



DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING  
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

***SEMINAR: The Future of Work: Labour after Laudato Si'***

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Human Development*

In the name of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, I would like to welcome all of you warmly to this seminar, and to bring you its prayerful wishes for a successful seminar on “*The Future of Work: Labour after Laudato Si' (LS)*”.

For the tradition of the Catholic Church, work is not just something that we can do in exchange for something else. Work is not merely *opus servile*, but rather *opus humanum*; work is first and foremost “a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment” (LS, 128). In fact, “we are created with a vocation to work” (LS, 128), to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gn 2:15), to collaborate, through our work, with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity (cf. *Laborem Exercens*, 27).

Work, as well as being essential for the realization of a person, is also a key to social development. “Work is work *with* others and work *for* others” (*Centesimus Annus*, 31), and the fruit of this labour offers “occasions for exchange, relationship and encounter” (*Compendium CSD*, 273). Every day, millions of people cooperate in development through

their manual or intellectual activities, in large cities or rural areas, with sophisticated or simple assignments. All are expressions of a concrete love for the promotion of the common good, of a civil love (cf LS, 231).

Therefore, work cannot be considered as a commodity or a mere tool in the production chain of goods and services (*Laborem Exercens*, 7) but rather, since it is the foundation for development, it takes priority over any other factor of production, including capital (cf Compendium CDS, 276). Hence the ethical imperative of “defending jobs” (*Evangelii Gaudium* [EG], 203), and of creating new ones in proportion to the increase in economic viability (cf EG, 204), as well as ensuring the dignity of the work itself (cf EG, 205).

However, a candid and frank look at the facts and experience of work in our day, show work which, unfortunately, hinders human fulfilment and which does not serve to till and keep God’s creation. A reality check on work, even in our century, shows that we still have serious problems of unemployment, exploitation, trafficking, unfair wages, unhealthy working environments, depletion of natural environments, and questionable technological advancement. In fact, we cannot defend or create jobs that damage the environment, our common home, or that wreak havoc on social relations and foment war and not peace, or do not enhance the dignity of the workers. So what kind of work should we defend, create and forge? This is a complex issue that needs a wise response.

Responding to difficult social problems, or to what is known in the Catholic tradition as ‘the signs of the time’, has been the aim of modern Catholic social encyclicals. The first one was issued in 1891 to respond to the problems of industrialization and the exploitation of workers. In today’s world, responding to the complexity of “labour” problem requires a thorough and interdisciplinary analysis. This is my understanding of what the project “*Future of Work: Labour After Laudato Si*” is about.

The project was initiated in 2014, after many workers, work unions, social movements, entrepreneurs and experts acknowledged that the issue of work needed a new approach in view of the new socio-economic and political realities. I appreciate the fact that this project has two approaches that are closely linked. The project has five lines of research that attempt to respond to five key areas where work is affected: (i) ecology and the environment, and how to defend and create jobs that can care for our common home; (ii)

peace and social justice, and how to defend and create jobs that do not cause social disruption; (iii) demographic and migration, and how to deal with issues on labour considering the current movement of people and the increasing world population; (iv) robotics, artificial intelligence and technology, and how technology can serve all humanity and not just a few; and (v) creation, innovation and changes, and how labour can help humans to develop their inner creative vocation to work.

The second fact of the project that is linked with the work of our Dicastery to Promote Integral Human Development is the “partnership” approach. This project is done in collaboration with ILO, the Vatican, universities, trade unions, social movements, entrepreneurs, researchers from different countries, et al.

As Pope Francis states in the statutes of the Dicastery, our mission is to be done by establishing or help establishing relationships and associations with other institutions in order to promote integral human development and to respond to the current signs of the time. This project is keen to our mission, and we are grateful for all of you who have been working on it for several years. I hope this meeting, where we will listen to some of the outcomes of the research so far, could shed light on what kind of work shall we defend, create and promote.

Have a very successful Seminar!