



Dienstbaar aan de waardigheid van de mens en geroepen tot het leven

Serving the dignity of man, and called to life

Address of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life

Moscow – February 12, 2019

Your Eminences, Most Reverend Prelates, Dear Professors,

I am pleased and honored to have this opportunity to speak on such an important occasion whose purpose is to bring about deeper understanding and fuller cooperation between the Catholic Church and the Patriarchate of Moscow and of the entire Russian Orthodox Church. During their meeting in Cuba three years ago, Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill emphasized the importance of the Gospel and of the Christian faith in the construction of a more just and peaceful society, one that promotes “respect for the dignity of man, called to life.” It is important that we recognize this responsibility and take it on as a shared commitment.

I interpret as a providential sign the fact that I just returned from a stay in Cuba, where I attended the fourth International Conference for World Balance in Havana. It dealt with the question of a more human and more fair coexistence in our now globalized planet. I spoke to the participants about the meeting in Cuba between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill, as well as about this conference, which takes its inspiration from the Joint Declaration that the Pope and the Patriarch signed.

We find ourselves now at a moment in history that requires greater unity among Christians because globalization without Christian inspiration is lacking in love and is prey to conflict. And unfortunately, that is what we often see today. The moment in history that we are passing through is characterized by people retreating into their own closed circles. We see everywhere an increased danger of an individualism that weakens both society and religions themselves. It is urgent for Christians in a globalized world to offer everyone that vision of the unity of humanity that permeates the Gospel.

The collapse of “us”

In fact, at the beginning of the 21st century, society is characterized by some of the negative results produced by modern Western culture and imposed by it on the rest of the world. These results are now centered on a contradiction that undermines the hopes for Christian humanism. While on the one hand, recent centuries have seen increased attention to the person, and the person’s irreplaceable and priceless uniqueness and desire for a well-lived life, on the other hand we see an explosion of individualism that leads to loneliness, self-referentiality, and embitterment against society. Some philosophers such as, for example, Gilles Lipovetsky, speak of a “second individualist revolution” marked by the worship of hedonism and of psychology, by the privatization of life and by the triumph of autonomy over collective institutions. Zygmunt Bauman, one of the most careful

students of social phenomena, spoke recently of a “fluid society,” a society with no fixed values.

Contemporary man, obsessively concerned with his personal destiny, is at risk of such an overwhelming narcissism that he is insensitive to those around him and no longer has the inner strength to commit himself to building a shared human community. The passion for humanity’s condition and “common destiny,” which nourishes an aspiration for “universal brotherhood,” has weakened and become uncertain. We could speak of what I call “the collapse of ‘us,’” that is, the loss of a common dream, of common vision.

The men and women of today are more connected, but not for that are they more brothers and sisters. If on the one hand technology and the economy have more or less bureaucratically unified societies, they have on the other hand disrupted them emotionally: pressure for functional efficiency kills relationships. We are looking at plan for the cultural and social “creation” of the individual as an end in himself, disconnected from any individual uniqueness and any possible separate “empowerment.” In the search for autonomy, the contemporary individual removes, day after day, the memory of the roots and bonds that generated and constructed him as a human person. Some speak of a new religion, “egolatry,” the cult of the ego, on whose altar the most sacred affections are sacrificed. The deterioration of social bonds, in all their aspects – family, work, culture, politics – is one of the most critical effects of the global diffusion of this individualism that has no others and no history.

Humana Communitas

Pope Francis, on the recent celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the creation of the Pontifical Academy for Life, wrote us a letter entitled *Humana Communitas*. We have translated it into Russian and want to give it to Patriarch Kirill and to all of you. In the letter, the Holy Father asks questions about the life of man and points out the (theological) roots that can serve as reference points when addressing the questions and difficulties that confront life itself. He explicitly and clearly points to the human community as the most complete and genuine locus for the free and conscious development of every man and woman. This is what the Pope writes: *The human community is God's dream even from before the creation of the world (cf. Eph 1:3-14). In it, the eternal Son begotten of God the Father has taken flesh and blood, heart and emotions. Through the mystery of giving life, the great family of humanity is enabled to discover its true meaning.* (HC1). This dream ...is what Jesus has entrusted to the Church and has placed in the heart of every person: the whole human family has a common origin and a common destiny. In a globalized world, the unity of the human family is the horizon that must involve all peoples. It is crucial to rediscover brotherhood, which unfortunately has not yet been achieved. Life is not an abstract universal; life is each person from his conception until the moment of death. Life is the whole human family all over the world. This is life, an historical reality.

And further on the Pope says: *Indeed, the many extraordinary resources made available to human beings by scientific and technological research could overshadow the joy of fraternal sharing and the beauty of common undertakings, unless they find their meaning in advancing that joy and beauty. We should keep in mind that fraternity remains the unkept promise of modernity. The universal spirit of fraternity that grows by mutual trust B within modern civil society and between peoples and nations B appears much weakened.* (HC13)

In the web of relationships that are part of the life of contemporary individuals, the fundamental questions that fill their hearts, their minds, even their bodies, and that are otherwise incapable of being answered exhaustively, must be included. Even the pressing question of rights, in order that it not become simply a declaration of intent, needs to be raised, justified, communicated and implemented, not with reference to an unconnected “I” but rather with broader reference to a human “us.” Without a harmonious correlation, without shared rights and duties, the proper protection of the person and his inherent dignity is not guaranteed, and the

life of the community is not more human. One example: too often we witness the reduction of the great theme of humanity's aspiration to happiness to the search for psycho-physical gratification, which becomes the sole criterion for and measure of everyday "quality of life." In fact, to think about it, true well-being is what wells up from mutual love, from being well-loved, that is, loved and able to love, welcomed and welcoming, mercied" (as Pope Francis likes to say) and merciful.

The challenge that the lives of the more than seven billion people alive today offers us is that of the "us": that is, rethinking ourselves within a web of relationships that certainly marks, limits, and imposes itself, but precisely for this reason does not abandon the other, that continues to reproduce, remains in solidarity, and hopes for a salvation that can reconcile us, all together, in shared and hopeful life.

There are two initiatives that I believe are fundamental in this area. The first deals with relocating the questions that must be asked about human life into the broader global perspective that is obligatory today. It is objectively illogical and unproductive to deal with the analysis of individual questions without first placing them into a framework within which, as far as possible, the complexity of the current situation can be taken into account. Today, in respect for, in defense of, and in the promotion of human life, everything is under consideration: local symptoms cannot be treated if global causes are not taken into account. Global bioethics is the current vehicle for examining the human quality of the choices intended to protect and reaffirm the ultimate destiny of life: resistance to addressing the radical understanding of this activity would be a serious misunderstanding of the responsibility that faith has today.

The second initiative is instead an extension of that theme. In recent decades, quite rightly, attention has been given to conditions on our planet and to the consequences of human activity on the environment. Today, it is time to widen this attention, to turn from a consideration of our common home to concern for its inhabitants. Precisely because the habitability of the planet is put into crisis by the reckless and selfish actions of its inhabitants, the time has come to concern ourselves seriously with this behavior. We are called to rediscover the connection between the relationships among us on the one hand and our relationships with the places in which we live on the other.

Accompany in the passage of death

In the context of our discussions, a unifying social understanding of death is particularly important. What troubles me deeply about the demand for approval of the various modalities of euthanasia is not simply the fact that there is a desire to pervert the practice of medicine, which should be entirely dedicated to the patient's life and not to his death, but rather the fact that a person who, at a particularly serious and difficult time in life, asks to die.

The task of accompanying those who approach the sensitive passage from earthly life to a definitive encounter with Heavenly Father has an importance that is not limited to those immediately involved, but rather has much broader implications. It is the expression of a caring that finds the proper balance between the use of available medical resources and the search for the integral good of the person, in his familial and social context. In fact, the progress of science in the biomedical field risks making healing almost the main, if not the exclusive, purpose of contemporary clinical practice. This evolution brings with it the risk of focusing on the fight against disease and neglecting (or eliminating) the patient. At that point, we forget that the deepest meaning of therapeutic efforts (curing) is found in a relationship centered on taking care of the patient (caring). The tendency, especially in strongly technological contexts, is to look at the elimination of disease as the only objective to be pursued.

This attitude, in its turn, has two consequences. First, there is the risk of being unreasonable in the use of medical treatments, in order to obtain a healing that "must" be achieved at all costs, because in any failure to

heal is seen as a defeat for medicine. Doing this, however, opens the way to the stubbornly unreasonable adoption of excessive measures. We can end up inflicting suffering on the patient by using means that are invasive and losing sight of the integral good of the person. Doing everything possible (if this is understood as always using all available means) can mean doing too much (that is, an excess that damages the patient).

The second risk is abandonment of the patient when a cure is no longer possible. Once that happens, the relationship between the doctor and the patient ends, and medicine (society) no longer has anything to do for him. This is an unacceptable course of action. If we cannot heal, we can still relieve pain and suffering and continue to take care of that person. The incurable patient is never to be left uncared for. This total commitment to care springs from a conviction that every person is endowed with absolute dignity at every stage of his life. We cannot speak seriously about the humanization of medicine unless we have an effective understanding of the dignity of every unique human person, even when seriously ill or near death. The risk that the incurable patient runs today is the risk of abandonment due to the idea that "Oh well, there is nothing left to do" or that "It's not worth the effort." Another risk that is the other side of the coin is euthanasia, based on the idea that if there is nothing that can be done, we might as well "get it over with."

The firm refusal to adopt such courses of action finds a strong ally in palliative care. Recently, the international scientific community has approved (and the Academy for Life has been among the supporters of this development) a new definition of palliative care. It begins by stating that: "*Palliative care is the active holistic care of individuals across all ages with serious health-related suffering due to severe illnesses, and especially of those near the end of life. It aims to improve the quality of life of patients, their families and their caregivers.*"

Two aspects of this definition seem particularly significant: the first is the holistic approach that palliative care offers, which is the exact opposite of a medical reduction in care. We don't have patients, we have people, with all their physical, psychological, cultural and spiritual baggage. It is only within a framework that takes into account the whole of the human person, that technology, which is particularly efficient today, finds its true effectiveness, expresses its true strength.

The second aspect presented by the new definition of palliative care is that it recognizes, not only the person being treated but also family members and healthcare professionals, with the interesting proviso that they are not simply agents in the treatment of the person who is ill, they themselves are recipients of specific and caring attention. This formulation is crucial precisely because it keeps the suffering person, even one who is approaching death, within the circle of his fundamental family and social relationships. It is unthinkable to die alone! Experience has shown that the request for euthanasia or assisted suicide is in almost all cases the result of the patient being abandoned by society or the medical profession. To the contrary, once a true multi-disciplinary treatment protocol has been put in place and a network of affective and professional relationships created, it is very rare to encounter a death request.

Medicine must recognize the value of its fundamental vocation to "take care" and breathe new life into that vocation. We need to overcome the misunderstanding that equates "palliative" with "useless" or ineffective. This confusion explains some of the resistance that hinders the practice and acceptance of palliative care, even when its importance is recognized in principle.

Among the different levels and participants involved in a "taking care" that is reintroduced in a specific case, thanks in some way to palliative care, special attention is to be given to spiritual and religious questions and the persons (chaplains, spiritual counselors) who deal with them. For the believer, death always takes the form of a radical surrender to the mystery of God who does not abandon His children to the grave; moreover, the last days of the earthly life of every human person are a precious and irreplaceable opportunity to take stock of their existence and speak words of reconciliation and forgiveness. To assist and accompany a dying person (and that person's family!) in this twofold transition is a precious gesture that gives added value to even the final

moments of a person's life.

Dear friends, following the Lord Jesus, healer of bodies and souls, confers on us the responsibility for the lives of men and women of today, especially the youngest and poorest, and of future generations. This is a great challenge because the world we live in is complex and its horizons are vast. This responsibility cannot be reduced to a simple technological process, but I can assure you that Christianity can really, in our time and within a humanistic and spiritual framework that is essential and inescapable, help the whole of humanity to answer the challenges of life. And this is one of the reasons we are here today. Together.

Thank you.



COMECE: reflectie over Robotisering van het Leven

COMECE, 4 februari 2019

The quick development of new technologies based on Artificial Intelligence (AI) is leading [COMECE to publish the reflection "Robotisation of Life - Ethics in view of new challenges"](#). The document reaffirms the primacy of the human person and promotes a right-based and person-centred approach in reviewing the main principles that define the relationship between human persons and robots.

Produced by an [ad-hoc working group on robotisation](#) established by COMECE, the reflection comes in a moment of intense discussion about the importance of Artificial intelligence at the EU level.

This ongoing debate - in the context of which a [statement on "Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Autonomous Systems"](#) was issued by the [European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies](#), and the [first draft of "Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI"](#) was published by the recently established [High - Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence](#) - reveals the increasing number of urgent and complex moral questions in this domain. It also highlights the need for defining an ethical and legal framework for the design, production, use and governance of Artificial Intelligence.

Led by [Prof. Antonio Autiero](#) and enriched by diverse contributions of experts in theology, philosophy, law and engineering, the COMECE *ad-hoc* working group analysed the impacts of robotisation on the human person and on society as a whole and elaborated its reflection as an ethical step which can shape community life in our complex and globalised society in which actors are increasingly interconnected.

Acknowledging the necessity of clear guidance for the future of the next generations, and convinced that no unconditional or emphatic acceptance of Artificial Intelligence is possible, this COMECE reflection encourages a review of the current principles, reaffirming the primacy of the human, on the basis of the recognition of the human dignity of each person.

[COMECE Robotization of lifeDownload](#)



66e Wereld Lepradag: Einde aan discriminatie, stigmata en vooroordelen

Message from the Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development for the 66th World Leprosy Day (27 January 2019)

To the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences,
To the Bishops responsible for Health Pastoral Care,
To Men and Women Religious,
To social, healthcare and pastoral workers,
To volunteers and all persons of good will,

“Ending discrimination, stigma, and prejudice”

The medical community and society have seen great advances in the care of persons with Leprosy or Hansen’s disease in recent years. Diagnosis has improved and various treatments are more accessible than before, yet “this illness still continues to strike, especially the neediest and poorest of persons.”^[1] Over 200,000 new cases of Hansen’s disease are reported each year, with 94% representing 13 different countries.^[2] “It is important,” Pope Francis has stated, “to keep solidarity alive with these brothers and sisters, disabled as a result of this disease.”^[3] Jesus has given us a model for this care; what moved Christ deeply in the encounter with Leprosy must now motivate us in the Church and in society.

Multidrug therapy and skilled clinical service centres have proven effective in addressing this illness, but “no institution can by itself replace the human heart or human compassion when it is a matter of encountering the suffering of another.”^[4] The theme for this year’s World Leprosy Day, “Ending discrimination, stigma, and

prejudice,” teaches us clearly that one of the most critical needs in the lives of those experiencing this devastating disease is love.

Pope Francis, reflecting on Jesus’ healing of the person with leprosy in St. Mark’s Gospel (Mk 1:40-45), indicates God’s power and effectiveness in meeting our deepest desire to be loved and cared for. “God’s mercy,” he reminds us, “overcomes every barrier and Jesus’ hand touches” the person with leprosy. The Divine Physician wastes no time diagnosing the diseases that afflict us, and He desires nothing more than to treat them by drawing near to us. “He does not stand at a safe distance,” Francis continues, “and does not act by delegating, but places himself in direct contact with our contagion.”^[5]

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the canonization of St. Damien de Veuster. Born in Tremelo, Belgium in 1840, he was ordained a priest for the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. His missionary zeal led him to serve the isolated community of persons suffering from leprosy on the Hawaiian Island of Molokai. Attentive to the inspirations of his own heart and the requests of the sick persons he served, Damien chose to remain on the island and later contracted the disease himself. To a community that was used to being addressed from a distance, he preached the Gospel of mercy, indicating the nearness of God to “We lepers.” He died on the Island of Molokai in 1889, after 16 years of compassionate care that revealed the face of Christ to those he served.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis addresses the human tendency to embrace “an unruly activism” when it comes to serving the poor and those in need. What God calls each of us to, he explains, is “an attentiveness which considers the other ‘in a certain sense as one with ourselves.’”^[6] What we need today is “the grace to build a culture of encounter, of this fruitful encounter, this encounter that returns to each person their dignity as children of God, the dignity of living.”^[7] St. Francis of Assisi’s profound conversion included a grace-filled encounter with a person suffering from leprosy. In the end, he cared for that person—the leper who was a figure of Christ crucified—helped him, and kissed him. Every true encounter has the power to restore life and hope.

On a practical level, there are several ways that this encounter with those suffering from leprosy can be facilitated. Our health institutions and local health care systems, cooperating with government agencies and NGOs, can help form partnerships that will have a lasting effect on those afflicted with this illness. It will not be an individual effort that will bring about the necessary transformation of those struggling with leprosy, but a shared work of communion and solidarity.

Building awareness, particularly in those countries where leprosy is endemic, is also a necessary step on the road to progress. Here the power of education and the contribution of the academy of sciences can do much to assist those diagnosed with leprosy to find a way forward and to help our communities to extend a welcoming, healing hand. God always blesses such cooperation and the benefits for the sick are tangible.

Finally, communities themselves must continually strive to eliminate “discrimination, stigma, and prejudice,” by working towards the complete integration of the person in all of his or her bodily and spiritual dimensions. When addressing the great need for development on a global scale, St. Paul VI spoke of the development “of the whole man and of everyman.”^[8] When persons with leprosy find the clinical care they deserve being matched by the receptivity of a fraternal glance of love, and therefore social acceptance in accord with their spiritual dignity, then will integral human development find its purest expression in authentic healing.

I express my deepest gratitude to all who work so tirelessly to assist persons afflicted by leprosy and who provide such effective relief in their care for the sick. The financial support of many, along with the various contributions of science and research have also brought hope and assistance for countless persons afflicted with this illness. May the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick, continue to be with us as we seek to eliminate Hansen’s disease, as well as stigma, discrimination and prejudice in all its forms.

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson
Prefect

- [¹] Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 28 January 2018.
[²] World Health Organization, “*Global Leprosy Strategy 2016-2020*,” 3.
[³] Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 31 January 2016.
[⁴] Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance for Health Care Workers, “*New Charter for Health Care Workers*,” 3.
[⁵] Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 15 February 2015.
[⁶] Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 199.
[⁷] Pope Francis, “Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Casa Santa Marta,” 13 September 2016.
[⁸] Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 42.
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Mgr. V. Paglia: Palliatieve zorg is een basaal mensenrecht

Address of mgr. Vincenzo Paglia to the conference “Muslim and Christian Perspectives on Palliative Care and End of Life”, organized by the Pontifical Academy for Life and Georgetown University in Qatar Doha

January 22-23, 2019

I would like to join in the greeting offered by Dean Dallal and welcome you, both for myself and on behalf of the Pontifical Academy for Life, to our Conference dealing with “Muslim and Christian Perspectives on Palliative Care and the End of Life.” This conference is part of the Academy’s wider PAL-LIFE project that is dedicated to the increased acceptance and full implementation of palliative care around the world. I first of all thank Georgetown University in Washington DC, represented here by Doctor John Borelli, then Georgetown University in Qatar, represented by Dean Ahmad Dallal, and I thank Sultana Afdhal, Chief Executive Officer of the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) Community sponsored Qatar Foundation. Their contributions to the scientific and organizational aspects of this event have been invaluable. It is an honor to collaborate with such prestigious and culturally committed institutions.

Historically, the palliative care movement was born at the middle of the last century to give specific medical and social attention to incurable cancer patients and relieve the complex of symptoms that accompany the most advanced stages of the disease until death.

From the beginning, palliative care includes not only the management of symptoms and care for the needs of the patient, but also preparation for death, in the realization that it is not only inevitable for all, but that it must be dealt with in particular ways when a disease is incurable and the progression to death is unstoppable. Palliative care also includes the patient's family, or those others who are closest, as beneficiaries of accompaniment.

We are aware of the importance that palliative care can assume, inside and outside medicine, in times like ours where we witness marginalization, discrimination, and the elimination of the weakest of human beings, such as those suffering from a serious, disabling or incurable disease. We want to oppose the "throw-away culture"—and we know how pervasive it is in most of contemporary society— by promoting a "palliative care culture," that overcomes the attraction of euthanasia and assisted suicide, and that leads to the greatest possible acceptance of a culture of care that enables us to accompany the dying with love until the end.

To accomplishing this, I think we must reflect as deeply as possible about the great anthropological questions and enormous ethical challenges we face in dealing with the end of earthly life. For this reason, our efforts in this Conference will be directed to exploring what palliative care can offer to those human needs that arise from the power of the human spirit. We will take consider not only clinical experience, but also the contributions that science and the deathless truths that religions preach about mystery of humanity.

Today the palliative care scientific community recognizes the important role that religions play in advancing this form of accompaniment of the sick or dying, given the ability of religions to reach the peripheries of humanity, those who in every community are in some way most in need. While this is certainly true, religions are and do much more. Religions are not only able to facilitate a greater presence of palliative care where it is needed, but they are one of the true component forces of palliative care itself. Total attention to the person is made much more difficult by economic hegemonies that colonize contemporary cultures and societies. The result of this situation can be only a culture, or rather anti-culture, of wastefulness. An understanding of human existence and of reality that values religious experience allows us to see and affirm a good that surpasses and is not limited by economic calculus. Recognition of the integral openness of the person to transcendence makes it possible to state that in human life, even when it is fragile and seems to be defeated by illness, there is inalienable value. Palliative care represents a vision of man that is preached and protected by the great religious traditions. In terms of motivation and inspiration, this is the most profound and trenchant contribution palliative care can receive.

Palliative care today represents for all of us a concrete initiative within a climate of vanishing love for humanity and a crisis of social ties that beginning with a generic disengagement is now reaching a real social disintegration that involves all social structures, beginning with the family. *Societas* as a communion of persons, no matter what form it takes, is necessary for self-realization of the individual. While the individual is not the servant of society, society is not merely an instrument for the self-realization of the individual. It is rather a condition that allows for the such realization. It is difficult to make what is human develop in a society where relationships are mummified. The ego, as it is more and more conceived of by postmodernity, becomes an force for dissolution, not for bonding; exclusion, not inclusion; fluidity, not consolidation. It is therefore essential to foster not only problem-solving, which can be superficial, but also the lasting dream of a new humanism for all, and of universal brotherhood. Reinventing a new brotherhood is the anthropological and social challenge of our day and is the specific charge that Pope Francis gave to the Pontifical Academy for Life on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of its creation, which will be celebrated on February eleventh. The text of the Holy Father's letter is in your folders. Here too, religions have a very special word to say.

Dependency—a human condition that is a focus of religions and palliative care—is indeed human and should be appreciated, when freely chosen, as an inalienable human value. The ego finds its fulfillment in relationship, in the "we." The "we" is no less innate in us than the "I." It is clear that our existence is marked by a permanent

movement from the “I” to the “we.” Humanism must necessarily be marked by solidarity. The task of “caring for” the other, and for creation, is very different from the false, predatory and destructive attitude so often adopted by man—not only towards nature and the earth, but also against brothers, especially when they are perceived as obstacles or no longer useful. The palliative care community bears witness to a new way of living that focuses on the person and his good, to which not only the individual but the whole community tends. In this community the good of each person is pursued as a good that benefits everyone. Palliative care is a human right, and various international programs are working to implement it; but the basic human right is to continue to be recognized and accepted as a member of society, as part of a community.

The Conference which we are about to begin will open with the signing, by me and Sultana Afdhal, of a Joint Declaration on the End of Life and Palliative Care, issued by WISH and the Pontifical Academy for Life, two institutions of different faiths, but sharing the task of study, scientific advancement and cultural development; two academic institutions that specifically in palliative care find a fruitful ground for encounter and cooperation in order to reach a new humanism for the benefit of all persons and all peoples. In this context I would like to express my appreciation for the scientific and cultural contribution that WISH has offered to the international community through its activities, not least for the work of the group on “Islamic Ethics and Palliative Care” led by Dr. Mohammed Ghaly, who presented its results during the Summit celebrated here in Doha last November. This was a valuable starting point for our work.

I hope that these two days can make an effective contribution to making palliative care—which is called on every day to face great challenges in accompanying the dying—more well-known and fully accepted by public opinion, and can give rise to a fruitful new humanism for the benefit of all. I am sure that we can work together effectively and learn much from each other. I wish everyone a very profitable two days.



Joint declaration on End of life and Palliative care

While we applaud medical science for advances to prevent and cure disease, we recognize that every life will ultimately end in death. For many, however, death is not considered as an unrewarding journey; it is the passing through a door that opens to eternal life in the hereafter.

The Promotion of Palliative Care

We encourage palliative care to support and provide companionship during illness and at the end of life. The basic philosophy of palliative care is to achieve the best quality of life for patients suffering incurable, progressive illness even when their illness cannot be cured. Palliative care is a health care specialty that is both

a philosophy of care and an organized, highly structured system for delivering care. Palliative care services are critical for realizing the most ancient mission of medicine “to care even when it cannot cure.” Palliative care is an expression of the truly human devotion to taking care of one another, especially of those who suffer. We should encourage professionals and students to specialize in this type of assistance which is no less valuable though it may not be considered “life-saving.” Palliative care accomplishes something vitally important: it values the person.

Noting that the scriptures of faith traditions emphasize divine purpose for all persons, regardless of health, we proclaim that:

- We reject any form of pressure upon the dying to end their lives.
- We encourage and support the concept of palliative care in all places and for everyone.
- We affirm laws and policies that protect the rights and dignity of the dying.
- Even when staving off death seems futile or unreasonably burdensome to continue, we must seek to offer comfort care: effective pain relief, companionship, and support the patient in the hard and sacred work of preparing for death.
- We as a society must assure that patients’ desire not to be a burden does not tempt them to choose death rather than receiving the care and support that could enable them to live out their remaining time in comfort and peace.
- We believe that all health care workers are bound to create the conditions by which religious assistance is assured to anyone who asks for it, either expressly or implicitly – We commit to using our knowledge and research to shape policies that encompass social, physical and spiritual care to provide more informed care for those facing grave illness and death.
- We commit to engaging the community regarding the issues of bioethics as well as the techniques of compassionate companionship for those who are suffering and dying.
- We commit to raise public awareness about palliative care through teaching resources and adult programs to consider treatments for the suffering and the dying in the context of religious affirmations of God’s providence and hope.
- We commit to providing succor to the family and loved ones of the dying

Doha, January 22 2019



Voor niets hebt gij ontvangen, voor niets moet gij geven

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

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

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

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

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

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

Amid today’s culture of waste and indifference, I would point out that “gift” is the category best suited to challenging today’s individualism and social fragmentation, while at the same time promoting new relationships and means of cooperation between peoples and cultures. Dialogue – the premise of gift – creates possibilities for human growth and development capable of breaking through established ways of exercising power in society. “Gift” means more than simply giving presents: it involves the giving of oneself, and not simply a transfer of property or objects. “Gift” differs from gift-giving because it entails the free gift of self and the desire to build a relationship. It is the acknowledgement of others, which is the basis of society. “Gift” is a reflection of God’s love, which culminates in the incarnation of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

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

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

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

for us today an eloquent witness to God's closeness to the poorest of the poor" (*Homily*, 4 September 2016).

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

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

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

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

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

Vatican City, 25 November 2018

Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

FRANCIS



Abortus en euthanasie zijn ernstig kwaad tegen het Leven

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

Pope Francis
6 January 2019

The Human Community

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

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

A passionate and productive history

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

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

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

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

Responsible listening

4. Christians, hearing the cry of suffering peoples, need to react against the negativity that foments division, indifference and hostility. They must do so not simply for their own sake, but for that of everyone. And they

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

A difficult task for the Church

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

Building universal fraternity

6. It is time for a new vision aimed at promoting a humanism of fraternity and solidarity between individuals and peoples. We know that the faith and love needed for this covenant draw their power from the mystery of history’s redemption in Jesus Christ, a mystery hidden in God even before the creation of the world (cf. *Eph 1:7-10*; *3:9-11*; *Col 1:13-14*). We know too that human minds and hearts are not completely closed or insensible to the seeds of faith and the works of this universal fraternity sown by the Gospel of the kingdom of God. We must once again bring this fraternity to the fore. For it is one thing to feel forced to live together, but something entirely different to value the richness and beauty of the seeds of common life needing to be sought out and cultivated. It is one thing to resign oneself to seeing life as a battle against constant foes, but something entirely different to see our human family as a sign of the abundant life of God the Father and the promise of a common destiny redeemed by the infinite love that even now sustains it in being.

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

Recognizing the signs of hope

8. In this mission, we are encouraged by signs that God is at work in our time. These signs need to be

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

The future of the Academy

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

10. We know that the threshold of basic respect for human life is being crossed, and brutally at that, not only by instances of individual conduct but also by the effects of societal choices and structures. Business strategies and the pace of technological growth now, as never before, condition biomedical research, educational priorities, investment decisions and the quality of interpersonal relationships. The possibility of directing economic development and scientific progress towards the covenant between man and woman, towards caring for our common humanity and towards the dignity of the human person, surely arises from a love for creation that faith helps us to deepen and illuminate. The prospect of a global bioethics, with a broad vision and a concern for the impact of the environment on life and health, offers a significant opportunity for strengthening the new covenant between the Gospel and creation.

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

and are violated in much of the world". Among those rights, the Pope emeritus points to "lack of food, drinkable water, basic instruction and elementary health care" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 43).

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

13. The kind of medicine, economy, technology and politics that develop within the modern city of man must also, and above all, remain subject to the judgment rendered by the peripheries of the earth. Indeed, the many extraordinary resources made available to human beings by scientific and technological research could overshadow the joy of fraternal sharing and the beauty of common undertakings, unless they find their meaning in advancing that joy and beauty. We should keep in mind that fraternity remains the unkept promise of modernity. The universal spirit of fraternity that grows by mutual trust - within modern civil society and between peoples and nations - appears much weakened. The strengthening of fraternity, generated in the human family by the worship of God in spirit and truth, is the new frontier of Christianity. Every detail of the life of the body and of the soul, in which the love and redemptive power of the new creation shine forth within us, leads to amazement before the miracle of a resurrection in the very process of occurring (cf. *Col* 3:1-2). May the Lord grant that we multiply these miracles! May the witness of Saint Francis of Assisi, who saw himself as the brother of every creature on earth and in heaven, inspire us by its perennial relevance. May the Lord prepare you for this new phase of your mission, your lamps filled with the oil of the Spirit to light your path and to guide your steps. How beautiful indeed are the feet of those who bring the joyful proclamation of God's love for the life of all those who dwell upon our land (cf. *Is* 52: 7; *Rom* 10:15).



Doodstraf is tegen de waardigheid van het leven dat heilig is

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

Pope Francis
17 December 2018

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is for this reason that the new version of the *Catechism* implies that we should also assume our responsibility for the past and that we acknowledge that the acceptance of this type of penalty was due to the mentality of an era that was more legalistic than Christian, which held sacred the value of laws lacking in humanity and mercy. The Church could not maintain a neutral stance in the face of the current demands of reaffirmation of personal dignity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Love toward oneself remains a fundamental principle of morality. Therefore it is legitimate to insist on respect for one's own right to life, even when doing so requires one to deal a lethal blow to one's aggressor (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2264). Legitimate defense is not a right but a duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others. Preserving the common good requires rendering the unjust aggressor unable to inflict harm. To this end, those holding legitimate authority must repel all aggression, even by armed force, to the extent necessary to protect their own lives and those of the people entrusted to their charge (cf. *ibid.*, n. 2265). As a result, any use of deadly force which is not strictly necessary to this end can be regarded only as an illegal execution, a crime by the state.

Any defensive action, in order to be legitimate, must be necessary and measured. As St Thomas Aquinas taught,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Responsum op een vraag over de legitimiteit van hysterectomie in sommige gevallen

Op 31 juli 1993 publiceerde de Congregatie voor de Geloofsleer *Antwoorden op vragen die werden voorgesteld met betrekking tot "baarmoederisolatie" en aanverwante zaken*. Volgens deze antwoorden, die hun volledige geldigheid behouden, is het verwijderen van de baarmoeder (hysterectomie) moreel toegestaan als het een ernstig actueel gevaar voor het leven of de gezondheid van de moeder vormt. Niet toelaatbaar is echter de vorm van directe sterilisatie door de verwijdering van de baarmoeder en de afbinden van de eileiders (uteriene isolatie), met het doel een mogelijke zwangerschap te voorkomen, in het geval deze een risico voor de moeder met zich mee kan brengen.

In de afgelopen jaren zijn aan de Heilige Stoel een aantal welomschreven gevallen voorgelegd die zich ook bezighouden met hysterectomie, maar die verschillen van de in 1993 onderzochte gevallen, voor zover het om situaties gaat waarbij voortplanting in het geheel niet meer mogelijk is. De vraag en het antwoord, die nu samen met een toelichting worden gepubliceerd, verwijzen naar deze nieuwe situatie en vullen de antwoorden uit 1993 aan.

Vraag:

Wanneer de baarmoeder onomkeerbaar in een zodanige staat is bevonden dat deze niet langer geschikt is voor voortplanting en medische deskundigen de zekerheid hebben bereikt dat een eventuele zwangerschap een spontane abortus tot stand zal brengen voordat de foetus in staat is tot een levensvatbare toestand te komen, is het dan geoorloofd om het te verwijderen (hysterectomie)?

Reactie:

Ja, omdat het geen sterilisatie betreft.

Illustratieve notitie

De vraag heeft betrekking op enkele extreme gevallen die de laatste jaren aan de Congregatie voor de Geloofsleer zijn voorgelegd en die betrekking hebben op andere situaties dan die welke op 31 juli 1993 negatief werd beantwoord. Wat in wezen de vraag die nu wordt voorgelegd onderscheid, is de zekerheid, verkregen door ervaren artsen, dat een mogelijke zwangerschap spontaan zou eindigen voordat de foetus levensvatbaar is. Dit gaat niet over grotere of kleinere moeilijkheden of risico's, maar over een echtpaar dat zich niet kan vermenigvuldigen.

Het eigenlijke doel van sterilisatie is om de functie van de voortplantingsorganen te buiten werking te stellen. De ontoelaatbaarheid van sterilisatie bestaat in de weigering van het krijgen van kinderen: het is een daad

tegen de bonum-prolis. In het geval dat door deze vraag beoordeeld wordt, is het echter bekend dat de voortplantingsorganen niet in staat zijn om een ontvangen kind levensvatbaar te maken, dat wil zeggen, dat het zijn natuurlijke voortplantingsfunctie niet kan vervullen. Het doel van het procreatieve proces is om een kind ter wereld te brengen, maar hier is de geboorte van een levende foetus biologisch niet mogelijk. Daarom hebben we het niet over een gebrekkig of riskant functioneren van de voortplantingsorganen, maar we worden hier geconfronteerd met een situatie waarin het op natuurlijke wijze tot het einde uitdragen en een levend kind ter wereld brengen niet haalbaar is.

De medische interventie kan niet worden beschouwd als anti-procreatief, omdat het een objectieve situatie is waarin geen procreatie en dus geen antiprocreatieve actie mogelijk is. Het verwijderen van voortplantingsorganen die niet in staat zijn om een zwangerschap te voldragen, kan dus niet worden omschreven als een directe sterilisatie, die als doel en als middel op zich niet toelaatbaar is.

Het probleem van de criteria om te beoordelen of de zwangerschap wel of niet zou kunnen doorgaan, is een medisch probleem. Vanuit moreel oogpunt moet men zich afvragen of de hoogste mate van zekerheid die het geneesmiddel kan bereiken, is bereikt, en in die zin is het gegeven antwoord geldig voor de vraag, zoals te goeder trouw is voorgesteld.

Bovendien betekent het antwoord op de vraag niet dat de beslissing om een hysterectomie uit te voeren altijd de best mogelijke is, maar alleen dat het een moreel toelaatbare beslissing is onder de bovengenoemde voorwaarden zonder andere opties (bijvoorbeeld beroep te doen op onvruchtbare perioden of volledige onthouding). Het is de beslissing van de echtgenoten om, in samenspraak met artsen en hun geestelijke leidsman, het te volgen pad te kiezen, door de algemene criteria voor het beoordelen van medische interventies per geval en hun omstandigheden toe te passen.

Tijdens de audiëntie verleend aan de Kardinaal prefect van de Congregatie voor de Geloofsleer, heeft Paus Franciscus dit antwoord goedgekeurd en heeft hij er de publicatie van bevolen.

Rome, op de zetel van de Congregatie voor de Geloofsleer, 10 december 2018.

Luis F. Card. Ladaria, S.J.

Prefect

+ Giacomo Morandi

Titulair aartsbisschop van Cerveteri

Secretaris



Drugsgebruik schadelijk voor mens en maatschappij

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

Pope Francis

1 december 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

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

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

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

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

pathologies.

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

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