



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

WELCOME GREETINGS

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Good Morning!

It is our honour and great joy to welcome all of you here, Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, our esteemed and distinguished guests, to this Seminar on *The Common Good in the Digital Age*, jointly organised by the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Dicastery for the promotion of Integral Human Development. Thanks you all for your very generous response to our invitation.

My dear friends, about ten or so year ago, when new and improved communication and information systems eliminated distances between people and places, causing "*an explosion of worldwide interdependence*", we spoke of *globalization*; and the world, whose parts and members were so wonderfully connected and closely brought together, was referred to as a *global village*. While the improved communication technology and information transfer which characterized *Globalization* were put at the service of business growth and expansion (economic globalization), Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that there is an "*underlying anthropological and ethical spirit that drives globalization towards the humanizing goal of solidarity: communion and the sharing of goods* (Civ, 42). *Globalization*, then requires a process of discernment: It is not just a socio-economic process. Rather, as a human reality, *globalization harks back to the unity of the human family and its development towards what is good*. (Civ, 42). Accordingly, for Pope Benedict XVI *globalization should not simply make us neighbours, eliminating distances between us; it should make us brothers/sisters*.

Now, as observed above, *globalization* has entailed the ability and facility to easily and rapidly transfer information, using the internet, computers and other technologies. This ability and facility constitute the *digital Age*, (information age, computer age), and it "*captures the ubiquitous nature of computing and the prolific use of technology in almost all aspects of human activity such that 'digital' interaction, the use of personal computers from 1970 and world wide web from the 80s, is a defining characteristic of human activity.*" (<https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/resource-sharing/7562>). Applications of ICTs or digital technologies presently drive our social, economic, entertainment and political activities, introducing thereby an *era for prolific development and use of sophisticated technological innovation in almost all aspect of global business activities* (idem).

In the past geological discoveries punctuated the periods of human history. In the "*Digital Age*", a time period beginning in the 1970s with the advent of personal computers which provide the technological capabilities to transfer information freely and quickly dawned. and like its geological antecedents, it is the discovery of a *tool*. ***the digital tool!*** **and with it comes the question about its use.**

The use of the *digital tool* is going to variously inspire our conversation these three days; and the core issue will be the way technology: *digital technology*, can serve the common good.

As we delve into this discussion, we shall do well to be guided by the words of Pope Francis: "Humanity has entered a new era in which our technical prowess has brought us to a crossroads" (LS, 102). On the one hand, " we are beneficiaries of two centuries of enormous waves of change", the outcome of which has triggered a new digital era which has countless benefits for humanity (LS, 102). We need just to think about advancement in infrastructure, health, communication, transportation, among others. On the other hand, however, technological advancement has some serious challenges, such as (a) inequality in the access to data and to the benefits of technology; (b) the powerful 'ironclad logic' underpinning current technology, which dominates and conditions many aspects of our lives, including politics and economics (cf. LS, 107); and (c) the challenge of the future of work, of peace and warfare, and of community life.

In short, modern technologies influence our common good. Thus, it is worth exploring the ethical dilemma The current development era in which social, economic and political activities/processes are as around technological development, and how some basic ethical consensus could help us using technologies for the common good. We would like to explore how technological advancement can promote peace and enhance the dignity of workers, while improving working conditions and performance. We would like to discover if technology is actually opening new horizons to humanity.

This seminar, jointly organised by two departments of the Vatican -and with the help of many of you, wants also to testify the synodal face of the Church. The word synod (synodos) means “walking together”. We want to walk with you; and we look forward to your contributions, stimulating thoughts and questions, ant to your active participation in the working groups. By walking together, we might discover, in common, some guidelines with which we can help technological advancement to be at the service of integral human development, at the service of all the person, of all people (cf. [*Populorum Progressio*](#), 14).

God bless you all!