

## WELCOME AND PRESENTATION OF THE ACADEMY

MARY ANN GLENDON

Presidents of Sister Academies, Honorable Ambassadors, Esteemed Guests, and Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the members of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to this celebration of the tenth anniversary of our founding, and to thank our distinguished visitors for honoring us with their presence here.

Shortly after Pope John Paul II established the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in January 1994, he welcomed the original members of this group with the exhortation to 'Be not afraid' in the quest for knowledge. He urged us to search for 'all the grains of truth present in the various intellectual and empirical approaches' of the disciplines gathered under this roof. As a model, he held up St Thomas Aquinas whose unrestricted desire to know led him to seek dialogue with the most advanced natural and human science of his time, and to engage the ideas of the great minds of antiquity.

On that occasion, he also reminded us that we must not be content merely with harvesting the wisdom of the social sciences. He made clear that we were not to regard the secluded and beautiful Casina Pio IV as an ivory tower where scholars commune only with each other. As might be expected from the philosopher-Pope who has traveled the world speaking truth to power for the past twenty-five years, John Paul II enjoined us to bring the wisdom of the social sciences to bear on human realities 'with a view to finding solutions to people's concrete problems, solutions based on social justice'.

Since then, in each meeting with our young academy, he has asked us to stretch our capacities, to be bold and creative in deploying the resources of our disciplines. In his 1998 address, he told us to keep in mind that sometimes we would be called to play the role of 'pioneers ... to indicate new

paths and new solutions for solving in a more equitable way the burning issues of today's world'.

The Pope also expressed his hope that the relationship between Catholic social thought and the social sciences would be a two-way street. Quoting from his social encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, he said that by entering into dialogue with the disciplines concerned with the human person, the Church not only 'assimilates what these various disciplines have to contribute', but also 'helps them to open themselves to a broader horizon' (CA, 59).

Over the past ten years, we Academicians have tried to live up to those expectations, under the inspiring leadership of President Edmond Malinvaud, whom we honor today. We have concentrated thus far on four areas where it seemed to us that 'burning issues' posed new challenges for the human family, for policy makers, for the social sciences, and for Catholic social thought: the changing world of work, the risks and opportunities presented by globalization, the dilemmas of democracy, and the topic to which we gave the name 'intergenerational solidarity'. Later in this program, the coordinators of the first three of those projects will report on what has been accomplished under those headings. Then, as the coordinator of the fourth and newest of these projects, I will say a few words about where our work on intergenerational solidarity stands at the end of the first plenary session on that subject.

First, however, I would like to tell you a little more about our Academy, the ways in which it is like its sister academies all over the world, and some ways in which it has a distinctive character.

In his 1994 Apostolic Letter establishing the Academy, John Paul II recalled the remarkable flourishing of Catholic social thought in the century following Pope Leo XIII's path-breaking 1891 encyclical on labor questions, *Rerum Novarum*. He wrote that,

Over the last century the Church has strengthened her 'citizenship status' by perfecting her social doctrine ... [in] close collaboration, on the one hand, with Catholic social movements, and on the other, with experts in the social sciences.

He recalled how Pope John XXIII had stressed, in *Pacem in Terris* and *Mater et Magistra*, 'that the social doctrine must always strive to take into account "the true state of affairs" by maintaining a constant dialogue with the social sciences'. Then, citing 'the great tasks the future has in store', John Paul II said the time had now come to give 'new expression' to this long-standing interdisciplinary dialogue. Accordingly, he founded the Pontifical Academy

of Social Sciences, alongside the four hundred year old Pontifical Academy of Sciences. He charged the new academy with the task of

promoting the study and progress of the social, economic, political, and juridical sciences, and of thus offering the Church the elements which she can use in the study and development of her social doctrine.

Like other learned academies, the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, but a distinctive feature that influences our choice of subjects is that we are expected to provide the Church with useful material to aid in the continuing 'development of her social doctrine'. In that sense, we are something like the Councils that governments appoint when expert knowledge on such matters as, for example, bio-technology, is required. Like such advisory bodies, our role is not to announce or develop doctrine, but to make sure that those who do explain, announce, and develop doctrine have the best possible information and the most promising ideas at their disposal.

But unlike governments, who seek expert opinion to aid in the formulation of policy, the Church does not make policy prescriptions, nor does she offer technical solutions to specific problems. As John Paul II has put it,

The Church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations, through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political and cultural aspects, as these interact with one another (CA, 43).

The aim of the social doctrine, as the Pope put it in his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, is to offer 'principles for reflection, criteria of judgments and directives for action' showing that the Gospel message in all its richness and newness applies 'to people's lives and the life of society (SRS, 8)'. As he elaborated in an address to our Academy four years ago, the social doctrine is meant to be

a vehicle through which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is brought to bear on the different cultural, economic and political situations facing modern men and women. ... The Church's task – her right and her duty – is to enunciate those basic ethical principles forming the foundation and proper functioning of society, within which men and women make their pilgrim way to their transcendent destiny.

To promote the building up of a society that enables each man and woman to perfect his or her own nature, the Holy Father urged the Academicians to

help to insure that social doctrines do not ignore the spiritual nature of human beings, their deep longing for happiness and their super-

natural destiny which transcends the merely biological and material aspects of life.

Guided by those counsels, the Academy has made what we believe are important contributions to the understanding of human work, globalization, and democracy. Its thirty-three members, emblematic of the universal concerns of the Church, come from all continents of the world, and each is a specialist in at least one of the human sciences. It has not been easy for this diverse group of men and women to learn to communicate across disciplinary, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. But in ten years we have made great progress, educating and being educated by each other in this multinational, multidisciplinary setting. All would agree, I believe, that it has been an extraordinarily enriching experience to be able to hear such a wide range of thoughtful perspectives on the problems we have studied. We look forward to ever greater progress in fulfilling our mission to the Church, the social sciences, and to humanity.