



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

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Audience with a group of CEOs of major companies and banks

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a group of CEOs of major companies and banks, to whom he addressed the following greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

It is with pleasure that I welcome you, the CEOs and employees of major corporations and banks.

The functions you are called upon to perform are increasingly decisive in not only economic but also social and political life. Large companies are players in the dynamics of international relations. You therefore find yourselves making decisions that have an impact on thousands and thousands of workers and investors, and increasingly on a global scale. Economic power is intertwined with political power. Large corporations, in fact, in addition to consumption, savings and production choices, also condition the fate of governments, national and international public policies, and the sustainability of development. You live this reality, because you are “inside it”, it is your world. But this is not enough: you must become aware of it and look at it critically, with discernment, so that you can fully exercise responsibility for the effects, direct and indirect, of your choices. Because today, more than ever, the economy is bigger than the economy. In this regard, I would like to focus briefly on three challenges, namely caring for the environment, caring for the poor, and caring for young people.

First, I invite you to place *the environment and the earth* at the centre of your attention and responsibility. We are in a time of serious environmental crisis, which depends on many actors and factors, including the economic and business choices of yesterday and today. It is no longer enough to comply with the laws of states, which proceed too slowly: we need to innovate by anticipating the future, with courageous and far-sighted choices that can be imitated. The innovation of the entrepreneur today must first and foremost be innovation in caring for the common home.

Second, do not forget *the poorest and the discarded*. The “circular economy” has become a buzzword, calling for the reuse and recycling of waste. But while we recycle discarded materials and waste, we have not yet learnt -

allow me the expression - to “recycle” and not discard people, workers, especially the most fragile, for whom the culture of rejection often prevails. Be wary of a certain “meritocracy” that is used to legitimize the exclusion of the poor, judged without merit, to the point of considering poverty itself as a fault. And do not settle for mere philanthropy, it is too little: the challenge is to include the poor in companies, to make them become resources for common benefit. It is possible. I dream of a world where the discarded can become protagonists of change - but I think a certain Jesus has already achieved this, don't you?

Third: *the young*. The young are often among the poor of our time: poor in resources, opportunities and future. And this, paradoxically, both where there are many of them, but the means are lacking, and where there are increasingly few – such as in Italy, because the birth rate is low here – and there ought to be the means. No job can be learned without “corporate hospitality”, which means generously welcoming the young even when they do not have the required experiences and skills, because every job can be learned only by working. I encourage you to be generous, to welcome the young in your companies, giving them a foretaste of the future so as not to make an entire generation lose hope.

Dear friends, you have a great and beautiful responsibility. May the Lord help you to use it and to make courageous choices, to the benefit of the environment, the poor, and the young. It will be the most fruitful investment, even economically. I thank you for what you are already doing: you are pioneers, do not be discouraged, continue to be pioneers. Please, pray for me. And I bless you all, I bless you, your companies, your hopes, your work. I bless you all. Thank you.
