

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING  
SPONSORED BY THE FOUNDATION  
"CENTESIMUS ANNUS - PRO PONTIFICE"**

*Saturday, 9 February 2002*

*Your Eminence,  
Brothers in the Episcopate,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. I am happy to welcome you to this meeting, with which you wish to renew the sentiments of affection that bind you to the Successor of Peter, while you also show your effective solidarity with the needs of the Church. Thank you for your visit!

I cordially greet Cardinal Agostino Cacciavillan, President of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, and I thank him for his kind words on your behalf. I also greet Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, Secretary, and Dr Lorenzo Rossi di Montelera, President of the "*Centesimus annus - Pro Pontifice*" Foundation.

I also warmly welcome the members of your association and express my deep pleasure for the work they have accomplished in the course of the past year. This work is highly commendable for the contribution you gave to the charitable activities of the Holy See. How can I not perceive in your dedication the constant desire to *participate directly in the mission of the entire People of God*, according to the specific vocation of each believer? For this reason, I desire to show my gratitude, and I am well aware of the spiritual motivations that guide your beneficial action.

Special greetings to those who have come from the United States of America. In the last several months your beloved country has been very much in my thoughts and in my prayers. I also welcome those who have come from Canada. I thank all of you for your efforts in joining the foundation in the pursuit of its noble purposes.

I likewise extend my gratitude to the archbishops and bishops in their dioceses and in their Bishops' Conferences in Italy, Poland and other countries, who have offered the foundation their support, together with the national and local chaplains.

2. With its interventions in the financial and social sectors, your foundation is a valid form of lay apostolate. As I had an opportunity to say at our first meeting of 5 June 1993, the Foundation "*Centesimus annus - Pro Pontifice*" is "a significant expression of your involvement as lay faithful". In fact, to them is entrusted the ministry "to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 31).

Your activity is even more timely, since you intend to pay special attention to the family and to ensuring its indispensable role in society. A serene and active family becomes a wonderful place for building peace. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, observed nearly two months ago, I recalled: "the family that lives the requirements of love and forgiveness to the full becomes the main bulwark of the civilization of love and the hope for the future of humanity" (*Address to participants in the congress organized by the Pontifical Council for the Family*, 23 November 2001; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 9 January 2002, n. 5, p. 6). It is in healthy and harmonious families that *the paths of the civilization of love begin*, thanks to the

mutual acceptance and support that they live. It is important to pray and work, so that the family may be an active agent in a constructive peace process, from within and outside.

3. In the world there is a great desire for truth, justice and harmony. I experienced it two weeks ago in Assisi, when in a climate of attentive listening and dialogue with the representatives of the religions, I spent the whole day dedicated to reflection and prayer for peace.

We felt that we were children of God the Almighty Creator, and in need of his provident help. We noted with alarm how seeds of hatred and violence can corrode harmony and understanding. There is need to foster love in society, and to do this it is necessary to start from the primordial cell of humanity, the family. If no one helps the family nucleus to live and prosper in safety and peace, it is weakened and breaks up, with serious harm for individuals and society. As a result, it is vital to guarantee to every family nucleus, among other things, adequate financial, social, educational and cultural security, so that it may *carry out the tasks that are its first duty*. The State must positively favour and positively solicit responsible initiatives by families (cf. *Familiaris consortio*, n. 45).

4. Dear brothers and sisters, during the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, you studied in some depth the theme of ethics and finance, with a focus on the financial globalization in constant expansion in the world. In continuity with this subject, this year you have decided to study *the principle of subsidiarity*, a key element of the Church's social teaching. By applying this principle to the relations of the family with the State, there is an urgent need to use every possible instrument to safeguard the promotion of those values that enrich the family, the sanctuary of life and the setting in which the citizens of the future are formed. Then the State has to realize that "a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good" (*Centesimus annus*, n. 48).

Your foundation will continue to be involved in this direction, so that *authentic solidarity* may develop that will translate the principle of subsidiarity into action. I am grateful to you for your common endeavour, and I hope you will find a response in the various forces that make up the fabric of civil society. Considering present-day needs, you have the task to redouble in a special way every effort for a genuine social renewal, taking the perennial teaching of the Gospel as your reference and the Church's social doctrine as your guide. May God grant that your generous dedication may be crowned with abundant fruit.

As once more I express my esteem and spiritual closeness, I entrust you to the heavenly protection of the Mother of God, so that she may safeguard all of you under her motherly mantle of grace. I cordially impart my blessing to you, to your families and to all your loved ones; may it go with you.