



Doodstraf is tegen de waardigheid van het leven dat heilig is

Paus Franciscus spreekt zich opnieuw uit tegen de doodstraf. Hij vindt deze in strijd met het respect dat we voor het menselijke leven moeten hebben.

Drugsgebruik schadelijk voor mens en maatschappij

Paus Franciscus stelt dat drugsgebruik schadelijk is voor de menselijke persoon en de maatschappij in een toespraak tot deelnemers aan een internationale conferentie.

Integrale, menselijke ecologie - Holistisch mensbeeld

Toespraak van Paus Franciscus tot de Pauselijke Academie voor het Leven over een integrale, holistische, menselijke ecologie.

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. *Evangelii 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.

Pas Evangelie in gezondheidszorg toe

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the World Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (FIAMC)



Pope Francis
28 May 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to welcome you and I greet all of you, beginning with your President, Dr. John Lee, whom I thank for his kind words.

As Catholic physicians, you are committed to an ongoing spiritual, moral and bioethical formation that enables you to bring the values and principles of the Gospel to your practice of medicine, from the doctor-patient relationship to missionary activity aimed at improving health conditions among peoples living on the peripheries of our world. Your work is a particular form of human solidarity and Christian witness, and is enriched by the spirit of faith. It is important that your Associations be concerned to make medical students and young physicians aware of these principles by involving them in your various activities.

Your Catholic identity poses no obstacle to your cooperation with those who, whether from a different religious perspective or with no specific creed, acknowledge the dignity and grandeur of the human person as the criterion of their activity. The Church is committed to life, and to ensuring that nothing opposed to life be imposed on any person, however frail or defenceless, underdeveloped or challenged, he or she may be. To be a Catholic physician thus means being a health care professional who finds in personal faith and communion with the Church a source of inspiration to grow constantly in Christian living and professional expertise, in tireless devotion to others and in the desire to learn and understand the laws of nature in order to serve life ever more effectively (cf. Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae vitae*, 24).

Everyone is aware of the fidelity and consistency with which the Associations of your Federation have, down the years, maintained their Catholic identity and followed the Church’s teaching and the directives of her



Magisterium in the medical-moral field. This criterion of recognition and action has fostered your cooperation in the Church's mission of promoting and defending human life from conception to its natural end, out of concern for the quality of life, respect for the weakest, the humanization of medicine and its full socialization.

This fidelity frequently entails hardships and difficulties that, in certain situations, call for great courage. I encourage you to persevere with serenity and conviction along this path, receiving the magisterial interventions in the areas of medicine with an awareness of their moral implications. For the fields of medicine and health care have not been immune to the advance of the technocratic cultural paradigm, the worship of unlimited human power and a practical relativism, wherein everything is considered irrelevant unless necessary for one's personal interests (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 122).

In this context, you are called upon to affirm the centrality of the patient as a person, together with his or her dignity and inalienable rights, especially the right to life. The tendency to view the sick as machines to be repaired, without respect for moral principles, and to exploit the weakest by discarding what does not respond to the ideology of efficiency and profit, has to be resisted. The defence of the personal dimension of the patient is essential for the humanization of medicine, also in terms of "human ecology". Make every effort, in your respective countries and on the international level, to speak out in specialized environments but also in debates about legislation dealing with sensitive ethical problems such as the termination of pregnancy, end-of-life issues and genetic medicine. Take care also to defend the freedom of conscience of physicians and of healthcare workers. It is not acceptable that your role should be reduced to that of a simple executor of the will of the patient or the requirements of the health-care system in which you work.

In your forthcoming Congress, to be held a few days from now in Zagreb, you will reflect upon the theme: "Sanctity of Life and the Medical Profession, from *Humanae vitae* to *Laudato Si'*". This too is evidence of your participation in the Church's life and mission. This participation – as the Second Vatican Council made clear – "is so necessary within the Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors will frequently be unable to obtain its full effect" (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 10). Be ever more aware that today it is necessary and urgent that the activity of the Catholic physician be unmistakably evident on the level of both personal and group witness.

In this regard, it is desirable that the activities of Associations of Catholic doctors be interdisciplinary and involve other ecclesial realities. In particular, consider how to coordinate your efforts with those of priests, men and women religious, and all engaged in pastoral care of the sick. Join them in being close to people who suffer; they are in great need of your help. Be ministers not only of care but also of fraternal charity, helping those with whom you come in contact by your knowledge, your great humanity and your evangelical compassion.

Dear brothers and sisters, so many people look to you and your work. Your words, your actions, your advice and your decisions have an echo far beyond the strictly professional sector and become, if consistent, a witness of lived faith. Your profession thus rises to the dignity of a true apostolate. I encourage you to carry forward the efforts of your Associations with joy and generosity, in cooperation with all those individuals and institutions that share a love for life and endeavour to serve it in its dignity and sanctity. May the Virgin Mary, *Salus Infirmorum*, sustain your efforts, which I accompany with my blessing. And please, pray also for me.

Thank you.



Menselijk leven heeft onaantastbare waardigheid

**Address of the Holy Father to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith**



Pope Francis
26 January 2018

Cardinals, Venerable Brothers in the episcopate and in the priesthood, dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to meet you at the end of the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. I thank the Prefect for his introduction, with which he has summarized the most important lines of your work over the last two years.

I express my appreciation for your delicate service, which responds to your Dicastery's particular bond with the ministry of the Successor of Peter, who is called to confirm brothers in faith and the Church in unity.

I thank you for your daily commitment in support of the teaching of the bishops, in the protection of the righteous faith and the holiness of the Sacraments, and in all the various issues that today require important pastoral discernment, such as the examination of cases relating to graviora delicta and applications for the dissolution of the marriage bond in favorem fidei.

All these tasks are even more current when faced with the horizon, ever more fluid and changeable, which characterizes the self-understanding of the man of today and which has a significant influence on his existential and ethical choices. The man of today no longer knows who he is and, therefore, struggles to recognize how to act well.

In this sense, your Congregation's task in recalling the transcendent vocation of man and the indivisible connection of his reason to truth and good, introduced by faith in Jesus Christ, appears decisive. There is nothing like the opening of reason to the light that comes from God to help man know himself and God's plan for the world.

I, therefore, appreciate the study you have undertaken on some aspects of Christian salvation, in order to reaffirm the meaning of redemption, in reference to the current neo-Pelagian and neo-gnostic tendencies. These tendencies are expressions of an individualism that relies on its own forces to save itself. We, on the other hand, believe that salvation consists in communion with the risen Christ Who, thanks to the gift of His Spirit, has introduced us into a new order of relations with the Father and among men. Thus we can unite ourselves to the Father as sons in the Son and become a sole body in He who is "the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8: 29).

How can I fail to mention, then, the studies you are performing in relation to the ethical implications of an adequate anthropology also in the economic-financial field? Only a vision of man as a person, that is, as an essentially relational subject and connoted by a specific and broad rationality, is able to act in conformity with the objective order of morality. In this regard, the Magisterium of the Church has always clearly stated that "economic activity is to be carried on according to its own methods and laws within the limits of the moral order" (Vatican Ecumenical Council II), Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 64).



During this Plenary Session, you have also studied some sensitive issues regarding the accompaniment of terminally ill patients. In this regard, the process of secularization, by rendering absolute the concepts of self-determination and autonomy, has led to the growth of the demand for euthanasia in many countries as an ideological affirmation of man's will to power over life. This has also led to considering the voluntary interruption of human existence as a choice of "civilization". It is clear that where life is valid not for its dignity, but for its efficiency and productivity, all this becomes possible. In this scenario, it must be reiterated that human life, from conception to its natural end, has a dignity that makes it intangible.

Pain, suffering, the meaning of life and death are realities that contemporary mentality struggles to face with a look full of hope. And yet, without a trustworthy hope to help him confront pain and death, man cannot live well and maintain a confident perspective before his future. This is one of the services that the Church is called to make to contemporary man.

In this sense, your mission assumes an eminently pastoral face. Authentic pastors are those who do not abandon man to himself, nor leave him in the grip of his disorientation and his errors, but with truth and mercy bring him back to find his true face in goodness. Therefore every action aimed at taking the man by the hand, when he has lost the sense of his dignity and his destiny, to lead him trustfully to rediscover the loving paternity of God, his good destiny and the ways to build a more humane world, is authentically pastoral. This is the great task that awaits your Congregation and every other pastoral institution of the Church.

Certain of your dedication to this important service, which has always been the high road of the Church, I reiterate my gratitude and express to you all my closeness, imparting my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.

Paus hekelt nieuwe mensenrechten

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional exchange of new year greetings



Heilige Stoel, 8 januari 2018

Pope Francis
8 January 2018

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our meeting today is a welcome tradition that allows me, in the enduring joy of the Christmas season, to offer you my personal best wishes for the New Year just begun, and to express my closeness and affection to the peoples you represent. I thank the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Armino Fernandes do Espírito Santo Vieira, Ambassador of Angola, for his respectful greeting on behalf of the entire Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See. I offer a particular welcome to the non-resident Ambassadors, whose numbers have increased following the establishment last May of diplomatic relations with the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. I likewise greet the growing number of Ambassadors resident in Rome, which now includes the Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa. I would like in a special way to remember the late Ambassador of



Colombia, Guillermo León Escobar-Herrán, who passed away just a few days before Christmas. I thank all of you for your continuing helpful contacts with the Secretariat of State and the other Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, which testify to the interest of the international community in the Holy See's mission and the work of the Catholic Church in your respective countries. This is also the context for the Holy See's pactional activities, which last year saw the signing, in February, of the Framework Agreement with the Republic of the Congo, and, in August, of the Agreement between the Secretariat of State and the Government of the Russian Federation enabling the holders of diplomatic passports to travel without a visa.

In its relations with civil authorities, the Holy See seeks only to promote the spiritual and material well-being of the human person and to pursue the common good. The Apostolic Journeys that I made during the course of the past year to Egypt, Portugal, Colombia, Myanmar and Bangladesh were expressions of this concern. I travelled as a pilgrim to Portugal on the centenary of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima, to celebrate the canonization of the shepherd children Jacinta and Francisco Marto. There I witnessed the enthusiastic and joyful faith that the Virgin Mary roused in the many pilgrims assembled for the occasion. In Egypt, Myanmar and Bangladesh too, I was able to meet the local Christian communities that, though small in number, are appreciated for their contribution to development and fraternal coexistence in those countries. Naturally, I also had meetings with representatives of other religions, as a sign that our differences are not an obstacle to dialogue, but rather a vital source of encouragement in our common desire to know the truth and to practise justice. Finally, in Colombia I wished to bless the efforts and the courage of that beloved people, marked by a lively desire for peace after more than half a century of internal conflict.

Dear Ambassadors,

This year marks the centenary of the end of the First World War, a conflict that reconfigured the face of Europe and the entire world with the emergence of new states in place of ancient empires. From the ashes of the Great War, we can learn two lessons that, sad to say, humanity did not immediately grasp, leading within the space of twenty years to a new and even more devastating conflict. The first lesson is that victory never means humiliating a defeated foe. Peace is not built by vaunting the power of the victor over the vanquished. Future acts of aggression are not deterred by the law of fear, but rather by the power of calm reason that encourages dialogue and mutual understanding as a means of resolving differences.[1] This leads to a second lesson: peace is consolidated when nations can discuss matters on equal terms. This was grasped a hundred years ago – on this very date – by the then President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, who proposed the establishment of a general league of nations with the aim of promoting for all states, great and small alike, mutual guarantees of independence and territorial integrity. This laid the theoretical basis for that multilateral diplomacy, which has gradually acquired over time an increased role and influence in the international community as a whole.

Relations between nations, like all human relationships, “must likewise be harmonized in accordance with the dictates of truth, justice, willing cooperation, and freedom”.[2] This entails “the principle that all states are by nature equal in dignity”,[3] as well as the acknowledgment of one another's rights and the fulfilment of their respective duties.[4] The basic premise of this approach is the recognition of the dignity of the human person, since disregard and contempt for that dignity resulted in barbarous acts that have outraged the conscience of mankind.[5] Indeed, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms, “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”.[6]

I would like to devote our meeting today to this important document, seventy years after its adoption on 10 December 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. For the Holy See, to speak of human rights means above all to restate the centrality of the human person, willed and created by God in his image and



likeness. The Lord Jesus himself, by healing the leper, restoring sight to the blind man, speaking with the publican, saving the life of the woman caught in adultery and demanding that the injured wayfarer be cared for, makes us understand that every human being, independent of his or her physical, spiritual or social condition, is worthy of respect and consideration. From a Christian perspective, there is a significant relation between the Gospel message and the recognition of human rights in the spirit of those who drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Those rights are premised on the nature objectively shared by the human race. They were proclaimed in order to remove the barriers that divide the human family and to favour what the Church's social doctrine calls integral human development, since it entails fostering "the development of each man and of the whole man... and humanity as a whole".[7] A reductive vision of the human person, on the other hand, opens the way to the growth of injustice, social inequality and corruption.

It should be noted, however, that over the years, particularly in the wake of the social upheaval of the 1960's, the interpretation of some rights has progressively changed, with the inclusion of a number of "new rights" that not infrequently conflict with one another. This has not always helped the promotion of friendly relations between nations,[8] since debatable notions of human rights have been advanced that are at odds with the culture of many countries; the latter feel that they are not respected in their social and cultural traditions, and instead neglected with regard to the real needs they have to face. Somewhat paradoxically, there is a risk that, in the very name of human rights, we will see the rise of modern forms of ideological colonization by the stronger and the wealthier, to the detriment of the poorer and the most vulnerable. At the same time, it should be recalled that the traditions of individual peoples cannot be invoked as a pretext for disregarding the due respect for the fundamental rights proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

At a distance of seventy years, it is painful to see how many fundamental rights continue to be violated today. First among all of these is the right of every human person to life, liberty and personal security.[9] It is not only war or violence that infringes these rights. In our day, there are more subtle means: I think primarily of innocent children discarded even before they are born, unwanted at times simply because they are ill or malformed, or as a result of the selfishness of adults. I think of the elderly, who are often cast aside, especially when infirm and viewed as a burden. I think of women who repeatedly suffer from violence and oppression, even within their own families. I think too of the victims of human trafficking, which violates the prohibition of every form of slavery. How many persons, especially those fleeing from poverty and war, have fallen prey to such commerce perpetrated by unscrupulous individuals?

Defending the right to life and physical integrity also means safeguarding the right to health on the part of individuals and their families. Today this right has assumed implications beyond the original intentions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which sought to affirm the right of every individual to receive medical care and necessary social services.[10] In this regard, it is my hope that efforts will be made within the appropriate international forums to facilitate, in the first place, ready access to medical care and treatment on the part of all. It is important to join forces in order to implement policies that ensure, at affordable costs, the provision of medicines essential for the survival of those in need, without neglecting the area of research and the development of treatments that, albeit not financially profitable, are essential for saving human lives.

Defending the right to life also entails actively striving for peace, universally recognized as one of the supreme values to be sought and defended. Yet serious local conflicts continue to flare up in various parts of the world. The collective efforts of the international community, the humanitarian activities of international organizations and the constant pleas for peace rising from lands rent by violence seem to be less and less effective in the face of war's perverse logic. This scenario cannot be allowed to diminish our desire and our efforts for peace. For



without peace, integral human development becomes unattainable.

Integral disarmament and integral development are intertwined. Indeed, the quest for peace as a precondition for development requires battling injustice and eliminating, in a non-violent way, the causes of discord that lead to wars. The proliferation of weapons clearly aggravates situations of conflict and entails enormous human and material costs that undermine development and the search for lasting peace. The historic result achieved last year with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference for negotiating a legally binding instrument to ban nuclear arms, shows how lively the desire for peace continues to be. The promotion of a culture of peace for integral development calls for unrelenting efforts in favour of disarmament and the reduction of recourse to the use of armed force in the handling of international affairs. I would therefore like to encourage a serene and wide-ranging debate on the subject, one that avoids polarizing the international community on such a sensitive issue. Every effort in this direction, however modest, represents an important step for mankind.

For its part, the Holy See signed and ratified, also in the name of and on behalf of Vatican City State, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It did so in the belief, expressed by Saint John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris*, that “justice, right reason, and the recognition of man’s dignity cry out insistently for a cessation to the arms race. The stockpiles of armaments which have been built up in various countries must be reduced all round and simultaneously by the parties concerned. Nuclear weapons must be banned”.^[11] Indeed, even if “it is difficult to believe that anyone would dare to assume responsibility for initiating the appalling slaughter and destruction that war would bring in its wake, there is no denying that the conflagration could be started by some chance and unforeseen circumstance”.^[12]

The Holy See therefore reiterates the firm conviction “that any disputes which may arise between nations must be resolved by negotiation and agreement, not by recourse to arms”.^[13] The constant production of ever more advanced and “refined” weaponry, and dragging on of numerous conflicts – what I have referred to as “a third world war fought piecemeal” – lead us to reaffirm Pope John’s statement that “in this age which boasts of its atomic power, it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice... Nevertheless, we are hopeful that, by establishing contact with one another and by a policy of negotiation, nations will come to a better recognition of the natural ties that bind them together as men. We are hopeful, too, that they will come to a fairer realization of one of the cardinal duties deriving from our common nature: namely, that love, not fear, must dominate the relationships between individuals and between nations. It is principally characteristic of love that it draws men together in all sorts of ways, sincerely united in the bonds of mind and matter; and this is a union from which countless blessings can flow”.^[14]

In this regard, it is of paramount importance to support every effort at dialogue on the Korean peninsula, in order to find new ways of overcoming the current disputes, increasing mutual trust and ensuring a peaceful future for the Korean people and the entire world.

It is also important for the various peace initiatives aimed at helping Syria to continue, in a constructive climate of growing trust between the parties, so that the lengthy conflict that has caused such immense suffering can finally come to an end. Our shared hope is that, after so much destruction, the time for rebuilding has now come. Yet even more than rebuilding material structures, it is necessary to rebuild hearts, to re-establish the fabric of mutual trust, which is the essential prerequisite for the flourishing of any society. There is a need, then, to promote the legal, political and security conditions that restore a social life where every citizen, regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation, can take part in the development of the country. In this regard, it is vital that religious minorities be protected, including Christians, who for centuries have made an active contribution to Syria’s history.



It is likewise important that the many refugees who have found shelter and refuge in neighbouring countries, especially in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, be able to return home. The commitment and efforts made by these countries in this difficult situation deserve the appreciation and support of the entire international community, which is also called upon to create the conditions for the repatriation of Syrian refugees. This effort must concretely start with Lebanon, so that that beloved country can continue to be a “message” of respect and coexistence, and a model to imitate, for the whole region and for the entire world.

The desire for dialogue is also necessary in beloved Iraq, to enable its various ethnic and religious groups to rediscover the path of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence and cooperation. Such is the case too in Yemen and other parts of the region, and in Afghanistan.

I think in particular of Israelis and Palestinians, in the wake of the tensions of recent weeks. The Holy See, while expressing sorrow for the loss of life in recent clashes, renews its pressing appeal that every initiative be carefully weighed so as to avoid exacerbating hostilities, and calls for a common commitment to respect, in conformity with the relevant United Nations Resolutions, the status quo of Jerusalem, a city sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims. Seventy years of confrontation make more urgent than ever the need for a political solution that allows the presence in the region of two independent states within internationally recognized borders. Despite the difficulties, a willingness to engage in dialogue and to resume negotiations remains the clearest way to achieving at last a peaceful coexistence between the two peoples.

In national contexts, too, openness and availability to encounter are essential. I think especially of Venezuela, which is experiencing an increasingly dramatic and unprecedented political and humanitarian crisis. The Holy See, while urging an immediate response to the primary needs of the population, expresses the hope that conditions will be created so that the elections scheduled for this year can resolve the existing conflicts, and enable people to look to the future with newfound serenity.

Nor can the international community overlook the suffering of many parts of the African continent, especially in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Nigeria and the Central African Republic, where the right to life is threatened by the indiscriminate exploitation of resources, terrorism, the proliferation of armed groups and protracted conflicts. It is not enough to be appalled at such violence. Rather, everyone, in his or her own situation, should work actively to eliminate the causes of misery and build bridges of fraternity, the fundamental premise for authentic human development.

A shared commitment to rebuilding bridges is also urgent in Ukraine. The year just ended reaped new victims in the conflict that afflicts the country, continuing to bring great suffering to the population, particularly to families who live in areas affected by the war and have lost their loved ones, not infrequently the elderly and children.

I would like to devote a special thought to families. The right to form a family, as a “natural and fundamental group unit of society... is entitled to protection by society and the state”,^[15] and is recognized by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Unfortunately, it is a fact that, especially in the West, the family is considered an obsolete institution. Today fleeting relationships are preferred to the stability of a definitive life project. But a house built on the sand of frail and fickle relationships cannot stand. What is needed instead is a rock on which to build solid foundations. And this rock is precisely that faithful and indissoluble communion of love that joins man and woman, a communion that has an austere and simple beauty, a sacred and inviolable character and a natural role in the social order.^[16] I consider it urgent, then, that genuine policies be adopted to support the family, on which the future and the development of states depend. Without this, it is not possible to create societies capable of meeting the challenges of the future. Disregard for families has another dramatic effect – particularly present in some parts of the world – namely, a decline in the birth rate. We are experiencing a true demographic winter! This is a sign of societies that struggle to face the challenges of the present, and



thus become ever more fearful of the future, with the result that they close in on themselves.

At the same time, we cannot forget the situation of families torn apart by poverty, war and migration. All too often, we see with our own eyes the tragedy of children who, unaccompanied, cross the borders between the south and the north of our world, and often fall victim to human trafficking.

Today there is much talk about migrants and migration, at times only for the sake of stirring up primal fears. It must not be forgotten that migration has always existed. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the history of salvation is essentially a history of migration. Nor should we forget that freedom of movement, for example, the ability to leave one's own country and to return there, is a fundamental human right.[17] There is a need, then, to abandon the familiar rhetoric and start from the essential consideration that we are dealing, above all, with persons.

This is what I sought to reiterate in my Message for the World Day of Peace celebrated on 1 January last, whose theme this year is: "Migrants and Refugees: Men and Women in Search of Peace". While acknowledging that not everyone is always guided by the best of intentions, we must not forget that the majority of migrants would prefer to remain in their homeland. Instead, they find themselves "forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation" to leave it behind... "Welcoming others requires concrete commitment, a network of assistance and good will, vigilant and sympathetic attention, the responsible management of new and complex situations that at times compound numerous existing problems, to say nothing of resources, which are always limited. By practising the virtue of prudence, government leaders should take practical measures to welcome, promote, protect, integrate and, 'within the limits allowed by a correct understanding of the common good, to permit [them] to become part of a new society' (Pacem in Terris, 57). Leaders have a clear responsibility towards their own communities, whose legitimate rights and harmonious development they must ensure, lest they become like the rash builder who miscalculated and failed to complete the tower he had begun to construct" (cf. Lk 14:28-30).[18]

I would like once more to thank the authorities of those states who have spared no effort in recent years to assist the many migrants arriving at their borders. I think above all of the efforts made by more than a few countries in Asia, Africa and the Americas that welcome and assist numerous persons. I cherish vivid memories of my meeting in Dhaka with some members of the Rohingya people, and I renew my sentiments of gratitude to the Bangladeshi authorities for the assistance provided to them on their own territory.

I would also like to express particular gratitude to Italy, which in these years has shown an open and generous heart and offered positive examples of integration. It is my hope that the difficulties that the country has experienced in these years, and whose effects are still felt, will not lead to forms of refusal and obstruction, but instead to a rediscovery of those roots and traditions that have nourished the rich history of the nation and constitute a priceless treasure offered to the whole world. I likewise express my appreciation for the efforts made by other European states, particularly Greece and Germany. Nor must it be forgotten that many refugees and migrants seek to reach Europe because they know that there they will find peace and security, which for that matter are the fruit of a lengthy process born of the ideals of the Founding Fathers of the European project in the aftermath of the Second World War. Europe should be proud of this legacy, grounded on certain principles and a vision of man rooted in its millenary history, inspired by the Christian conception of the human person. The arrival of migrants should spur Europe to recover its cultural and religious heritage, so that, with a renewed consciousness of the values on which the continent was built, it can keep alive her own tradition while continuing to be a place of welcome, a herald of peace and of development.

In the past year, governments, international organizations and civil society have engaged in discussions about the basic principles, priorities and most suitable means for responding to movements of migration and the



enduring situations involving refugees. The United Nations, following the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, has initiated important preparations for the adoption of the two Global Compacts for refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration respectively.

The Holy See trusts that these efforts, with the negotiations soon to begin, will lead to results worthy of a world community growing ever more independent and grounded in the principles of solidarity and mutual assistance. In the current international situation, ways and means are not lacking to ensure that every man and every woman on earth can enjoy living conditions worthy of the human person.

In the Message for this year's World Day of Peace, I suggested four "mileposts" for action: welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating.[19] I would like to dwell particularly on the last of these, which has given rise to various opposed positions in the light of varying evaluations, experiences, concerns and convictions. Integration is a "two-way process", entailing reciprocal rights and duties. Those who welcome are called to promote integral human development, while those who are welcomed must necessarily conform to the rules of the country offering them hospitality, with respect for its identity and values. Processes of integration must always keep the protection and advancement of persons, especially those in situations of vulnerability, at the centre of the rules governing various aspects of political and social life.

The Holy See has no intention of interfering in decisions that fall to states, which, in the light of their respective political, social and economic situations, and their capacities and possibilities for receiving and integrating, have the primary responsibility for accepting newcomers. Nonetheless, the Holy See does consider it its role to appeal to the principles of humanity and fraternity at the basis of every cohesive and harmonious society. In this regard, its interaction with religious communities, on the level of institutions and associations, should not be forgotten, since these can play a valuable supportive role in assisting and protecting, in social and cultural mediation, and in pacification and integration.

Among the human rights that I would also like to mention today is the right to freedom of thought, conscience and of religion, including the freedom to change religion.[20] Sad to say, it is well-known that the right to religious freedom is often disregarded, and not infrequently religion becomes either an occasion for the ideological justification of new forms of extremism or a pretext for the social marginalization of believers, if not their downright persecution. The condition for building inclusive societies is the integral comprehension of the human person, who can feel himself or herself truly accepted when recognized and accepted in all the dimensions that constitute his or her identity, including the religious dimension.

Finally, I wish to recall the importance of the right to employment. There can be no peace or development if individuals are not given the chance to contribute personally by their own labour to the growth of the common good. Regrettably, in many parts of the world, employment is scarcely available. At times, few opportunities exist, especially for young people, to find work. Often it is easily lost not only due to the effects of alternating economic cycles, but to the increasing use of ever more perfect and precise technologies and tools that can replace human beings. On the one hand, we note an inequitable distribution of the work opportunities, while on the other, a tendency to demand of labourers an ever more pressing pace. The demands of profit, dictated by globalization, have led to a progressive reduction of times and days of rest, with the result that a fundamental dimension of life has been lost – that of rest – which serves to regenerate persons not only physically but also spiritually. God himself rested on the seventh day; he blessed and consecrated that day "because on it he rested from all the work that he had done in creation" (Gen 2:3). In the alternation of exertion and repose, human beings share in the "sanctification of time" laid down by God and ennoble their work, saving it from constant repetition and dull daily routine.

A cause for particular concern are the data recently published by the International Labour Organization



regarding the increase of child labourers and victims of the new forms of slavery. The scourge of juvenile employment continues to compromise gravely the physical and psychological development of young people, depriving them of the joys of childhood and reaping innocent victims. We cannot think of planning a better future, or hope to build more inclusive societies, if we continue to maintain economic models directed to profit alone and the exploitation of those who are most vulnerable, such as children. Eliminating the structural causes of this scourge should be a priority of governments and international organizations, which are called to intensify efforts to adopt integrated strategies and coordinated policies aimed at putting an end to child labour in all its forms.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In recalling some of the rights contained in the 1948 Universal Declaration, I do not mean to overlook one of its important aspects, namely, the recognition that every individual also has duties towards the community, for the sake of “meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society”.^[21] The just appeal to the rights of each human being must take into account the fact that every individual is part of a greater body. Our societies too, like every human body, enjoy good health if each member makes his or her own contribution in the awareness that it is at the service of the common good.

Among today’s particularly pressing duties is that of caring for our earth. We know that nature can itself be cruel, even apart from human responsibility. We saw this in the past year with the earthquakes that struck different parts of our world, especially those of recent months in Mexico and in Iran, with their high toll of victims, and with the powerful hurricanes that struck different countries of the Caribbean, also reaching the coast of the United States, and, more recently, the Philippines. Even so, one must not downplay the importance of our own responsibility in interaction with nature. Climate changes, with the global rise in temperatures and their devastating effects, are also a consequence of human activity. Hence there is a need to take up, in a united effort, the responsibility of leaving to coming generations a more beautiful and livable world, and to work, in the light of the commitments agreed upon in Paris in 2015, for the reduction of gas emissions that harm the atmosphere and human health.

The spirit that must guide individuals and nations in this effort can be compared to that of the builders of the medieval cathedrals that dot the landscape of Europe. These impressive buildings show the importance of each individual taking part in a work that transcends the limits of time. The builders of the cathedrals knew that they would not see the completion of their work. Yet they worked diligently, in the knowledge that they were part of a project that would be left to their children to enjoy. These, in turn, would embellish and expand it for their own children. Each man and woman in this world – particularly those with governmental responsibilities – is called to cultivate the same spirit of service and intergenerational solidarity, and in this way to be a sign of hope for our troubled world.

With these thoughts, I renew to each of you, to your families and to your peoples, my prayerful good wishes for a year filled with joy, hope and peace. Thank you.

Notes

[1] Cf. JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963, 90.

[2] *Ibid.*, 80.

[3] *Ibid.*, 86.

[4] *Ibid.*, 91.

[5] Cf. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948.

[6] *Ibid.* Preamble.

[7] PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 26 March 1967, 14.

- [8] Cf. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble.
[9] Cf. *ibid.*, Art.3.
[10] Cf. *ibid.*, Art. 25.
[11] *Pacem in Terris*, 112.
[12] *Ibid.*, 111.
[13] *Ibid.*, 126.
[14] *Ibid.*, 127 and 129.
[15] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16.
[16] Cf. PAUL VI, Address in the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, 5 January 1964.
[17] Cf. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 13.
[18] FRANCIS, Message for the 2018 World Day of Peace, 13 November 2017, 1.
[19] *Ibid.*, 4.
[20] Cf. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 18.
[21] *Ibid.*, Art. 29.
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Kwesties rond het levenseinde

Aan de Voorzitter van de Pauselijke Academie voor het Leven, aartsbisschop Vincenzo Paglia, en aan de deelnemers aan de Europese Regionale Bijeenkomst van de World Medical Association

Paus Franciscus
7 november 2017

1

Aan mijn Eerbiedwaardige Broeder Aartsbisschop Vincenzo Paglia, Voorzitter van de Pauselijke Academie voor het Leven

Ik maak mijn hartelijke groeten aan u over en aan al de deelnemers van de Europese Regionale Bijeenkomst van de World Medical Association betreffende vraagstukken aangaande het einde van het leven, die gehouden werd in het Vaticaan, tezamen met de Pauselijke Academie voor het Leven.

Uw bijeenkomst zal vragen behandelen omtrent het einde van het aardse leven. Het zijn vragen die de mensheid steeds hebben uitgedaagd, maar die vandaag nieuwe vormen aannemen omwille van de verhoogde kennis en de ontwikkeling van nieuwe technische instrumenten.

De groeiende therapeutische mogelijkheden van de medische wetenschap hebben het mogelijk gemaakt om vele ziektes te doen verdwijnen, de gezondheid te verbeteren en de levensduur te verlengen. Terwijl deze ontwikkelingen als positief kunnen geduid worden, is het ook mogelijk geworden het leven te verlengen door manieren die ondenkbaar waren in het verleden. Operaties en andere medische ingrepen zijn meer effectief geworden, maar ze zijn niet altijd heilzaam; ze kunnen falende vitale functies ondersteunen of zelfs vervangen, maar dat is niet hetzelfde als de gezondheid bevorderen. Grotere wijsheid is vandaag nodig, omwille van de verleiding om aan te dringen op behandelingen die krachtige gevolgen hebben voor het lichaam, maar soms niet het integrale welzijn van de persoon dienen.

2

Ongeveer zestig jaar geleden stelde paus Pius XII in een gedenkwaardige toespraak tot anesthesisten en

specialisten in intensieve zorgen dat er geen verplichting is om in alle omstandigheden toevlucht te zoeken naar elke mogelijke remedie en dat, in sommige specifieke gevallen, het is toegestaan om zich te onthouden van het gebruik ervan. (1) Bijgevolg is het moreel aanvaardbaar om te beslissen geen therapeutische maatregelen te nemen, of er niet mee door te gaan, wanneer hun gebruik niet overeen komt met die ethische en humanistische standaard die later zou genoemd worden “evenredig nut”. (2)

Het specifieke element van dit criterium is dat “het effect dat men ermee hoopt te bereiken, rekening houdend met de toestand van de zieke en met zijn lichamelijke en geestelijke krachten” in overweging wordt genomen. (3) Het maakt dus een beslissing mogelijk die moreel wordt gekwalificeerd als terugtrekken van “therapeutische hardnekkigheid”.

3

Zulk een beslissing erkent op een verantwoordelijke manier de grenzen van onze sterfelijkheid, eenmaal het duidelijk wordt dat verzet ertegen nutteloos is. “Men wil zo niet de dood bewerken; men aanvaardt dat men hem niet kan verhinderen”. (4) Dit verschil van perspectief herstelt de mensheid in de begeleiding van de stervenden, waarbij niet wordt getracht de onderdrukking van de levenden te rechtvaardigen. Het is duidelijk dat het niet aannemen of anders het opheffen van disproportionele maatregelen, betekent hardnekkig behandelen vermijden; vanuit een ethisch standpunt is dit compleet verschillend van euthanasie, dat altijd verkeerd is, vermits de intentie van euthanasie is om het leven te beëindigen en de dood te veroorzaken.

4

Het is overbodig om te zeggen dat in het aanschijn van kritische situaties en in een klinische praktijk het soms moeilijk is om de factoren die in het geding zijn, te evalueren. Om te bepalen of een klinisch aangepaste medische interventie werkelijk proportioneel is, is de mechanische toepassing van een algemene regel niet voldoende. Een zorgvuldige onderscheiding van het morele doel is nodig, evenals van de omstandigheden van de behandeling en de intenties van diegenen die erbij betrokken zijn. Bij het zorgen voor en het begeleiden van een welbepaalde patiënt moeten de persoonlijke en relationele elementen in zijn of haar leven en sterven – dat tenslotte het laatste moment in het leven is – in overweging worden genomen die het best passen bij de menselijke waardigheid. In dit proces komt de eerste rol toe aan de patiënt. De Catechismus van de Katholieke Kerk maakt dit duidelijk: “De beslissingen moeten genomen worden door de patiënt, als hij daartoe de bevoegdheid en het vermogen heeft”. (5) De patiënt in de eerste plaats heeft het recht, vanzelfsprekend in dialoog met medische professionals, om een voorgestelde therapie te evalueren en diens actuele proportionaliteit te beoordelen in zijn of haar geval, en ze noodzakelijkerwijs te weigeren indien wordt geoordeeld dat de proportionaliteit ontbreekt. Die evaluatie is niet gemakkelijk te maken in de huidige medische context, waarin de relatie arts-patiënt enorm is gefragmenteerd en medische zorg een groot aantal technologische en organisatorische aspecten bevat.

5

Ook moet worden opgemerkt dat deze evaluatieprocessen worden bepaald door de groeiende kloof tussen gezondheidsmogelijkheden die voortvloeien uit de combinatie van technische en wetenschappelijk bekwaamheid en economische interesses. Toenemende gesofisticeerde en kostelijke behandelingen zijn beschikbaar voor meer en meer gelimiteerde en geprivilegieerde segmenten van de bevolking. En dit doet vragen rijzen over de duurzaamheid van het leveren van gezondheidszorg en wat kan genoemd worden een systematische tendens naar een groeiende ongelijkheid in gezondheidszorg. Deze tendens is duidelijk zichtbaar op het globale niveau, in het bijzonder wanneer verschillende continenten worden vergeleken. Maar die is ook aanwezig in de meer rijke landen, waar de toegang tot de gezondheidszorg meer afhankelijk dreigt te worden van de economische middelen van de individuen, eerder dan van hun actuele nood voor behandeling.

6

In de complexiteit die voortvloeit uit de invloed van deze verschillende factoren in de klinische praktijk, maar ook in de medische cultuur in het algemeen, moet het hoogste gebod van verantwoordelijke nabijheid zeker in gedachten worden gehouden, zoals we duidelijk zien in het Evangelie van de Barmhartige Samaritaan. (6) Het kan gesteld worden dat de categorische imperatief erin bestaat om nooit de zieken te verlaten. De angst verbonden met de situaties die ons brengen op de drempel van de menselijke sterfelijkheid en de moeilijkheid van de beslissing die we moeten nemen, kunnen ons ertoe brengen om ons te verwijderen van de patiënt. Maar het is daar, meer dan om het even waar, dat wij geroepen zijn om liefde en nabijheid te tonen, waarbij we de grens erkennen die we allen delen en om onze solidariteit te tonen. Laat ieder van ons liefde geven op zijn of haar manier – als een vader, een moeder, een zoon, een dochter, een broer, een zuster, een arts, een verpleegster. Maar laat ons ze geven! En zelfs als we weten dat we niet altijd heling of genezing kunnen garanderen, kunnen en moeten we altijd zorg dragen voor de levenden, zonder dat we zelf hun leven verkorten, maar ook zonder nutteloos hun dood tegen te gaan. Dat is de aanpak die in de palliatieve zorg aanwezig is, en die uiterst belangrijk blijkt te zijn in onze cultuur. Want die is tegenovergesteld aan wat de dood zeer schrikwekkend en niet welkom maakt – pijn en eenzaamheid.

7

In democratische samenlevingen moeten deze gevoelige onderwerpen kalm, ernstig en bedachtzaam worden aangepakt, op een manier om in de mate van het mogelijke aanvaarde oplossingen te vinden, ook op juridisch vlak.

Enerzijds is er een nood om rekening te houden met de verschillende wereldvisies, ethische overtuigingen en religieuze affiliaties, in een klimaat van openheid en dialoog. Anderzijds kan de staat niet verzaken aan zijn plicht om allen die betrokken zijn te beschermen, door de fundamentele gelijkheid te verdedigen waarbij iedereen is erkend door de wet als een menselijk wezen dat leeft met anderen in de samenleving. Bijzondere aandacht moet besteed worden aan de meest kwetsbaren, die hulp nodig hebben om hun eigen belangen te verdedigen. Indien deze kern van waarden, die essentieel is voor het samenleven, verzwakt, zal de mogelijkheid om tot overeenstemming te komen omtrent die erkenning van de ander, die de voorwaarde is voor elke dialoog en het leven in gemeenschap, ook verloren gaan. Wetgeving inzake gezondheidszorg heeft ook deze brede visie nodig en een begrijpelijke kijk op wat daadwerkelijk het algemeen welzijn bevordert in elke concrete situatie.

8

In de hoop dat deze reflecties kunnen helpen, bied ik u mijn hartelijke goede wensen aan voor een serene en constructieve bijeenkomst. Ik vertrouw erop dat u de meest aangepaste manieren zult vinden om deze delicate onderwerpen te behandelen met een kijk op het welzijn van allen die u ontmoet en met diegenen met u werkt in uw veeleisend beroep.

Moge de Heer u zegenen en moge de Maagd Maria u beschermen.

Noten

1. Vgl. Paus Pius XII, Toespraak, Ook over de vraag naar het ontvangen van de Ziekenzalving in die omstandigheid, Le Dr. Bruno Haid – Tot anaesthesisten over het probleem van reanimatie (24 nov 1957)
2. Vgl. Congregatie voor de Geloofsleer, Verklaring over euthanasie, Iura et Bona (5 mei 1980). vgl. Congregatie voor de Geloofsleer, Verklaring omtrent euthanasie, 5 mei 1980, IV: Acta Apostolicae Sedis LXXII (1980), 542-552.
3. Congregatie voor de Geloofsleer, Verklaring over euthanasie, Iura et Bona (5 mei 1980), 4. **“De maat die men moet houden bij het gebruik van geneesmiddelen ”** In onze tijden is het van groot belang dat het ogenblik van de dood de waardigheid van de menselijke persoon en de christelijke betekenis van het leven



intact laat, ...”

4. Catechismus-Compendium, Catechismus van de Katholieke Kerk (15 aug 1997), 2278. *“Het stopzetten van medische behandelingen die belastend zijn, gevaarlijk, buitengewoon of die niet in verhouding tot de verwachte resultaten staan, kan geoorloofd zijn. Dit is het afwijzen van “therapeutische koppigheid”. Men wil zo niet de dood bewerken; men aanvaardt dat*

5. Catechismus-Compendium, Catechismus van de Katholieke Kerk (15 aug 1997), 2278. *“Het stopzetten van medische behandelingen die belastend zijn, gevaarlijk, buitengewoon of die niet in verhouding tot de verwachte resultaten staan, kan geoorloofd zijn. Dit is het afwijzen van “therapeutische koppigheid”. Men wil zo niet de dood bewerken; men aanvaardt dat*

6. Vgl. Lc. 10, 25-37. *“DE BARMHARTIGE SAMARITAAN. Daar trad een wetgeleerde naar voren om Hem op de proef te stellen. Hij zei: ‘Meester, wat moet ik doen om het eeuwig leven te verwerven?’*

Vertaling: Patrick De Pooter

Overgenomen met toestemming van R.K. Documenten

Message of his holiness Pope Francis to the participants in the European Regional Meeting of the World Medical Association

To My Venerable Brother Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia President of the Pontifical Academy for Life

I extend my cordial greetings to you and to all the participants in the European Regional Meeting of the World Medical Association on end-of-life issues, held in the Vatican in conjunction with the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Your meeting will address questions dealing with the end of earthly life. They are questions that have always challenged humanity, but that today take on new forms by reason of increased knowledge and the development of new technical tools. The growing therapeutic capabilities of medical science have made it possible to eliminate many diseases, to improve health and to prolong people’s life span. While these developments have proved quite positive, it has also become possible nowadays to extend life by means that were inconceivable in the past. Surgery and other medical interventions have become ever more effective, but they are not always beneficial: they can sustain, or even replace, failing vital functions, but that is not the same as promoting health. Greater wisdom is called for today, because of the temptation to insist on treatments that have powerful effects on the body, yet at times do not serve the integral good of the person.

Some sixty years ago, Pope Pius XII, in a memorable address to anaesthesiologists and intensive care specialists, stated that there is no obligation to have recourse in all circumstances to every possible remedy and that, in some specific cases, it is permissible to refrain from their use (cf. AAS XLIX [1957], 1027-1033).

Consequently, it is morally licit to decide not to adopt therapeutic measures, or to discontinue them, when their use does not meet that ethical and humanistic standard that would later be called “due proportion in the use of remedies” (cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration on Euthanasia, 5 May 1980, IV: AAS LXXII [1980], 542-552). The specific element of this criterion is that it considers “the result that can be expected, taking into account the state of the sick person and his or her physical and moral resources” (ibid.). It thus makes possible a decision that is morally qualified as withdrawal of “overzealous treatment”.

Such a decision responsibly acknowledges the limitations of our mortality, once it becomes clear that opposition to it is futile. “Here one does not will to cause death; one’s inability to impede it is merely accepted” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2278). This difference of perspective restores humanity to the accompaniment of the dying, while not attempting to justify the suppression of the living. It is clear that not adopting, or else suspending, disproportionate measures, means avoiding overzealous treatment; from an ethical standpoint, it is



completely different from euthanasia, which is always wrong, in that the intent of euthanasia is to end life and cause death.

Needless to say, in the face of critical situations and in clinical practice, the factors that come into play are often difficult to evaluate. To determine whether a clinically appropriate medical intervention is actually proportionate, the mechanical application of a general rule is not sufficient. There needs to be a careful discernment of the moral object, the attending circumstances, and the intentions of those involved. In caring for and accompanying a given patient, the personal and relational elements in his or her life and death – which is after all the last moment in life – must be given a consideration befitting human dignity. In this process, the patient has the primary role. The Catechism of the Catholic Church makes this clear: “The decisions should be made by the patient if he is competent and able” (loc. cit.). The patient, first and foremost, has the right, obviously in dialogue with medical professionals, to evaluate a proposed treatment and to judge its actual proportionality in his or her concrete case, and necessarily refusing it if such proportionality is judged lacking. That evaluation is not easy to make in today’s medical context, where the doctor-patient relationship has become increasingly fragmented and medical care involves any number of technological and organizational aspects.

It should also be noted that these processes of evaluation are conditioned by the growing gap in healthcare possibilities resulting from the combination of technical and scientific capability and economic interests. Increasingly sophisticated and costly treatments are available to ever more limited and privileged segments of the population, and this raises questions about the sustainability of healthcare delivery and about what might be called a systemic tendency toward growing inequality in health care. This tendency is clearly visible at a global level, particularly when different continents are compared. But it is also present within the more wealthy countries, where access to healthcare risks being more dependent on individuals’ economic resources than on their actual need for treatment.

In the complexity resulting from the influence of these various factors on clinical practice, but also on medical culture in general, the supreme commandment of responsible closeness, must be kept uppermost in mind, as we see clearly from the Gospel story of the Good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25-37). It could be said that the categorical imperative is to never abandon the sick. The anguish associated with conditions that bring us to the threshold of human mortality, and the difficulty of the decision we have to make, may tempt us to step back from the patient. Yet this is where, more than anything else, we are called to show love and closeness, recognizing the limit that we all share and showing our solidarity. Let each of us give love in his or her own way—as a father, a mother, a son, a daughter, a brother or sister, a doctor or a nurse. But give it! And even if we know that we cannot always guarantee healing or a cure, we can and must always care for the living, without ourselves shortening their life, but also without futilely resisting their death. This approach is reflected in palliative care, which is proving most important in our culture, as it opposes what makes death most terrifying and unwelcome—pain and loneliness.

Within democratic societies, these sensitive issues must be addressed calmly, seriously and thoughtfully, in a way open to finding, to the extent possible, agreed solutions, also on the legal level. On the one hand, there is a need to take into account differing world views, ethical convictions and religious affiliations, in a climate of openness and dialogue. On the other hand, the state cannot renounce its duty to protect all those involved, defending the fundamental equality whereby everyone is recognized under law as a human being living with others in society. Particular attention must be paid to the most vulnerable, who need help in defending their own interests. If this core of values essential to coexistence is weakened, the possibility of agreeing on that recognition of the other which is the condition for all dialogue and the very life of society will also be lost. Legislation on health care also needs this broad vision and a comprehensive view of what most effectively



promotes the common good in each concrete situation.

In the hope that these reflections may prove helpful, I offer you my cordial good wishes for a serene and constructive meeting. I also trust that you will find the most appropriate ways of addressing these delicate issues with a view to the good of all those whom you meet and those with whom you work in your demanding profession.

May the Lord bless you and the Virgin Mary protect you.

Beschouw gehandicapten niet als marginaal

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to participants in the conference organized by the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization



21 October 2017

Pope Francis

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to meet you, especially because in these days you have addressed a theme of great importance for the life of the Church in her work of evangelization and Christian formation: Catechesis and people with disabilities. I thank Archbishop Fisichella for his introduction, the Dicastery over which he presides for its service, and all of you for your work in this field.

We recognize the great development there has been over the course of recent decades with regard to disability. Greater awareness of the dignity of each person, especially of the weakest, has led to the espousal of courageous positions for the inclusion of those who live with various forms of handicap, so that no one should feel like a stranger in his own home. Yet, at the cultural level, through a prevailing false understanding of life, expressions that harm the dignity of these persons still persist. An often narcissistic and utilitarian vision, unfortunately, leads not a few to consider persons with disabilities as marginal, without grasping their manifold human and spiritual richness. In the common mind-set, there is still too strong an attitude of rejection of this condition, as if it prevents one from achieving happiness and self-fulfilment. It is demonstrated by the eugenic trend of ending the lives of the unborn who show some form of imperfection. In reality, we all know many people who, despite even serious fragility, have found, albeit with difficulty, the path of a good life, rich with meaning. Likewise, on the other hand, we know people who are seemingly perfect, yet they despair! After all, it is a perilous deception to think we are invulnerable. As said by a girl whom I met on my recent journey to Colombia: vulnerability is intrinsic to the essential nature of mankind.

The answer is love: not that false, saccharine and sanctimonious love, but that which is true, concrete and respectful. To the extent that one is accepted and loved, included in the community and supported in looking to the future with confidence, the true path of life evolves and one experiences enduring happiness. This — as we know — applies to everyone, but for the most fragile people it is like a test. Faith is a great life companion when it lets us touch by hand the presence of a Father who never forsakes his creatures, in any state of their life. The



Church cannot be voiceless or out of tune in the defence and promotion of people with disabilities. Her closeness to the families helps them to overcome the loneliness that often risks closing them off for want of attention and support. This applies even more so due to her responsibility with regard to generating and forming the Christian life. The community must not lack the words and above all the gestures for encountering and welcoming people with disabilities. The Sunday Liturgy, especially, must be able to include them, so that the encounter with the Risen Lord and with the community itself may be a source of hope and courage in the difficult journey of life.

Catechesis, in a particular way, is called to discover and test congruent forms so that each person, with their gifts, limitations and even severe disabilities, can encounter Jesus on the journey and trustfully abandon themselves to Him. No physical or mental limitation should ever be an impediment to this encounter, because Christ's face shines in the heart of each person. Moreover, let us take care, especially we ministers of Christ's grace, not to fall prey to the neo-Pelagian mistake of failing to recognize the need for the strength of grace that comes from the Sacraments of Christian initiation. Let us learn to overcome the discomfort and fear that at times we can feel toward persons with disabilities. Let us learn to seek and also to intelligently "invent" appropriate tools so that no one lacks the support of grace. Let us form — first of all by example! — catechists ever more able to accompany these persons so they may grow in faith and give their genuine and original contribution to the life of the Church.

Lastly, I hope that in the community, more and more, people with disabilities may be their own catechists, by their witness too, so as to pass on the faith in a more effective way.

I thank you for your work in these days and for your service in the Church. May Our Lady accompany you. I bless you wholeheartedly. And I ask that you, please, not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

Genderideologie: 'utopie van het onzijdige'

Het leven begeleiden; nieuwe verantwoordelijkheden in het technologisch tijdperk
Tot de deelnemers aan de Algemene vergadering van de Pauselijke Academie voor het Leven

5 oktober 2017

Paus Franciscus

Excellentie, Dames en Heren,

Met genoegen neem ik deel aan uw jaarvergadering en ik dank Aartsbisschop Paglia voor zijn vriendelijke woorden ter inleiding. Ik ben u allen erkentelijk voor uw bijdragen; naarmate de tijd verstrijkt, wordt hun belang des te zichtbaarder voor de vooruitgang van wetenschappelijke, antropologische en ethische kennis, en voor de dienstbaarheid aan het leven, met name voor de zorg voor het menselijk leven en voor de schepping, ons gemeenschappelijk thuis.

Het thema van uw vergadering – *Het leven begeleiden; nieuwe verantwoordelijkheden in het technologisch tijdperk* – is een veeleisend en zeer noodzakelijk thema, want het betreft de uitdagende combinatie van kansen en vraagstukken die met recente technologische ontwikkelingen in de levenswetenschappen samenhangen. De macht van biotechnologieën die reeds nu het manipuleren van het leven mogelijk maken op tot dusver onvoorstelbare manieren, roept serieuze vragen op.

Er is dringend behoefte aan meer bestudering van en discussie over de sociale effecten van deze technologische ontwikkeling, om een antropologische visie te formuleren die is opgewassen tegen deze historische uitdaging. Uw deskundig advies kan echter niet alleen beperkt blijven tot het aanbieden van oplossingen voor vragen die uit specifieke ethische, sociale of wettelijke conflictsituaties voortvloeien. Het voorstellen van vormen van gedrag dat consistent is met de menselijke waardigheid gaat ook om de theorie en praktijk van wetenschap en technologie met betrekking tot de algehele benadering van het leven, zijn betekenis en waarde. Vanuit dit perspectief wil ik u vandaag graag mijn bespiegelingen aanbieden.

1. De mens lijkt zich op het ogenblik op een speciaal kruispunt in zijn geschiedenis te bevinden, op onbekend terrein, waarin hij te maken heeft met zowel oude als nieuwe vragen omtrent de betekenis, oorsprong en bestemming van het menselijk leven. (1)

Het belangrijkste element van dit moment is, kort gezegd, de snelle verbreiding van een cultuur die obsessief gericht is op de beheersing door mensen – individueel en als soort – van de werkelijkheid. Sommigen spreken zelfs van een *egolatrie*, een verering van het zelf, op welks altaar alles wordt geofferd, zelfs de meest gekoesterde menselijke affecties. Deze benadering is allesbehalve onschadelijk, want zij zet mensen ertoe aan voortdurend in de spiegel te staren, zodat zij uiteindelijk niet meer in staat zijn hun ogen van zichzelf af te wenden en te richten op anderen en de bredere wereld. De verbreiding van deze handelswijze heeft uiterst ernstige gevolgen voor iedere affectie en relatie in het leven.

Tegelijkertijd is duidelijk dat de legitimiteit van het streven van individuen naar een zekere kwaliteit van leven of het belang van economische hulpbronnen en technische middelen die dat mogelijk kunnen maken, niet ontkend of geminimaliseerd moeten worden. Toch kunnen we het grove materialisme niet veronachtzamen, dat typerend is voor de koppeling van economie en technologie en dat uiteindelijk het leven als hulpbron ziet dat gebruikt of afgedankt kan worden om redenen van macht en winst.

Helaas beseffen over de hele wereld mannen, vrouwen en kinderen met wroeging en verdriet de misleidende beloften van het technocratisch materialisme. Dit komt ook omdat, in tegenstelling tot propaganda over uitbreidende markten die automatisch tot grotere welvaart zouden leiden, de regio's van armoede en conflict, afwijzing en verlatenheid, verbittering en wanhoop zich steeds verder uitbreiden. In plaats daarvan zou authentieke wetenschappelijke en technologische vooruitgang tot meer menswaardige politieke beleidslijnen moeten inspireren.

Het christelijk geloof zet ons aan *het initiatief terug te vorderen*, zonder ons over te geven aan nostalgie of klagen. De Kerk heeft een lange traditie van nobele en verlichte geesten die in hun tijd de weg geplaveid hebben voor wetenschap en sociaal bewustzijn. De wereld heeft behoefte aan gelovigen die, opgewekt doch bescheiden, creatief en proactief zijn, nederig en moedig, vastbesloten om de kloof tussen de generaties te overbruggen. Deze kloof verstoort de overdracht van het leven. We juichen de opwindende mogelijkheden van jonge mensen toe, maar wie begeleidt hen naar vervulling als volwassenen? Volwassenheid betekent een leven van verantwoordelijkheid en liefde voor zowel toekomstige als voorbijge generaties. Wanneer vaders en moeders oud worden, verwachten zij terecht geëerd te worden voor wat zij grootmoedig hebben gegeven, en niet aan de kant te worden geworpen omdat zij niet langer nuttig zijn.

2. De inspiratie om dit initiatief terug te vorderen is wederom het *woord van God*, dat licht werpt op oorsprong en bestemming van het leven.

Er is tegenwoordig grote behoefte aan een theologie van schepping en verlossing, die geschikt is om tot uitdrukking te komen in woorden en daden van liefde voor elk leven en het geheel van het leven, als metgezel op het pelgrimspad van de Kerk in deze wereld. De Encycliek "*Laudato Si*" is een van de tekenen van deze



hernieuwde aandacht voor de manier waarop God en mens onze wereld beschouwen, vanaf de openbaring die in de eerste hoofdstukken van het boek Genesis te vinden is. Daar leren we dat ieder van ons een schepsel is dat *door God wordt gewild en liefgehad omwille van hem- of haarzelf*, niet slechts een combinatie van cellen, georganiseerd en geselecteerd door een proces van evolutie. De gehele schepping is op de een of andere manier deel van Gods speciale liefde voor menselijke schepsels, een liefde die zich uitstrekt tot iedere generatie van moeders, vaders en kinderen.

God's oorspronkelijke zegen en zijn belofte van een eeuwige bestemming vormen de basis voor de waardigheid van elk leven; zij zijn bedoeld voor iedereen. De mannen, vrouwen en kinderen die de volkeren der aarde vormen, zijn het leven van de wereld die God liefheeft en wenst te redden, zonder uitzondering.

De Bijbelse scheppingsgeschiedenis moet gelezen en herlezen worden, om de omvang en diepgang van de liefdevolle handelingen te kunnen waarderen van een God die de schepping en de geschiedenis toevertrouwt aan het verbond van man en vrouw.

Dit verbond is zeker bezegeld door de persoonlijke en vruchtbare liefdesverbintenis die, door het huwelijk en het gezin, het middel is om het leven door te geven. Maar naast deze bezegeling is het verbond tussen man en vrouw tevens geroepen een richtsnoer voor de maatschappij als geheel te zijn. We worden uitgenodigd verantwoordelijk te zijn voor de wereld, in de domeinen van cultuur en politiek, in de wereld van werk en economisch leven, maar ook in de Kerk. Dat is niet alleen een kwestie van gelijke kansen of wederzijds respect. Het betreft de wijze waarop mannen en vrouwen de ware betekenis van het leven en van de menselijke vooruitgang begrijpen. Zij zijn geroepen om niet alleen *over* liefde met elkaar te spreken, maar om *met* liefde te spreken over wat er gedaan moet worden zodat de menselijke gemeenschap vorm kan krijgen in het licht van Gods liefde voor al zijn schepselen. Man en vrouw zijn geroepen tot elkaar te spreken als partners in het verbond, omdat geen van twee – man noch vrouw – deze verantwoordelijkheid alleen op zich kan nemen. Zij zijn samen geschapen, in hun heilige verscheidenheid; samen zondigden zij, vanwege hun arrogante poging de plaats van God in te nemen; samen keren zij, door Christus' genade, terug naar Gods aanwezigheid, als rentmeesters van de wereld en van de geschiedenis die hij hen heeft toevertrouwd.

3. We kunnen dus zeggen dat we thans aan de vooravond van een culturele revolutie staan. En de Kerk moet de eerste zijn die daar haar rol in speelt.

In het licht hiervan moeten we allen in de eerste plaats onze *tekortkomingen en fouten* eerlijk erkennen. De vormen van ondergeschiktheid die op tragische wijze de geschiedenis van vrouwen hebben gekenmerkt, moeten we voor eens en voor altijd achter ons laten. Er moet een nieuw begin worden gemaakt in de morele houding van volkeren, en dit kan worden bereikt door een nieuwe cultuur van identiteit en verscheidenheid. Het recente voorstel om de waardigheid van een persoon te bevorderen door radicaal de seksuele verscheidenheid, en bijgevolg ons begrip van man en vrouw, te elimineren, is niet juist. In plaats van het bestrijden van verkeerde interpretaties van seksuele verscheidenheid dat het fundamenteel belang van dat verschil voor de menselijke waardigheid zou verminderen, zou een dergelijk voorstel die verscheidenheid simpelweg elimineren door procedures en praktijken voor te stellen die haar irrelevant maken voor iemands ontwikkeling en voor de menselijke betrekkingen.

Maar de utopie van het "neutrum" elimineert zowel de menselijke waardigheid in seksueel onderscheidende kenmerken als de persoonlijke aard van het genereren van nieuw leven. De biologische en psychologische manipulatie van seksuele verscheidenheid, die de biomedische technologie nu een simpele kwestie van persoonlijke keuze kan laten lijken – die het niet is! – brengt het gevaar met zich mee, de energiebron die het verbond tussen man en vrouw voedt, en het creatief en vruchtbaar maakt, te ontmantelen.



De mysterieuze band tussen *de schepping van de wereld* en de *verwekking van Gods Zoon* wordt geopenbaard in Zijn vleeswording in de schoot van Maria – de Moeder van Jezus en de Moeder van God – uit liefde voor ons. Deze mysterieuze band verwondert en ontroert ons telkens weer; haar openbaring zet het mysterie van het zijn en de betekenis van het leven in het volle licht. Voortaan straalt het mysterie van de menselijke verwekking een *diepe wijsheid omtrent het leven* uit. Omdat het leven als geschenk ontvangen wordt, wordt het zelf verheven. Door nieuw leven te verwekken worden wijzelf herboren; door van ons leven te geven worden wij verrijkt.

We staan dan ook voor de uitdaging ons te verweren tegen een sfeer van intimidatie die rond de verwekking van het leven hangt, als was het op een of andere manier beneden de waardigheid van vrouwen of een bedreiging voor ons collectief welzijn.

Het leven-brengende verbond tussen man en vrouw beschermt juist de waardigheid van onze menselijk gezin, in plaats van haar in de weg te staan. Onze geschiedenis zal zich niet langer vernieuwen als we deze waarheid verwerpen.

4. Een hartstochtelijke betrokkenheid bij het begeleiden van en zorgen voor het leven vereist, in de geschiedenis van individuen en maatschappijen, een zich voortdurend vernieuwend ethos van compassie en tedere liefde voor de geboorte en wedergeboorte van de mensheid, in al haar verschillen.

We moeten in de eerste plaats weer ontvankelijk worden voor de *verschillende stadia van het leven*, speciaal van *kinderen* en *ouderen*. Hun zwakheden, hun gebreken en hun kwetsbaarheid zijn niet louter de zorg van geneeskunde en gezondheidszorg. Zij hebben ook te maken met de ziel en met menselijke noden die moeten worden herkend, erkend, beschermd en gerespecteerd, zowel door individuen als door de gemeenschap. Een maatschappij die deze zaken als koopbaar en verkoopbaar, bureaucratisch gereguleerd en technisch gemanaged beschouwt, heeft al haar gevoel voor de betekenis van het leven verloren. Zij zal deze betekenis niet meer aan haar jongeren overdragen, noch haar in haar ouder wordende ouders respecteren. Bijna zonder het te beseffen zijn we inmiddels begonnen steden te bouwen die steeds onvriendelijker zijn voor kinderen en gemeenschappen waar ouderen zich steeds minder welkom voelen. Zij hebben muren, maar geen ramen of deuren; ze zijn bedoeld om te beschermen, maar in feite verstikken zij.

Het getuigenis van het geloof van *Gods genade* die alle rechtvaardigheid verfijnt en vervolmaakt, is een essentiële voorwaarde voor de groei van de compassie tussen de generaties. Zonder die genade staat de cultuur van de wereldlijke stad weerloos tegenover de ontkrachting en het verval van de menselijke geest.

Tegen de achtergrond van deze nieuwe horizon staat mij de missie van de vernieuwde Pauselijke Academie voor het Leven voor ogen. Ik besef dat het een moeilijke maar ook stimulerende missie is. Ik weet zeker dat er geen gebrek is aan mannen en vrouwen van goede wil, inclusief wetenschappers, met uiteenlopende meningen over religie en met een verscheidenheid aan antropologische en ethische visies, die het eens zijn over de noodzaak te komen tot een meer authentieke wijsheid over het leven met het oog op algemeen goed. Open en vruchtbare dialoog kan en moet worden nagestreefd tussen allen die zich inspannen te zoeken naar betekenisvolle grondslagen voor het menselijk bestaan.

De Paus en de gehele Kerk zijn dankbaar voor de inspanningen die u zich zal gaan getroosten. De verantwoorde begeleiding van het menselijk leven, van conceptie tot aan het natuurlijke einde, betekent onderscheiding en een begrip dat uit liefde voortkomt; het is een taak voor mannen en vrouwen die vrij en toegewijd zijn, een taak voor schaapherders, niet voor huurlingen. Moge God uw vastberadenheid zegenen waarmee u hen ondersteunt met de kennis, integriteit en wijsheid die de uwe zijn.

Dank u, en vergeet, alstublieft, niet voor mij te bidden.

Noten

1. Paus Franciscus, Encycliek, 'Wees geprezen' – over de zorg voor het gemeenschappelijke huis, *Laudato Si'* (24 mei 2015), 48: *Het menselijk en natuurlijke milieu gaan samen achteruit en wij zullen niet op een adequate wijze het hoofd kunnen bieden aan het verval van het milieu, als wij geen aandacht besteden aan de oorzaken die verband houden met het menselijk ...*

Vertaling: W. van Winden

Met toestemming overgenomen van R.K. Documenten

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you for this annual meeting and I thank Archbishop Paglia for his kind words of introduction. I am grateful to all of you for the contributions you make; as time passes, their value becomes all the more evident for the advance of scientific, anthropological and ethical knowledge, and for the service of life, particularly for the care of human life and of creation, our common home.

The theme of your meeting – Accompanying Life: New Responsibilities in the Technological Era – is one that is demanding and much needed, as it deals with the challenging combination of opportunities and issues associated with recent technological developments in the life sciences. Serious questions are being raised by the power of biotechnologies that, even now, enable the manipulation of life in ways hitherto unimaginable.

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. Your expert advice, however, 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. It is from this perspective that I would like to offer you my reflections today.

1. Human beings seem now to find themselves at a special juncture in their history, in uncharted territory, as they deal with questions both old and new regarding the meaning of human life, its origin and destiny. The key feature of this moment is, in a word, the rapid spread of a culture obsessively centred on the mastery of human beings – individually and as a species – over reality. Some have even spoken of an egolatry, a worship of the self, on whose altar everything is sacrificed, even the most cherished human affections. This approach is far from harmless, for it induces people to gaze constantly in the mirror, to the point of being unable to turn their eyes away from themselves and towards others and the larger world. The spread of this approach has extremely grave effects on every affection and relationship in life (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 48).

Clearly, this is not to deny or minimize the legitimacy of the aspiration of individuals to a certain quality of life or the importance of the economic resources and technical means that can make it possible. Still, we cannot ignore the crass materialism that often typifies the linkage between the economy and technology, and ends up treating life as a resource either to be used or discarded for reasons of power and profit.

Sadly, throughout our world, men, women and children are realizing with remorse and grief the fallacious promises of technocratic materialism. This is also the case because, contrary to propaganda about expanding markets automatically resulting in greater prosperity, the zones of poverty and conflict, rejection and abandonment, resentment and despair, are spreading. Authentic scientific and technological progress ought



instead to inspire policies more worthy of man.

Christian faith prompts us to reclaim the initiative, without yielding to nostalgia or complaint. The Church has a long tradition of noble and enlightened minds that paved the way for science and social consciousness in their day. The world needs believers who, joyful yet unassuming, are creative and proactive, humble and courageous, resolutely determined to overcome the divide between the generations. This divide disrupts the transmission of life. We applaud the exciting potential of young people, but who guides them to fulfilment as adults? Adulthood means a life of responsibility and love for both future and past generations. When fathers and mothers grow old, they rightly expect to be honoured for what they have generously given, not to be cast aside because they are no longer useful.

2. The inspiration for reclaiming this initiative is once again the word of God, which sheds light on life's origins and destiny.

Today, there is great need of a theology of creation and redemption capable of finding expression in words and acts of love for each life and the whole of life, in order to accompany the Church's pilgrim path in this world. The Encyclical *Laudato Si'* is one sign of this renewed attention to the way God and man regard our world, starting from the revelation found in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis. There we learn that each of us is a creature willed and loved by God for his or her own sake, not merely a combination of cells organized and selected by a process of evolution. All creation is in some way part of God's special love for human creatures, a love extending to every generation of mothers, fathers and children.

God's original blessing and his promise of an eternal destiny are the basis of the dignity of every life; they are meant for everyone. The men, women and children who make up the peoples of the earth are the life of the world that God loves and desires to save, without exception.

The biblical account of creation needs to be read and reread, in order to appreciate the breadth and depth of the loving action of the God who entrusts creation and history to the covenant of man and woman.

This covenant is certainly sealed by the personal and fruitful union of love that, through marriage and the family, is the means of transmitting life. In addition to this seal, the covenant between man and woman is called to be a guiding force for society as a whole. We are invited to be responsible for the world, in the realms of culture and politics, in the world of work and economic life, as well as in the Church. This is not merely a matter of equal opportunities or mutual appreciation. It involves the way men and women understand the very meaning of life and human progress. They are called not only to speak to one another about love, but to speak with love about what needs to be done so that the human community can take shape in the light of God's love for all his creatures. Men and women are called to speak to one another as covenant partners, because neither of the two – neither man nor woman – can assume this responsibility alone. They were created together, in their sacred difference; together they sinned, for their presumption in trying to take the place of God; together, by the grace of Christ, they return to God's presence, as stewards of the world and of the history that he has entrusted to them.

3. We can say, then, that we are currently on the verge of a cultural revolution. And the Church must be the first to play her part in it.

In light of this, we need first all to acknowledge honestly our shortcomings and failures. The forms of subordination that have tragically marked the history of women have to be abandoned once and for all. A new start must be made in the ethos of peoples, and this can be achieved through a new culture of identity and difference. The recent proposal to advance the dignity of a person by radically eliminating sexual difference and, as a result, our understanding of man and woman, is not right. Instead of combatting wrongful interpretations of sexual difference that would diminish the fundamental importance of that difference for



human dignity, such a proposal would simply eliminate it by proposing procedures and practices that make it irrelevant for a person's development and for human relationships. But the utopia of the "neuter" eliminates both human dignity in sexual distinctiveness and the personal nature of the generation of new life. The biological and psychological manipulation of sexual difference, which biomedical technology can now make appear as a simple matter of personal choice – which it is not! – runs the risk of dismantling the energy source that feeds the covenant between man and woman, making it creative and fruitful.

The mysterious bond between the creation of the world and the generation of God's Son is revealed by his taking flesh in the womb of Mary – Mother of Jesus and Mother of God – out of love for us. This mysterious bond never fails to amaze and move us; its revelation fully illumines the mystery of being and the meaning of life. Henceforth, the mystery of human generation radiates a profound wisdom about life. Received as a gift, life is itself exalted. Generating life regenerates us; by giving of our lives, we are enriched.

We are challenged, then, to counter an atmosphere of intimidation that surrounds the generation of life, as if it were somehow demeaning to women or a menace to our collective well-being.

The life-giving covenant between man and woman protects, not hinders, the dignity of our human family. Our history will not continue to be renewed if we reject this truth.

4. A fervent concern to accompany and care for life requires, in the history of individuals and societies, a constantly renewed ethos of compassion and tender love for the birth and rebirth of humanity, in all its differences.

We need first to become sensitive once more to the different stages of life, especially of children and the elderly. Their frailties, their infirmities and their vulnerability are not exclusively the concern of medicine and health care. They also have to do with the soul and with human needs that must be recognized and taken into account, protected and esteemed, by individuals and the community alike. A society that considers these things as buyable and sellable, bureaucratically regulated and technically managed, is one that has already lost its sense of the meaning of life. It will no longer pass on that meaning to its young, or revere it in its aging parents. Almost without realizing it, we have now started to build cities increasingly unfriendly to children and communities increasingly unwelcoming to the elderly. They have walls but no windows or doors; meant to protect, they in fact stifle.

Faith's witness to God's mercy, which refines and perfects all justice, is an essential condition for the growth of compassion between generations. Without that mercy, the culture of the secular city is defenceless before the deadening and decay of the human spirit.

It is against this new horizon that I view the mission of the renewed Pontifical Academy for Life. I realize that it is a difficult, yet also exhilarating one. I am certain that there is no shortage of men and women of good will, scholars included, with differing approaches to religion and with a variety of anthropological and ethical visions, who are agreed on the need to propose a more authentic wisdom about life in view of the common good. Open and fruitful dialogue can and must be pursued between all those committed to seeking meaningful foundations for human existence.

The Pope and the whole Church are grateful for the efforts you are about to undertake. The responsible accompaniment of human life, from conception to its natural end, involves discernment and an understanding born of love; it is a task for men and women who are free and dedicated, a task for shepherds, not hirelings. May God bless your resolve to support them with the knowledge, integrity and wisdom that are yours.

Thank you, and please, do not forget to pray for me.