

His Holiness

We are deeply grateful to Your Holiness for receiving once again the participants in the annual international conference of the *Centesimus Annus – Pro Pontifice* Foundation, established by Pope John Paul II 21 years ago.

I would like also to thank His Eminence Cardinal Calcagno and Archbishop Celli for the generosity and care with which they follow our work.

As businessmen, we are deeply interested in the administrative reforms you are introducing. Thus, may I take the liberty to express our admiration and support for your efforts. As lay people engaged in business decisions we are well aware of the primary importance of sober, transparent and effective management and of the courage needed to implement reforms.

Your Holiness, last year you asked us: is there room for solidarity in economic life? We are trying to provide an answer to this very question. As ever, our Foundation's goal is to reduce the gap between the affirmation of principles and ethical values and the complex reality of economic decisions **“lest the great social principles remain mere generalities which challenge no one”** (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 182)

We have begun this year's conference by looking at the inequalities and the serious uncertainties concerning growth and job creation; then we looked at solidarity and fraternity as fundamental social dimensions, not merely as principles but also in practice, for example in the fight against organized economic crime or in running efficient social programs. We then asked ourselves, using real examples, whether solidarity can or cannot be part of business reality and political life.

The answer is yes, the problem is how. The first step is personal and essential, as Archbishop Celli reminded us this morning in his meditation on the parable of the Good Samaritan.

This year's conference was highly interactive; it ended with the appointment of a small panel of people who, in the next few weeks, will draw conclusions and draft proposals that recap the work of the past two days.

Later this year the Foundation will hold a meeting in New York, organized by our United States members, focused on poverty and the responsibility to protect populations in extreme situations.

And in October we have invited a select group of social doctrine experts, theologians, bankers, bank executives and academics, to continue in Dublin the dialogue begun last year on “Finance and common good”.

These three events should result in a series of challenging and at the same time realistic recommendations which we will take the liberty of submitting to Your Holiness before circulating them as widely as possible, and for this we plan to join efforts also with other associations, such as UNIAPAC (International Union of Christian Entrepreneurs).

Your Holiness, our daily work is in the field of economic activity, where the temptations of weakness and greed abound, but where there is also the enthusiasm of people whose work creates wealth and jobs. Ethic values are essential for us.

We do know, however, that individual good behavior is not sufficient: the movement towards an economy that truly serve human needs must be wider, shared by believers and non believers; it must be supported by opinion trends and political will. To this change of priorities, to this widening of horizons, the words and example of Your Holiness contribute powerfully; we are convinced that they should be forcefully brought to the attention of all economic and political power centers, also - for instance - in the present debate on the United Nations' development goals. We are ready to enroll on this campaign with you, Your Holiness, to the best of our abilities.

Domingo Sugranyes Bickel

May 10th, 2014