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Message of the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the “European House – Ambrosetti” Forum

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the “European House – Ambrosetti” Forum (Villa d’Este, Cernobbio, 4-5 September 2020):

Message of the Holy Father

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I offer a warm greeting to all those taking part in the Forum of The European House-Ambrosetti. Your discussions this year deal with significant issues involving society, the economy and innovation: issues that call for extraordinary efforts to meet the challenges created or aggravated by the present medical, economic and social emergency.

The experience of the pandemic has taught us that none of us is saved alone. We have experienced at first hand the vulnerability of the human condition that is ours and that makes us one family. We have come to see more clearly that each of our personal choices affects the lives of our neighbours, those next door and those in distant parts of the world. The turn of events has forced us to recognise that we belong to one another, as brothers and sisters dwelling in a common home. Having failed to show solidarity in wealth and in the sharing of resources, we have learned to experience solidarity in suffering.

Culturally, this time of trial has taught us a number of lessons. It has shown us the greatness of science, but also its limits. It has called into question the scale of values that sets money and power over all else. By forcing us to stay at home together, parents and children, young and old, it has once again made us aware of the joys and difficulties involved in our relationships. It has made us refrain from the superfluous and concentrate on the essential. It has toppled the shaky pillars that supported a certain model of development. In the face of a future that appears uncertain and full of challenges, especially on the social and economic level, we have been moved to spend this time discerning what is lasting from what is fleeting, what is necessary from what is not.

In this situation, economics – *oeconomia* in its deepest human meaning as the governance of our earthly home – takes on even greater importance, due to its close connection with the concrete life situations of individual men and women. Economics ought to become the expression of a care and concern that does not exclude but seeks to include, that does not demean but seeks to uplift and give life. A care and concern that refuses to sacrifice human dignity to the idols of finance, that does not give rise to violence and inequality, and that uses financial resources not to dominate but to serve (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 53-60). For genuine profit comes from treasures accessible to all. “That which I truly own is what I can offer to others” (cf. *General Audience*, 7 November 2018).

In this tragedy, that humanity as a whole continues to experience, science and technology have, of themselves, proved insufficient. What has proved decisive instead is the outpouring of generosity and courage shown by so many persons. This should spur us to move beyond the technocratic paradigm, understood as a sole or dominant way to deal with problems. That paradigm, born of a mindset that sought mastery over the natural world, was based on the erroneous presupposition that “an infinite quantity of energy and resources are available, that it is possible to renew them quickly, and that the negative effects of the exploitation of the natural order can be easily absorbed” (Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 463; cf. *Laudato Si'*, 106). Where nature and, even more, persons are involved, another way of thinking is needed, one that can broaden our gaze and guide technology towards the service of a different model of development, more healthy, more human, more social and more integral.

The present is a time for *discernment* in light of the principles of ethics and the common good, for the sake of the recovery desired by all. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, frequently employs the term “discernment” in his writings, drawing from the great sapiential tradition of the Bible and, above all, the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Christ urged all who heard him, and ourselves today, not to stop at externals, but to discern sagely the signs of the times. To do so, two things are demanded, conversion and creativity.

We need to experience an *ecological conversion*, in order to slow down our inhuman pace of consumption and production, and to learn once more how to understand and contemplate nature. To reconnect with the world around us. To work for an ecological retooling of our economy, without yielding to the pressures of time and of human and technological processes, but rather by returning to relationships that are experienced, not consumed.

We are also called to be *creative*, like artisans, devising fresh new ways to pursue the common good. That creativity can only come from openness to the breath of the Spirit, who inspires us to attempt new, timely and indeed bold decisions, as men and women capable of shaping that integral human development to which we all aspire. The creativity of a love that can restore meaning to the present, in order to open it to a better future.

This conversion and creativity necessarily imply training and encouraging the next generation of economists and entrepreneurs. For this reason, I have invited them to meet from 19 to 21 November next in Assisi, the town of the young Saint Francis, who stripped himself of everything “in order to choose God as the compass of his life, becoming poor with the poor, a brother to all. His decision to embrace poverty also gave rise to a vision of economics that remains most timely” (*Letter for the Event “Economy of Francesco”*, addressed to young economists and entrepreneurs worldwide, 1 May 2019). It is important to invest in the young people who will be the protagonists of tomorrow’s economy, to train men and women prepared to put themselves at the service of the community and the creation of a culture of encounter. Today’s economy, and the young and the poor of our world, have need, above all, of your humanity and your respectful and humble fraternity, and only then of your money (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 129; *Address to Participants in the Meeting “Economy of Communion”*, 4 February 2017).

The work of your Forum also foresees the development of an agenda for Europe. Seventy years have passed since the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950, which paved the way for today’s European Union. Now, more than ever, Europe is called to show leadership in a creative effort to emerge from the straits of the technocratic paradigm as applied to politics and the economy. This creative effort must be one of solidarity, the sole antidote to the virus of selfishness, a virus far more potent than Covid-19. Back then, the concern was for solidarity in production; today, solidarity must extend to a more precious good: the human person. The human person must

take its rightful place at the heart of our educational, healthcare, social and economic policies. Persons must be welcomed, protected, accompanied and integrated when they come knocking on our doors, seeking a future of hope.

Your reflections will also concentrate on the *city of the future*. It is not by chance that, in the Bible, the destiny of all humanity finds fulfilment in a City, the heavenly Jerusalem described by the Book of Revelation (Chapters 21-22). As its name indicates, it is a city of peace, whose gates are always open to all peoples; a city built for people, beautiful and resplendent: a city of abundant fountains and trees; a welcoming city where sickness and death are no more. This lofty vision can mobilise the best energies of mankind for the building of a better world. I ask you not to lower your gaze, but to pursue high ideals and great aspirations.

It is my hope that these days of reflection and discussion will prove fruitful, that they will contribute to our common journey by providing guidance amid the din of so many voices and messages, and will be concerned that no one be lost along the way. I urge you to strive to develop new understandings of the economy and progress, to combat every form of marginalisation, to propose new styles of life and to give a voice to those who have none.

I conclude by offering you my prayerful good wishes in the words of the Psalmist: "May the favour of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper the work of our hands. Prosper the work of our hands!" (*Ps* 90:17).

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 27 August 2020

FRANCIS
