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Family, Business: Overcoming the crisis with new forms of Solidarity
Twenty years after Centesimus Annus

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October 14, 2011
Friday Morning Session I : Group Discussion
Report Summary
Submitted by Dr. Karen Wright, Moderator

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Executive Summary

A group discussion was held on Friday morning on the prior presentation of Prof. Stefano Zamagni on "*Family Values and Entrepreneurship: Overcoming the crisis with new forms of Solidarity*".

Twenty three (23) participants from nine (9) countries: Chile, Germany, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Slovakia, Spain, United Kingdom, and United States attended the discussion session.

The focus of the discussion was on how participants viewed our Christian family values provide a basis for transformation within an enterprise - for the enterprise to become a place of solidarity; and what would be needed to inculcate those values in an enterprise. And how can we move from the reality towards the ideal of the Catholic family.

There is a cultural crisis with the media overtly presenting a message of *Sexism, Mammonism, and Consumerism*¹, three (3) main cultural forces in conflict with Catholic family and Catholic social values. The family is the place to best prepare one for the greater society, and the social agency best to combat these messages of the media.

We need to create a *bridge* to the secular society, a bridge with a moral dimension that is by sharing the Catholic Social Teachings. Though there are warnings hope is on the horizon.

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- Sexism - gender devaluation of the human person based on a person's sex
- Mammonism- the greedy pursuit of material wealth and possessions, especially a dedication to riches that is tantamount to devotion
- Consumerism - the systematic creation and fostering of a desire to purchase goods and services in ever greater and greater need to 'have' versus 'be'

October 14, 2011
Friday Morning Session I : Group Discussion
Summary submitted by Dr. Karen Wright, Moderator

A group discussion, moderated by Dr. Karen Wright of the USA, was held on Friday morning on the prior presentation of Prof. Stefano Zamagni on "*Family Values and Entrepreneurship: Overcoming the crisis with new forms of Solidarity.*"

Twenty three (23) participants from nine (9) countries: Chile, Germany, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Slovakia, Spain, United Kingdom, and United States attended the discussion session.

The participants represented a spectrum of professionals: e.g., entrepreneurs, lawyers, economists, industrialists, clergy, academics, corporate executives, venture capitalists, and bankers, along with several leaders of family owned enterprises.

After individual introductions, the moderator provided a review of Prof. Zamagni's highlights, verbally and in outline on a flip chart, for reference. Participants then added other points to the outline summary.

The focus of the discussion was on how participants viewed our Christian family values provide a basis for transformation within an enterprise - for the enterprise to become a place of solidarity; and what would be needed to inculcate those values in an enterprise.

Within a few minutes there was consensus that there existed dissonance between society's values and Christian family values, a clash of cultures creating a moral crisis that was the underpinning of the current financial crisis. The needed change was not primarily to increase synergy, lower costs, or increase prosperity, but to serve the individual, the family, and the common good.

What are the core family values that could be transferred? How do we take what we experience and learn in the family,(a place that provides mutual support, understanding, and cooperation) into the enterprise for needed change? How can we inculcate family values into the type of society we have today, then into the enterprise? All agreed that the Catholic family is the ideal conduit, yet we need to face the realities confronting us in a practical and authentic manner.

As in no time in history we have a media with global reach providing much of today's role models. We have a cultural crisis with the media overtly presenting a message of *Sexism, Mammonism, and Consumerism*², three (3) main cultural forces in conflict with Catholic family and Catholic social values.

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How to combat these messages? The family is the place to best prepare one for the greater society, and the social agency best to combat the messages of the media. The family is a natural society: we are born into a family. It is the first place we experience our dignity: it is the place of learning, of self-giving, where we experience the economy of love. The family is the model community, the dynamic entity, which provides us with the necessary experiences to take into the greater society. Enterprise can be, as the family is, a place of solidarity.

Zamagni presented four value areas of the Catholic family that could be crossed linked with the values needed in an enterprise. Throughout the morning these values were expressed explicitly or implicitly within the comments, suggestions, and examples given.

Gratuitous: as one is gift to another in which we can experience dignity and freedom within the family i.e. complementarity and communion. For freedom to flourish in the enterprise, in order to become a place where one can experience the other as gift, there needs to be a fostering of a 'dynamic creativity'. How to effectively and successfully implement such in the enterprise becomes the challenge and success comes down to the type of leadership.

Reciprocity: of exchanging for mutual benefit. As laity, in our vocation - married or single – we are living in communion with one another. How does exchange in employee/employer relationship achieve solidarity? By having employees act not as individuals, but as families. Yet how can we create a business culture to allow that to happen since each business is unique?

Example given of Hewlett-Packard's offering extensive holiday time off for families may not work for some businesses who have their main profit from products and/or services around the holidays, as one director of a family business reminded us. The principle of Subsidiarity must come into play for each business to address how best to effect family policies which serve the common good. We cannot provide a one-size-fits-all formula.

Gender: It is in the Catholic family where we come to experience who we are. It is where the rightly anthropological nature of being male and female can be understood and experienced with dignity. Such transfer of values to the workplace would help alleviate gender discrimination and devaluation based on a person's sex. We need to go beyond gender mainstreaming into family mainstreaming.

Generativity: The main concern brought to the floor was the need to establish and guide the next generation with Catholic family and social values. The enterprise needs guidance in creative and efficient means of production that has the person at its center, keeping with the dignity of the person and the dignity of work, and not as the means to an end.

Leadership

It takes Leadership to affect change, Zamagni remarked. An entrepreneur needs certain skills to implement such values. They need to be someone with beliefs, beliefs grounded in faith; they must have the ability to look far ahead, a long term horizon; and they must have the technical expertise to make it happen.

The key to success is to create a daily creative dynamic solidarity built on the solid foundation of Catholic Social Teachings.

Two Main Concerns

Debt Crisis

One of the main issues society faces today is a downward demographic trend with birthrates i.e. 1.3 children per household.

Is this just a cultural phenomenon? The cause of the problem facing the young generation, suggested by several attendees, is the debt: to overwhelming debt individually, nationally and globally. 'They just cannot afford to marry.' Marriage is put off until later, if at all, as well as children. It affects generativity. The level of today's debt, causing this economic crisis, requires an immediate response.

Media and the Message

However, the more pressing challenge of our society comes from the Media. Today our modes of communication are too fast, way beyond any in history. Technology is neutral, yet it can be overwhelming. Today we have 'media models', who have become the primary influencers. Consumerism is fed to us through the media. The youth live in a 'feel good' society; there needs to be a paradigm shift. Blessed Pope John Paul II talked of the interior life – of *Being* versus *Having*. How can we affect such a shift? Again it needs to be done incrementally, and via personal example.

The Ideal vs. the Reality

The ideal is the Catholic Family. Yet, as another business leader remarked, there seems to be a wide gap between 'the Ideal and the Reality'. The Catholic family is a model for our time, yet many families live in separation from those values. We live in a dominant secular culture.

How can we move from the reality towards the ideal?

Several examples of the cultural and economic forces affecting the family were brought into the discussion. This led to sharing personal and practical suggestions on what one could do. We:

- can only move towards the ideal incrementally, by degrees. Example given: As directing change in a river's flow, it must be done slowly, step-by step. Or, as a large steam ship is moved by a small tug boat, gently.

We need to look at what we offer as a 'seed' – as an investment providing compound interest.

- need patience, for it is in the little things we do that change will begin. Begin with ourselves, within the family, through our daily encounters. i.e. by listening to one's

spouse; allowing for more family time; not bringing work home, and; finding creative ways to provide a daily experience of solidarity.

- can affect others best by being living examples. We can also offer practical examples via education, by creating case studies with authentic narratives to bring hope to others.
- will need courage, rooted in a personal faith, to offer principled authentic responses. It will be necessary to present such with the virtues that include charity - charity as *caritas* - as an exterior action with a Christian interior disposition, not just as 'good works'.
- need to create a *bridge*, with a moral dimension, to cross over into the secular world. But, as one participant reminded us: we cannot just tell others what to do. The next generation will need principles, not formulations. Pass on the 'why', not just the 'how to'.

The Bridge

The *bridge* is our Catholic social doctrine. Those principles of CSD i.e. human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, common good - are there to help the current and next generation address the issues and concerns we face in order to work towards what is just.

We were reminded that history tends to repeat itself with each generation. "Had not throughout history each generation complained about the upcoming one?" one father asked the group. Therefore, it will be important that we pass on the principles, in the light of faith, so as to give the next generation tools for prudential judgment and decision making.

A Warning

We are to be on our guard to not become so pessimistic that we lose ourselves - and the next generation. We need to accurately diagnose the issues and provide guidance through expert knowledge within a principled response rooted in a personal faith.

Hope on the Horizon

At the end of the day, all agreed, we need to take courage and live authentically in faith, hope and charity, and find ways to influence the influencers within the media.