



2025 General Assembly and International Conference Keynote Address of Archbishop Giordano Piccinotti

Most Eminent Cardinals, Most Reverend Excellencies, Dear President, Esteemed Assembly Participants,

I extend my fraternal greetings to all of you, thanking the President of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation, Prof. Paolo Garonna, for the kind invitation to address this annual International Conference. The recent election of Pope Leo XIV to the pontifical throne is an event that offers renewed inspiration to reflect on the continuity of the Magisterium and the relevance of the Church's Social Doctrine. The name chosen by the new Pontiff explicitly recalls Leo XIII and his historic Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* (May 15, 1891), which opened a new horizon for the Church's engagement with social issues, placing the dignity of human work, distributive justice, and the need for harmonious cooperation between classes at the center.

Is a new *Rerum Novarum* on the horizon? With all the new crises, the new poor, environmental, social, and digital inequalities, and artificial intelligence, a renewed commitment from the Church, particularly from the laity, is emerging. These new crises are also new challenges and opportunities for us as committed Christians.

The theme chosen for my address this year is characterized by its engagement "in the world," marked by concrete practicality: "How can we strengthen the cohesion and motivation of FCAPP members and their stakeholders? How can we provide leadership in societies and political systems marked by highly polarized and transactional economies? How can we address the challenges and opportunities of 21st-century evangelization?" These are three important questions, which I will attempt to address in the time allotted by analyzing, from a historical perspective, the Church's Social Doctrine as it has been handed down through over a century of pontifical Magisterium.

The task of the Church's Social Doctrine is to reflect on human and social realities in light of faith and ecclesiastical tradition, with the aim of evaluating their coherence with the Gospel and guiding Christian behavior. It is not an ideology but a moral theology (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41).

How can we strengthen the cohesion and motivation of FCAPP members and their stakeholders?

To strengthen the cohesion and motivation of the members of the Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice Foundation (FCAPP) and their stakeholders, it is essential to integrate the principles of the Church's Social Doctrine with concrete operational strategies. Established by St. John Paul II, the FCAPP aims to promote knowledge of Christian social doctrine among individuals distinguished by their entrepreneurial and professional commitment in society through:

1. **Continuous formation and shared spirituality.** Formation is a cornerstone for group cohesion. These formative moments, inspired by the principles of the Church's Social Doctrine, foster a deep understanding of contemporary challenges and strengthen the shared identity among members.
2. **Dialogue, inclusion, and network enhancement.** Promoting dialogue across different sectors of society is crucial. Initiatives like the "Dialogues for a Fully Sustainable Finance" have already been launched to combine effectiveness and efficiency with integral sustainability, inclusion, and ethics. These initiatives foster

collaboration between members and stakeholders, creating a sense of belonging and shared goals.

3. **Ethical leadership and witness.** Leadership within the FCAPP should be inspired by Christian values of service and witness. Pope Francis has emphasized the importance of leadership that does not seek mere authority but establishes its credibility through dialogue and shared objectives.
4. **Concrete projects and social impact.** Implementing concrete projects that embody the principles of the Church's Social Doctrine is fundamental. The FCAPP promotes initiatives to enhance the presence and work of the Catholic Church in various societal spheres.
5. **Effective and transparent communication.** Using modern, accessible communication tools fosters active participation and a sense of belonging.

In summary, strengthening cohesion and motivation within the FCAPP requires ongoing commitment to formation, dialogue, leadership, concrete projects, and effective communication. These elements, rooted in the Church's Social Doctrine, are essential for addressing contemporary challenges and promoting the common good.

How can we provide leadership in societies and political systems characterized by highly polarized and transactional economies?

To address this second question, Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* offers guidance, emphasizing that the human family can only be saved by remaining united around core principles: protecting the family and its educational mission (*FT*, 114), combating poverty and inequalities (*FT*, 115), recognizing personal rights (*FT*, 121), and developing an ethic in international relations (*FT*, 126). Pope Francis warns that "destroying someone's self-esteem is an easy way to dominate them" (*FT*, 52). A true Christian leader is not an intermediary but a mediator: one who unites, guides, and serves, willing to offer themselves for the common good and step back when necessary (*FT*, 159). The true Christian leader is a "witness." "To disappear so that Christ may remain" (Pope Leo XIV, Homily, Sistine Chapel, May 9, 2025).

The world needs leaders capable of dialogue, listening, and intergenerational vision, whose authority is rooted not in power but in service, as true peacemakers (*FT*, 284). Therefore, leadership:

- Is not just personal coherence but the public and responsible expression of one's values, even when inconvenient.
- Is acting selflessly, even in a system that rewards calculation.
- Is resisting the culture of compromise, offering alternative models of commitment and service.
- Is rejecting convenient neutrality in the face of systemic injustices.

How can we address the challenges and opportunities of 21st-century evangelization?

St. John Paul II, in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, states that the Church, "expert in humanity," does not propose political systems but dedicates itself to proclaiming the Gospel to foster integral human development (*SRS*, 41). Evangelization is inseparable from promoting justice. Proclaiming the truth about Christ is, in itself, an evangelizing act. It is not just about denouncing but about witnessing through life. As John Paul II reminds us, "proclamation is always more important than denunciation" (*SRS*, 42), and Christians are called to witness Christ's charity, especially toward the poorest and most marginalized.

Pope Benedict XVI, in *Caritas in Veritate*, continues this reflection, emphasizing the need to avoid utopian or ideological drifts. Evangelization is most effective when grounded in an integral ethic of life and coherent action for justice, peace, and authentic human development (*CV*, 15).

- In a polarized society, words lose credibility: only coherent action can restore trust.
- Transactional governance prioritizes the short term: witness offers a moral horizon, resituating decisions within collective history.
- When everything is perceived as self-interest, the gratuitousness of a witnessing act breaks through prevailing cynicism.

I think of some witnesses of our time:

- Václav Havel: leadership as the power of the powerless — truth as a form of resistance.
- Nelson Mandela: the coherence between forgiveness and justice as a disarming witness in a polarized context.
- Pope Francis: symbolic and gestural language as a form of witnessing leadership in a clericalized and politicized world.

Conclusion

I conclude my address by reminding us all that we are called to serve the Church in a time marked by radical individualism and widespread relativism, in a culture that marginalizes absolute truths and seeks fleeting consensus, even at the cost of diluting the Gospel. Pope Leo XIII left us a legacy of robust formation for the faithful, authentic sacramental life, and deep communion with the Pope and the Magisterium. This is the foundation for addressing complex challenges with a spirit of fidelity, without yielding to easy solutions.

As St. John Paul II reminded us in *Centesimus Annus*, fidelity to the Magisterium is an opening to the world, not a closure: “The social doctrine is built on the foundation handed down by the Apostles to the Fathers of the Church and then received and deepened by the great Christian Doctors. [...] It is witnessed by the Saints and those who gave their lives for Christ the Savior in the field of justice and peace” (CA, 3; CV, 12).

“They are not of the world, as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). We must learn to be in the world without being of the world; to live in the flesh but not according to the flesh; to inhabit the earth as citizens of heaven. Thus, the soul in the body: it is not generated by it but gives it life (*Epistle to Diognetus*, 2nd century).

To be for the world, rediscovering the mission of the laity as reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council and the Pontifical Magisterium. To be for the world, effective witnesses of the Word, witnesses of Hope.

“Hope has nothing to do with optimism. Hope is not the conviction that what we are doing will succeed. Hope is the certainty that what we are doing has meaning, whether it succeeds or not.” (Václav Havel)

Thank you all.

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