



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS  
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ  
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N. 0530

Giovedì 02.07.2015

**Intervento del Cardinale Segretario di Stato alla Conferenza di alto livello “Le persone e il pianeta al primo posto: l’imperativo di cambiare rotta” (Augustinianum, Roma, 2-3 luglio 2015)**

Pubblichiamo di seguito l’intervento che il Cardinale Segretario di Stato Pietro Parolin ha pronunciato oggi pomeriggio alla Conferenza di alto livello “Le persone e il pianeta al primo posto: l’imperativo di cambiare rotta”, organizzata dal Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace e dalla CIDSE (rete internazionale di Ong cattoliche per lo Sviluppo) (Roma, Augustinianum, 2-3 luglio 2015):

**Intervento del Cardinale Segretario di Stato Pietro Parolin**

Your Eminence,

Dear Prime Minister,

Dear Ambassadors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the organizers of this Conference, dedicated to identifying a way to channel our efforts to examine and make known the wealth of content offered in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis's Encyclical on the care of our common home. The Encyclical itself, as the Pontiff tells us, is addressed “to every person living on this planet... [inviting them] to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (3).

This afternoon's session is significant: “The Importance of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* for the Church and the World, in the Light of Major Political Events in 2015 and Beyond”. Many points can be raised in this perspective, above all because, as the Holy Father reminds us, “*Young people [are demanding] change*” (13), and this change can only highlight the “*immensity and urgency of the challenge we face*” (15).

We are all well aware that in the second half of 2015 three important United Nations conferences will take place:

1. first, the “Third International Conference on Financing for Development”, coming up shortly in Addis Ababa from the 13th to the 16th July;
2. second, the “United Nations Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, scheduled to take place in New York from the 25th to the 27th September; and
3. third, the “Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations framework Convention on Climate Change” (“COP21”), due to take place in Paris from the 30th November to the 11th December, for the purpose of adopting a new agreement on climate change.

The Encyclical will have a certain impact on these events, but its breadth and depth go well beyond its context in time.

In this regard, and in keeping with the title of today’s session, I wish to focus on three areas which help to understand the Encyclical itself: (1) the international sphere, (2) the national and local sphere, and (3) the sphere of the Catholic Church. As its point of departure my reflection on these three areas has two pressing requirements identified in the Encyclical, namely, “*redirecting our steps*” (61) and promoting a “*culture of care*” (231). The “*culture of care*” recalls, to some extent, the responsibility of custodianship that is being developed through the United Nations, albeit not exclusively.

Let us begin with the first of these spheres: the international framework. This calls for an ever greater recognition that “*everything is connected*” (138) and that the environment, the earth and the climate are “*a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone*” (93). They are a common and collective good, belonging to all and meant for all, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone (23; 95).

Recognizing these truths is not, however, a foregone conclusion. It calls for a firm commitment to develop an authentic ethics of international relations, one that is genuinely capable of facing up to a variety of issues, such as commercial imbalances, and foreign and ecological debt, which are denounced in the Encyclical. Nevertheless, the principal challenge that faces us, and to which our commitment is directed, is that of “*needing to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference*” (52).

None of this is obvious. However, as Teilhard de Chardin had already understood as far back as nineteen fifty-five, it can be observed that the human being, or at least a certain part of the human family, is becoming ever more aware, and capable of understanding that, “*in the great game that is being played, we are the players as well as being the cards and the stakes*”[1]. Such an increased consciousness brings with it a change in perspective, a “*redirecting of our steps*”, inspired by a “*more integral and integrating vision*” (141). This can be summarized by welcoming and promoting the paradigm of integral ecology so clearly outlined in *Laudato Si’*. That is a model dedicated to consciously responding both to “*the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*” (49), as well as to refuting the culture of individualism that leads to “*an ethical and cultural decline which has accompanied the deterioration of the environment*” (162). This individualism is incapable of recognizing the relationship with others: what Lévinas calls “*the face of the Other*”, and he reminds us that “*the subject is responsible for the responsibility of the other person*”[2].

Unfortunately, what has prevented the international community from assuming this perspective can be summed up in the following observations of the Pope: its “*failure of conscience and responsibility*” (169) and the consequent “*meagre awareness of its own limitations*” (105). We live, however, in a context where it is possible to “*leave behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress... [and] to devise intelligent ways of directing, developing and limiting our power*” (78); “*we have the freedom needed to limit and direct technology; we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral*” (112). More than once I have had occasion to emphasize how the technological and operative base for promoting such progress is already available or within our reach. We must seize this great opportunity, given the real human capacity to initiate and forge ahead on a genuinely and properly virtuous course, one that irrigates the soil of economic and technological innovation, cultivating three interrelated objectives: (1) to help human dignity flourish; (2) to help eradicate poverty; and (3) to help counter environmental decay.

This virtuous course, dedicated to “*redirecting our steps*”, can only raise the profile of “*the major paths of*

*dialogue which can help us escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us*" (163), and overcome that *"tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures"* (68), which has allowed the culture of relativism and waste to catch on and be propagated in our society. We need paths of dialogue which can help us create space so that our home is truly held in common.

The forces at work in the international sphere are not sufficient on their own, however, but must also be focused by a clear national stimulus, according to the principle of subsidiarity. And here we enter into the second area of our reflection, that of national and local action. *Laudato Si'* shows us that we can do much in this regard, and it offers some examples, such as: *"modifying consumption, developing an economy of waste disposal and recycling... [the improvement of] agriculture in poorer regions... through investment in rural infrastructures, a better organization of local [and] national markets, systems of irrigation, and the development of techniques of sustainable agriculture"* (180), the promotion of a *"circular model of production"* (22), a clear response to the wasting of food (cf.50), and the acceleration of an *"energy transition"* (165).

We are concerned with complex, but far-sighted changes, which go well beyond the political and economic short-sightedness that typifies the culture of relativism and waste. This conceals a rejection of ethics and often of God as well. *"True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good. Political powers do not find it easy to assume this duty in the work of nation-building"* (178). Again we hear Pope Francis's plea: *"Let us refuse to resign ourselves to this, and [let us] continue to wonder about the purpose and meaning of everything"* (113).

Unfortunately, *"there are too many special interests, and economic interests [too] easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected"* (54). This is where the process of increasing awareness among organizations in civil society comes in (cf. 166). Notable among these associations are ones inspired by the Catholic spirit, having as their guiding light the heritage of the social teaching of the Church, of which *Laudato Si'* also forms part (cf. 15). This social doctrine has as its basic point of reference the dignity of the human person and the promoting and sharing of the common good.

Let us now pass to the third and last area: the Catholic Church. She finds nourishment in the example of Saint Francis who, as indicated from the very opening pages of the Encyclical, *"lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace"* (10).

Pope Francis states once again that *"the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics"* (188), but seems to be the bearer of the need to *"question... the meaning and purpose of all human activity"* (125). What is well-known by now is the Encyclical's call for us to reflect on *"what kind of world we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up"* (160). The answer which the Pope offers to this question is quite revealing: *"When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values... It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity"* (160).

These are words which remind us once again of our responsibility, to be *"responsible for the responsibility of the other"*. Furthermore, *"our vocation to be protectors... is not [something] optional"* (217). And this requires the formation of consciences and the preparation of the necessary *"leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations"* (53).

The final chapter of *Laudato Si'* is dedicated to education, on the basis of the fact that *"many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. And thus emerges a great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge"* (202), the *"culture of care"* capable of restoring *"the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with*

*God'* (210).

These, then, are some clear points that can serve as guidelines for the Church and the World, in the care of our common home, in 2015 and beyond.

Thank you!

[01155-EN.01] [Original text: English]

[B0530-XX.02]

[1] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1955), *The Phenomenon of Man*, 230...; original in French: *Le Phénomène Humain...*

[2] Emmanuel Lévinas (1971)... *Totality and Infinity: Essay on Exteriority*, .... ; original in French: *Totalité et Infini: Essai sur l'Extériorité*.

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