



Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I welcome you and I thank your President, Prof. Stefano Zamagni, for his courteous words and for having agreed to preside over the [Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences](#). This year too, you have chosen to address an ever current topic. Unfortunately we have before our eyes situations in which certain nation-states conduct their relations in a spirit more of opposition than of cooperation. Moreover, it should be recognized that State borders do not always coincide with the demarcations of homogeneous populations and that much tension arises from excessive claims of sovereignty on the part of States, often in the very areas where they are no longer able to act efficiently to protect the common good.

Both in the Encyclical [Laudato Si'](#) and in this year's [Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps](#), I drew attention to the challenges, of an international nature, that humanity must address, such as integral development, peace, care for our common home, climate change, poverty, wars, migration, human trafficking, organ trafficking, protection of the common good, the new forms of slavery.

Saint Thomas had a beautiful idea of what a people is: "The river Seine is not *this* river because of *this* water flowing down it, but because of *this* source and *this* river bed; so it's always regarded as the same river in spite of different water flowing down it. And it's like this for a population: it's

the same population, not because of any sameness of soul or of persons, but because of the same dwelling place; or, even more, because of the same laws and the the same style of living, as Aristotle explained in book 3 of his *Politics*" (*On Spiritual Creatures*, a. 9, ad 10). The Church has always encouraged love of one's people, of country; respect for the value of various cultural expressions, uses and customs and for the just ways of living rooted in peoples. At the same time, the Church has admonished individuals, peoples and governments regarding deviations from this attachment when focused on exclusion and hatred of others, when it becomes hostile, wall-building nationalism, or even racism or anti-Semitism. The Church observes with concern the re-emergence, somewhat throughout the world, of aggressive tendencies toward foreigners, types of migrants, as well as that growing nationalism that disregards the common good. This risks compromising previously consolidated forms of international cooperation, threatens the aims of International Organizations as spaces for dialogue and encounter for all countries on a level of mutual respect, and prevents the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals unanimously approved by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015.

It is a common doctrine that the State is at the service of the person and of natural groupings of people such as the family, the cultural group, the nation as an expression of the will and customs inherent in a people, the common good and peace. Too often, however, States are subjugated to the interests of a dominant group, largely for motives of economic profit, which oppress, among others, ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities who are in their territory.

In this perspective, for example, the way in which a nation welcomes migrants reveals its vision of human dignity and of its relationship with humanity. Every human being is a member of humanity and has the same dignity. When a person or a family is compelled to leave their homeland they must be welcomed with humanity. I have said many times that our duty to migrants can be articulated around four verbs: *welcome*, *protect*, *promote* and *integrate*. Migrants are not a threat to the culture, customs and values of a receiving nation. They too have a duty, that of being integrated into the nation that receives them. Integrating does not mean assimilating, but sharing the way of life of their new homeland, while they themselves remain as individuals, with their own biographical history. In this way, migrants can present themselves and be recognized as an opportunity to enrich the people that integrates them. It is the task of public authorities to protect migrants and to regulate migratory flows with the virtue of prudence, as well as to promote welcome so that the local populations may be formed and encouraged to consciously take part in the integrative process of the migrants who are to be received.

The migratory issue too, which is a permanent fact of human history, revives reflection on the nature of the nation state. All nations are the result of integration of consecutive waves of migrating individuals or groups, and tend to be images of the diversity of humanity while being united by values, common cultural resources and healthy customs. A State that arouses in its people nationalistic sentiments against other nations or groups of people would fail in its own mission. We know from history where similar deviations have led; I am thinking of Europe in the

last century.

The nation-state cannot be considered as an absolute, as an island with respect to the surrounding circumstances. In the current situation of globalization not just of the economy but also of technological and cultural exchanges, the nation-state is no longer able to procure on its own the common good of its populations. The common good has become global and nations must affiliate themselves for their own benefit. When a supranatural common good is clearly identified, it necessitates a specific, legally and concordantly constituted authority capable of facilitating its fulfilment. Let us consider the great contemporary challenges of climate change, of the new forms of slavery and of peace.

While, according to the principle of subsidiarity, the power of individual nations to work for whatever they can achieve must be recognized, on the other hand, groups of neighbouring nations — as is already the case — can strengthen their own cooperation by conceding the exercise of certain functions and services to the intergovernmental institutions that manage their common interests. It is to be hoped, for example, that awareness of the benefits produced by this approach and harmony among peoples undertaken in this post-World War II period not be lost in Europe. Meanwhile, in Latin America, Simón Bolívar urged the leaders of his time to forge the dream of a Great Homeland, which knows how and is able to welcome, respect, embrace and develop the richness of every people. This vision of cooperation among nations can advance the narrative by upholding multilateralism, opposing both new nationalistic impulses and hegemonic policies.

Humanity would thus escape the threat of resorting to armed conflict every time a dispute between nation-states arose, and would likewise exclude the danger of economic and ideological colonization by superpowers. Thus, it would avoid the subjugation of the strongest over the weakest, being attentive to the global dimension without losing sight of the local, national and regional dimension. Before the design of a globalization imagined as “spherical”, which levels differences and suffocates localization, it is easy for both nationalism and hegemonic policies to re-emerge. In order for globalization to be beneficial for all, a “polihedral” form must be considered, supporting a healthy struggle for mutual recognition between the collective identity of each people and nation and globalization itself, according to the principle that the whole first comes from the parts, so as to arrive at a general state of peace and harmony.

Multilateral petitions have been drawn up in the hope of being able to replace the logic of revenge, the logic of dominion, of subjugation and of conflict with that of dialogue, of mediation, of compromise, of harmony and awareness of belonging to the same humanity in the common home. Of course, it is imperative that such organizations assure that the states be effectively represented, with equal rights and obligations, so as to avoid the growing hegemony of powers and interest groups that impose their own visions and ideas, as well as new forms of ideological colonization, not rarely disrespectful of the identity, of uses and customs, of the dignity and sensitivity of the concerned peoples. The emergence of these tendencies is weakening the

multilateral system, resulting in insufficient credibility in international policies and in the progressive marginalization of the weakest members of the family of nations.

I encourage you to persevere in seeking appropriate processes to overcome what divides nations and to propose new paths of cooperation, especially in regard to the new challenges of climate change and new forms of slavery, as well as that exalted social good which is peace.

Unfortunately, today the season of multilateral nuclear disarmament seems to have been superseded and no longer moves the political conscience of the nations that possess atomic weapons. Instead, a new season of disturbing nuclear confrontation seems to have appeared, as the progress of the recent past is cancelled out and the risk of war increased, also due to the potential malfunctioning of technologies that are highly advanced but always subject to the naturally and humanly imponderable. Now, if offensive and defensive nuclear arms are placed not only on earth but also in space, the so-called technological new frontier will raise and not lower the danger of nuclear holocaust.

The state is called therefore, to a greater responsibility. While maintaining the characteristics of independence and sovereignty, and continuing to seek the good of its own population, today it is its task to participate in the edification of the common good of humanity, a necessary and essential element for global balance. This universal common good, in its turn, must acquire a heightened legal significance at the international level. Of course, I am not thinking of a universalism or a generic internationalism that disregards the identity of individual peoples: this, indeed, must be appreciated as a unique and indispensable contribution in the largest harmonious plan.

Dear friends, as inhabitants of our time, Christians and scholars of the [Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences](#), I ask you to cooperate with me in spreading this awareness of renewed international solidarity with respect for human dignity, the common good, with respect for the planet and the supreme good of peace.

I bless all of you; I bless your work and your initiatives. I accompany you with my prayers, and you too, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!