



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE "CENTESIMUS ANNUS - PRO PONTIFICE" FOUNDATION**

Clementine Hall

Saturday, 31 May 2008

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is with pleasure that today I meet with you and address my cordial welcome to you. I thank Count Lorenzo Rossi di Montelera, who as the President of the Foundation has interpreted your sentiments, also expounding on the lines of action taken during this year. I greet Cardinal Attilio Nicora and Archbishops Claudio Maria Celli and Domenico Calcagno, as I do each one of you, and I renew the expression of my gratitude for the service that you render to the Church, offering a generous contribution to many of the Holy See's initiatives at the service of the poor in many parts of the world. In this sense I thank you in particular for the gift you have wished to offer me on the occasion of this meeting.

This year, for your customary gathering, you have chosen the theme: "Social capital and human development". You have paused to reflect on the need, felt by many, to promote a global development aimed at the integral promotion of man, also highlighting the contribution that volunteer associations can give, such as non-profit foundations and other types of community entities that have been founded with the goal of making the social fabric ever more solid. A harmonious development is possible if the economic and political choices take into account and put into practice those fundamental principles which make it accessible to all. I am referring, in particular, to the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. It is always necessary that the person, created in the image of God and willed by him to keep and administer the immense resources of creation, be at the centre of every economic programme, especially considering the vast and complex network of relations which characterize the post-modern epoch. Only a shared culture of responsible and active participation can enable each human being to feel not as a consumer or a passive bystander, but an active collaborator in the process of world development.

Man, to whom, in Genesis, God entrusted the earth, has the duty to make all the earth's goods fruitful, committing himself to use them to satisfy the multiple needs of each member of the human family. One of the recurring metaphors of the Gospel is, in effect, exactly that of the steward. With the heart of a faithful administrator man must, therefore, administer the resources entrusted to him by God, putting them at the disposition of all. In other words, one must avoid that the profit accrue only to the individual or that forms of collectivism oppress personal freedom. Economic or commercial interests must never become exclusive, because, indeed, this would be to mortify human dignity. Since the process of globalization, taking place in the world, invests ever more in the field of culture, economics, finance and politics, the great challenge today is "to globalize" not only economic and commercial interests, but also the expectations of solidarity, with respect for and valuing the contribution of each component of society. As you have opportunely confirmed, economic growth must never be separate from seeking integral human and social development. In this regard, the Church, in her social doctrine emphasizes the importance of the contribution of intermediate bodies according to the principle of subsidiarity, to freely contribute to orient cultural and social changes and to direct them to the authentic progress of the person and the community. In the Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, I had purposely reaffirmed that "the best structures function only when the community is animated by convictions capable of motivating people to assent freely to the social order" (n. 24).

Dear friends, while I renew my gratitude for the generous support that you untiringly lend to charitable activities and to the human promotion of the Church, I invite you also to offer the contribution of your reflection to bring about a just economic world order. In this regard, I am pleased to cite an eloquent affirmation of the Second Vatican Council: "Christians", one reads in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, "can yearn for nothing more ardently than to serve the men of this age with an ever growing generosity and success. Holding loyally to the Gospel, enriched by its resources, and joining forces with all who love and practice justice, they have shouldered a weighty task here on earth..." (n. 93). Continue your action in this spirit to help so many of our brothers and sisters. On the Last Day, on the Day of the Universal Judgement, we will be asked if we have used what God has put at our disposition to meet the legitimate expectations and needs of our brethren, especially the smallest and neediest.

May the Virgin Mary, whom we contemplate today on her Visit to her cousin Elizabeth, obtain for each one of you an ever greater concern for your neighbour. I assure you of a remembrance in prayer and with affection I impart my Apostolic Blessing to you present here, to your families and to those who collaborate with you in your various professional activities.