

Fondazione Centesimus Annus – Pro Pontifice

**Third Edition of the International Prize for
“Economy and Society”
Palazzo della Cancelleria, Rome, 18th May 2017**

**Speech by the Secretary of State
H.E. Cardinal Pietro Parolin**

Your Eminence Cardinal Reinhard Marx, President of the Jury
Dr. Domingo Sugranyes Bickel, President of the *Centesimus Annus* Foundation
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Professors
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to express my thanks for the renewed invitation to preside at this ceremony, during which the prizes of the third edition of the international “Economy and Society” Competition will be awarded. This takes place in the context of the Foundation’s annual conference, which this year is entitled: “*Constructive alternatives in an era of turmoil. Job creation and human integrity in the digital space — incentives for solidarity and civic virtue*”.

I am pleased to know that the three prize-winners are with us this evening: Professor Markus Vogt, Reverend Father Dominique Greiner and Doctor Burkhard Schäfers. Each one of them, within their specific field of research and work, and in the development of their expertise, helps us to find answers to the questions and concerns raised by the economic and technological developments of the twenty-first century, an era which some have called the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”.

We face a tendency to interpret social reality in terms of one-dimensional ideological paradigms, be it the Marxism or *laissez-faire* economics of the last century, or, in today’s world, what is often call “technolatry”, which seeks to use the features of science to disguise a new ideology. The prize-winners contribute to strengthening the way of thinking of Christian social teaching, which is committed to resolving social problems by considering them in their complexity and harmonizing them in a respect for the dignity of the human person. This intellectual methodology is well suited to giving rise to new ideas capable of encouraging a handing on of older but still useful ideas. Professor Vogt does this by affirming a multidimensional approach to understanding social reality and by proposing “sustainability” as the fourth basic element of the Church’s social teaching. Father Grenier does the same, by way of a flexible, creative and constructive communication of the same teaching. Likewise, the journalist Burkhard Schäfers suggests reconsidering the ideas of Father

Oswald von Nell-Breuning, which played a vital role in the development of Christian social teaching during the Pontificate of Pius XI and which continue to offer useful starting points for facing today's challenges. The prize-winning works show how this competition, run by the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation, helps promote authentic answers to the serious problems of politics and the global economy.

Together with the invitation to share this moment with you, the *Centesimus Annus* Foundation sent me the 2017 Declaration "*Constructing Alternatives to Promote Human Dignity*". This document proposes a multidimensional and non-ideological approach to the social sciences, as well as to political and economic *praxis*, so that they may genuinely be at the service of the common good. Thank you for the replies to the teachings and exhortations of the Holy Father contained in the declaration. These replies demonstrate the vitality of the thought of Christian entrepreneurship.

We truly need the involvement of all social agents, especially entrepreneurs, not only to increase the commitment to charity, but also to address, in a decisive manner, the problem of inequality and disparity of income. As the Declaration clearly highlights, this leads to situations of vulnerability for many people and for families, even in developed countries. What is needed, above all, is a spirit of noble generosity. The Gospel offers the example of Zacchaeus, who, struck by the gaze of Jesus, shares half of his wealth with the poor. For this reason it is important to encourage the *Voluntary Solidarity Funds*, which are a tangible sign of the thorough dialogue within the *Centesimus Annus* Foundation.

In this regard, I wish to convey the thanks of the Holy Father for the contribution which the Foundation, from its available funds in 2016, has donated to the Pope's charitable works, and in particular for the support offered to unaccompanied young refugees. I join with the Foundation's Board in encouraging all members to engage in charitable activity under the inspired guidance of Pope Francis.

Indeed, as the Pope himself points out, urgent action is called for in order to help the poorest become the primary agents of their own destiny. To this end, it seems necessary to produce and promote business models and practices that are accessible to them. As for the social sciences, new methods of analysis and evaluation are required, which will correspond to the real experience of the weakest.

At the same time, it is impossible not to share the call to include the poor in the networks of productivity and to develop a financial mediation that is adapted to their needs and possibilities. The suggestion of the "goodwill broker" is an idea that merits particular consideration: genuine mediators rather than intermediaries, who facilitate contact between businesses and banks on the one hand, and local initiatives, development groups and micro-businesses on the other, with the aim of quickly finding models that can be applied effectively.

The 2017 *Centesimus Annus* Declaration also addresses the theme of migrants and refugees, recognising that the fundamental objective must be “*to defend each person’s right to live with dignity, first and foremost by exercising the right not to emigrate*”¹. This requires decisive action in favour of peace. We know well, of course, that in the first instance this does not depend on entrepreneurs, but on governments and the international community. Entrepreneurs can, however, offer an invaluable contribution by raising awareness, cultivating a personal and institutional dialogue with the political class, promoting a sense of welcome and understanding through cooperation, and, above all, I would suggest, by joining their prayers with those of the Holy Father.

A final range of themes concerns the digital economy, “robotisation” and “*big data*”, that is the immense and articulated mass of information on people and their behaviour, obtained in the course of an individual’s digital interaction. Much has been published recently on this new phase, sometimes with dramatic emphasis, and its dangers for work, for social inclusion and for freedom. On the other hand, more calmly, it is recognised that these innovations offer great potential for promoting a sustainable and truly inclusive economy. By the same token, the new technologies can increase *de facto* the participation of individuals in political decisions and in the defence of rights. Everything will depend on the direction given to the profound change currently underway.

At this point, I would like to come back to the prize-winners, who, with different approaches, yet anchored in the fundamental principles of the social teaching of the Church, understand economics and politics as places for the privileged exercise of the virtue of prudence². The key message is the necessity of appropriate discernment, carried out in the light of justice, considering all the elements in play in various historical situations, and recognising the urgency of making courageous decisions in order to do good, even when it might come at the cost of great personal sacrifice.

Addressing the United Nations, Pope Francis turned to the cardinal virtues as a guide for international political action. His words can easily be applied to the entrepreneurial world. The Pope recalled that “*the classic definition of justice [...] contains as one of its essential elements a constant and perpetual will: Iustitia est constans et perpetua voluntas ius sum cuique tribuendi. Our world demands of all government leaders a will which is effective, practical and constant, concrete steps and immediate measures for preserving and improving the natural environment and thus putting an end as quickly as possible to the phenomenon of social and economic exclusion. [...] It must never be forgotten that political and economic activity is only effective when it is understood as a prudential activity, guided by a perennial concept of justice and constantly conscious of the fact that, above and beyond our plans and programmes, we are dealing with real men and women who live, struggle and suffer, and are often forced to live in great poverty, deprived of all rights*”³.

¹ Cfr. Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2015.

² Cfr. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 547-548 & Note 1147; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1806.

³ POPE FRANCIS, Meeting with the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, New York, 25 September 2015.

The Holy Father constantly raises his prophetic voice to ask for a “revolution of tenderness”. Business management can play its part in such a revolution, without losing its professional standards. On the contrary it can proceed ever more conscientiously, motivated by an authentic spirit of service in favour of integral human development. I believe this is also the ultimate aim of the international “Economy and Society” Prize, as it is of the annual conferences of the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation, and of the Foundation itself. For this reason, I express my sincere wish that these activities may be carried forward with ever-greater effectiveness and positive ecclesial and social impact. Thank you for all that are so generously doing for the Church and for the good of human society.