



**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING PROMOTED BY
THE CENTESIMUS ANNUS PRO PONTIFICE FOUNDATION**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 10 May 2014*

Dear Friends,

I welcome all of you, members of the *Centesimus Annus – Pro Pontifice* Foundation and those taking part in the International Conference. I thank the President for his introduction to this encounter, which is a milestone on your path, as you seek to meet some of the current world challenges in light of the social doctrine of the Church.

I thank you for having accepted the suggestion to develop the value of solidarity. We thus carry forward a theme of reflection and commitment which is intrinsic to the social doctrine, which is always in harmony with subsidiarity. In particular this was a salient theme of St John Paul II's Magisterium, that Pope Benedict XVI later clarified and updated in *Caritas in Veritate*.

In the current economic situation — and in the mentality that it generates — the word “solidarity” has become uncomfortable, even bothersome. Last year, I told you it seemed even like a swear word in this context. The cause of the crisis of these current years is of a deep ethical nature that has enhanced this “allergy” to words like solidarity, the equitable distribution of goods, employment as a priority.... And the reason is that one has not succeeded — or does not want to succeed — in really studying how these ethical values could promote concrete economic values, like creating virtuous dynamics in the areas of production, labour, the market, and finance itself.

This is precisely what you are trying to do, combining the theoretical and practical aspects, thought and experience in the field.

The conscience of the businessman is the vital area where this research takes place. In particular, the Christian businessman is urged to always compare the Gospel with the reality in which he works; and the Gospel asks him to place the human person and the common good first, to do his part in providing employment and dignified work. Naturally, this “initiative” cannot succeed on its own, but by working with others who share the same ethical foundations and by seeking to cast the net as far out as possible.

The Christian community — the parish, the diocese, the associations — is the place where the businessman, as well as the politician, the professional and the trade unionist, draw life to feed their commitment and relate to their brothers. This is indispensable, because the work environment at times becomes unfeeling, hostile and inhumane. The crisis puts the hopes of businessmen to the test; but we must not leave those in most difficulty alone.

Dear friends of *Centesimus Annus*, this is your field of testimony! The Second Vatican Council insisted on the fact that the lay faithful are called to fulfil their mission in the areas of social, economic and political life. With the help of God and the Church, you can bear effective witness in your field, because you bring not only words and speeches, but also personal and business experience in an attempt to implement the Christian ethical principals in the current situation in the world of labour.

This testimony is of the utmost importance and I encourage you to carry it forward with faith, also by dedicating sufficient time to prayer, for the layperson as well as the businessman needs to pray, and to pray all the more, the more difficult are the challenges! Last Wednesday I gave a catechesis on the gift of counsel, one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. You also have great need to ask God for this gift, the gift of counsel, to act and make decisions for the greater good. May the Virgin Mary, *Mater boni consilii*, help you, and may my blessing also go with you.
