



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
"CENTESIMUS ANNUS PRO PONTIFICE" FOUNDATION**

*Clementine Hall
Monday, 5 June 2023*

[[Multimedia](#)]

***Memory for building the future:
Thinking and acting in terms of community***

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

Celebrating anniversaries is something beautiful. The *Centesimus Annus* Foundation has existed now for thirty years: it had its start in the wake of the [Encyclical Letter](#) of Saint John Paul II, written for the one hundredth anniversary of Leo XIII's historic [Rerum Novarum](#). Your commitment finds its place precisely in this path, in this "tradition": the commitment, that is, to study and spread the social doctrine of the Church, seeking to show that it is not just a theory, but can become a virtuous way of life with which to build up societies worthy of men and women.

The centrality of the person, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity have been transformed for you, over these thirty years, into concrete actions and have affected the hearts and actions of many people. I am grateful to the Foundation and to all of you for the valuable work you have carried out and, in particular, for what you have done in the last ten years through the reception and revitalization of the contributions I have tried to make to the development of the Church's social doctrine.

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I wanted to warn against the danger of experiencing the economy in an unhealthy way. “Such an economy kills” (n. 53), I said in 2013, decrying an economic model that produces waste and that fosters what we could call the “globalization of indifference”. Many of you work in the economic sector: you know how everyone can benefit from a way of imagining reality that places the person at the centre, that does not belittle the worker and that seeks to create good for all.

The Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* highlighted the damage caused by the dominant technocratic paradigm and proposed the logic of an integral ecology, where “everything is connected”, “everything is related”, and where environmental issues are inseparable from social issues, for they go together. Caring for the environment and caring for the poor stand or fall together. In the end, no one is saved alone, and the rediscovery of fraternity and social friendship is decisive in order not to lapse into an individualism that makes people lose the joy of living and even their lives.

I am pleased that you have chosen for this international meeting the theme: “Memory for building the future: Thinking and acting in terms of community”, explicitly citing paragraph 116 of the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*. In fact, these words come from an [address given to popular movements in 2014](#). On that occasion, I said: “Solidarity is a word that is not always well received... However, it is a word that means much more than an occasional gesture of generosity. *It means thinking and acting in terms of community.* It means that the lives of all take priority over the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means fighting against the structural causes of poverty and inequality; of the lack of work, land and housing; and of the denial of social and labour rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced dislocation, painful emigration, human trafficking, drugs, war, violence... Solidarity, understood in its deepest sense, is a way of making history”.

I recall – I spoke of money – a passage from the Gospel, when Jesus said that no one can serve two masters: either you serve God, a Lord, or you serve – and I expected him to say: the devil, but he doesn't say “the devil” – he says “money”. Either you serve God or you serve money. Worse than the devil. We have to look for what Jesus means in this: there is a message. Either you serve God, or you are a servant of money. You are not free.

Today, in speaking to you and in thinking of the theme you have chosen, I want to add something that I read from a great Italian jurist, Paolo Grossi, who was also the President of the Constitutional Court and who died last year. He said: “The community is always a safety belt for the vulnerable and also provides a voice for those who have no voice of their own” (*Grammatiche del diritto*, p. 38).

In order for the community to become truly a place where the vulnerable and voiceless can feel welcomed and heard, perhaps what is needed from everyone is that exercise we could call

“making room”. Everyone pulls his or her “ego” back a little bit, and this allows the other person to live. Yet for this to happen, the foundation of community needs to be the ethic of the gift and not the ethic of an exchange.

In this sense, we could quote a poet from Milan, Giampiero Neri, also recently deceased, who stated: “It is said of some people that, when they enter a room, they fill up the whole room. I should imagine that when they leave, they leave a great void. Instead, I am inclined to think that those who leave a great void are the humble, quiet people who fill up only the space they need, who make themselves loved”.

Dear brothers and sisters, thinking and acting in terms of community means, therefore, making room for others, imagining and working for a future where each person can find his or her place and have room in the world. A community that knows how to give a voice to the voiceless is what we all need.

The valuable work of the *Centesimus Annus* Foundation can also be this: contributing to that thinking and acting which fosters the growth of a community in which we walk together on the path of peace. I bless all of you and I bless your loved ones. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.