



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE CENTESIMUS ANNUS PRO PONTIFICE FOUNDATION

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 25 May 2013*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Distinguished and Dear Friends,
Good morning to you all!*

I am very glad to meet you on the occasion of the International Conference of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation on the theme: “Rethinking Solidarity for Employment: the Challenges of the 21st Century”. I cordially greet each one of you and thank Dr Domingo Sgranyes, your President, in particular for his courteous words.

The Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation was set up by Blessed John Paul II 20 years ago and is called after the Encyclical he signed on the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*. So it is that the context of his reflection and action is the social doctrine of the Church. The popes of the past century contributed to this area in various ways, including in particular Benedict XVI with his Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, as well as with memorable discourses.

I would therefore like to thank you for your commitment to deepening and spreading knowledge of the Church’s social doctrine with your courses and your publications. I think your service to the social magisterium, as lay people who live in society, in the world of economics and work is really beautiful and important.

The theme of your conference is oriented to work in the perspective of solidarity, which is a structural value of the social doctrine, as Blessed John Paul II reminded us. In 1981, 10 years before writing the Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, he wrote the Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*,

entirely focused on human work.

What does “rethinking solidarity mean?”. It does not of course mean calling into question the recent magisterium which, on the contrary, is increasingly showing how farsighted and up to date it is. Rather than “rethinking”, it seems to me to mean two things: first of all combining the magisterium with social and economic development since it is constant and rapid it reveals ever new aspects. Secondly, “rethinking” means deepening knowledge, reflecting further to enhance all the fruitfulness of a value — solidarity in this case — which draws in depth from the Gospel, that is, from Jesus Christ, and so as such contains an inexhaustible potential.

Today’s economic and social crisis makes this “rethinking” ever more urgent and highlights even more clearly the truth and timeliness of affirmations of the social magisterium such as the one we read in *Laborem Exercens*: “As we view the whole human family... we cannot fail to be struck by a disconcerting fact of immense proportions: the fact that, while conspicuous natural resources remain unused, there are huge numbers of people who are unemployed or under-employed and countless multitudes of people suffering from hunger. This is a fact that without any doubt demonstrates that... there is something wrong” (n. 18).

Unemployment — the lack or loss of work — is a phenomenon that is spreading like an oil slick in vast areas of the west and is alarmingly widening the boundaries of poverty. Moreover there is no worse material poverty, I am keen to stress, than the poverty which prevents people from earning their bread and deprives them of the dignity of work.

Well, this “something wrong” no longer regards only the south of the world but also the entire planet. Hence the need “to rethink solidarity” no longer as simply assistance for the poorest, but as a global rethinking of the whole system, as a quest for ways to reform it and correct it in a way consistent with the fundamental human rights of all human beings. It is essential to restore to this word “solidarity”, viewed askance by the world of economics — as if it were a bad word — the social citizenship that it deserves. Solidarity is not an additional attitude, it is not a form of social alms-giving but, rather, a social value; and it asks us for its citizenship.

The current crisis is not only economic and financial but is rooted in an ethical and anthropological crisis. Concern with the idols of power, profit, and money, rather than with the value of the human person has become a basic norm for functioning and a crucial criterion for organization. We have forgotten and are still forgetting that over and above business, logic and the parameters of the market is the human being; and that something is men and women in as much as they are human beings by virtue of their profound dignity: to offer them the possibility of living a dignified life and of actively participating in the common good. Benedict XVI reminded us that precisely because it is human, all human activity, including economic activity, must be ethically structured and governed (cf. Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 36). We must return to the centrality of the human being, to a more ethical vision of activities and of human relationships without the fear of losing

something.

Dear friends, thank you once again for this meeting and for the work you carry out. I assure each one of you, all your loved ones, my remembrance in prayer, as I bless you warmly. Many thanks.