



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN A CONGRESS PROMOTED
BY THE 'CENTESIMUS ANNUS - PRO PONTIFICE' FOUNDATION**

Clementine Hall

Saturday, 15 October 2011

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am very glad to welcome you on the occasion of the Annual Congress of the *Centesimus Annus* — *Pro Pontifice* Foundation which has brought you together for two study days on the theme of the relationship between the family and business. I thank Mr Domingo Sugranyes Bickel for his courteous word and I cordially greet you all.

This year, as was mentioned, is the 20th anniversary of the Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* of Blessed John Paul II, published 100 years after *Rerum Novarum*. It is also the 30th anniversary of the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*. This double commemoration makes your well chosen theme ever more timely. In the past 120 years of the development of the Church's social teaching great changes have occurred in the world that were not even imaginable at the time of Pope Leo's historic Encyclical.

Yet, the inner patrimony of the social Magisterium that has always promoted the human person and the family, in the context of their life and business, has not changed with the changing external conditions. The *Second Vatican Council* spoke of the family in terms of the *domestic Church* as the “intangible sanctuary” where a person's affections, solidarity and spirituality mature. Even economics, with its laws, must always *take into account* and *safeguard* this primary cell of society; the etymological origin of the very word “economics” contains a reference to the family's importance: *oikia* and *nomos*, the law of the home.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, Bl. John Paul II pointed out four tasks for the

family institution which I should like to recall briefly: forming a community of persons; serving life; participating in the development of society; and sharing in the life and mission of the Church. All these tasks are based on love and it is love that teaches and forms the family.

“The love”, the Venerable Pontiff started, “between husband and wife and, in a derivatory and broader way, the love between members of the same family — between parents and children, brothers and sisters and relatives and members of the household — is given life and sustenance by an unceasing inner dynamism leading the family to ever deeper and more intense communion, which is the foundation and soul of the community of marriage and the family” (n. 18). In the same way, love is at the root of the service to life, founded on the cooperation that the family gives to the continuity of creation, to the procreation of man made in God’s image and likeness.

Moreover the family is the first place where one learns that the right approach in the social context and also in the world of work, economics and business, must be guided by *caritas*, in the logic of “free giving” giving, of solidarity, and of responsibility for each other. “The relationships between the members of the family community”, Bl. John Paul II wrote further, “are inspired and guided by the law of ‘free giving’. By respecting and fostering personal dignity in each and every one as the only basis for value, this free giving takes the form of heartfelt acceptance, encounter and dialogue, disinterested availability, generous service and deep solidarity” (n. 43).

In this perspective, from being a mere object, the family becomes an active subject that is able to remember the “human countenance” which the world of economics must present. If this applies to society in general, in the ecclesial community it assumes an even greater importance. Indeed, the family also has an important role in evangelization, as I recently mentioned in Ancona: it is not simply on the receiving end of pastoral action but plays the lead in it. It is called to take part in evangelization in its own original way, placing its being and action as “an ‘intimate community of life and love’ at the service of the Church and of society” (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 50). Family and work are privileged places in which to realize the vocation of human beings to collaborate with God’s creative work today.

As you pointed out in your reports, in the difficult situation in which we live we are unfortunately witnessing a crisis of work and of the economy which is accompanied by a crisis of the family: the conflict within the couple, between generations and between the time for family and for work, as well as the employment crisis, are creating a complex situation of unease that has a negative influence on life in society itself. A new, harmonious synthesis between family and work is therefore necessary, to which the Church’s social doctrine can make its own precious contribution.

In the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* I wished to stress that the family model of the logic of love, of free giving and of reciprocal gift, should be extended to a universal dimension. Commutative justice — “giving in order to acquire” — and distributive justice — “giving through duty” [n. 39], are not sufficient to build up society. In order for true justice to exist it is necessary to add free giving

and solidarity.

“Solidarity is first and foremost a sense of responsibility on the part of everyone with regard to everyone and it cannot therefore be delegated to the State alone. While in the past it was possible to argue that justice had to come first and that gratuitousness could compliment it afterwards, today one must say that without gratuitousness, there can be no justice in the first place.... Charity in truth, in this case, requires that shape and structure be given to those types of economic initiative which, without rejecting profit, aim at a higher goal than the mere logic of the exchange of equivalents, of profit as an end in itself” (cf. n. 38).

“The market of gratuitousness does not exist, and attitudes of gratuitousness cannot be established by law. Yet both the market and politics need individuals who are open to reciprocal gift” (*ibid.*, n. 39). It is not up to the Church to define ways to face the current crisis. Yet Christians are duty bound to report evils, to witness to and to keep alive the values on which the person’s dignity is founded and to promote those forms of solidarity that encourage the common good so that humanity may become increasingly a family of God.

Dear friends, I hope that the considerations which arose at your Congress will help you to assume ever more actively your role in the spread and application of the Church’s social teaching, without forgetting that “development needs Christians with their arms raised towards God in prayer, Christians moved by the knowledge that truth-filled love, *caritas in veritate*, from which authentic development proceeds, is not produced by us, but given to us” (n. 79).

With this wish, as I entrust you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, I warmly impart to all of you and to your dear ones a special Apostolic Blessing.

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