

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 230605g

Monday 05.06.2023

Audience with members of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

It is good to celebrate anniversaries: up to a certain point, then not so much... The *Centesimus Annus* Foundation has existed for thirty years now; everything began after John Paul II's Encyclical, written on the centenary of Leo XIII's historic *Rerum Novarum*. And your commitment is set precisely in this path, in this "tradition": the commitment, that is, to study and spread the social doctrine of the Church, endeavouring to show that it is not only theory, but can become a virtuous lifestyle with which to enable the growth of societies worthy of mankind.

The centrality of the person, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity, have been transformed for you in these thirty years into concrete actions and have influenced the hearts and actions of many people. I am grateful to the Foundation and to all of you for the valuable work you have carried out; in particular, for what has been done over the last ten years through the reception and relaunch of the contributions I have tried to make to the development of the social doctrine.

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* I wanted to warn against the danger of living the economy in an unhealthy way. "Such an economy kills" (I said this in no. 53, in the year 2013, denouncing an economic model that produces waste and promotes what can be defined as the "globalization of indifference". Many of you work in the economic field: you are well aware of the benefit to everyone of having a way of imagining reality that places the person at the centre, that does not diminish the worker, and that tries to create good for all.

The Encyclical *Laudato si'* shed light on the damage due to the dominant technocratic paradigm, and proposed

the logic of integral ecology, where “everything is connected”, “everything is related”, and the environmental issue is inseparable from the social issue: they go together. Care for the environment and attention to the poor stand or fall together. In the end, no-one is saved alone, and the rediscovery of fraternity and social friendship is decisive so as not to degenerate into an individualism that makes us lose the joy of living. And it also makes us lose life.

I am pleased that in this international convention you have chosen the title: “Memory to build the future: thinking and acting in terms of community”, explicitly quoting no. 116 of the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. In reality, those words come from an address to popular movements, from 2014. On that occasion I said: “Solidarity is a word that is not always well received. ... However, it is a word that means much more than an occasional gesture of generosity. It means *thinking and acting in terms of community*. It means that the lives of all take priority over the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means fighting against the structural causes of poverty and inequality; of the lack of work, land and housing; and of the denial of social and labour rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced dislocation, painful emigration, human trafficking, drugs, war, violence. ... Solidarity, understood in its deepest sense, is a way of making history”. And I am reminded - I mentioned money - of a passage in the Gospel, when Jesus tells us that you cannot serve two masters: either you serve God, one master, or you serve - I expected him to say: the devil, and he does not say “the devil”, he says “money”. Either you serve God or you serve money. Worse than the devil. We must look for what Jesus wants to say in this: there is a message. Either you serve God, or you are a servant of money. You are not free.

Today, talking to you and thinking of the title you have chosen, I would like to add something I read, by a great Italian jurist, Paolo Grossi, who was also president of the Constitutional Court and who died last year. He stated: “The community is always a refuge for the weak, and gives a voice also to the voiceless” (*Grammatiche del diritto*, p.38).

Perhaps, for the community truly to become a place where the weak and the voiceless can feel welcomed and heard, what is needed from everyone is that exercise we might call “making room”. Everyone withdraws their “self” a little and this allows the other to exist. But for this, the foundation of community must be the ethics of giving and not that of exchange. The ethics of giving, and not the ethics of exchange.

In this regard we can quote a Milanese poet, Giampiero Neri, also recently departed. He affirmed: “It is said of some people that, when they enter a room, they occupy it all. I should imagine that, when they leave, they leave a great void. Instead, I am inclined to think that it is the humble, silent people, who occupy only the necessary space, who make themselves loved, who leave a great void”.

Dear brothers and sisters, thinking and acting in terms of community therefore means making room for others, it is imagining and working for a future where each person can find his or her place and have space in the world. A community that is able to give a voice to the voiceless is what we all need.

The valuable work of the *Centesimus Annus* Foundation can also be this: contributing to a thought and an action that promote the growth of a community in which we can walk the path of peace together. I bless you all, I bless your loved ones. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.
