



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN A STUDY CONFERENCE
PROMOTED BY THE "CENTESIMUS ANNUS PRO PONTIFICE"***

Clementine Hall

Saturday, 22 May 2010

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,
Distinguished and Dear Friends,*

I am pleased to greet you on the occasion of the study Conference promoted by the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation. I greet Cardinal Attilio Nicora, Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli and the other Prelates and priests present. I am thinking in particular of the President, Mr Domingo Sugranyes Bickel, whom I thank for his kind words. I also extend a greeting to you, Counsellors and Members of the Foundation, whom have wished to visit me with your families.

I was glad to see that the central focus of your meeting is reflection on the relationship between "development, progress, common good". Indeed, today more than ever, the human family may develop as a free society of free peoples if globalization is guided by solidarity and by the common good, and also by a relative social justice, which find a precious source in the message of Christ and in the Church. In reality, the crisis and difficulties which are now afflicting international relations, the States, society and the economy, are largely due to the lack of trust and inadequate supportive and creative inspiration, as well as a lack of dynamism oriented to the common good, which lead to authentic human relationships of friendship, solidarity and reciprocity even "within" economic activities. The common good is the goal that gives meaning to progress and to development, which would otherwise be limited solely to the production of material goods. These are necessary, but unless they are oriented to the common good, consumerism, waste, poverty and imbalances will ultimately prevail factors impeding progress and development.

As I highlighted in my Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, one of the greatest risks in the world today is that "the *de facto* interdependence of people and nations is not matched by ethical interaction of consciences and minds that would give rise to truly human development" (n. 9). For example, such interaction appears to be too weak in those governments which, in the face of renewed episodes of irresponsible speculation with regard to the weakest nations, fail to react by introducing adequate measures for financial regulation. Politics must take priority over finance and ethics should direct every activity.

Without the common good as a universal reference point, one cannot say that a true global *ethos* exists and that there is a corresponding will to enact it through appropriate institutions. The identification of those goods to which all peoples must have access for their human fulfilment is thus crucial. And this should not be undertaken casually, but in an orderly and harmonious manner. Indeed, the common good is made up of many goods: material, cognitive and institutional goods, and moral and spiritual goods. The latter are superior to the former. The commitment to the common good of the family of nations, as for every society, thus involves tending and making available a complex of institutions which give legal, civil, political and cultural structure to social life globally in such a way that they become a form of a *pólis*, a human city (cf. *ibid.*, 7). In this way, it may be ensured that the economic-productive order is socially responsible and at the service of humanity, with combined and united action on more fronts, also internationally (cf. *ibid.*, nn. 57, 67). Likewise, the consolidation of constitutional, legal and administrative systems needs to be supported in nations which do not yet fully enjoy them. Therefore, besides economic assistance, there must be aid intended to reinforce the real guarantees of a *State of law*, a system of true and efficient public order, in full respect of human rights, along with truly democratic and participative institutions (cf. *ibid.*, n. 41).

However, what is fundamental and a priority in view to the development of the entire family of nations is to make every effort to recognize the true *scale of values and goods*. Only with a correct hierarchy of human goods will it be possible to understand which type of growth should be supported. The integral development of nations, which is the main objective of the universal common good, cannot be achieved by the diffusion of entrepreneurship alone (cf. *ibid.*), material and cognitive goods such as housing and education, from the choices available. This is provided especially by the increasing number of *good decisions* that are possible when a notion of *integral human good* exists, when there is a *telos*, an end, in the light of which growth is considered and desired. The notion of integral human growth presumes precise coordinates, such as subsidiarity and solidarity, in addition to an interdependence between State, society and the market. In a global society, composed of many peoples and of various religions, the common good and integral development are only achieved with the input of all. In this, religions are crucial, particularly when they teach brotherhood and peace, because they teach people to make room for God and to be open to the Transcendent, especially in our society marked by secularization. The exclusion of religions from the public sphere, just as, in another way, religious fundamentalism, impedes the encounter of peoples and their collaboration for the progress of humanity. The life of society is

drained of its motivation and politics assumes oppressive and aggressive features (cf. *ibid.* [n. 56](#)).

Dear friends, the Christian vision of development, progress and the common good the way it emerges from the Social Doctrine of the Church responds to man's deepest expectations and your commitment to delve into it and to disseminate it is a valid contribution towards the edification of "the civilization of love". For this I express my gratitude and best wishes, and I impart my heartfelt Blessing to you all.

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