



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN A MEETING
SPONSORED BY THE "YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS
OF THE ITALIAN MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION"**

Clementine Hall
Saturday, 26 May 2007

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your visit, which is particularly pleasing to me: to each one of you I address my cordial greeting.

In the first place, I greet your President, Dr Matteo Colaninno, and I thank him for the kind words that he has addressed to me in the name of all of you.

I extend my thoughts to the heads of the national, regional and provincial levels of the Small Business Youth Movement as well as to all the members of your sodality, which distinguishes itself by the fact that it is a movement of persons and not simply an organization of businesses. In this way you wish to emphasize the responsibility of the small businessman, called to make a particular contribution to the economic development of society.

Actually, the level of social well-being that Italy enjoys today would be unthinkable without the contribution of small entrepreneurs and managers, whose "roles", as the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* recalls, "have a central importance from the viewpoint of society, because they are at the heart of that network of technical, commercial, financial and cultural bonds that characterizes the modern business reality" (n. 344).

At this meeting I would like to set out some brief considerations concerning your role in the commercial environment. I take up the idea from a famous and often-cited text of the Second Vatican Council: "In business enterprises", the Council recalls, "it is persons who work together,

that is, free and independent human beings, created to the image of God. Therefore, the active participation of everyone in the running of the enterprise should be promoted. This participation should be exercised in appropriately determined ways. It should take into account each person's function, whether it be one of ownership, hiring, management or labour. It should provide for the necessary unity of operations" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 68).

Each enterprise must consider itself, in the first place, as a group of people whose rights and dignity are to be respected. Concerning this, I am pleased to know that your Movement, in the course of these years, is committed to vigorously emphasizing the centrality of man in the economic field.

The theme of your first National Convention of 2006: *The Economy of Man*, is also noteworthy. Actually, it is indispensable that the ultimate aim of every economic undertaking be the common good and the satisfaction of the legitimate expectations of the human being.

In other words, human life and its value must always be the beginning and end of the economy. In this perspective, the function of profit assumes its correct proportion as the first indication of the good performance of the company.

The Church's social Magisterium at the same time recognizes its importance, emphasizing the need to safeguard the dignity of those involved in business on various levels.

Even in moments of great crisis, the criterion that regulates entrepreneurial choices cannot be merely the promotion of greater profit. The above-cited *Compendium* affirms in this regard: "Business owners and management must not limit themselves to taking into account only the economic objectives of the company, the criteria for economic efficiency and the proper care of 'capital' as the sum of the means of production. It is also their precise duty to respect concretely the human dignity of those who work within the company.

"These workers", the text continues, "constitute 'the firm's most valuable asset' and the decisive factor of production. In important decisions concerning strategy and finances, in decisions to buy or sell, to resize, close or to merge a site, financial and commercial criteria must not be the only considerations made" (n. 344).

It is necessary that the workplace return to being the environment where man can realize his own potential, putting his personal capacities and ingenuity to use, and much depends on you, business owners, to create the most favourable conditions for this to occur.

It is true, all of this is not easy since the business world is marked by a strong and persistent crisis, but I am certain that you will spare no effort to safeguard the employment, especially of youth. In fact, to confidently build their own future, they must be able to count on a font of sure means of

support for themselves and their dear ones.

Besides the centrality of man in the economy, your reflection in the course of these years has faced other highly topical issues, for example, that of the family in Italian business. Several times I have been able to repeat the importance of the family founded on marriage as the supporting element of a society's life and development.

To work in favour of the family means to contribute to renewing the social fabric and also to ensuring the foundations of an authentic economic development.

Another important theme that you emphasize is the complex phenomenon of globalization. This is a phenomenon which, if on the one hand nourishes the hope of a more general participation in the development and diffusion of well-being thanks to the redistribution of production on a world scale, on the other, presents various risks linked to the new dimensions of commercial and financial relationships, which move towards a greater gap between the economic riches of the few and the growth in poverty of the many.

As my venerable Predecessor John Paul II was able to affirm in an incisive way, it is a duty "to ensure a globalization in solidarity, a globalization without marginalization" ([Message for the 1998 World Day of Peace](#), *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 17/25 December 1997, p. 3, n. 3). Dear friends, may the Lord enlighten your minds and strengthen your will so that you can fulfil your mission as a precious service to society.

With these sentiments, while I assure you of a particular remembrance in my prayers for each one of you and for your business activities, I heartily bless you together with your families and loved ones.

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