Maria Mater Ecclesiae.

**Holy Mass and Audience with Pope Leo XIV.** The event will conclude on the morning of Saturday 30 May with the celebration of Holy Mass at the Altar of the Chair in St Peter's Basilica and a private audience with Pope Leo XIV in the Apostolic Palace.

The **concept paper** and the **programme for the Assembly and Conference** are available on the Foundation's website: [www.centesimusannus.va](http://www.centesimusannus.va)

- **Accreditation procedure.** Journalists and media operators who wish to attend the conference proceedings on 29 May must apply, no later than 1:00 p.m. on 28 May 2026, exclusively through the Holy See Press Office's online accreditation system, available at: [press.vatican.va/accreditamenti](http://press.vatican.va/accreditamenti)
- ❖ **Acknowledgements.** We extend our heartfelt thanks to **Intesa Sanpaolo** and **Fideuram-Intesa Sanpaolo Private Banking**, the official sponsors of the initiative. This valuable collaboration has been a key factor in the success of this international event, aimed at promoting dialogue and understanding.

*Press Officer, Centesimus Annus pro Pontifice Foundation:*  
Costantino Coros, email [corospress@gmail.com](mailto:corospress@gmail.com), mob. +393939396689