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Audience with the Centesimus Annus – pro Pontifice Foundation

This morning, in the Sala Regia of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the *Centesimus Annus – pro Pontifice* Foundation, on the occasion of the international conference “The Catholic Social Teaching from inception to the digital age: how to live the *Laudato si’*”, taking place in the Vatican from 6 to 8 June.

The following is the Holy Father’s address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to offer a warm welcome to all of you who are present for the 2019 International Conference of the *Centesimus Annus pro Pontifice* Foundation. I thank the organizers and those who have taken part in the discussions you have held on fostering an integral ecology.

Your Conference this year has chosen to reflect on the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’* and the call to a conversion of minds and hearts so that the development of an integral ecology can become ever more a priority internationally, nationally and indeed individually. In the four years since the publication of the Encyclical, there have certainly been signs of an increased awareness of the need to care for our common home. I am thinking of the adoption, by many nations, of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Organization; a growing investment in renewable and sustainable energy sources; new methods of energy efficiency; and a greater sensitivity, especially among young people, to ecological concerns.

At the same time, however, a number of challenges and issues still remain. Progress on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals has in some cases been slow and even non-existent. Improper use of natural resources and models of development that are not inclusive and sustainable continue to have negative effects on poverty, social growth and social equality (cf. *Laudato Si’*, 43, 48); and the common good is placed in

jeopardy by attitudes of unbridled individualism, consumption and wastefulness. All this makes it difficult to promote economic, environmental and social solidarity and sustainability within a more humane economy which considers not only the satisfaction of immediate desires but also the welfare of future generations. Faced with the enormity of such challenges, it would be easy to lose heart, giving in to uncertainty and anxiety. Yet, “human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start” (*ibid.*, 205).

For this reason, the word “conversion” assumes a special importance in our present situation. Adequate responses to current problems cannot be superficial. Rather, what is needed is precisely a conversion, a “turning around”, that is, a transformation of hearts and minds. Striving to overcome problems such as hunger and food insecurity, persistent social and economic distress, the degradation of ecosystems, and a “culture of waste” calls for a renewed ethical vision, one that places persons at the center, desiring to leave no one on the margins of life. A vision which unites rather than divides, includes rather than excludes. It is a vision transformed by taking into account the ultimate purpose and goal of our work, efforts, lives and earthly sojourn (*cf. ibid.*, 160).

The development of an integral ecology, then, is both a call and a task. It is a call to rediscover our identity as sons and daughters of our heavenly Father who have been created in the divine image and commissioned to be stewards of the earth (*cf. Gen 1:27,28; 2:15*); re-created through the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (*cf. 2 Cor 5:17*); and sanctified by the gift of the Holy Spirit (*cf. 2 Thess 2:13*). Such an identity is God’s gift to every person and even to creation itself, made new by the life-giving grace of the Lord’s death and resurrection. In this light, our call to solidarity as brothers and sisters and to a shared responsibility for our common home becomes increasingly urgent.

The task that lies before us is to change “models of global development” (*ibid.*, 194), opening a new dialogue on the future of our planet (*cf. ibid.*, 14). May your discussions and ongoing work bear fruit in helping to bring about a deep transformation at all levels of our contemporary societies: individuals, corporations, institutions and politics. Although this task seems daunting, I encourage you not to lose hope, for that hope is based upon the merciful love of our Father in heaven. He, “who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. Praise be to him!” (*ibid.*, 245).

Dear friends, with these sentiments, I entrust all of you, together with your families, to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in Christ our Risen Saviour.
