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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 171020d

Friday 20.10.2017

Audience with participants in the meeting organised by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences

At 12.30 today, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the meeting organised by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Illustrious Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cordially greet the Members of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and those who are participating in these study days, as well as the institutions that support the initiative. This draws attention to a need of great current relevance, such as that of developing new models of cooperation between the market, the State and civil society, in relation to the challenges of our time. In this occasion, I would like to focus briefly on two specific causes that increase exclusion and the existence of existential peripheries.

The first is the *endemic and systemic increase of inequality and the exploitation of the planet*, which is greater than the increase in income and wealth. However inequality and exploitation are not inevitable, nor are they an historic constant. They are not inevitable because they depend not only on different individual forms of behaviour, but also the economic rules that a society decides to adopt. We can think of energy production, the job market, the banking system, welfare, the tax system, the schools sector. According to how these sectors are planned, there are different consequences on the way in which income and wealth are distributed among those who have participated in their production. If the aim of profit prevails, democracy tends to become a plutocracy in which inequalities grow, as does the exploitation of the planet. I repeat: this is not a necessity; there are periods in which, in some countries, inequalities diminish and the environment is better protected.

The other cause of exclusion is *work that is not worthy of the human person*. Yesteryear, in the age of *Rerum novarum* (1891), Today, beyond this sacrosanct demand, we also ask ourselves why we still have not

succeeded in putting into practice the content of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*: “The entire process of productive work ... must be adapted to the needs of the person and to his way of life” (no. 67) and, we can add with the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, with respect for creation, our common home.

The creation of new work needs, especially in this time, people who are open and enterprising, fraternal relations, and research and investment in the development of clean energy to face the challenges of climate change. This is concretely possible today. It is necessary to divest ourselves of the pressures of public and private lobbies which defend sectorial interests, and also to overcome forms of spiritual sloth. It is necessary for political action to be placed truly at the service of the human person, of the common good and of respect for nature.

The challenge to meet is therefore that of endeavouring courageously to go beyond the model of social order currently prevalent, transforming it from within. We must ask the market not only to be efficient in the production of wealth and in ensuring sustainable growth, but also of placing itself in the service of integral human development. We cannot sacrifice the “golden calf” of our times – fundamental values such as democracy, justice, freedom, the family, creation – on the altar of efficiency. Substantially, we must aim at “civilising” the market, with a view to an ethics that is friendly to man and his environment.

A similar issue is the rethinking of the figure and role of the nation-State in a new context such as that of globalisation, which has profoundly altered the previous international order. The State cannot be conceived of as the only and exclusive holder of the common good, without permitting intermediary bodies in civil society to freely express all their potential. This would be a violation of the principle of subsidiarity which, combined with that of solidarity, constitutes a fundamental pillar of the social doctrine of the Church. Here the challenge is how to reconcile individual rights with the common good.

In this sense, the specific role of civil society may be compared to that which Charles Péguy attributed to the virtue of hope: like a younger sister in the middle of another two virtues – faith and charity – holding them by the hand and pulling them ahead. This is how the position of civil society seems to me: “pulling” ahead the State and the market so that they rethink their reason for being and their way of working.

Dear friends, I thank you for your attention to these reflections. I invoke the Lord’s blessing upon you, your loved ones and your work.
