

PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FOUNDATION: *Centesimus Annus* in the Years Ahead
A Summary of the Gathering of Italian Ecclesial Assistants and Referents in Florence
(April 13, 2026)

Italian Ecclesial Assistants and Referents of CAPPF gathered at the Episcopal Seminary in Florence on April 13. The aim, as set out by the President, Professor Paolo Garonna, was to continue the synodal reflection begun at last year's International Conference - in this case, bringing together voices from across Italy to pray, listen, share insights, and discern issues or future trajectories.

The Foundation finds itself at a generational moment. Not a moment of crisis, but an inflection points to draw on the spirit of its founding pioneers while allowing the enduring insights of *Centesimus Annus* to illuminate, in fresh ways, the realities now shrouding our world. The questions we face today - shaped by technological transformation, ecological strain, and geopolitical fragmentation - differ in form from those of thirty-five years ago yet call for the same depth of anthropological and moral discernment. Professor Garonna invited participants to use their time in working groups for a candid assessment of the Foundation's situation, identifying opportunities as well as challenges both within the organization and in the broader signs of the times shaping our world and the life of the Church.

Monsignor Migliavacca offered the spiritual foundation for this shared work. Reflecting on the parable of the yeast in Matthew 13, he recalled that, in the logic of God's Kingdom, small initiatives - entrusted to a small group - can, by grace, bear fruit far beyond human expectation. Yet this vocation requires relationships marked by honesty, frankness, and genuine openness. This is what the synodal path calls listening - not only to one another, but with hearts attentive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit speaking through the words of others.

What followed in the five working groups gave concrete expression to this invitation. From different starting points emerged a host of new questions or practices for the CAPPF to consider. Importantly, several intuitions came to light across multiple groups, which are of resonance to the Foundation in this moment of transition and regeneration.

One such intuition concerns language. Participants returned repeatedly to the difficulty - and necessity - of expressing the Social Doctrine of the Church in ways that can be received within the worlds the Foundation seeks to engage. The issue is not the adequacy of the tradition, but its intelligibility in contexts shaped by new forms of knowledge and communication. To draw fruitfully from *Centesimus Annus* today is not simply to repeat its formulations, but to allow its vision of the human person, work, and economic life to take renewed expression. This calls for a language both faithful and accessible, capable of sustaining depth and encounter.

Closely linked to exploring this prophetic grammar is the presence of younger generations. Their importance was widely affirmed, yet the discussion underscored that the imperative is not for only for recruitment but for organizational renewal - not only to widen inclusion, but to entrust the Foundation's mission to those responsible for shaping the future. Younger Catholics already inhabit the environments academic, entrepreneurial, technological - where the most pressing questions are taking shape. More than being recipients of tradition, they are its potential mediators. To engage them fully is also to allow the Foundation itself to be renewed through their participation.

A second convergence concerns the outward orientation of the Foundation. There was clear awareness that remaining primarily within internal exchanges risks limiting the reach of even the most valuable reflections. Proposals to strengthen partnerships - with ecclesial institutions,

organizations beyond the Catholic sphere, and the worlds of business and research- point toward a more relational presence.

This is not simply a matter of visibility. It reflects a shift from understanding the Foundation as a circle of exchange to recognizing it as a node within a wider network committed, in different ways, to human dignity and the common good. Such a shift requires greater intentionality: mapping relationships, developing shared initiatives, and fostering sustained collaboration, particularly with the Global South, while maintaining clarity of identity.

Within this outward movement, practical considerations were also shared. Financial sustainability cannot be separated from the quality of relationships the Foundation cultivates. Contributions - whether through membership, donations, or partnerships - depend on the trust earned in the seriousness of the mission, the coherence of its expression, and the fruitfulness of its initiatives. Growth, therefore, must remain aligned with the integrity of the Foundation's purpose.

Another theme shared by multiple groups concerns the substantive issues the Foundation is called to address. The discussions highlighted the increasingly complex terrain of today's social question: artificial intelligence, technological systems, ecological degradation, generational transitions in economic life, and a broader crisis of trust affecting institutions and public discourse.

In this regard, the enduring insights of Centesimus Annus offer orientation, with principles for guiding discernment rather than ready-made solutions or prescriptions. The dignity of the human person, the centrality of work, the role of intermediate bodies such as multilateral institutions, and the ordering of economic life to the common good remain as relevant as ever. The task is to bring these principles into engagement with realities that are often fatigued, suspicious of moral enquiry, and without reference points for encounter or dialogue.

Running through the groups' reflections was also the quieter yet decisive theme summoning formation. Whether in relation to younger members, leadership in professional contexts, or engagement with external partners, formation emerged as a common thread - not one more activity to add to the "to-do list", the condition for integral personal development that makes the other qualities of integral ecology and integral disarmament possible.

Formation in this sense is much more than a transaction of facts or knowledge. It cultivates the ability to read, personally, and with others, the current reality with sufficient depth to forth discernment from within complexity, to act with responsibility. Formation is to foster a unity between thought and action that allows the Church's social doctrine to be lived, rather than simply discussed. In this perspective, the Foundation is called not only to be a place of exchange, but increasingly a space of dynamic formation for all members, and all who are touched by the CAPPF mission.

The meeting in Florence did not produce a definitive program. Its value lay in the convergence of these insights and in the recognition that they point in a common direction. The Foundation is being invited to deepen its roots while extending its reach - to remain faithful to its inspiration while finding new ways to embody it within the changing conditions of our time.

After the formal proceedings, the group crossed over the Arno River to attend a special presentation in the historic Palazzo Vecchio. Surrounded by the Four Elements painted by Visari and his studio, speakers from across diverse sectors, representing Italian, European, and international entities, shared experiences and suggestions in applying the Social Doctrine of the Church to realizing "The Green City." Inspiring as well as informative, we heard first-hand how the principles for fraternity and justice articulated by recent popes have guided civic initiatives for authentic and humanizing sustainability.

This event was proof again that, in a world marked by fragmentation and uncertainty, the mission of CAPPF and the vocation of each of its members takes on particular significance. To contribute even in a modest way to the rebuilding of trust, to a more human economy, and to the formation of responsible leadership is no small task. Yet, as the image of the yeast reminds us, it is precisely through small and faithful initiatives that momentous transformation often begins.