

Toewijding artsen aan het H. Hart van Jezus: Jezus, arts en broeder

Toespraak tot de leden van de Internationale Federatie van Verenigingen van Katholieke Geneesheren (FIAMC)

Paus Franciscus

22 juni 2019

Mijnheer de Kardinaal, mijnheer de voorzitter, dierbare broeders en zusters,

Ik heet u welkom en dank kardinaal Turkson voor zijn vriendelijke woorden. Ik waardeer dat u tijdens uw bijeenkomst, een bijzondere toewijding heeft willen doen aan het Heilig Hart van Jezus en ik verzeker u van mijn gebed opdat zij voor ieder van u vruchtbaar mag zijn. Ik zou enkele eenvoudige gedachten met u willen delen.

De eerste christengemeenschappen hebben de Heer Jezus dikwijls voorgesteld als “geneesheer”, en benadrukten zo de constante aandacht, vol medelijden, die Hij toedroeg aan wie onder allerlei ziekten leden. Zijn zending bestond er vooreerst in, zieken of gehandicapten nabij te zijn, vooral degenen die geminacht en gemarginaliseerd werden. Zo doorbreekt Jezus het oordeel, dat een zieke dikwijls als zondaar beschouwde; met deze medelijdende nabijheid toont Hij de oneindige liefde van God de Vader voor Zijn meest noodlijdende kinderen.

De zorg voor de zieken lijkt dus één van de opbouwende dimensies van de zending van Christus; en om die reden is het in de zending van de Kerk zo gebleven. In de Evangelies is de nauwe band dus evident tussen de verkondiging van Christus en de genezingen die Hij verricht voor degenen die “er slecht aan toe waren, die door velerlei ziekten en pijnen gekweld werden, bezetenen, lijdens aan vallende ziekte en lammen” (Mat. 4, 24).

Ook de manier waarop Jezus zorg draagt voor zieken en mensen die lijden, is belangrijk. Hij raakt deze mensen dikwijls aan en laat zich aanraken, zelfs in de gevallen waarin dat verboden was. Hij doet het bijvoorbeeld met de vrouw die jarenlang aan bloedvloeiingen leed. Hij voelt dat Hij aangeraakt wordt, Hij voelt de genezende kracht die van Hem uitgaat en wanneer deze persoon Hem op de knieën belijdt wat zij gedaan heeft, zegt Hij haar: “Dochter, uw geloof heeft u genezen; ga in vrede” (Luc. 8, 48).

Voor Jezus betekent genezen, de persoon nabij zijn, ook al zouden sommigen dat willen verhinderen, zoals in het geval van de blinde Bartimeüs, in Jericho. Jezus laat hem roepen en vraagt hem: “Wat wilt ge dat Ik voor u doe?” (Marc. 10, 51). Het kan verrassend lijken dat de “geneesheer” aan degene die lijdt, vraagt wat deze van Hem verwacht. Maar dat onderlijnt de waarde van het woord en van het gesprek in de zorgrelatie. Voor Jezus betekent genezen, in gesprek gaan om het verlangen van de mens naar boven te laten komen en de zachte macht van Gods liefde, die werkzaam is in Zijn Zoon.

Want genezen betekent, een weg inslaan: een weg van verlichting, vertroosting, verzoening en genezing. Wanneer een bepaalde behandeling met oprechte liefde voor de ander gedaan wordt, dan verruimt de horizon van de verzorgde persoon, want de mens is één: hij is een eenheid van geest, ziel en lichaam. En dat is duidelijk zichtbaar in de werkzaamheid van Jezus: Hij geneest nooit een deel, maar heel de mens, integraal. Soms begint Hij bij het lichaam, soms bij het hart – dat wil zeggen door de zonden te vergeven – maar altijd om het geheel te genezen.

Tenslotte valt de zorg van Jezus samen met het oprichten van de persoon en na hem nabij te komen en genezen, te zenden. Er zijn veel zieken die na hun genezing door Jezus, Zijn leerling worden en Hem volgen.

Bijgevolg, Jezus komt nader, draagt zorg, geneest, verzoent, roept en zendt. Zoals men ziet, Zijn relatie met

mensen die verdrukt worden door ziekte en gebreken, is voor Hem een persoonlijke, rijke relatie, en niet mechanisch of afstandelijk.

In die school van Jezus, de geneesheer en broeder van lijdende mensen, bent u geroepen, u, geneesheren die in Hem gelooft, die lid bent van Zijn Kerk, om mensen nabij te zijn die lijden onder de beproeving van ziekten.

U bent geroepen om te verzorgen met fijngevoeligheid, met respect voor de waardigheid, de lichamelijke en psychische integriteit van de mens.

U bent geroepen om aandachtig te luisteren, het gepaste antwoord te geven dat de verzorging begeleidt, menselijker maakt en dus ook doeltreffender.

U bent geroepen om aan te moedigen, te troosten, op te richten, hoop te geven. Men kan niet genezen en genezen worden zonder hoop; daarin zijn wij allemaal behoeftig en God dankbaar, die ons hoop geeft. Maar ook dankbaar aan degenen die werkzaam zijn in het medisch onderzoek.

In de loop van de laatste eeuw, was er zeer veel vooruitgang. Nieuwe therapieën en vele behandelingen werden beproefd. Al die zorgen waren voor de voorbije generaties ondenkbaar. Wij kunnen en moeten het lijden verlichten en iedereen opvoeden om verantwoordelijker om te gaan met zijn gezondheid en die van de naaste en familie. Wij mogen ook niet vergeten dat verzorgen betekent, de gave van het leven respecteren van het begin tot het einde. Wij zijn er geen eigenaar van: het leven wordt ons toevertrouwd en de geneesheren zijn de dienaren ervan.

Uw zending is tegelijk een getuigenis van menselijkheid, een bevoorrechte manier om ons te laten zien en voelen dat God, onze Vader, zorg draagt voor elke mens, zonder onderscheid. Daarom verlangt Hij tevens gebruik te maken van onze kennis, onze handen en ons hart om elke mens te verzorgen en te genezen, want Hij verlangt aan iedereen leven en liefde te geven.

Dat vraagt van u bekwaamheid, geduld, geesteskracht en broederlijke solidariteit. De stijl van een katholieke geneesheer verbindt professionalisme, bekwaamheid tot samenwerking en ethische striktheid. En dat alles komt ten goede aan de zieken en het milieu waarin u werkzaam bent. Het is geweten, dat de kwaliteit van een dienst dikwijls niet alleen afhangt van het hoog gehalte aan instrumenten waarover men beschikt, maar van het niveau aan professionalisme en menselijkheid van het diensthoofd en het artsenteam. We zien het alle dagen, vele eenvoudige mensen die naar de kliniek gaan: ik zou die dokter willen – waarom? – omdat zij hun nabijheid voelen, hun toewijding.

Door u voortdurend te vernieuwen, door naar de bronnen van het woord Gods en de sacramenten te gaan, zult u uw zending goed kunnen vervullen en zal de Geest u de gave van onderscheiding geven om aan delicate en ingewikkelde situaties het hoofd te bieden, om het juiste woord op de juiste manier te zeggen en door de juiste stilte op de juiste manier.

Dierbare broeders en zusters, ik weet dat u dat reeds doet, maar ik roep u op te bidden voor degenen die u verzorgt en voor de collega's die met u samenwerken. En vergeet alstublieft ook niet voor mij te bidden. Dank u!

Pope Francis
Saturday, 22 June 2019

Your Eminence, dear President, dear brothers and sisters,

I offer you a cordial welcome and I thank Cardinal Turkson for his kind words. I am impressed that at this meeting you wanted to make a special act of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Please know of my prayers that this will prove spiritually fruitful for each of you. I would now like to share with you a few simple thoughts.

The earliest Christian communities often spoke of the Lord Jesus as a “physician”, highlighting in this way his constant, compassionate concern for those suffering from every kind of illness. His mission consisted above all in *drawing near* to the sick and the disabled, especially to those who for that reason were looked down upon and marginalized. Jesus thus overturned the sentence of condemnation that so often labelled the sick person as a sinner. By his compassionate closeness, Jesus showed the infinite love of God our Father for his children most in need.

Care for the sick emerges, then, as an *essential* aspect of Christ’s mission and, consequently, of the Church’s mission as well. The Gospels show a clear link between Jesus’ preaching and the acts of healing that he performed for all those who were, in Matthew’s words, “afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics” (4:24).

Important too is the *way* that Jesus cared for the sick and suffering. He often touched those persons and let them touch him, even in cases where it was forbidden. This was the case, for example, with the woman who had suffered for years from haemorrhages. Jesus sensed that he had been touched and that healing power had gone forth from him, and when the woman fell to her knees and confessed what she had done, he said to her: “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace” (Lk 8:48).

For Jesus, then, healing involves *drawing near to the person*, even if at times there were some who would prevent him from doing so, as in the case of the blind Bartimaeus in Jericho. Jesus had the man brought before him and asked: “What do you want me to do for you?” (Mk 10:51). It might surprise us that the “physician” should ask the patient what he expects from him! Yet this highlights the importance of words and dialogue in a relationship of care. For Jesus, care entails entering into dialogue, in order to bring out the individual’s own desire and the soothing power of God’s love working through his Son. Caregiving means starting a process: a process of relief, consolation, reconciliation and healing. When care is given with genuine love for the other, it expands the horizons of the recipient, for human beings are a unity: a unity of spirit, soul and body. We can see this clearly in the ministry of Jesus. He never heals just one part, but rather the *whole* person, integrally. At times, he starts with the body, at other times with the heart – by forgiving sins (cf. Mt 2:5), but always for the sake of restoring the whole.

Finally, Jesus’ care involves *raising up* and then *sending forth* those whom he has drawn near to and healed. Many of the sick who were cured by Christ then became his disciples and followers.

In a word, Jesus draws near, shows concern, heals, reconciles, calls and sends forth. It is obvious that, for him, a relationship with persons afflicted by illness and infirmity is one both personal and profound. Not a mechanical relationship, not a distant one.

It is to this school of Jesus, physician and brother to the suffering, that *you*, as physicians, believers and members of the Church, *have been called*. You are called to draw near to those experiencing the suffering brought on by illness.

You are called to provide care with sensitivity and with respect for the dignity and for the physical and psychological integrity of each person.

You are called to listen attentively and to respond appropriately, in addition to the physical care you provide.

This will make the latter all the more humane and, consequently, all the more effective.

You are called to offer encouragement and comfort, to raise up and to give hope. Care cannot really be given or received in the absence of hope. In this sense, all of us need hope. We are grateful to God who grants us that hope. But also grateful to all those who are engaged in medical research.

The last hundred years have seen immense progress in this area. New therapies and numerous experimental treatments have developed, forms of care that would have been unimaginable in earlier generations. We can and should alleviate suffering, while at the same time teaching people to become more responsible for their own health and the health of their relatives and friends. And we must remember too, that the work of caring for others also entails respect for the gift of life from beginning to end. For we are not the masters of life; it is given to us in trust, and physicians stand at its service.

Your mission is a witness of humanity, a privileged means of helping others to see and feel that God our Father cares for every individual, without distinction. To do this, he wishes to employ our knowledge, our hands and our hearts, in order to care for and bring healing to every human being. To each of us he wants to grant life and love.

All this requires of you competence, patience, spiritual strength and fraternal solidarity. The way you fulfil your mission as Catholic physicians should unite professionalism with the capacity for teamwork and ethical integrity. This will benefit both the patient and the environment in which you carry out your work. Very often – as we know – the quality of a hospital ward depends not merely on the sophistication of its technology, but on the level of professionalism and humanity shown by the head physician and the medical team. We see this every day, many ordinary people who go to hospital: “I want to see this doctor, or that one” – why? Because they sense their closeness, their dedication.

By constant spiritual renewal and by drawing from the wellspring of God’s word and the sacraments, you will accomplish your mission well. The Holy Spirit will grant you the gift of discernment needed to confront sensitive and complex situations, and to say the right things in the right way, and with the right silence, at the right time.

Dear brothers and sisters, I know that you are already doing it, but I urge you also to pray for your patients and for all your colleagues and assistants. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

Over het ongeboren leven: geen mens is ongeschikt voor het leven

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to participants in the conference “Yes to Life! - taking care of the precious gift of life in its frailty” organized by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life

Pope Francis
25 May 2019

Your Eminences, Dear Brother Bishops and Priests, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning and welcome. I greet Cardinal Farrell and I thank him for his words of introduction. My greeting also goes to all taking part in this international Conference, “Yes to Life! Taking Care of the Precious Gift of Life in its Frailty”, organized by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, and by the Foundation Il Cuore in una

Goccia, one of the groups that work daily in our world to welcome children born in conditions of extreme frailty. These are children that the throw-away culture sometimes describes as being “unfit for life”, and thus condemned to death.

No human being can ever be unfit for life, whether due to age, state of health or quality of existence. Every child who appears in a woman’s womb is a gift that changes a family’s history, the life of fathers and mothers, grandparents and of brothers and sisters. That child needs to be welcomed, loved and nurtured. Always! Even when they are crying, like that baby over there... (applause). Some people might think: “But, the baby is crying... they should leave”. No, this is music that all of us need to hear. (I think the baby heard that applause and thought it was for him!) We need to hear the sound always, even when the baby is a little annoying: Also in church: let children cry in church! They are praising God. Never, never chase a child out because he or she is crying. Thank you for your witness.

When a woman discovers that she is expecting a child, she immediately feels within her a deep sense of mystery. A woman who becomes a mother knows this. She is aware of a presence growing within her, one that pervades her whole being. Now she is not only a woman but also a mother. From the very beginning, an intense, interactive dialogue takes place between her and the child. Scientists call this “cross-talk”. It is a real and intense relationship between two human beings communicating with one another from the very first moments of conception, and it leads to a mutual adjustment as the child grows and develops. This ability to communicate is not only on the part of the woman; even more, the child, as an individual, finds ways to communicate his or her presence and needs to the mother. Thus, this new human being immediately becomes a son or daughter, and this moves the woman to connect with her child with all her being.

Nowadays, from the very first weeks, modern prenatal diagnosis techniques can detect the presence of malformations and illness that may at times seriously endanger the life of the child and the mother’s peace of mind. Even the suspicion of an illness, and especially the certainty of a disease, changes the experience of pregnancy and causes deep distress to women and couples. A sense of isolation, helplessness and concern about the eventual suffering of the child and the whole family, all this is like a silent cry, a call for help in the darkness, when faced with an illness whose outcome cannot be foreseen with certainty. Every illness takes its own course, nor can physicians can always know how it will affect each individual.

Yet, there is one thing that medicine knows well, and that is that unborn children with pathological conditions are little patients who can often be treated with sophisticated pharmacological, surgical and support interventions. It is now possible to reduce the frightening gap between diagnoses and therapeutic options. For years, that has been one of the reasons for elective abortion and abandonment of care at the birth of many children with serious medical conditions. Foetal therapies on the one hand, and perinatal hospices on the other, achieve surprising results in terms of clinical care, and they provide essential support to families who embrace the birth of a sick child.

These possibilities and information need to be made available to all, in order to expand a scientific and pastoral approach of competent care. For this reason, it is essential that doctors have a clear understanding not only of the aim of healing, but also of the sacredness of human life, the protection of which remains the ultimate goal of medical practice. The medical profession is a mission, a vocation to life, and it is important that doctors be aware that they themselves are a gift to the families entrusted to them. We need doctors who can establish a rapport with others, assume responsibility for other people’s lives, be proactive in dealing with pain, capable of providing reassurance, and always committed to finding solutions respectful of the dignity of each human life.

In this sense, perinatal comfort care is an approach to care that humanizes medicine, for it entails a

responsible relationship to the sick child, who is accompanied by the staff and his or her family in an integrated care process. The child is never abandoned, but is surrounded by human warmth and love.

This is particularly necessary in the case of those children who, in our current state of scientific knowledge, are destined to die immediately after birth or shortly afterwards. In these cases, treatment may seem an unnecessary use of resources and a source of further suffering for the parents. However, if we look at the situation more closely, we can perceive the real meaning behind this effort, which seeks to bring the love of a family to fulfilment. Indeed, caring for these children helps parents to process their mourning and to understand it not only as loss, but also as a stage in a journey travelled together. They will have had the opportunity to love their child, and that child will remain in their memory forever. Many times, those few hours in which a mother can cradle her child in her arms leave an unforgettable trace in her heart. And she feels, if I may use the word, realized. She feels herself a mother.

Unfortunately, the dominant culture today does not promote this approach. On a social level, fear and hostility towards disability often lead to the choice of abortion, presenting it as a form of "prevention". However, the Church's teaching on this point is clear: human life is sacred and inviolable, and the use of prenatal diagnosis for selective purposes must be strongly discouraged. It is an expression of an inhumane eugenic mentality that deprives families of the chance to accept, embrace and love the weakest of their children.

Sometimes we hear people say, "You Catholics do not accept abortion; it's a problem with your faith". No, the problem is pre-religious. Faith has nothing to do with it. It comes afterwards, but it has nothing to do with it. The problem is a human problem. It is pre-religious. Let's not blame faith for something that from the beginning has nothing to do with it. The problem is a human problem. Just two questions will help us understand this clearly. Two questions. First: is it licit to eliminate a human life to solve a problem? Second: is it licit to hire a killer to resolve a problem? I leave the answer to you. This is the point. Don't blame religion for a human issue. It is not licit. Never, never eliminate a human life or hire a killer to solve a problem.

Abortion is never the answer that women and families are looking for. Rather, it is fear of illness and isolation that makes parents waver. The practical, human and spiritual difficulties are undeniable, but it is precisely for this reason that a more incisive pastoral action is urgently needed to support those families who accept sick children. There is a need to create spaces, places and "networks of love" to which couples can turn, and to spend time assisting these families.

I think of a story that I heard of in my other Diocese. A fifteen-year-old girl with Down syndrome became pregnant and her parents went to the judge to get authorization for an abortion. The judge, a very upright man, studied the case and said "I would like to question the girl". [The parents answered:] "But she has Down syndrome she doesn't understand". [The judge replied:] "No, have her come". The young girl sat down and began to speak with the judge. He said to her: "Do you know what happened to you". [She replied:] "Yes, I'm sick". [The judge then asked:] "And what is your sickness?" [She answered:] "They told me that I have an animal inside me that is eating my stomach, and that is why I have to have an operation". [The judge told her:] "No, you don't have a worm that's eating your stomach. You know what you have? It's a baby". The young girl with Down syndrome said: "Oh, how beautiful!" That's what happened. So the judge did not authorize the abortion. The mother wanted it. The years passed; the baby was born, she went to school, she grew up and she became a lawyer. From the time that she knew her story, because they told it to her, every day on her birthday she called the judge to thank him for the gift of being born. The things that happen in life... The judge is now dead and she has become a public prosecutor. See what a beautiful thing happened! Abortion is never the response that women and families are looking for.

Thank you, then, to you who are working for all this. Thank you, in particular, families, mothers and

fathers, who have welcomed life that is frail – and I emphasize that word “frail” – for mothers, and women, are specialists in situations of frailty: welcoming frail life. And now, all of you are supporting and helping other families. Your witness of love is a gift to the world. I bless you and keep you in my prayer. And I ask you, please, to pray for me.

Orgaandonatie moet een vrijwillige en onbetaalde daad zijn

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Italian Association for The Donation of Organs, Tissues and Cells (AIDO)

Pope Francis
13 april 2019

I am pleased to welcome you all, volunteers of the Italian Association for Organ, Tissue and Cell Donation, gathered here to represent the thousands of people who have chosen to bear witness to and disseminate the values of sharing and donation, without asking for anything in return. I greet you all cordially and thank your president, Dr. Flavia Petrin, for the words with which she introduced this meeting.

The developments in transplant medicine have made it possible to donate organs after death, and in certain cases in life (as, for example, in the case of the kidney), so as to save other human lives; to conserve, recover and improve the state of health of many sick people who have no other alternative. Organ donation responds to a social need because, despite the development of many medical cures, its usefulness is never exhausted, since these are profoundly human experiences filled with love and altruism. Donation means looking to and going beyond oneself, beyond individual needs, and opening up with generosity towards a broader good. From this perspective, organ donation is not only an act of social responsibility, but also an expression of the universal fraternity that links all men and women to each other.

In this regard, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that “Organ donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as a expression of generous solidarity” (2296). By virtue of the intrinsic relational dimension of the human being, each one of us realizes himself also through participation in the realization of the good of others. Every subject represents a good not only for himself, but for society as a whole; from this there derives the meaning of commitment for the achievement of the good of our neighbour.

In the Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, Saint John Paul II reminded us that, among the gestures that contribute to nurturing an authentic culture of life, “A particularly praiseworthy example ... is the donation of organs, performed in an ethically acceptable manner, with a view to offering a chance of health and even of life itself to the sick who sometimes have no other hope” (86). Therefore it is important to maintain organ donation as a freely and unpaid act. Indeed, any form of commodification of the body or any part of it is contrary to human dignity. In donating blood or an organ of the body, it is necessary to respect the ethical and religious perspective.

As for those who do not have religious faith, the gesture towards brothers in need demands to be performed on the basis of an ideal of selfless human solidarity. Believers are called to live it as an offering to the Lord, Who identified with those who suffer as a result of disease, road accidents or accidents at work. It is good, for Jesus’

disciples, to offer one's own organs, according to the terms consented by law and morality, as it is a gift made to the suffering Lord, Who said that whatever we do to a brother in need, we do also to Him (cf. Mt 25: 40).

It is therefore important to promote a culture of donation that, through information, awareness-raising and your constant and appreciated effort, promotes this offering of a part of one's own body, without risk or disproportionate consequences, in donation by the living, and of all organs after death. From our own death and from our gift, there may spring life and health for others, the sick and suffering, contributing to strengthening a culture of help, of giving, of hope and of life. Faced with threats against life, which we unfortunately witness almost daily, as in the case of abortion and euthanasia, society needs these concrete gestures of solidarity and generous love.

I encourage you to continue in your efforts to defend and promote life, through the wonderful methods of organ donation. I like to recall Jesus' words: "Give, and it will be given to you: A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap" (Lk 6: 38). We shall receive our recompense from God according to the sincere and concrete love we have shown towards our neighbour.

May the Lord support your good works. For my part, I accompany you with my blessing.

Robot-ethiek: de waardigheid van iedere mens moet centraal blijven staan

Tot de deelnemers aan de 25^{ste} Algemene vergadering van de Pauselijke Academie voor het Leven: Robotethiek - Mensen, machines en gezondheid

Paus Franciscus
25 februari 2019

Beste broeders en zusters,

Ik groet u van harte bij gelegenheid van uw algemene vergadering en ik dank Mgr. Paglia voor zijn vriendelijke woorden. Deze ontmoeting vindt plaats ter gelegenheid van het eerste jubileum van de Academie voor het leven: op 25 jaar na haar ontstaan. Bij deze belangrijke gebeurtenis heb ik de vorige maand een brie aan de president geschreven met de titel: *Humana communitas*. Het was vooral de wens om alle presidenten die elkaar hebben opgevolgd aan het hoofd van de Academie en alle leden te bedanken voor hun competente dienstwerk en hun edelmoedige inzet voor de bescherming en de bevordering van het menselijke leven gedurende deze werkzame 25 jaar.

We kennen de moeilijkheden waarmee onze wereld de strijd aanbindt. Het weefsel van de betrekkingen in gezin en maatschappij lijkt steeds meer te verslijten en er verspreidt zich een neiging om in zichzelf en zijn persoonlijke belangen opgesloten te raken, met ernstige gevolgen voor de "grote en beslissende kwestie van de eenheid in de mensenfamilie en haar toekomst" (brief *Humana communitas*, nr. 2). Er tekent zich een dramatische paradox af. Juist nu de mensheid de wetenschappelijke mogelijkheden bezit om te komen tot een eerlijk verdeeld welzijn volgens het gebod van God, zien we daarentegen een versterking van de conflicten en een toename van de ongelijkheid. De mythe van de vooruitgang volgens de filosofie van de Verlichting neemt in betekenis af en de opeenstapeling van de mogelijkheden die wetenschap en techniek ons hebben verschaft leidt niet altijd tot de resultaten waarop gehoopt werd. Inderdaad, aan de ene kant hebben de technische

ontwikkelingen het ons mogelijk gemaakt problemen op te lossen die enkele jaren geleden nog onoverkomelijk waren en we zijn de onderzoekers die dergelijke resultaten mogelijk gemaakt hebben dankbaar; aan de andere kan zijn er moeilijkheden en dreigingen die soms sluipender zijn dan die van voorheen aan het licht gekomen. Het “kunnen doen” brengt het gevaar mee dat niet meer gezien wordt *wie* het doet en *voor wie* men het doet. Het technocratische systeem dat gebaseerd is op het criterium van de doeltreffendheid beantwoordt niet aan de diepste vragen die de mens zichzelf stelt. En al is het dan aan de ene kant onmogelijk om het zonder de hulpbronnen te stellen, aan de andere kant legt dit systeem zijn logica op aan hen die ze gebruiken. Toch is de techniek een kenmerk van het menselijke wezen. Men moet haar niet zien als een kracht die de mens vreemd en vijandig is, maar als een voortbrengsel van zijn vindrijkheid, waardoor hij kan voorzien in de eisen die het leven stelt, voor zichzelf en voor de anderen. Het is dus een typisch menselijke manier om de wereld te bewonen. Maar de huidige ontwikkeling van de technische mogelijkheden brengt een gevaarlijke betovering met zich mee: in plaats van voor het menselijke leven de hulpmiddelen te leveren die de zorg ervoor verbeteren, lopen we het gevaar dat we het leven overlaten aan de logica van de voorzieningen die beslissen over de waarde ervan. Die omkering mondt uit in kwalijke resultaten: de machine blijft er niet bij om geheel alleen zichzelf te besturen, maar gaat uiteindelijk de mens besturen. Zo wordt de menselijke rede teruggebracht tot een redelijkheid die is losgemaakt van haar effecten en die niet meer als menswaardig gezien mag worden.

We zien helaas de ernstige schade die aan de planeet, ons gemeenschappelijke huis, wordt toegebracht door het zonder onderscheid toepassen van technische middelen. Daarom is de wereld-bio-ethiek een belangrijke zaak om zich voor in te zetten. Zij laat zien dat men zich bewust is van de diepgaande invloed die de milieufactoren en maatschappelijke factoren op de gezondheid en het leven hebben. Dat is een aanpak die geheel in overeenstemming is met de integrale ecologie, zoals die beschreven en aanbevolen werd in de encycliek *Laudato si*. Het is bovendien op zijn plaats dat wij in de huidige wereld, die gekenmerkt wordt door een nauw contact tussen verschillende culturen, als gelovigen onze specifieke bijdrage leveren in het zoeken naar operationele criteria die met allen gedeeld kunnen worden en die gemeenschappelijke uitgangspunten zijn voor het maken van keuzes door het die de grote verantwoordelijkheid hebben om op nationaal en internationaal niveau beslissingen te nemen. Dat betekent ook dat men zich engageert in de dialoog over de mensenrechten, waarbij ook de plichten die ermee gepaard gaan duidelijk belicht worden. Zij vormen inderdaad het onderzoeksgebied voor een universele ethiek en we zien dat belangrijke vragen daarover door de traditie behandeld zijn door te putten uit het erfgoed van de natuurwet.

De brief *Humana communitas* verwijst expliciet naar het thema van “opkomende en met elkaar samenwerkende technologieën”. De mogelijkheid om op de levende materie in te grijpen op een niveau met een steeds kleinere schaal, om steeds grotere massa’s informatie te verwerken, om de hersenprocessen die te maken hebben met de activiteit van het kennen en het denken te volgen – en te beïnvloeden – heeft onmetelijke consequenties: dit raakt de eigenlijke drempel van de biologische specificiteit van de mens en wat hem in geestelijke zin verschillend maakt. Ik bevestig hierbij dat “wat het menselijke leven verschillend maakt een absoluut goed is” (nr. 4).

Het is belangrijk dit nog eens te herhalen: “kunstmatige intelligentie, robotica en andere technologische vernieuwingen moeten gebruikt worden om bij te dragen aan de dienst aan de mensheid en aan de bescherming van ons gemeenschappelijke huis en niet aan precies het tegenovergestelde daarvan, zoals helaas sommige schattingen voorzien.” (*Boodschap aan het World Economic Forum te Davos 12 januari 2019*). De waardigheid die elk menselijk wezen eigen is moet met vasthoudendheid geplaatst worden in het centrum van ons denken en handelen.

In dit kader is het op zijn plaats op te merken dat de benaming “kunstmatige intelligentie” het gevaar loopt

bedrieglijk te zijn ook al kan ze zeker doeltreffend zijn. De termen verhullen het feit dat die functionele automatisen in hun kwaliteiten ver verwijderd blijven van die van het kennen en handelen die een menselijk privilege zijn – ook al zijn ze nuttig in het vervullen van slaafse taken (dat is de oorspronkelijke betekenis van de term “robot”). En juist daarom kunnen ze een maatschappelijk gevaar vormen. Er is trouwens al een risico dat de mens vertechnologiseerd wordt, in plaats van dat de techniek vermenselijkt wordt: men schrijft al te snel aan zogenaamde “intelligente machines” vermogens toe die echt menselijk zijn.

We dienen beter te begrijpen wat in deze context de betekenis is van intelligentie, bewustzijn, gevoelsleven, gevoelsmatige gerichtheid en de autonomie van het moreel handelen. De kunstmatige voorzieningen die menselijke vermogens nabootsen bezitten in werkelijkheid geen enkele menselijke hoedanigheid. Daarmee moet rekening gehouden worden om de regeling van hun gebruik en het onderzoek zelf te oriënteren op een constructieve en billijke interactie tussen de mensen en de meeste recente versies van die machines. Deze verspreiden zich immers in onze wereld en wijzigen het scenario van ons bestaan radicaal. Als we in staat zijn deze overwegingen te doen gelden in wat er gebeurt, dan zullen de buitengewone mogelijkheden van de nieuwe ontdekkingen hun zegeningen kunnen doen stralen over iedereen en over de hele mensheid.

De discussie tussen de specialisten zelf laat de ernstige problemen aangaande de bestuurbaarheid van de algoritmen die met enorme hoeveelheden data omgaan al zien. Evenzo stellen de technieken waarmee het genetisch erfgoed en de hersenfuncties gemanipuleerd kunnen worden ons voor ernstige ethische vraagstukken. De poging om het geheel van het gedachteleven, het gevoelsleven en de menselijke psyché te verklaren op grond van de functionele som van de samenstellende fysieke en organische onderdelen houdt in ieder geval geen rekening met wat er aan het licht komt aan verschijnselen van de ervaring en het bewustzijn. Het verschijnsel mens is meer dan het resultaat van een optelling en samenstelling van elk van zijn elementen. Ook op dit terrein krijgt het axioma dat zegt dat het geheel meer is dan de som van de delen een nieuwe diepgang en een nieuwe betekenis.

Aan de andere kant leren we nu juist in deze lijn van de complexiteit in de synergie tussen *psyché* en *technè* dat, hetgeen we te weten komen over de hersenactiviteit nieuwe aanwijzingen levert voor de wijze waarop we het bewustzijn (van onszelf en van de wereld) en het menselijk lichaam zelf moeten zien: het is niet mogelijk om geen rekening te houden met het in elkaar grijpen van allerlei betrekkingen als we willen geraken tot een dieper begrip van de integrale menselijke dimensie.

Zeker, we kunnen geen metafysische gevolgtrekkingen maken uit de gegevens van de empirische wetenschappen. Maar we kunnen er wel aanwijzingen aan ontlelen die richting geven aan ons antropologische denken, zelf op theologisch gebied, zoals dat trouwens in de geschiedenis altijd is gebeurd. Het zou immers tegen onze toch authentieke traditie ingaan als we nu zouden vasthouden aan een anachronistisch begrippenapparaat. We zouden dan niet in staat zijn op passende manier om te gaan met de veranderingen in de begrippen natuur en kunst, omstandigheden en vrijheid, middel en doel die is opgeroepen door de nieuwe cultuur van handelen die typisch is voor het tijdperk van de technologie. We worden opgeroepen de weg in te slaan die op beslissende wijze is gekozen door het Tweede Vaticaans Concilie. Dat roept op tot een vernieuwing van de theologische wetenschappen en een kritisch nadenken over de betrekking tussen Christelijk geloof en moreel handelen (vgl. *Optatam totius*, 16).

In onze deelname in de ethische samenwerking ten gunst van het leven zal onze inzet – zowel op intellectueel als op specialistisch gebied – een erezaak zijn. In een situatie waarin technologische voorzieningen die steeds vernuftiger zijn rechtstreeks ingrijpen op menselijke eigenschappen van lichaam en geest wordt het nu een dringende zaak om dit met alle mannen en vrouwen die zich inzetten voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek en de praktijk van de zorg. Dat is zeker een zware taak, gezien het snelle tempo waarin de vernieuwingen

plaatsvinden. We worden hierin aangemoedigd en gesteund door het voorbeeld van leermeesters uit de gelovige intelligentsia, die met wijsheid en moed de processen van hun eigen tijd hebben benaderd met het oog op een begrip van het geloofsgoed op een verstandelijk niveau dat de mens waardig is.

Ik wens u toe dat u uw studie en onderzoek kunt voortzetten zodat het werk voor de bevordering en de bescherming van het leven steeds doeltreffender en vruchtbaarder zal worden. Moge de Maagd Maria u bijstaan en moge mijn zegen u begeleiden. En vergeet alstublieft niet voor mij te bidden. Dank u.

Vertaling: dr. J.A. Raymakers

To the participants of the 25th General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life “Robo Ethics - Humans, Machines and Health”

Pope Francis
25 February 2019

Dear brothers and sisters,

I cordially greet you on the occasion of your General Assembly, and I thank Archbishop Paglia for his kind words. This meeting takes place in the first Jubilee of the Academy for Life: twenty-five years after its birth. On this important anniversary, last month I sent the president a letter entitled *Humana communitas*. I was moved to write this message first of all by the wish to thank all the presidents who have guided the Academy, and all the Members for their competent service and generous commitment to protecting and promoting human life during these twenty-five years of activity.

We know the difficulties with which our world struggles. The fabric of family and social relations seems increasingly to wear away, and there is a tendency to become wrapped up in oneself and one's own individual interests, with serious consequences for the “the decisive global issue of the unity of the human family and its future” (Letter *Humana communitas*, 2). A dramatic paradox is thus outlined: just when humanity possesses the scientific and technical capacities to achieve a justly distributed well-being, in accordance with how it was delivered by God, we observe instead an exacerbation of conflicts and an increase in inequality. The enlightenment myth of progress is declining and the accumulation of the potentialities that science and technology have provided us does not always attain the desired results. Indeed, on the one hand, technological development has allowed us to solve problems that were insurmountable until a few years ago, and we are grateful to the researchers who have achieved these results; yet on the other hand, difficulties and threats, sometimes more insidious than the previous ones, have emerged. The possibility of doing something risks obscuring both the person who does, and the person doing it. The technocratic system based on the criterion of efficiency does not respond to the most profound questions that man poses; and if on the one hand it is not possible to do without its resources, on the other it imposes its logic on those who use them. Yet technology is characteristic of the human being. It should not be understood as a force that is alien to and hostile to it, but as a product of its ingenuity through which it provides for the needs of living for oneself and for others. It is therefore a specifically human mode of inhabiting the world. However, today's evolution of technical capacity casts a dangerous spell: instead of delivering the tools that improve their care to human life, there is the risk of giving life to the logic of the devices that decide its value. This reversal is destined to produce nefarious outcomes: the machine is not limited to driving alone, but ends up guiding man. Human reason is thus reduced to rationality alienated from effects, which cannot be considered worthy of mankind.

We see, unfortunately, the serious damage caused to the planet, our common home, from the indiscriminate use of technical means. This is why global bioethics is an important front on which to engage. It expresses awareness of the profound impact of environmental and social factors on health and life. This approach is very

in tune with the integral ecology described and promoted in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*. Moreover, in today's world, in which there is close interaction between different cultures, we need to bring our specific contribution as believers to the search for universally shared operational criteria, so that they may be common points of reference for the choices of those who have the serious responsibility for taking decisions on national and international levels. This also means engaging in dialogue regarding human rights, clearly highlighting their corresponding duties. Indeed these constitute the ground for the common search for universal ethics, on which we find many questions that tradition has dealt with by drawing on the patrimony of natural law.

The Lettera *Humana communitas* explicitly recalls the theme of “emerging and converging technologies”. The possibility of intervening on living material to orders of ever smaller size, to process ever greater volumes of information, to monitor – and manipulate – the cerebral processes of cognitive and deliberative activity, has enormous implications: it touches the very threshold of the biological specificity and spiritual difference of the human being. In this sense, I affirmed that “The distinctiveness of human life is an absolute good” (4).

It is important to reiterate: “Artificial intelligence, robotics and other technological innovations must be so employed that they contribute to the service of humanity and to the protection of our common home, rather than to the contrary, as some assessments unfortunately foresee” (*Message to the World Economic Forum in Davos, 12 January 2018*). The inherent dignity of every human being must be firmly placed at the centre of our reflection and action. In this regard, it should be noted that the designation of “artificial intelligence”, although certainly effective, may risk being misleading. The terms conceal the fact that – in spite of the useful fulfilment of servile tasks (this is the original meaning of the term “robot”), functional automatism remain qualitatively distant from the human prerogatives of knowledge and action. And therefore they can become socially dangerous. Moreover, the risk of man being “technologized”, rather than technology humanized, is already real: so-called “intelligent machines” are hastily attributed capacities that are properly human.

We need to understand better what intelligence, conscience, emotionality, affective intentionality and autonomy of moral action mean in this context. Indeed, artificial devices that simulate human capabilities are devoid of human quality. This must be taken into account to guide the regulation of their use, and research itself, towards a constructive and equitable interaction between human beings and the latest versions of machines. Indeed these spread throughout our world and radically transform the scenario of our existence. If we can also make these references bear weight also in action, the extraordinary potential of the new discoveries may radiate their benefits on every person and on the whole of humanity.

The ongoing debate among specialists themselves already shows the serious problems of governability of algorithms that process huge amounts of data. Likewise, the technologies for the manipulation of genetic makeup and brain functions also pose serious ethical questions. In any case, the attempt to explain the whole of human thought, sensitivity, and psychism on the basis of the functional sum of its physical and organic parts, does not account for the emergence of the phenomena of experience and consciousness. The human phenomenon exceeds the result of the calculable assemblage of the individual elements. Also in this context, the axiom according to which the whole is superior to the parts takes on new depth and meaningfulness (see Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 234-237).

Precisely in this area of the complexity of the synergy of *psyche* and *techne*, on the other hand, what we are learning about cerebral activity provides new clues about the way of understanding the conscience (of self and of the world) and the human body itself: it is not possible to disregard the interweaving of multiple relationships for a deeper understanding of the integral human dimension.

Of course, we cannot make metaphysical deductions from the data provided by empirical sciences. We can, however, draw from them indications that instruct anthropological reflection, in theology too, as has always

happened in its history. It would indeed be decidedly contrary to our more genuine tradition to become set on an anachronistic conceptual apparatus, incapable of adequately interacting with the transformations of the concept of nature and of artifice, conditioning and freedom, means and ends, induced by the new culture of acting, typical of the technological era. We are called to place ourselves on the path undertaken decisively by Vatican Council II, which calls for the renewal of theological disciplines and a critical reflection on the relationship between Christian faith and moral action (cf. *Optatam totius*, 16).

Our commitment – also intellectual and specialist – will be a point of honour for our participation in the ethical alliance in favour of human life. A project which, in a context in which increasingly sophisticated technological devices directly involve the human qualities of the body and the psyche, it becomes urgent to share with all men and women engaged in scientific research and care work. It is a difficult task, certainly, given the fast pace of innovation. The example of the teachers of the Christian intelligence, who entered with wisdom and audacity in the processes of their contemporary world, with a view to an understanding of the patrimony of the faith at the level of reason worthy of man, must encourage and sustain us.

I hope you will continue your study and research so that the work of the promotion and defence of life may be increasingly effective and fruitful. May the Virgin Mother assist you and my blessing accompany you. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

Voor niets hebt gij ontvangen, voor niets moet gij geven

“You received without payment; give without payment” (Mt 10:8)

Message of the Holy Father for 27th World Day of the Sick

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“You received without payment; give without payment” (Mt 10:8). These are the words spoken by Jesus when sending forth his apostles to spread the Gospel, so that his Kingdom might grow through acts of gratuitous love.

On the XXVII World Day of the Sick, to be solemnly celebrated on 11 February 2019 in Calcutta, India, the Church – as a Mother to all her children, especially the infirm – reminds us that generous gestures like that of the Good Samaritan are the most credible means of evangelization. Caring for the sick requires professionalism, tenderness, straightforward and simple gestures freely given, like a caress that makes others feel loved.

Life is a gift from God. Saint Paul asks: “What do you have that you did not receive?” (1 Cor 4:7). Precisely because it is a gift, human life cannot be reduced to a personal possession or private property, especially in the light of medical and biotechnological advances that could tempt us to manipulate the “tree of life” (cf. Gen 3:24).

Amid today’s culture of waste and indifference, I would point out that “gift” is the category best suited to challenging today’s individualism and social fragmentation, while at the same time promoting new relationships and means of cooperation between peoples and cultures. Dialogue – the premise of gift – creates possibilities for human growth and development capable of breaking through established ways of exercising power in society. “Gift” means more than simply giving presents: it involves the giving of oneself, and not simply a

transfer of property or objects. “Gift” differs from gift-giving because it entails the free gift of self and the desire to build a relationship. It is the acknowledgement of others, which is the basis of society. “Gift” is a reflection of God’s love, which culminates in the incarnation of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Each of us is poor, needy and destitute. When we are born, we require the care of our parents to survive, and at every stage of life we remain in some way dependent on the help of others. We will always be conscious of our limitations, as “creatures”, before other individuals and situations. A frank acknowledgement of this truth keeps us humble and spurs us to practice solidarity as an essential virtue in life.

Such an acknowledgement leads us to act responsibly to promote a good that is both personal and communal. Only if we see ourselves, not as a world apart, but in a fraternal relationship with others, can we develop a social practice of solidarity aimed at the common good. We should not be afraid to regard ourselves as needy or reliant on others, because individually and by our own efforts we cannot overcome our limitations. So we should not fear, then, to acknowledge those limitations, for God himself, in Jesus, has humbly stooped down to us (cf. *Phil 2:8*) and continues to do so; in our poverty, he comes to our aid and grants us gifts beyond our imagining.

In light of the solemn celebration in India, I would like to recall, with joy and admiration, the figure of Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta – a model of charity who made visible God’s love for the poor and sick. As I noted at her canonization, “Mother Teresa, in all aspects of her life, was a generous dispenser of divine mercy, making herself available for everyone through her welcome and defence of human life, of those unborn and those abandoned and discarded... She bowed down before those who were spent, left to die on the side of the road, seeing in them their God-given dignity; she made her voice heard before the powers of this world, so that they might recognize their guilt for the crime – the crimes! – of poverty they created. For Mother Teresa, mercy was the ‘salt’ which gave flavour to her work; it was the ‘light’ that shone in the darkness of the many who no longer had tears to shed for their poverty and suffering. Her mission to the urban and existential peripheries remains for us today an eloquent witness to God’s closeness to the poorest of the poor” (*Homily*, 4 September 2016).

Saint Mother Teresa helps us understand that our only criterion of action must be selfless love for every human being, without distinction of language, culture, ethnicity or religion. Her example continues to guide us by opening up horizons of joy and hope for all those in need of understanding and tender love, and especially for those who suffer.

Generosity inspires and sustains the work of the many volunteers who are so important in health care and who eloquently embody the spirituality of the Good Samaritan. I express my gratitude and offer my encouragement to all those associations of volunteers committed to the transport and assistance of patients, and all those that organize the donation of blood, tissues and organs. One particular area in which your presence expresses the Church’s care and concern is that of advocacy for the rights of the sick, especially those affected by pathologies requiring special assistance. I would also mention the many efforts made to raise awareness and encourage prevention. Your volunteer work in medical facilities and in homes, which ranges from providing health care to offering spiritual support, is of primary importance. Countless persons who are ill, alone, elderly or frail in mind or body benefit from these services. I urge you to continue to be a sign of the Church’s presence in a secularized world. A volunteer is a good friend with whom one can share personal thoughts and emotions; by their patient listening, volunteers make it possible for the sick to pass from being passive recipients of care to being active participants in a relationship that can restore hope and inspire openness to further treatment. Volunteer work passes on values, behaviours and ways of living born of a deep desire to be generous. It is also a means of making health care more humane.

A spirit of generosity ought especially to inspire Catholic healthcare institutions, whether in the more developed

or the poorer areas of our world, since they carry out their activity in the light of the Gospel. Catholic facilities are called to give an example of self-giving, generosity and solidarity in response to the mentality of profit at any price, of giving for the sake of getting, and of exploitation over concern for people.

I urge everyone, at every level, to promote the culture of generosity and of gift, which is indispensable for overcoming the culture of profit and waste. Catholic healthcare institutions must not fall into the trap of simply running a business; they must be concerned with personal care more than profit. We know that health is relational, dependent on interaction with others, and requiring trust, friendship and solidarity. It is a treasure that can be enjoyed fully only when it is shared. The joy of generous giving is a barometer of the health of a Christian.

I entrust all of you to Mary, *Salus Infirmorum*. May she help us to share the gifts we have received in the spirit of dialogue and mutual acceptance, to live as brothers and sisters attentive to each other's needs, to give from a generous heart, and to learn the joy of selfless service to others. With great affection, I assure you of my closeness in prayer, and to all I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

Vatican City, 25 November 2018

Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

FRANCIS

Humana Communitas - De Menselijke Gemeenschap

Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the president of the Pontifical Academy for Life for the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the academy

Pope Francis

6 January 2019

The Human Community

The human community is God's dream even from before the creation of the world (cf. *Eph* 1:3-14). In it, the eternal Son begotten of God the Father has taken flesh and blood, heart and emotions. Through the mystery of giving life, the great family of humanity is enabled to discover its true meaning. The ability of the family to initiate its members to human fraternity can be considered a hidden treasure that can aid that general rethinking of social policies and human rights whose need is so urgently felt today. All of us ought to grow in the awareness of our common origin in God's love and creative act. Christian faith confesses the begetting of the Son as the ineffable mystery of the eternal unity between "bringing into being" and "benevolent love" within the life of the Triune God. A renewed proclamation of this often overlooked revelation can open a new chapter in the history of human community and culture, which today cries out — "groaning as if in labour pains" (cf. *Rom* 8:22) — for rebirth in the Spirit. God's tenderness and his will to redeem all those who feel lost, abandoned, discarded, or hopelessly condemned, is revealed in the only-begotten Son. The mystery of the eternal Son who became one of us is the definitive witness to this "passion" of God. The mystery of Christ's cross — "for us and for our salvation" — and resurrection — as "the firstborn of many brothers" (*Rom* 8:29) — tells us the extent to which God's passion is directed to the redemption and full flourishing of human beings.

We need to renew a lively awareness of God's passion for humanity and its world. Human beings were made by

God “in his image” – “male and female” (*Gen 1:27*) – as spiritual and sentient, conscious and free. The relationship between man and woman is the primary place where all creation speaks with God and bears witness to his love. This world is the place where we are brought to life; it is the place and time in which we gain a foretaste of the heavenly home that is our destiny (cf. *2 Cor 5:1*) and where we will live fully our communion with God and with all others. The human family is a community with a common origin and a common goal, whose attainment “is hidden, with Christ, in God” (*Col 3:1-4*). In our time, the Church is called once more to propose the humanism of the life that bursts forth from God’s passion for human beings. Our commitment to valuing, supporting and defending the life of every human being is ultimately motivated by God’s unconditional love. Such is the beauty and the allure of the Gospel, which does not reduce love of neighbour to criteria of economic or political convenience, or to “certain doctrinal or moral points based on specific ideological options” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 39).

A passionate and productive history

1. That passion has inspired the work of the Pontifical Academy for Life from the time it was created twenty-five years ago by Saint John Paul II at the prompting of the eminent scientist and Servant of God Jérôme Lejeune. Recognizing the rapid and sweeping changes taking place in biomedicine, Pope John Paul saw the need for a more structured and organic approach and engagement in this area. The Academy was thus able to promote initiatives of research, education and communications aimed at demonstrating “*that science and technology, at the service of the human person and his fundamental rights, contribute to the overall good of man and to the fulfilment of the divine plan of salvation.*” (Saint John Paul II, *Motu Proprio Vitae Mysterium* [11 February 1994], 3). The new statutes of the Academy, issued on 18 October 2016, have given renewed impetus to its activities. The goal of the statutes is to make the Academy’s reflection on human life issues ever more attuned to the contemporary scene. The ever-quickenning pace of technological and scientific innovation, and the phenomenon of globalization have multiplied interactions between cultures, religions and different fields of study, and among the many dimensions of our human family and the earth, our common home. Consequently, as Pope Francis pointed out to the General Assembly of the Academy, “*there is an urgent need for greater study and discussion of the social effects of this technological development, for the sake of articulating an anthropological vision adequate to this epochal challenge. Yet your expert advice cannot be limited solely to offering solutions to the questions raised by specific ethical, social or legal conflict situations. The proposal of forms of conduct consistent with human dignity involves the theory and practice of science and technology in terms of their overall approach to life, its meaning and its value*” (5 October 2017).

Loss of the human dimension and the paradox of “progress”

2. At this moment in time, passion for what is distinctively human, and for the whole human family, encounters serious obstacles. The joys of family relationships and social coexistence appear seriously diminished. Mutual distrust between individuals and peoples is being fed by an inordinate pursuit of self-interest and intense competition that can even turn violent. The gap between concern with one’s own well-being and the prosperity of the larger human family seems to be stretching to the point of complete division. In the Encyclical *Laudato Si*, I pointed to the state of emergency existing in our relationship with the history of the earth and its peoples. This alarming situation is the result of the scarce attention paid to the decisive global issue of the unity of the human family and its future. The erosion of this sensitivity, due to worldly forces of conflict and war, is growing worldwide at a much higher rate than that of the production of goods. We are speaking of a real culture – indeed, it would be better to speak of anti-culture – of indifference to the community: hostile to men and women and in league with the arrogance of wealth.

3. This emergency reveals a paradox. How could it happen that, at the very moment of history when available

economic and technological resources make it possible for us to care suitably for our common home and our human family, in obedience to God's command, those same economic and technological resources are creating our most bitter divisions and our worst nightmares? People sense acutely and painfully, albeit often confusedly, the spiritual dejection, or even nihilism, that subordinates life itself to a world and a society dominated by this paradox. The attempt to dull this sense of deep distress by the blind pursuit of material pleasure produces the ennui of a life lacking in a purpose that can satisfy its spiritual yearning. Let us face the fact: men and women in our time are often demoralized and disoriented, bereft of vision. All of us are, to some extent, closed in on ourselves. The financial system and the ideology of consumerism regulate our needs and manipulate our desires, with little concern for beauty of a life in common and for the sustainability of our common home.

Responsible listening

4. Christians, hearing the cry of suffering peoples, need to react against the negativity that foments division, indifference and hostility. They must do so not simply for their own sake, but for that of everyone. And they need to do so now, before it is too late. The ecclesial family of disciples – and of all others who seek in that family reasons for hope (cf. 1 Pet 3:15) – has been planted on earth as “a sacrament, a sign and instrument a communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race” (*Lumen Gentium*, 1). The restoration of each of God's creatures to the joyful hope of his or her spiritual destiny must become the passionate theme of our preaching. It is urgent that the elderly have greater confidence in their best “dreams” and that the young have “visions” able to sustain them to act boldly in history (cf. J1 3:1). At the level of culture, our goal must be a new and universal ethical perspective attentive to the themes of creation and human life. We cannot continue down the mistaken path followed in recent decades of allowing humanism to be deconstructed and considered simply as another ideology of the will to power. We must resist such ideologies, however strongly urged by the market and by technology, and choose humanism. The distinctiveness of human life is an absolute good, worthy of being ethically defended, precious for the care of creation as a whole. For humanism not to draw inspiration from the loving act of God would be a contradiction and a scandal. The Church must be the first to rediscover the beauty of this inspiration and make her contribution with renewed enthusiasm.

A difficult task for the Church

5. We acknowledge the difficulties involved in restoring this broader humanistic horizon, even within the Church. First, we can ask frankly if our ecclesial communities today realize and testify to the gravity of this contemporary emergency. Are they seriously focused on the passion and joy of proclaiming God's love for the dwelling of his children on the earth? Or are they still overly focused on their own problems and on making timid accommodations to an essentially worldly outlook? We can question seriously whether we have done enough as Christians to offer our specific contribution to a vision of humanity capable of upholding the unity of the family of peoples in today's political and cultural conditions. Or whether we have lost sight of its centrality, putting our ambition for spiritual hegemony over the governance of the secular city, concentrated as it is upon itself and its wealth, ahead of a concern for local communities inspired by the Gospel spirit of hospitality towards the poor and the hopeless.

Building universal fraternity

6. It is time for a new vision aimed at promoting a humanism of fraternity and solidarity between individuals and peoples. We know that the faith and love needed for this covenant draw their power from the mystery of history's redemption in Jesus Christ, a mystery hidden in God even before the creation of the world (cf. Eph 1:7-10; 3:9-11; Col 1:13-14). We know too that human minds and hearts are not completely closed or insensible to the seeds of faith and the works of this universal fraternity sown by the Gospel of the kingdom of God. We must once again bring this fraternity to the fore. For it is one thing to feel forced to live together, but

something entirely different to value the richness and beauty of the seeds of common life needing to be sought out and cultivated. It is one thing to resign oneself to seeing life as a battle against constant foes, but something entirely different to see our human family as a sign of the abundant life of God the Father and the promise of a common destiny redeemed by the infinite love that even now sustains it in being.

7. The ways of the Church all lead to man, as Saint John Paul II solemnly proclaimed in his first encyclical (*Redemptor Hominis*, 1979). Before him, Saint Paul VI, echoing the teaching of the Council, had stated in his own first encyclical that the Church family extends in concentric circles to all men and women, even to those who consider themselves extraneous to the faith and the worship of God (cf. *Ecclesiam Suam*, 1964). The Church shelters and protects the signs of grace and mercy that God offers to every human being who comes into this world.

Recognizing the signs of hope

8. In this mission, we are encouraged by signs that God is at work in our time. These signs need to be acknowledged and not overshadowed by certain negative factors. Along these lines, Saint John Paul II pointed to the many efforts to welcome and defend human life, the growing opposition to war and to the death penalty, and a greater concern for the quality of life and ecology. He also indicated as a sign of hope the development of bioethics as “reflection and dialogue – between believers and nonbelievers, as well as between believers of different religions – on ethical problems, even the most fundamental ones, that affect the life of man” (*Evangelium Vitae*, 27). The scientific community of the Pontifical Academy for Life has demonstrated, over the past twenty-five years, its ability to enter into this dialogue and to offer its own competent and respected contribution. A sign of this is its constant effort to promote and protect human life at every stage of its development, its condemnation of abortion and euthanasia as extremely grave evils that contradict the Spirit of life and plunge us into the anti-culture of death. These efforts must certainly continue, with an eye to emerging issues and challenges that can serve as an opportunity for us to grow in the faith, to understand it more deeply and to communicate it more effectively to the people of our time.

The future of the Academy

9. Before all else, we need to enter into the language and lives of men and women today, making the Gospel message incarnate in their concrete experiences, as the Council demanded. To appreciate the meaning of human life, we should begin with the experience of procreation; this will enable us to avoid reducing life merely to a biological concept or a universal abstraction divorced from relationships and from history. The primordial reality of our “flesh” precedes and makes possible all further consciousness and reflection, preventing us from thinking that we are the source of our own existence. Only after receiving the gift of life, and prior to any intention or decision of our own, can we become aware that we are in fact alive. Life necessarily entails being a child, welcomed and cared for, however inadequately in certain cases. “It thus seems reasonable to see a connection between the care we have received from the beginning of life, that enabled it to grow and develop, and the responsible care we in turn give to others... This precious connection preserves a human and God-given dignity that endures, even despite one’s loss of health, role in society and control over his or her body” (*Letter of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Conference on Palliative Care*, 28 February 2018).

10. We know that the threshold of basic respect for human life is being crossed, and brutally at that, not only by instances of individual conduct but also by the effects of societal choices and structures. Business strategies and the pace of technological growth now, as never before, condition biomedical research, educational priorities, investment decisions and the quality of interpersonal relationships. The possibility of directing economic development and scientific progress towards the covenant between man and woman, towards caring for our common humanity and towards the dignity of the human person, surely arises from a love for creation

that faith helps us to deepen and illuminate. The prospect of a global bioethics, with a broad vision and a concern for the impact of the environment on life and health, offers a significant opportunity for strengthening the new covenant between the Gospel and creation.

11. Our shared humanity demands a global approach to the questions raised by the dialogue between diverse cultures and societies that, in today's world, are in increasingly close contact. May the Academy for Life be a place for courageous dialogue in the service of the common good. I encourage you not to be afraid to advance arguments and formulations that can serve as a basis for intercultural and interreligious, as well as interdisciplinary, exchanges. But also to take part in the discussion of human rights, which are central to the search for universally acceptable criteria for decisions. At stake is the understanding and exercise of a justice that demonstrates the essential role of responsibility in the discussion of human rights and about their close correlation with duties, beginning with solidarity with those in greatest need. Pope Benedict XVI has spoken of the importance of "a renewed reflection on how rights presuppose duties, if they are not to become mere licence. Nowadays we are witnessing a grave inconsistency. On the one hand, appeals are made to alleged rights, arbitrary and non-essential in nature, accompanied by the demand that they be recognized and promoted by public structures, while, on the other hand, elementary and basic rights remain unacknowledged and are violated in much of the world". Among those rights, the Pope emeritus points to "lack of food, drinkable water, basic instruction and elementary health care" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 43).

12. Another area calling for study is that of the new technologies described as "emergent" and "convergent." These include information and communication technologies, biotechnologies, nanotechnologies and robotics. Relying on results obtained from physics, genetics and neuroscience, as well as on increasingly powerful computing capabilities, profound interventions on living organisms are now possible. Even the human body is subject to interventions capable of modifying not only its functions and capabilities, but also its ways of relating on personal and societal levels, with the result that it is increasingly exposed to market forces. There is a pressing need, then, to understand these epochal changes and new frontiers in order to determine how to place them at the service of the human person, while respecting and promoting the intrinsic dignity of all. This task is extremely demanding, given its complexity and the unpredictability of future developments; consequently, it requires even greater discernment than usual. We can define this discernment as "a sincere work of conscience, in its effort to know the possible good on the basis of which to engage responsibly in the correct exercise of practical reason" (Synod of Bishops on Young People, *Final Document* [27 October 2018], 109). This process of research and evaluation thus entails the workings of the moral conscience and, for the believer, is part of his or her relationship with the Lord Jesus, in the desire to put on the mind of Christ in our actions and choices (cf. *Phil* 2:5).

13. The kind of medicine, economy, technology and politics that develop within the modern city of man must also, and above all, remain subject to the judgment rendered by the peripheries of the earth. Indeed, the many extraordinary resources made available to human beings by scientific and technological research could overshadow the joy of fraternal sharing and the beauty of common undertakings, unless they find their meaning in advancing that joy and beauty. We should keep in mind that fraternity remains the unkept promise of modernity. The universal spirit of fraternity that grows by mutual trust - within modern civil society and between peoples and nations - appears much weakened. The strengthening of fraternity, generated in the human family by the worship of God in spirit and truth, is the new frontier of Christianity. Every detail of the life of the body and of the soul, in which the love and redemptive power of the new creation shine forth within us, leads to amazement before the miracle of a resurrection in the very process of occurring (cf. *Col* 3:1-2). May the Lord grant that we multiply these miracles! May the witness of Saint Francis of Assisi, who saw himself as the brother of every creature on earth and in heaven, inspire us by its perennial relevance. May the Lord prepare

you for this new phase of your mission, your lamps filled with the oil of the Spirit to light your path and to guide your steps. How beautiful indeed are the feet of those who bring the joyful proclamation of God's love for the life of all those who dwell upon our land (cf. *Is52: 7; Rom 10:15*).

Doodstraf is tegen de waardigheid van het leven dat heilig is

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the delegation of the International Commission against the Death Penalty

Pope Francis

17 December 2018

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cordially greet you and would like to express my personal appreciation for the work that the International Commission against the Death Penalty carries out in favour of the universal abolition of this cruel form of punishment.

I also thank you for the commitment that you have all generously dedicated to this cause in your respective countries.

I addressed a [letter to your former President on 20 March 2015](#) and I expressed the Church's commitment to the cause of abolition in [my discourse before the Congress of the United States on 24 September 2015](#).

I shared several ideas on this theme in [my 30 May 2014 letter to the International Association of Penal Law and to the Latin-American Association of Penal Law and Criminology](#). I expanded on them in [my discourse on 23 October 2014 to the five great world associations dedicated to the study of penal law, criminology, victimology and prison issues](#). The certainty that every life is sacred and that human dignity must be safeguarded without exception, has led me, from the very beginning of my ministry, to work at different levels for the universal abolition of the death penalty.

All this is now reflected in the recently revised text of n. 2267 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which expresses the progress of the doctrine of the last Pontiffs, as well as a change in the conscience of the Christian people, which rejects a penalty that is deeply injurious to human dignity (cf. [Address to participants in the Meeting promoted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 11 October 2017](#)); a penalty contrary to the Gospel, because it means suppressing a life which is always sacred in the eyes of the Creator and of which God alone is the true judge and guarantor (cf. [Letter to the President of the International Commission against the Death Penalty, 20 March 2015](#)).

In past centuries, when the instruments that we have available today for the protection of society were lacking and the current level of development in human rights had not yet been achieved, recourse to the death penalty was presented on some occasions as a logical and just consequence. Even in the Papal States recourse was made to this inhuman form of punishment, ignoring the primacy of mercy over justice.

It is for this reason that the new version of the *Catechism* implies that we should also assume our responsibility

for the past and that we acknowledge that the acceptance of this type of penalty was due to the mentality of an era that was more legalistic than Christian, which held sacred the value of laws lacking in humanity and mercy. The Church could not maintain a neutral stance in the face of the current demands of reaffirmation of personal dignity.

The revision of the text of the *Catechism* in the article dedicated to the death penalty does not imply any contradiction with past teaching, because the Church has always defended the dignity of human life. However, the harmonious development of doctrine necessarily requires that the *Catechism* reflect the fact that, despite the gravity of the crime committed, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that the death penalty is always inadmissible because it offends the inviolability and dignity of the person.

Likewise, the *Magisterium* of the Church holds that life sentences, which take away the possibility of the moral and existential redemption of the person sentenced and in favour of the community, are a form of death penalty in disguise (cf. *Address to the Delegates of the International Association of Penal Law, 23 October 2014*). God is a Father who always awaits the return of his son, who, aware he has made a mistake, asks forgiveness and begins a new life. Thus, life cannot be taken from anyone, nor the hope of one's redemption and reconciliation with the community.

As has happened in the heart of the Church, it is necessary that a similar commitment be assumed in the concert of nations. The sovereign right of every country to define its own legal system cannot be exercised in contradiction to the duties that pertain to it by virtue of international law, nor can it represent an obstacle to the universal recognition of human dignity.

The United Nations' resolutions on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, which aim to suspend the application of capital punishment in member countries, are a necessary path to undertake, without this meaning that the initiative for its universal abolition be discontinued.

On this occasion, I would like to invite all States that have not abolished the death penalty but do not apply it to continue to comply with this international commitment so that the moratorium may apply not only to the execution of the penalty but also to the imposition of the death sentence. The moratorium must not be experienced by the convicted person as merely an extended delay of his execution.

I ask the States that continue to apply the death penalty to adopt a moratorium with a view to the abolition of this cruel form of punishment. I understand that to achieve abolition, which is the objective of this cause, in certain contexts it may be necessary to submit to a complex political process. The suspension of executions and the reduction of offenses punishable by the death penalty as well as the prohibition of this type of punishment for minors, pregnant women or persons with mental or intellectual disabilities, are the least of the objectives to which the leaders of the entire world must commit themselves.

As I have already done on other occasions, I would like to call attention once again to *extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions*, which unfortunately are a recurrent phenomenon in countries with and without the legal death penalty. These are deliberate murders committed by state agents, which are often passed off as the result of clashes with presumed criminals or are presented as the unintended consequences of the rational, necessary and proportionate use of force to protect citizens.

Love toward oneself remains a fundamental principle of morality. Therefore it is legitimate to insist on respect for one's own right to life, even when doing so requires one to deal a lethal blow to one's aggressor (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2264). Legitimate defense is not a right but a duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others. Preserving the common good requires rendering the unjust aggressor unable to inflict harm. To this end, those holding legitimate authority must repel all aggression, even by armed force, to

the extent necessary to protect their own lives and those of the people entrusted to their charge (cf. *ibid.*, n. 2265). As a result, any use of deadly force which is not strictly necessary to this end can be regarded only as an illegal execution, a crime by the state.

Any defensive action, in order to be legitimate, must be necessary and measured. As St Thomas Aquinas taught, “this act, since one’s intention is to save one’s own life, is not unlawful, seeing that it is natural to everything to keep itself in ‘being’, as far as possible. And yet, though proceeding from a good intention, an act may be rendered unlawful, if it be out of proportion to the end. Wherefore if a man, in self-defense, uses more than necessary violence, it will be unlawful: whereas if he repel force with moderation his defense will be lawful, because according to the jurists, ‘it is lawful to repel force by force, provided one does not exceed the limits of a blameless defense’” (*Summa Theologiae* ii-ii, q. 64, a. 7).

Lastly, I would like to share with you a reflection that is related to your field of work, to your fight for *truly humane justice*. Reflections in the fields of law and the philosophy of law traditionally focus on those who offend or interfere with the rights of others. Inadequate attention has led to the failure to help others when we are able to do so. This reflection can wait no longer.

The traditional principles of justice, characterized by the idea of respect for individual rights and their protection from any interference by others, must be integrated with an ethic of care. In the field of criminal justice, this entails a greater understanding of the causes of conduct, of their social context, of the situation of vulnerability of those who break the law and of the suffering of victims. This form of reasoning, inspired by divine mercy, should lead us to contemplate each concrete case in its specificity, and not permit ourselves to be influenced by abstract numbers of victims and criminals. In this way it is possible to address the ethical and moral issues that derive from conflict and from social injustice, to understand the pain of the actual persons involved and to reach a different kind of solution that does not increase such suffering.

We could express it with this image: we need justice that in addition to being a father is also a mother. Gestures of mutual care, typical of love that is both civil and political, are present in every action that seeks to build a better world (cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, n. 231). Love for society and the commitment to the common good are an excellent form of charity, which regards not only relationships between individuals, but also “macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)” (Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, 29 June 2009, n. 2: aas 101 [2009], 624).

Social love is the key to authentic development: “In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life — political, economic and cultural — must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 582). In this context, social love spurs us to think of great strategies that encourage a culture of care in the various spheres of life in common. The work you do is a part of this effort to which we are called.

Dear friends, I thank you again for this meeting, and I assure you that I will continue to work together with you for the abolition of the death penalty. The Church is committed to this and I would like the Holy See to cooperate with the International Commission against the Death Penalty in building the consensus necessary for the eradication of capital punishment and of every form of cruel punishment.

It is a cause to which all men and women of good will are called, and a duty for we who share the Christian vocation of Baptism. All of us, in any case, need the help of God, who is the wellspring of all reason and justice.

Therefore, I invoke upon each of you, through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, the light and strength of the Holy Spirit. I bless you wholeheartedly and, please, I ask you to pray for me.

Drugsgebruik schadelijk voor mens en maatschappij

Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to participants in the International Conference on “Drugs And Addictions: An Obstacle to Integral Human Development”

Pope Francis

1 december 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to receive you at the conclusion of this International Congress on Drugs and Addictions. I offer all of you a cordial greeting and I thank Cardinal Turkson for his words of introduction to our meeting.

In these days, you have discussed issues and problems linked to the troubling phenomenon of narcotics and other forms of addiction, old and new, which pose an obstacle to integral human development. Communities everywhere are challenged by current social and cultural changes and by pathologies derived from a secularized climate marked by consumerist capitalism, self-sufficiency, a loss of values, an existential void, and a weakening of bonds and relationships. Drug addiction, as has often been pointed out, is an open wound in our society; its victims, once ensnared, exchange their freedom for enslavement to a dependency that we can define as chemical.

Drug use is gravely harmful to health, human life and society. All of us are called to combat the production, processing and distribution of drugs worldwide. It is the duty and responsibility of governments courageously to undertake this fight against those who deal in death. An area of increasing risk is virtual space; on some Internet sites, young people, and not only the young, are lured into a bondage hard to escape, leading to a loss of life's meaning and, at times, even of life itself. Faced with this disturbing scenario, the Church senses the urgent need to create in today's world a form of humanism capable of restoring the human person to the centre of social, economic and cultural life: a humanism grounded in the “Gospel of Mercy”. There the disciples of Jesus find the inspiration for a pastoral action that can prove truly effective in alleviating, caring for and healing the immense suffering associated with different kinds of addiction present in our world.

The Church, together with local, national and international institutions, and various educational agencies, is concretely engaged in every part of the world in combating the spread of addictions, devoting her resources to prevention, care, rehabilitation and reinsertion, in order to restore dignity to those who have lost it. Fighting addictions calls for a combined effort on the part of various local groups and agencies in enacting social programmes promoting health care, family support and especially education. In this regard, I readily support the desire expressed by this Conference for a better coordination of policies aimed at halting the growth of drug abuse and addictions through the creation of networks of solidarity and closeness to those suffering from these pathologies.

Dear brothers and sisters, I express my deep gratitude for your contribution to these days of study and reflection. I encourage all of you, in your various sectors, to pursue your commitment to increasing awareness and offering support to those who have emerged from the tunnel of drug addiction and various addictions. They need our help and accompaniment, so that they in turn will be able to ease the pain of so many our brothers and sisters in difficulty.

I entrust your efforts and your worthy initiatives to the intercession of Our Lady, Health of the Infirm. I ask you, please, to remember me in your prayers. To all of you, and to your families and communities, I cordially impart

my blessing. Thank you.

Integrale, menselijke ecologie - Holistisch mensbeeld

Pope Francis
June 24th, 2018

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to address my greeting to you all, starting from the President, Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, whom I thank for introducing me to this General Assembly, in which the theme of human life will be situated in the broad context of the globalized world in which we live today. And also, I wish to greet to Cardinal Sgreccia, ninety years old but enthusiastic and young, in his commitment in favor of life. Thank you, Your Eminence, for what you have done in this field and for what you are doing. Thank you.

The wisdom that should inspire our attitude towards “human ecology” is encouraged to consider the ethical and spiritual quality of life in all its phases. There exists a conceived human life, a life in gestation, a life that has come to light, a child’s life, a teenage life, an adult life, an aged and consumed life – and there exists an eternal life. There is a life that is family and community, a life that is invocation and hope. Just as there is fragile and sick human life, wounded, offended, dejected, marginalized, discarded life. It is always human life. It is the life of human persons, who inhabit the earth created by God and share the common home with all living creatures. Certainly, in the biology laboratories, life is studied with the tools that allow exploring its physical, chemical and mechanical aspects. A very important and indispensable study, but one which must be integrated with a broader and deeper perspective, which calls for attention to the truly human life, which erupts on the world scene with the prodigy of the word and of thought, affections and spirit. What recognition does the human wisdom of life receive today from the natural sciences? And what political culture inspires the promotion and protection of real human life? The “beautiful” work of life is the generation of a new person, the education of his spiritual and creative qualities, the initiation to the love of family and community, the care of his vulnerabilities and his wounds; as well as initiation into the life of children of God, in Jesus Christ.

When we deliver children to deprivation, the poor to hunger, the persecuted to war, the old to abandonment, do not we ourselves, instead, do the “dirty” work of death? Where does the dirty work of death come from? It comes from sin. Evil tries to persuade us that death is the end of everything, that we have come to the world by chance and we are destined to end up in nothingness. Excluding the other from our horizon, life folds back on itself and becomes a consumer good. Narcissus, the character of ancient mythology, who loves himself and ignores the good of others, is naive and does not even realize it. Meanwhile, however, it spreads a very contagious spiritual virus, which condemns us to become mirror-men and mirror-women, who see only themselves and nothing else. It is like becoming blind to life and its dynamic, as a gift received from others and asking to be placed responsibly in circulation for others.

The global vision of bioethics, which you are preparing to relaunch in the field of social ethics and of planetary humanism, strengthened by Christian inspiration, will engage with more seriousness and rigor to defuse this complicity with the dirty work of death, supported by sin. In this way, I may restore to us the reasons and practices of the covenant with the grace destined by God for the life of each one of us. This bioethics will not

take illness and death as a starting point in deciding the meaning of life or defining the value of the person. It will rather start from the profound conviction of the irrevocable dignity of the human person, as God loves him, the dignity of every person, in every phase and condition of his existence, in the search for the forms of love and care that must be addressed to his vulnerability and fragility.

So, in the first place, this global bioethics will be a specific way of developing the perspective of integral ecology that is proper to the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, in which I have insisted on these strong points: “the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the critique of new paradigms and the forms of power derived from technology, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the value proper to each creature, the human meaning of ecology, the need for forthright and honest debate, the serious responsibility of international and local policy, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle” (no. 16).

Secondly, in a holistic view of the person, it is necessary to articulate with ever greater clarity all the concrete connections and differences in which the universal human condition dwells and which involve us, starting from our body. Indeed “our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our body as a gift from God is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy a absolute power over creation. Learning to accept your body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different” (*Laudato si'*, 155).

It is, therefore, necessary to proceed with a careful discernment of the complex fundamental differences of human life: of man and woman, of fatherhood and motherhood, of filiation and fraternity, of sociality and also of all the different ages of life. And also, all the difficult conditions and all the delicate or dangerous passages that require special ethical wisdom and courageous moral resistance: sexuality and generation, sickness and old age, insufficiency and disability, deprivation and exclusion, violence and war. “Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection” (Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*, 101).

In the texts and teachings of Christian and ecclesiastical formation, these themes of the ethics of human life will have to find an appropriate place in the context of a global anthropology, and not be confined to the limit-questions of morality and law. I hope that a conversion to today’s centrality of the integral human ecology, or rather a harmonious and complete comprehension of the human condition, will I hope find valid support and propositional tone in your intellectual, civil and religious effort.

Global bioethics thus urges us towards the wisdom of a profound and objective discernment of the value of personal and community life, which must be preserved and promoted even in the most difficult conditions. We must also strongly state that, without the adequate support of a responsible human closeness, no purely juridical regulation and no technical aid can, on their own, guarantee conditions and relational contexts that correspond to the dignity of the person. The prospect of a globalization that, left only to its spontaneous dynamics, tends to increase and deepen inequalities, urges an ethical response in favor of justice. The attention to the social, economic, cultural and environmental factors that determine health is part of this commitment, and becomes a concrete way to realize “the right of every people to its own identity, independence and

security, as well as the right to share, on a basis of equality and solidarity, in the goods intended for all" (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo rei socialis, 21).

Finally, the culture of life must take a more serious look at the "serious question" of its ultimate destination. This means highlighting with greater clarity what directs the existence of man towards a horizon that surpasses him: every person is gratuitously called "to commune with God and share in His happiness. [The Church] further teaches that a hope related to the end of time does not diminish the importance of intervening duties but rather undergirds the acquittal of them with fresh incentives" (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 21). We need to reflect more deeply on the ultimate destination of life, capable of restoring dignity and meaning to the mystery of its deepest and most sacred affections. The life of man, enchantingly beautiful and fragile to die, refers beyond itself: we are infinitely more than what we can do for ourselves. But human life is also incredibly tenacious, certainly for a mysterious grace that comes from above, in the audacity of its invocation of a justice and a definitive victory of love. And it is even capable - hoping against all hope - to sacrifice itself for it, unto the end. Recognizing and appreciating this fidelity and dedication to life arouses gratitude and responsibility in us, and encourages us to generously offer our knowledge and our experience to the whole human community. Christian wisdom must reopen with passion and boldness the thought of the destination of the human race to the life of God, which has promised to open to the love of life, beyond death, the infinite horizon of loving bodies of light, no longer with tears. And to amaze them eternally with the ever new enchantment of all things, "visible and invisible", concealed in the womb of the Creator.

Thank you.

Kinderen ontvangen zoals ze van God komen

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the delegation of the Forum of Family Associations



Pope Francis
16 June 2018

Extemporaneous speech of the holy father

Good morning everyone,

I thought it would be a welcome address.... But hearing Gianluigi speak, I saw that there was fire in [his words]; there was mysticism. It is a great thing. For some time now, I have not heard the family being spoken about with so much passion. And it takes courage to do so nowadays! It takes courage. And thank you for this! I had prepared a speech but after the warmth with which Gianluigi spoke, I find mine cold. I will consign it, so that he may distribute it later, and then I will publish it.

While he was speaking, many things came to my mind and heart, many things regarding the family, things that are not said, that are not normally said, or if they are said, they are said in a very polite way, as if it were a schooling on the family.... He spoke from the heart and all of you wish to speak like this. I will take something he

said, and I too would like to speak from the heart and to ad-lib what came to my heart while he was speaking.

He used the expression : “to look into each other’s eyes”. The man and the woman, the husband and the bride, looked into each other’s eyes. I will tell you an anecdote. During audiences, I like to greet the couples who are celebrating their 50th, their 25th anniversary ..., also when they come to Mass at Santa Marta. There was once a couple who was celebrating their 60th anniversary. But they were young because they married when they were 18 years old, as was done in those days. In those days, people married young. Nowadays, why would a son get married? Poor mothers! But the solution is clear: stop ironing the shirts and he will marry soon, Right? I find this couple before me and they were looking at me.... I said: “Sixty years! But do you still have the same love?”. And they were looking at me; they looked at each other and then they looked at me again, and I saw that their eyes were moist. And they both said to me: “We are in love”. I’ll never forget this. “After 60 years, we are in love”. The warmth of the family that grows, love that is not the love of a romance novel. It is true love. Being in love your whole life with all the problems there are.... But being in love.

Then there is another question I would like to ask the couples who have been married for 50 or 60 years: “which one of you has had more patience?”. It’s predictable; the answer is: “both of us”. This is beautiful! This reveals a life together, a life lived as a couple. That patience of abiding one another.

And then to the young spouses who tell me: “we have been married for one month, two months...” my question is: “Have you argued?” They usually say “yes” — “Ah good, this is important. But it is also important not to end the day without making up”. Please teach this: it is normal to argue because we are free people and there are problems and we must sort them out; but not to end the day without making up. Why? Because the “cold war” of the following day is very dangerous.

With these three anecdotes I wanted to introduce what I would like to say to you.

Family life is a sacrifice but a beautiful sacrifice. Love is like making pasta: every day. Love in marriage is a challenge for the man and for the woman. What is the man’s greatest challenge? To help his wife become ‘more woman’. More woman. So she may grow as a woman. And what is the woman’s challenge? To help her husband become ‘more man’. And thus, they both move forward. They move forward.

Another thing that greatly helps in married life is patience: knowing how to wait. Waiting. There are crises in life — very serious crises, terrible crises — where there may also be times of infidelity. When the problem cannot be solved at that time, there is need for that loving patience which waits, which waits. Many women — because this pertains to women more than to men, but even men do this at times — many women have waited in silence, looking the other way, waiting for the husband to return to fidelity. And this is holiness; the holiness that forgives all, because it loves. Patience. A lot of patience, each for the other. If one is nervous and shouts, do not reply with another shout.... Keep quiet; let the storm blow over and then, at the right time, talk about it.

There are three expressions that are magical words, but words that are important in marriage. “Excuse me”: do not be invasive with the other; “may I?”: that respect for each other. The second expression is “I am sorry”. Apologizing is something that is very important! We all make mistakes in life, all of us. “I am sorry; I did this ...”; “I’m sorry, I forgot...”. And this helps us to move on. The ability to apologize helps families move forward. It is true that asking forgiveness involves some shame, but it is a holy shame! “Forgive me, I forgot...”. It is something that really helps us move forward. And the third expression is “thank you”: having the greatness of heart to always say thank you.

You then spoke about Amoris Laetitia, and you said “Here Amoris Laetitia is made flesh”. I am happy to hear this: read, read the fourth chapter. The fourth chapter is the very heart of Amoris Laetitia. It is precisely the family’s everyday spirituality. Some have reduced Amoris Laetitia to a sterile record of “this can be done, this

cannot". They have not understood anything. Then, in *Amoris Laetitia* the problems are not hidden, problems of marriage preparation. You help engaged couples to prepare: things must be stated clearly, is that not true? Clearly. A woman in Buenos Aires once said to me: "You priests are clever..." — "Why?" — "you study eight years to become priests; you prepare for eight years. And then if after a few years it does not work, you write a nice letter to Rome; and Rome gives you permission and you can marry. Instead to us, to whom they give a lifelong Sacrament, you indulge us with three or four meetings as preparation. This is not right". And that woman was right. Preparing for marriage: yes it requires meetings, explanatory materials, but it takes men and women, friends, who speak to them and help them to grow, to mature on their journey. And we can say that today there is a need of a catechumenate for marriage as there is a catechumenate for Baptism. To prepare, to help one prepare for marriage.

Then, another problem we see in *Amoris Laetitia* is raising children. It is not easy to raise children. Today children are quicker than we are! In the virtual world, they know more about it than we do. But it is important to educate them about community, educate them about family life. Teach them about making sacrifices for one another. It is not easy to raise children. The difficulties are major. And you, who love the family, can help other families so much in this regard. The family is an adventure, a beautiful adventure! And today — I say this with heartache — we see that so often one thinks about starting a family and getting married as if it were a lottery: "Let's go. If it works, it works. If it doesn't work, we cancel the matter and start over". This superficiality about the greatest gift God has given to humanity: the family. Because, after the account of the creation of man, God shows that he created man and woman in his image and likeness. And when Jesus himself talks about marriage, he says: "A man shall leave his father and mother and with his wife shall become one flesh". Because they are the image and likeness of God. You are the icon of God: the family is the icon of God. Man and woman: are the very image of God. He said so, I am not saying it. And this is great; it is sacred.

Then today — it hurts to say it — we speak of 'diversified' families: different types of family. Yes, it is true that the word 'family' is an analogical term, because it refers to the 'family' of stars, to 'families' of trees, to 'families' of animals ... it is an analogical term. But the human family as the image of God, man and woman, is one alone. It is one alone. It may be that a man and a woman are not believers: but if they love each other and become joined in marriage, they are the image and likeness of God, even though they do not believe. It is a mystery: Saint Paul calls it the "great mystery", the "great sacrament" (cf. Eph 5:32). A true mystery. I like everything you said and the passion with which you said it. And this is how one should speak about the family, with passion.

Once, I think a year ago, I called one of my relatives who was getting married. Forty years old. At the end I said: "Tell me a little: what church are you getting married in?" — "We don't know yet because we are looking for a church that goes well with the dress that — and he said his fiancée's name — will wear ... and then we have the issue of the restaurant...". But imagine ... that was the main concern. When what is secondary takes the place of what is important. The important thing is to love each other, to receive the Sacrament, to go forth...; and then do all the celebrating you want, all of it.

Once I met a couple married for 10 years, without children. Talking about this is very delicate, because many times they want children but they do not come, isn't it true? I did not know how to broach the subject. Then I learned that they did not want children. But these people had three dogs, two cats.... It is nice to have a dog, a cat, it's nice.... Or when at times you hear them tell you: "Yes, yes, but we do not have children yet because we have to buy a house in the country, then travel...". Children are the greatest gift. Children who are welcomed as they come, as God sends them, as God allows — even if at times they are sick. I have heard that it is in fashion — or at least customary — in the first months of pregnancy to have certain exams, to see whether the baby is not well, or has some problems.... The first proposal in that case is: "Shall we do away with it?". The murder of

children. And to have a nice life, they do away with an innocent.

When I was a boy, the teacher was teaching us history and told us what the Spartans did when a baby was born with deformities: they carried it up the mountain and cast it down, to maintain “the purity of the race”. And we were stunned: “But how, how could they do this, the poor babies!”. It was an atrocity. Today we do the same thing. Have you ever wondered why you do not see many dwarfs on the streets? Because the protocol of many doctors — many, not all — is to ask the question: “Will it have problems?”. It pains me to say this. In the last century the entire world was scandalized over what the Nazis were doing to maintain the purity of the race. Today we do the same thing, but with white gloves.

Family, love, patience, joy, and frittering away time with the family. You spoke about something bad: that there is no opportunity to “fritter the time away”, because to earn a living today one has to have two jobs, because the family is not taken into consideration. You also spoke about the young people who cannot get married because there is no work. The family is being threatened by unemployment.

And I would like to end with some advice that a teacher once gave me — he gave it to us at school —, a philosophy teacher, the dean. I was in the seminary, in the philosophy phase. There was the topic of human maturity; we study that in philosophy. And he asked: “What is the everyday criterion to know if a man, if a priest is mature?”. We gave some answers.... And he said: “No, a more simple one: an adult person, a priest, is mature if he is able to play with children”. This is the test. And I say to you: fritter away time with your children; fritter away time with your children; play with your children. Do not tell them: “Don’t be a nuisance!”. I once heard a young father of a family say: “Father, when I go to work they are sleeping. When I come home they are sleeping”. It is the cross of this slavery of an unjust way of working that today’s society brings us.

I said that this was the last thing. No, the penultimate. The last thing is what I will say now, because I do not want to forget it. I spoke about children as the treasure of promise. But there is another treasure in the family: it is grandparents. Please, take care of grandparents! Have the grandparents talk; have the children speak with their grandparents. Embrace grandparents; do not distance them from the family because they are annoying, because they repeat the same things. Love grandparents, and have them talk to the children. Thank you all. Thank you for your passion; thank you for the love that you have for the family. Thanks for everything! And go onward with courage. Thank you! Now before giving you the blessing, let us pray to Our Lady: “Hail Mary...”.

Prepared speech of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you and I offer a warm greeting to you and to your President, whom I thank for his words. This encounter allows me to meet your organization, the Forum of Families, up close. Founded 25 years ago, it embraces overall more than 500 associations, and is truly a network which highlights the beauty of communion and the power of sharing. It is a special “family of families”, of an associative type, through which you experience the joy of co-existence and at the same time you commit yourselves to assume the burden of the common good, to be built each day both in the environment of the Forum, and that of the broader society.

The family, which you foster in various ways, is at the centre of God’s plan, as the entire history of salvation shows. Through a mysterious divine plan, the complementarity and the love between man and woman make them co-operators of the Creator, who entrusts them with the task of bringing new creatures to life, taking to heart their growth and education. Jesus’ love for children, his filial relationship with the heavenly Father, his defence of the marriage bond, which he declares sacred and indissoluble, fully reveals the family’s place in God’s plan: being the cradle of life and the first place of welcome and of love, it plays an essential role in

mankind's vocation and is like a window which opens wide onto the very mystery of God, who is Love in the unity and in the trinity of the Persons.

Our world, often tempted and guided by individualistic and selfish reasoning, often loses the meaning and the beauty of stable bonds, of commitment to people, of unconditional care, of assuming responsibility for the good of the other, of gratuitousness and of self-giving. For this reason one has difficulty in comprehending the value of the family, and one ends up understanding it according to the same reasoning that privileges individual interests instead of relationships and the common good. And this is despite the fact that in the recent years of economic crisis the family has represented the most powerful shock absorber, capable of redistributing resources according to the needs of each person.

On the contrary, full recognition and appropriate support of the family should be the top priority of civil institutions, called to promote the formation of sound, serene families who attend to their children's education and who compensate for situations of weakness. Indeed, those who learn to experience authentic relationships in the sphere of the family will be better able to exercise them in the broadest contexts, from school to the world of work; and those who practice it in a spirit of respect and service at home, will be better able to practice it also in society and in the world.

Now, the objective of stronger support for families and a more appropriate appreciation of them, should be reached through a tireless effort toward raising awareness and dialogue. This is the task that the Forum has carried out for 25 years, in which you have accomplished a great deal of initiatives, establishing a relationship of trust and cooperation with the institutions. I exhort you to continue this work, by promoting projects which demonstrate the beauty of the family, and which are attractive because they are convincing, since their importance and value are evident.

Thus I encourage you to witness to the joy of love, which I explained in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, where I harvested the fruits of the providential journey of the Synod on the Family, which was carried out by the whole Church. Indeed, there is no better subject than joy which, radiating from the inside, proves the value of ideas and experience and points to the treasure that we have discovered and wish to share.

Therefore, impelled by this force, you will be ever more ready to take the initiative. The Apostle Paul reminds Timothy that "God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim 1:7). May this be the spirit which animates you too, teaching you respect but also courage, to accept the challenge and seek out new paths, without fear. It is the style I have asked of the entire Church since my first and programmatic Apostolic Exhortation, when I used the term "primerear" ["take the initiative"], which suggests the capacity to go with courage to encounter others, not to close oneself in one's comfort zone but to look for points of convergence with people, to build bridges by going to discover goodness wherever it may be found (cf. *Evangilii Gaudium*, n. 24). God is the first to primerear with us: if we have truly met him, we cannot hide, but rather we must go out and act, using our talents.

Thank you for making the effort to do so! Thank you for your generous dedication, in line with your Statute, for the "active and responsible participation of families in the cultural, social and political life" (2.1.b), and for the "promotion of appropriate family policies that protect and support the functions of the family and its rights" (2.1.c). May you continue, moreover, in the school environment, to favour greater parental involvement and to encourage many families to a style of participation. Never tire of supporting the growth of the birth rate in Italy, by raising awareness in institutions and in public opinion of the importance of giving life to policies and structures more open to the gift of children. It is a real paradox that the birth of children, which constitutes the greatest investment for a country and the first condition of its future prosperity, often is a cause of poverty for families, due to the inadequate support they receive or to the inefficiency of many services.

These and other problems must be addressed with determination and charity, demonstrating that the sensitivity that you carry forth regarding the family is not to be labelled as confessional in order to accuse it — wrongly — of partiality. It is instead based on the dignity of the human person and therefore must be recognized and shared by all, as when, also in institutional contexts, the “Family Factor” is referred to as that element of political and operative evaluation, the multiplier of human, economic and social richness.

I thank you again for this meeting. I exhort you to continue in your commitment in service to the family and life, and I invoke upon all members of the Forum God’s blessing and the protection of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Please, do not forget to pray for me.