

Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation General Assembly & International Conference Vatican City 15-16-17 May 2025

CONCEPT PAPER

The Ethical Foundations for Overcoming Polarizations and Rebuilding Global Governance: How Catholic Social Thought Contributes to Responsible Leadership Dialogue and Cooperation

The present crisis must be seen in the context of an international order, built over time from the end of WWII onwards, which appears now at risk of collapsing. Indeed, some analysts think that it has already collapsed. There are multiple reasons for this momentous collapse; they are of an economic, social, financial, environmental and geopolitical nature.

But **ethics** in the crisis play a fundamental role. The ethical principles that have underpinned the international order of the last 80 years are today **under attack**. Please note that those principles largely reflect the universal values of Catholic Social Thought, from common good to solidarity, from integral human development to integral ecology, from subsidiarity and poverty eradication to human rights, freedom and supranationalism.

The 2025 International Conference and General Assembly of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation aim at identifying and discussing those ethical principles, showing that their abandonment, or lack of dedication in applying those principles, causes **growing polarization** and conflicts threatening peace and development. We refer basically to the shift from multilateralism to unilateralism, from a rules-based order to a power-based (dis)order, from agreed dispute settlement mechanisms to self-justice and recourse to violence and war for settling disagreement, from human rights to discrimination abuse and social exclusion, from liberal democracy to illiberal autocracy, etc. Those shifts bring about insecurity, uncertainty and fear and call for a new focus on responsible leadership in the economy, society and international relations. They require rebuilding and consolidating the ethical foundations of global and local governance. Positivism is not sufficient. We need a normative approach oriented towards the future and the common good. And we need to “walk the talk” and change actual behavior. To this purpose, drawing on Catholic Social Thought, its long and rich tradition, its on-going progress and

innovative contributions, under the guidance of **Pope Francis magisterium**, provides a strong basis and insightful inspiration. Religions and interreligious dialogue can be a decisive factor for overcoming polarizations and doing away with fanaticism and radicalism. From His hospital bed, Pope Francis pointed out that **“religions can rekindle the desire for fraternity and justice, the hope for peace”**, which requires “commitment, work, silence, and words” and for people to be “united in this effort” (2 March 2025).

In the first Session of the Conference, we revisit the **ethical foundations of global governance** and the need to revitalize diplomacy and international organizations. “War – the Pope said- only devastates communities and the environment, without offering solutions to conflicts ... diplomacy and international organizations are in need of new vitality and credibility” (ibidem).

We focus then on Europe, its Christian roots, its aspiration to play a global role based on soft power and universal values, raising the question of how such an approach can survive in a world ever more driven by hard power and sectional interests. And how far national Governments are ready to abandon old nationalist habits and adopt the supranational dimension.

In the second Session, we look at the *problematique* from the point of view of the specific situation in the different continents: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the so-called Western World. This is necessary, because the moral messages required for dialogue and cooperation cannot be transplanted from one continent to the other. They must be looked for and found in the **autochthonous seeds of universalism** (Catholicism) present in each and all the different cultures. In essence, this is the “inculturation” approach to Evangelization that Pope Francis has consistently developed throughout His teaching.

In the third and final Session, we learn of the recent developments in the **theology of the Mediterranean** and from the Mediterranean, and their implications for Abrahamic dialogue and socio-economic cooperation in the Mediterranean and from the Mediterranean. The FCAPP is a community of common values that promotes responsible leadership and social friendship. With its diverse skills and professional expertise, and its 40 local chapters spread out all over the world, together with its stakeholders participating at the Conference, the Foundation will be called upon to be “pilgrim of hope”, taking from its members’ shores to the Jubilee dedication and commitment to invest in Catholic Social Teaching, make it real life, thereby overcoming polarization, and **promoting dialogue and development**.

Rome, 1 April 2025

For information and registration, see www.centessimusannus.org