

Activities of Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation in Slovakia

Members of the branch meet regularly on a monthly basis together with ecclesial assistants Fr. Jozef Vadkerti and Fr. Ladislav Stromcek. Besides the general study of various topics related to Catholic Social Teaching, we have focused on two very important themes 1) Family and 2) Migration and ongoing religious and ethnic persecutions.

Family as a Foundation for Renewed Economic Growth in Europe

In June we had a pleasure to host international conference „Family as Foundation for Renewed Economic Growth in Europe” with speakers, professors, experts, entrepreneurs, businessmen and politicians from Ukraine, Austria, Italy, Slovakia and United States of America, under the patronage of Apostolic Nuncio in Slovakia H.E. Mons. Mario Giordana

Following address of Pope Francis to Participants of Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Annual Meeting in Rome in May 2014, conference focused on combining theoretical and practical aspects of Economic and Moral Values in the areas of Family, Christian Community and Society. There was a common understanding that renewal of the prosperity cannot be achieved without understanding of the clear link between moral values, which could flourish in the functional families, and sound, reliable and virtuous behavior of all members of economic society.

Several leading political figures have attended the conference, including Advisor to the Prime Minister, former Prime Minister of Slovakia, former Ministers of Interior, Education, as well as several Members of National Council and of European Parliament. Auxiliary Bishop of Bratislava H.E. Jozef Halko participated in the working breakfast, Apostolic Nuncio to Slovakia H.E. Mario Giordana and Minister of Justice Tomas Borec greeted participants of the conference with personal letters and Secretary General of the Foundation Massimo Gattamelata represented the foundation headquarters during the conference. Members of the Foundation informed Bratislava Archbishop Stanislav Zvolensky and Apostolic Nuncio to Slovakia about the outcomes of the conference in individual follow-up meetings.

The family is the foundation for a healthy economy because stable families that function in accordance with the physical and psychological realities of the natural created order provides the only place on earth where the human being can truly prosper and grow into his or her talents and sense of responsibility, both which are needed to create healthy economic conditions.

Quoting the Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church: “A society built on a family scale is the best guarantee against drifting off course into individualism or collectivism because within the family the person is always at the center of attention as an end and never as a means.”

In its very essence the Social Doctrine of the Church puts the human being in the center of all economic activities. In this light and only from this angle we need to assess our economic decisions on each level of the society, business and economy in general.

And although it is an undisputable fact that economy based on the personal freedom, talents and diligence brought prosperity to millions of people, we should not forget the words of Pope Francis reminding us that in our deeply materialistic society still needs to mature into a more humane system of economic development, putting the human being and its unique vocation at the center.

In our families, in our schools, universities and think-tanks we need to educate again what it means to be human, what is a virtuous life, and why charity above all needs to rule society, also economics. It is obvious, that economy based on humanity, needs to be deeply rooted in functioning families, because as Saint John Paul II called it, Family is the School of Humanity. Numerous empirical observations could be collected to confirm the above stated theoretical argumentation.

Two presentations from leading Slovak economist point to important roles of families in the slow but fundamental changes in our societies related to increasing life expectancy and decreasing fertility rate.

There are strong evidences that changes in the structure of our society in the term of age or education will have crucial impact on the economy itself. Functional and stable families open to grow up children is the most important element which influences this development. Countries with fertility rate 2,0 preserve the number of its citizen unchanged in contrary, the society with fertility rate 1,0 will shrink to 1/8 in the course of four generation i.e. in less than 100 years. The fertility rate in Slovakia is 1,34 (2013) and it is below 2,0 for more than 25 years already. It is already the age of one generation and changes might not be so obvious and visible now, but economist agrees that this fact may be one of the most important factors influencing the economy of the country in the long term. Another factor which needs to be taken in consideration is the influence of migration.

Migration and refugees

Another topic closely followed by the members of Slovak branch was the topic of migration and severe religious and ethnic persecutions that occur all around the world.

Our members had the possibility to meet and discuss this complicated topic with H.E. Mons. Cyril Vasil SJ, Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Being in the daily contact with the immanence problems of Christians in Middle East and Africa, he explained the depth and complexity of current problems in those regions. Ongoing persecution, threats and slaughter of men, women and children leads to humanitarian crisis of paramount scale. The waves of refugees were forced to leave their homes. According to statistics the number of displaced people, either internationally or within own countries, is the highest since the end of WWII. Suffering of people doesn't end after leaving the war zones, it continue in refugee's camps and sometime even worsen on the way out of the country to new homes.

Another discussion was held with Mr. Bernard Prielcel, Head of the Migration Office, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic about the strategy and insights on the asylum and migration policy in Slovakia and the outcome for the next years (having one of the lowest acceptance rates of asylum seekers).

Our members were involved in the organization of the charitable event to get financial support to build a clinic for displaced people in Quaryatayn, near Homs in Syria. Discussions and workshops related to situation in Syria, immigration policy, refugees and methods of help, exhibitions and documentary films screening are part of the event as well. We will continue with these activists in the course of next months.

Outlook for the period 2015 – 2016

- Continue in regular meetings
- Search for extending the number of people involved in the work of the branch in Slovakia
- Discussion with experts on the topic of migration e.g. prof Krcmery rector of St. Elisabeth University, who leads numerous caritative, health care projects in third world
- Actively developing new relations with partners in Central and Eastern Europe, with prospective of identifying friends of the CAPP or potential members of the CAPP foundation.
- Attending the International conference of Centesimus Annus foundation in Rome together with friendly visit of several Slovak members of the Church based in Rome.