



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE XXVI WORLD CONGRESS OF UNIAPAC

[LISBON, 22-24 NOVEMBER 2018]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I offer a cordial greeting to all of you, business executives and leaders of economic life, who have gathered for the 26th UNIAPAC World Congress, on the theme of *Business as a Noble Vocation*. From its origin, some eight decades ago, your federation has sought to translate into economic and financial terms the principles and guidelines of Christian social doctrine in the light of changing times.

Today's context of the globalization of economic activity and exchange has profoundly affected outlooks, goals and ways of conducting business. Your decision to reflect on the vocation and mission of economic and business leaders is thus more essential and necessary than ever. In effect, with "the more intensified pace of life and work... the goals of this rapid and constant change are not necessarily geared to the common good or to integral and sustainable human development", and can even "cause harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity" (*Laudato Si'*, 18).

Amid such complex changes, fidelity to your vocation and mission calls for maintaining a delicate balance between embracing innovation and increasingly competitive production while at the same time viewing progress within the greater horizon of the common good, human dignity and a just use of the natural resources entrusted to our care. In your professional lives, you frequently encounter situations where these values are in tension, and consequently you must make important practical decisions regarding investment and management. Here it may prove helpful to recall three guiding principles present in the Gospel and the Church's social teaching.

The first is the centrality of *individual persons*, with their abilities, their aspirations and their

problems and difficulties. The Church has always managed to do great things with scanty resources, as a reminder that the results are from God and not from men (cf. *2 Cor* 4:7). When a business becomes a “family”, in which management is concerned that working conditions always serve the community, labourers in turn become a “source of enrichment”. They are encouraged to put their talents and abilities at the service of the common good, knowing that their dignity and circumstances are respected and not simply exploited.

In exercising this economic discernment, the goals to be set should always be guided by the rule of the *common good*. This foundational principle of Christian social thought illumines and, like a compass, directs the social responsibility of businesses, their research and technology, and their services of quality control, towards the building of a more humane and fraternal society that can “make the goods of this world more accessible to all” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 203). The principle of the common good points the way to an equitable growth wherein “decisions, programmes, mechanisms and processes [are] specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor that goes beyond a simple welfare mentality” (ibid., 204). In this way, the horizon can broaden to embrace the entire world and foster a new political and economic mindset open to higher values (cf. *ibid.*, 205). The vocation of business leaders will become “a noble commitment” to the extent that it is open to being “challenged by a greater meaning in life” (*ibid.*, 203).

Finally, we must never lose sight of the *moral and economic value of labour*, which is our means of cooperating with God in an “ongoing creation”, which hastens the coming of God’s kingdom by promoting justice and social charity, and by respecting the two dimensions individual and social, of the human person. The noble vocation of business leaders will be evident in the measure that all human activity becomes a witness of hope in the future and an incentive to greater social responsibility and concern through each person’s wise use of his or her talents and abilities. Like the first community of apostles, who were chosen to accompany Jesus along his way, you too are called, as Christian executives and business leaders, to undertake a journey of conversion and witness with the Lord, allowing him to inspire and guide the growth of our contemporary social order.

With prayerful good wishes for the fruitfulness of your deliberations, I ask Mary, Mother of the Church, to sustain you in hope and in docile openness to the Spirit, so that you can be effective instruments of the Lord who constantly “makes all things new” (*Rev* 21:5). In imparting to you my blessing, I ask you, please, to remember to pray for me.

From the Vatican, 22 November 2018

Francis

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